

Wildlife Conservation Volunteering - Kanaan



Unrivalled Scenery with Wildlife ~ Namibia at its Best

Background

The successful management of any wildlife area is a complex and difficult task with many facets and different interests. The scale of operations can be daunting and requires many eyes and hands to get the necessary work done. Previously utilised as a film, photography and holiday destination. Moreover, Kanaan is part of the Namib Sand Sea and holds ample photographic opportunities including Namibia's iconic red sand dunes, vast open grass plains dotted with camel thorn trees as well as abundant antelope, towering mountain ranges and many other scenic features. Kanaan welcomes guests who want to be actively involved in almost any of the duties which sound management requires, and those that want to experience the desert first-hand. During your visit, help the local team record wildlife information that contributes to the long-term management of the area. The main flagship species are cheetah, brown hyena, spotted hyena, leopard and a range of desert-adapted wildlife species. We're starting from scratch, so visitors can really make an impact.



Environment



Kanaan (and part of neighbouring farm Vergenoeg) provides 352km² of stunning desert scenery. The farm features all the iconic vistas that Namibia is world-famous for and hence has been used for professional film and photo shoots. Throw in some of the country's most spectacular wildlife and you've got the perfect combination for photographic and research adventures. Kanaan's environment entails a spectacular mix of red sand dunes, imposing mountain ranges, vast grass plains and old camel thorn trees. In addition, Kanaan directly borders the Namib Naukluft Park and therefore provides an important link for landscape scale wildlife conservation.

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Activities at Kanaan

Here volunteers will become first-hand involved in conservation through the research and monitoring of free-ranging carnivores.

Mapping

The simple basis for any professional management of a wildlife area is a good, accurate map. Maps, for example, are necessary to evaluate plant and animal population data and guide future decisions. The volunteers will join the researchers and use a GPS unit to map anything from important wildlife observations to habitat features as well as infrastructures such as roads, water holes, fences etc. Once collected, the positional information will continually be processed into up-to-date reserve maps which are used by management and for publication of scientific results. Mapping means quality time in this fantastic environment whilst collecting information on a variety of features and resources. A lot of the mapping will be undertaken on foot to understand the relevance of data at the landscape scale. Encounters with different species of wildlife are guaranteed.

Capture Mark Release

To understand how wildlife utilise the reserve and how they interact in a challenging and demanding environment requires indirect monitoring techniques such as GPS satellite tracking. Especially for very secretive species like the cheetah and spotted hyena, GPS collars are a good way of gathering important information. The volunteers will help



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researchers identify areas of regular carnivore activity (dens, riverbeds or marking trees for example), place trap cages for cheetahs only. When species of interest are captured, the animals will be immobilised on-site

and fitted with suitable GPS or VHF trackers for continued monitoring. After release, the work continues at the computer following the satellite information from study animals and putting them in a scientific context. Please note this activity is dependent on carnivore species present in the

environment and the availability of camera's and equipment.



Radio Telemetry Tracking

Collaring animals with GPS trackers to follow their day-to-day movements is only one piece of the puzzle though. Remote satellite tracking does not tell us much about the breeding success, prey selection, health status or other important ecological parameters of a study animal. Direct observations are necessary to evaluate these suitably and therefore the team will go into the field to track collared individuals and make direct assessments. The animals are found by way of radio telemetry which means locating the radio transmitter in each collar with an antenna and receiver. Days in the field can be long and warm, and a certain amount of walking is often required following the radio signal of transmitters – but the rewards of finding wildlife in the desert and collecting meaningful information at the same time are unrivalled. Please note this activity is dependent on collared carnivore species and their presence on Kanaan.



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Game Count

Herbivores of all sizes are an integral part of African ecosystems. In the vast Namib Desert it will be critical to understand local ungulate population dynamics and migrations to ensure sufficient water supply. At the same time, ungulate populations need to be assessed against the available vegetation to avoid damage to the ecosystem, for example from overgrazing. The volunteers will participate in regular game counts on either horseback or car to assist these monitoring efforts. Kanaan has historically been home to large herds of migratory and desert-adapted oryx (gemsbok) and springbok, but also contains less known species such as the greater kudu or klipspringer. Ostrich populations will also be counted. Questions to answer include, for example, how do wildlife utilise this semi-arid landscape on a seasonal basis and how does this correlate with predator populations?



Camera Trapping



During the early resource identification stage as well as during the continuous monitoring of wildlife populations we also rely on "additional eyes" in the form of motion-triggered camera traps. Because the cameras record data 24/7 and every day of the year, they often "observe" wildlife that humans overlook. Moreover, the cameras are non-selective and therefore capture information on all wildlife that pass in front of them, be they carnivores, herbivores, birds or others. This helps the researchers assess which species are present, and where they are most active, especially for animals that are usually very cryptic or entirely nocturnal. The cameras are non-invasive and sometimes record interesting behavioural data that we would otherwise have no access to. Volunteers will help set cameras in the field (for example at water points, cheetah marking trees, caves etc.), maintain them (refresh batteries and memory cards) but also go through the abundance of images to assess and structure the data recorded.



