

Sustainable Destination Award Good Practice Story

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Our pledge to help communities and wildlife

Human-wildlife conflict refers to all sorts of conflicts taking place between wild animals and humans. This includes destruction of crops and water points caused by elephants or other large herbivores, loss of livestock and in some cases human lives caused by various predators living in the close vicinity to rural communities. On the other side, the wild animals are often killed by the rural communities to ensure no damage will occur in their settlements.

The competition between human population and wildlife population for the same living space and natural resources has increased over the years due to new rural settlements encroaching into the habitat of wildlife in search of natural resources, as well as wild animals entering human-inhabited areas to look for food and water which is scarce, especially in times of drought. In recent years, Namibia has experienced more frequent and severe cases of Human-Wildlife Conflict that is causing extensive harm to the rural communities as well as the wildlife.

With this delicate balance in mind, Grootberg Lodge and the #Khoadi //Hoas Conservancy are working in close collaboration to protect the natural resources of the area and its wildlife and to reduce the human-wildlife conflict in the community by raising awareness amongst the locals to be more tolerant of the lions, cheetahs and elephants and understand their value from a tourism prospective. With the aim of supporting the local communities residing in the vicinity of wildlife areas, Grootberg Lodge has developed and successfully established a **Wildlife Fund**.

The lodge donates N\$ 25 to the Wildlife Fund for each guest sighting of a predator while on an activity at the lodge. Lion, cheetah, leopard, wild cat, caracal and hyenas are all included in the list of sightings which contributes towards the Fund. Due to Elephants and Rhinos also adding to the Human-Wildlife conflict as they struggle to survive with limited amounts of water in the environment, the donation of N\$ 25 to the Wildlife Fund has been extended to include sightings of elephants and rhinos.

The Wildlife Fund is used to provide monetary compensation to community members who have suffered damages and financial losses as a result of Human-Wildlife Conflicts, specifically loss of livestock due to predator attacks. The Wildlife Fund has also provided funding to the community to construct protective kraals for livestock and new water points for wild animals.

The Management Team at Grootberg Lodge meticulously records the relevant animal sightings by each guest during their activities. This data is then applied to calculate the monthly payments to be made to the Wildlife Fund.

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As an example, the below table reflects the current sightings for 2019 and the equivalent monetary donations made from Grootberg Lodge to the Wildlife Fund.

The key factors that have allowed the Wildlife Fund to become a successful instrument to help the community and protect the wildlife are:

1. The passion and the drive from Grootberg Lodge and #Khoadi //Hoas Conservancy's managers and directors who are committed to see a positive change in the way humans interact with wildlife. Also, to protect the animals, one of the biggest tourism resources in the country, and assist the rural populations at the same time.
2. The cohesive and positive working relationship with #Khoadi //Hoas Conservancy that has shown great dedication to the protection of the environment and the wild animals.
3. The constant effort of Grootberg Lodge's staff to educate the fellow locals about the precious value of wildlife as well as raising awareness amongst the visitors to the lodge.
4. The continuous need for more and improved agricultural and farming installations to protect livestock and water points from wildlife attacks remains the heart of the various projects initiated using the funds collected by the Wildlife Fund.

Human-Wildlife conflict has always existed where people and wildlife share the same environment and compete for the same natural resources. Such conflicts are impossible to entirely eradicate and will continue in the future. We believe that Grootberg Lodge, in its small way, is contributing towards the successful management of these conflicts in the most efficient way to ensure benefits for the local communities and help protect the wildlife in the area.

