



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Desert nomad finds a new home and new name

On Saturday, 18 April 2020, the bull elephant having taken up residence in the Swakop River and endeared himself to local residents, was relocated to the Zannier Reserve by N/a'an ku sê in a joint operation with METF.

The elephant, a stray male of unknown origin and estimated to be approximately 25 years old, appeared in the Swakopmund area in December 2019. He displayed some injuries and signs of undernourishment at the time. The Ministry of Environment Tourism and Forestry (METF) monitored the elephant and, under the guidance of Ministry veterinarian, Dr. Janine Sharpe, successfully fitted him with a GPS collar in January 2020. Closer examination during the collaring process revealed that the elephant had gained weight and his injuries had healed well.

The elephant was declared a problem animal by METF, and N/a'an ku sê was identified by METF as a partner in mitigating the situation.

In Namibia identified problem animals are dealt with in one of either three ways: the animal is destroyed; trophy hunted or relocated to a protected, conflict-free environment.

In a bid to avoid destroying the animal, the Ministry of Environment Tourism and Forestry decided to relocate the elephant to the Zannier Reserve by N/a'an ku sê – a 7,500-hectare protected reserve established for the benefit of perceived problem animals that would otherwise be destroyed.

“Of late we received concerns from the residents of Rossmund of the Swakopmund area that the animal has been causing damages to their palm trees, coming to their swimming pools and moving around residential areas. There has been a fear it might cause threats to human life in the area. Therefore the Ministry declared the animal as a problem-causing animal. N/a'an ku sê has been identified as a suitable property where this animal can be properly looked after.”
Mr. Colgar Sikopo, Director of Parks and Wildlife (METF).

N/a'an ku sê Foundation

Namibia Charity no.: 21/2007/256 UK Charity no.1142421 VAT No.: 4432160-01-5 Reg No.: 21/2007/256

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On Saturday, 18 April 2020, Mr. Colgar Sikopo, METF's Director of Parks and Wildlife, and Dr. Janine Sharpe, METF veterinarian, together with the N/a'an ku sê team, performed the relocation. Wildlife veterinarian, Dr. Ulf Tubbesing, assisted by N/a'an ku sê veterinarian, Dr. Maaïke De Schepper, was in charge of the relocation process.

Darted and sedated from a helicopter, the elephant was lifted by crane onto a 4x4 transport truck. The 4x4 transport truck was required to access the elephant's location in the soft riverbed sands. From this location the elephant was transported to the container truck, less than 1km away. After loading the elephant onto the container truck, the journey to his new home began.

Accompanied by police escort, the elephant was transported from the Swakopmund area to the Zannier Reserve by N/a'an ku sê, a 6-hour journey by road with the elephant carefully monitored throughout.

Upon arrival at the Zannier Reserve by N/a'an ku sê during the early evening hours, the elephant was released into a 1-hectare soft-release boma, allowing him to grow accustomed to electrified fencing. This is vital to his wellbeing on the reserve itself.

On Monday, 20 April 2020, less than 48 hours later, the elephant was released onto the 7,500 protected hectares of the Zannier Reserve by N/a'an ku sê.

All associated relocation costs, including the construction of the soft-release boma, were covered by the Shiloh Wildlife Sanctuary in partnership with the N/a'an ku sê Foundation.

Marlice van Vuuren, executive director of the N/a'an ku sê Foundation, expressed her gratitude to the Shiloh Wildlife Sanctuary and the elephant was named Apollo by Shiloh Jolie-Pitt.

Dr. Rudie van Vuuren, CEO of N/a'an ku sê, expressed his appreciation towards the METF, the police, NCAA and MWTC for the utterly efficient way the operation was conducted. The current lockdown regulations were strictly employed by the Swakopmund police force and health officials.

END OF RELEASE

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