



## Return of Desert Elephants

Elephants were absent from the southern Kunene Region during the war for independence, when they moved north for safety, until they returned to the Ugab River in the mid-1990s. By then, many indigenous people had moved into the area following Namibia's independence. This resulted in many residents having no knowledge of how to live with them.

## Importance of Elephants



- In the dry season, elephants dig holes (gorras) to find water, which other wildlife, livestock and people can also use.
- They also reduce bush cover and increase grass cover - of great importance to farmers.
- By shaking large trees, seedpods may fall to the ground and are then readily accessible by smaller game.
- Ancient elephant trails often represent the shortest route between two water sources. They form easy pathways that other animals and humans also use.
- Elephants help the dispersal of trees by spreading seeds in their dung. They are essential to the health of their habitat.

This brochure was printed cooperatively by EHRA and TOSCO.

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### Tourism Supporting Conservation (TOSCO)

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## Safety & Information

# DESERT-DWELLING elephants



Tourist info about the desert-dwelling elephants of Northwestern Namibia.





## Desert-dwelling Elephants



### NAMIBIA

**N**amibia's desert-dwelling elephants *Loxodonta africana africana* are one of only two populations worldwide that have adapted to live in a desert environment (the other lives in Mali). One adaptation to the dry, often sandy conditions is bigger feet. Desert-adapted elephants can survive without drinking water for several days and may walk up to 70km at night to find water points. In dry riverbeds they dig holes to access water and if stressed by lack of water, females with small calves can pull water from their stomachs to give to them. These elephants typically live in smaller herds to reduce pressure on food sources. They certainly are very special!



## FOR YOUR SAFETY

During self drives, you might encounter wild desert-dwelling elephants. Here are some guidelines to keep you and the elephants safe.

### DOs

- Stay in your car & be quiet!
- Stay downwind of elephants.
- View them from 100m distance.
- If elephants appear nervous - leave!
- Take a local guide with you who knows the elephants and the area.
- Deactivate all phone and car alarms or other unnatural sounds.
- Leave only footprints, take only photos!
- Camp at designated areas & pay fees.  
*This helps support the local residents who live with the elephants.*

### DON`Ts

- If elephants move away, don't follow them!
- Don't walk or drive around at night!
- Don't feed wild animals! *Be careful with food, especially fruits and sweets, which can tempt elephants to search for them.*
- Don't make new tracks in sensitive areas!



### Remember...

Respect our wild desert-dwelling elephants. They have excellent senses of hearing and smelling and can accelerate from 0-40km/h within seconds.

#### Warning signals: Head-shaking

When elephants are unhappy, they may shake their heads sharply to warn you.



## Human-Elephant Conflicts

- Conflicts between elephants and humans have existed ever since they have shared resources on common ground.
- In the Kunene Region in Northwest Namibia, conflicts are mainly due to water.
- Elephants travel far to reach water. Once found, they don't distinguish between natural or man-made water sources.
- Strong as they are, they simply pull out water-pipes and break water installations on farms.
- Most people are scared of elephants and don't know how to handle encounters.
- Lack of knowledge about elephants can result in fatally wounded people or elephants.
- Elephants that break houses or waterpoints are sometimes declared as problem animals.

## Solutions by EHRA



- **Waterpoint Protection Programme**
- **Elephant Education & Training**
- **School Elephant Safety Programme**
- **Elephant Movement and ID**
- **Conservancy support**
- **Internship Programme**
- **Volunteer Programme**

For more info  
check us out on  
[www.desertelephant.org](http://www.desertelephant.org)