



## *Behind the Scenes*

with the AfriCat Foundation  
in the Okonjima Nature Reserve

The AfriCat Foundation was established to contribute to the conservation of Namibia's wildlife, in particular carnivores and endangered species. Based in the 220km<sup>2</sup> Okonjima Nature Reserve, the AfriCat Foundation conducts research into the altered ecology of wildlife in an enclosed protected area in order to support the creation and management of protected areas as a strategy for conservation. An estimated 42% of Namibia's landmass is under some form of conservation management, including private reserves, such as the Okonjima Nature Reserve, and Namibia's biodiversity strategy recognizes the contribution of conservation to both biodiversity and economic development. The partnership between the Okonjima Lodges, the Okonjima Nature Reserve and the AfriCat Foundation is a demonstration of the symbiosis between conservation and tourism.

Research by the AfriCat Foundation has confirmed that the Okonjima Nature Reserve is an ideal ecosystem for leopard and brown hyena; the Reserve is thus one of the best places in the country to see these normally shy and elusive nocturnal animals. AfriCat research has also demonstrated however that the ecology of species within an enclosed protected reserve is altered – densities are higher, home ranges smaller, and there are behaviour changes to adapt to reduced opportunities for migration. AfriCat research therefore focuses on understanding how the ecology of key species in the Reserve has changed, including the interactions between species and their environment. This information contributes to the management of enclosed protected areas and to national policy development on the creation and maintenance of such areas, as part of the national conservation strategy.



AfriCat has one of the longest running leopard monitoring projects in Namibia and the AfriCat Pangolin Research Project is one of only a handful of projects studying free-roaming pangolin. Phase two of a highly successful brown hyena study is under development and AfriCat is initiating research on lesser-known Namibian wildlife such as the armadillo and armadillo. When adequate funding can be raised, AfriCat will test strategies for reversal of land degradation, starting with an evaluation of the impact of different methodologies of bush thinning on soil quality, vegetation and biodiversity. In order to facilitate the research in the Reserve, AfriCat is also initiating the installation of Smart Parks, a sensor-based monitoring system for reserve management and environmental and wildlife conservation.

In addition to undertaking its own research, AfriCat hosts and facilitates external researchers with similar research interests, such as graduate students from Namibian universities. Finally, the AfriCat Carnivore Care Centre is home to a small number of carnivores that have been rescued from farmland and are not able to be rehabilitated back into the wild. These animals are ambassadors for their species, helping AfriCat raise awareness about human-wildlife conflict and the conservation needs of these threatened species.

**The AfriCat Foundation welcomes Okonjima guests to come  
Behind the Scenes to learn first-hand about the work of the Foundation.**

# The AfriCat Foundation

## Behind the Scenes Programme

The AfriCat *Behind the Scenes* programme is available for groups of guests - between 4 to 8 pax - booked into the Okonjima Bush Camp or Luxury Villa for at least three nights on a fully inclusive basis.

### The programme includes:

- \* Private activities, specialist presentations and in-depth opportunities to learn about and contribute to AfriCat's projects
- \* A Specialist AfriCat guide to explain about AfriCat projects and conservation in Namibia. The AfriCat guide will join you for all activities and meals, unless you prefer otherwise
- \* A senior Okonjima guide and private vehicle for full access to the Okonjima Nature Reserve



### BEHIND THE SCENES RATES

2023: N\$23,000 (incl VAT)

Behind the Scenes rates are charged per person per visit, in addition to Okonjima accommodation rates. The funds are used by the Foundation to support the AfriCat projects that Behind the Scenes guests see during their visit to Okonjima.

The Behind the Scenes fee can be paid directly to the AfriCat Foundation or to Okonjima.

For more information or to book a Behind the Scenes visit please contact: [info@okonjimalodge.com](mailto:info@okonjimalodge.com)



In addition to time spent with the AfriCat team and seeing and learning about the following projects, *Behind the Scenes* guests will be able to see and participate in AfriCat work that can be scheduled for the time of the visit, such as re-collaring or re-tagging research individuals, and to assist with data collection for the below projects.

## AfriCat Research Projects

**LEOPARD MONITORING** by VHF and GPS collars and camera traps. This may, depending on timing, include darting of a leopard to put on or change a collar. All leopard activities are conducted in an open safari vehicle during the early mornings and evenings and may involve limited walking to camera trap sites.

**AFRICAT PANGOLIN RESEARCH PROJECT** which includes VHF and GPS tag monitoring and camera traps at pangolin burrows. This may, depending on timing, include changing of tags on a current research pangolin. As pangolins are generally nocturnal and shy this involves tracking on foot in the night. The timing of the pangolin activity depends upon the behaviour patterns of the pangolin. As security and stress levels of the pangolin are of the utmost priority there are restrictions on the amount of time spent with the pangolin, talking/making noise, location information and photos. Headlights with red light are preferred but can also be provided.