Cheetah Feed



Kanaan Desert Retreat is home to two rescued cheetahs from the N/a'an ku sê Sanctuary who are now the lucky residents of a 7 hectare enclosure on the red dunes of Kanaan. Volunteers will be involved in the food preparation, feeding (depending on lodge tours) and care-taking of these cheetahs as well as enclosure cleanings on a regular basis during their stay at Kanaan. Caring for these two cheetahs has become a vital aspect of the program at Kanaan, as N/a'an ku sê is dedicated to providing the best possible life for these former victims of human-wildlife conflict. Seeing these cheetahs up close with Kanaan's stunning desert scenery as a backdrop is a truly inspiring opportunity that is not to be missed!

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Maintenance and Security

Work on a wildlife farm does not end with science and research though. For the ecosystem to function adequately several maintenance activities are compulsory, especially in very dry areas like Kanaan. It will be important to conduct regular Anti-poaching patrols and other security efforts. As part of Environmental rehabilitation the volunteers will also be involved project such as fence removal. The volunteers will be exposed to and participate in the operational aspects of the farm, and they should be prepared to get their hands dirty from time to time and contribute to maintenance as their capabilities allow.

Other Activities

One of the must-do activities in the Namib Desert is the sun-downer. Enjoy the tranquillity and breath-taking scenery of the Namib when the sun sets and paints the desert in unimaginable colours. We will also be conducting night drives or sleep-outs as part of our security protocol, but also to observe some of the nocturnal desert wildlife. While your here, make sure you sit back and let your mind wander away from the buzz of civilization – Kanaan is the ideal place for relaxation. The Namib night sky with its ever-prominent Milky Way is another highlight not to be missed.



Accommodation



You will be staying in the beautifully renovated Kanaan farm house with shared rooms and bathroom. The farm house has 2 rooms which can accommodate 7 volunteers, with three campsites with tented accommodation to accommodate groups bigger than 7. The guesthouse has electricity, but volunteers need to bring their own South African socket adapters to charge electric appliances. However, there's limited cell phone reception in the area and no internet. We can accommodate groups of up to 12 participants at any one time. Most meals will be provided at the house.

Additionally, you can choose to upgrade to one of our luxury chalets for an additional N\$ 300.00 per person per night sharing in a twin room, or N\$ 400.00 per person per night single, depending upon availability. This upgrade only applies to accommodation upgrade. All meals will be enjoyed with the rest of the Volunteers at the Kanaan farm house. You can book this directly at Kanaan or you can book it in advance.



Food

Volunteers on Kanaan will receive 3 balanced meals per day. Meals include a standard breakfast with cereals and toast. Coffee and tea are available. Lunches will be provided at the guest farm or in packed form for groups active in the field. Dinners typically are warm meals with meat (chicken, red meat or fish), different vegetables and pasta, rice, potato or salad. Once per week, dinner will be in the form of a traditional Namibian braai (barbeque). Please note that due to the remote location of Kanaan, some fresh produce may only be available seasonally. **Vegetarian options can be catered for upon request. Please inform us of any special dietary requirements prior to your arrival at the project site.**

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Kiosk

We also have a small farm shop with beverages, alcoholic drinks and snacks at Kanaan which you can purchase while there, the shop only opens every second day around lunch time. There is communal fridge where you can put in your drinks to keep it nice and cold.

Important Information for Everyone

Volunteers should be equipped to work under any weather conditions, including cold winters and long hours in the sun (please check prevailing weather conditions at your time of travel). The local tap water is safe to drink. Although Kanaan is not located in a Malaria zone, people must consider prophylaxis if they intend to travel to other areas in Africa and suitable insect repellents should also be brought. All volunteers should ensure adequate health insurance cover for visiting Namibia and that relevant immunisations are up-to-date. Except for emergencies, volunteers have no access to the internet on Kanaan. Local currency can be obtained at the international airport upon arrival. Laundry services will be available on selected days.

Kanaan Volunteer Checklist:

- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping mat (optional)
- Torch/flashlight
- Warm clothing (including long pants)
- Raincoats (January to end of March)
- Binoculars (recommended)
- Guide books (optional)
- Hiking shoes
- 2ltr Water-bottles
- Sun protection (hat, sun-screen SPF30+)
- South African electricity socket adapter

Kanaan Donations Wish-List:

- AA batteries
- Monetary Donations for camera trap/radio collars fund
- Sleeping bags
- Sleeping mats
- Binoculars
- Guide books
- Work gloves
- Pliers for fence-cutting
- GPS Units (such as a Garmin Extrex 10 or 20)
- Hand-held radios for field communications (walk-talky with decent range)
- Used novels (for downtime)



The program at Kanaan runs for 7 nights starting every Saturday. Multiple week bookings are encouraged to ensure a lasting impact on the project and due to the diversity of activities.

Pre-bookings for Kanaan are recommended due to limited availability and can be made at the time of your booking
Or

Add Kanaan to your project itinerary in the office upon your arrival at the Sanctuary

We look forward to welcoming volunteers to Kanaan!

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