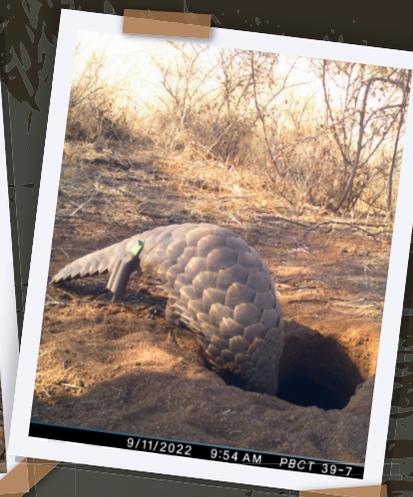
**RHINO MONITORING** based on visual sightings. In future, once the Smart Parks communication system has been installed, the rhinos will also be fitted with GPS sensors for remote monitoring. Rhino activities will involve tracking the rhino on foot.

**“ELUSIVE ANIMALS” MONITORING** involves night drives in search of animals not commonly seen. These include aardvark, aardwolf, African wildcat, honey badgers, bat-eared fox and snakes. We are currently collecting data on sightings of such animals in preparation for future research. Night drives to look for these elusive animals are available for interested guests.

**BROWN HYENA RESEARCH** includes a population census, den and kill site behaviour monitoring by camera traps and VHF and GPS collar monitoring of selected individuals. All brown hyena activities are conducted in an open safari vehicle during the early mornings and evenings and may involve limited walking to camera traps sites. As there is significant interaction between leopards and brown hyena, leopard and hyena activities may be combined.

**EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF DEBUSHING** on soil quality, vegetation and biodiversity will start when funding is available and research partners have been identified.

Other research projects operating at the time, often by visiting researchers. Behind the Scenes guests will have the opportunity to see on-going data collection and receive presentations from the principal investigators of the research if they are present at the time of the visit.

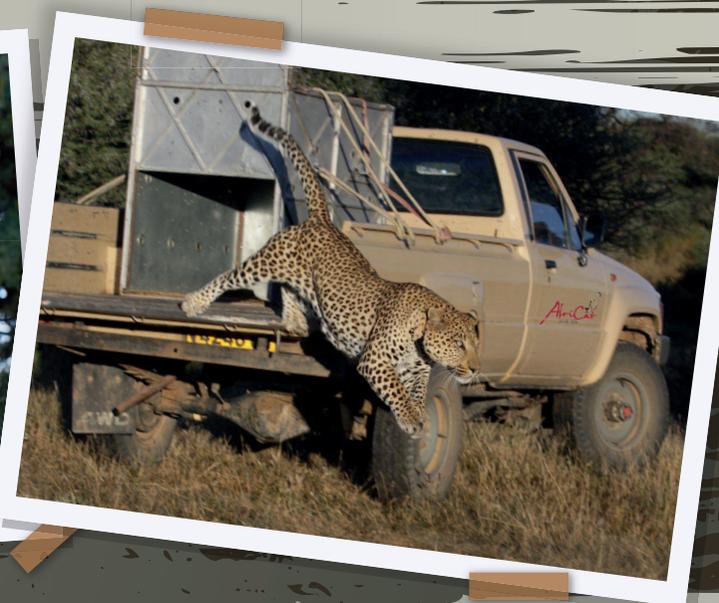


In addition, *Behind the Scenes* guests have the option of meeting the “AfriCat ambassador carnivores” - that are in the care of AfriCat. This activity can be combined with a visit to the AfriCat Information Centre which enables guests to learn about past work of the AfriCat Foundation.

Guided walks and hikes of a variety of levels of difficulty are available, allowing guests to get to know the Okonjima Nature Reserve more intimately.

General game drives and birding drives that focus on other animals and birds in the Reserve are also available.

The programme for *Behind the Scenes* guests is entirely flexible. Upon arrival at Okonjima, the guides will develop the schedule of activities in consultation with the guests, depending on season, interests and AfriCat activities happening at the time.



## Your Specialist AfriCat Guide:

### MS. TAMMY HOTH-HANSSEN

*Behind the Scenes* guests will be accompanied for the duration of their visit by a Specialist AfriCat guide. Ms. Tammy Hoth-Hanssen is a member of the Hanssen family that created Okonjima and established the AfriCat Foundation. Tammy has a broad knowledge of wildlife conservation in Namibia and a long history of working with the AfriCat Foundation. She is also the Director of the Namibian Lion Trust which undertakes lion research, provides community support and human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

## The Okonjima Nature Reserve

is home to the highest density of leopards in Namibia and a healthy population of the elusive brown hyena. The majority of the antelope of Namibia thrive in the undulating plains, mountainous outcrops and riverine thickets that make up the Reserve, including eland, kudu, oryx, wildebeest, zebra, hartebeest, sable, waterbuck, springbok and impala. The Reserve is also home to white rhino, giraffe, wart-hog and numerous smaller species such as black-backed jackal, steenbok, duiker and dik dik. Nocturnal species include bat-eared foxes, small-spotted genet, honey badgers, armadillo and the highly endangered African ground pangolin.

