Northwest Namibia Programme 2025 Impact Report

At our home base in Namibia, the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) runs a comprehensive giraffe conservation programme. One important aspect focuses on monitoring and supporting the long-term conservation of Namibia's desert-dwelling Angolan giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa angolensis*), a subspecies of the Southern giraffe (*G. giraffa*).

A Unique Landscape of Resilience

These Angolan giraffe roam throughout the northern Namib Desert in the country's northwest where we monitor them in an area of over 30,000 km^2. The area stretches from communal conservancy land in the east to the Skeleton Coast National Park bordering the Atlantic Ocean to the west; in the north, it stretches to the Kunene River and the Angolan border and south to the Hoanib River. In this stark landscape of dunes, gravel plains, and dry riverbeds, many wildlife species thrive, including these unique desert-dwelling populations.

Africa's Longest Running Programme GCF's long-term Angolan giraffe conservation monitoring and research programme – the longest-running programme on any species in Africa – offers a unique opportunity to better understand them in this remote region. Through what we learn, we provide invaluable conservation and management lessons for other giraffe populations throughout Africa. Analysis of our data has shown that bi-monthly monitoring trips are sufficient for critical long-term population data collection.



Key 2025 Findings

- **Population Growth:** Angolan giraffe numbers in northwest Namibia continue to increase, with our database currently estimating a population of **505** individuals.
- **New Discoveries:** We are seeing a regular trend of previously unrecorded adults; **20** new adults were identified in 2025 alone, with this number likely to increase further in 2026.
- **Movement Patterns:** While we cannot say for certain where these 'new' animals originate, they appear to be moving in from surrounding, largely unsurveyed areas and rugged mountainous regions rarely accessed by researchers.



Environmental Impacts & Ecosystem Dynamics The 2025 monitoring year was remarkable for its heavy rainfall, which lasted for weeks and caused rivers to flow for months. This created plenty of forage beyond the riverbeds, causing the giraffe to leave their usual habitats to explore new feeding areas. While excellent for the ecosystem, it made monitoring more challenging as they moved into unpredictable locations.

Exceptional rains encouraged them to explore widely, showing long-distance dispersal and an expanding distribution across northwest Namibia—especially in the far north where resources are naturally limited.

These shifts initially gave the impression that giraffe numbers along the Hoanib River had declined, partly due to local African lion populations adapting to hunt them. However, further observations revealed that they had dispersed rather than disappeared, similar for smaller ungulates including springbok and oryx.

The full extent of the impact of the good rains and increased pressure by African lion predation on this Angolan giraffe population is not fully understood, and more work is required.

Landscape-Level Responses

Angolan giraffe responded differently to the rains across various systems:

- **Hoanib River:** They dispersed widely into the mountains and only few individuals were encountered along the dry riverbeds.
- **Hoarusib River:** They showed greater movement between the Gomatub and Hoarusib Rivers, reflecting a landscape-level response to shifting forage availability.
- **Khumib River & Far North:** Most remained within the riverbed, though the area continues to produce new adult identifications, suggesting more individuals exist beyond our regular survey area.



Advancing Conservation Technology Alongside field monitoring, GCF remains committed to advancing technology while prioritising individual giraffe welfare. To better understand space use in the area, we deployed 14 GPS satellite tail tags – some as replacement of old units to continue following the same animal over an extended period of time – bringing the total to 16 active units as part of the Twiga Tracker initiative – the largest GPS study ever undertaken on giraffe.

Twiga Tracker Initiative 2025

The Data of Giants The tracking data revealed incredible variation in movement:

Newly Deployed GPS Units
14

Active GPS Tracking Units
16

Most Data Points for an Individual
3,442
(Bentley)

DISTANCES

Farthest distance travelled
2,784 km
(Sunburst)

Shortest distance travelled
516 km
(Diana Rossicones)

Average distance travelled
1,400 km

Average distance travelled per day
7.5 km

HOME RANGE

Largest Home Range
3,069 km²
(Eli)

Smallest Home Range
26 km²
(Bentley)

Average Home Range
696 km²

Northwest Namibia Programme in Numbers

Total Angolan giraffe population in Northwest Namibia
505

New Adults Added
20

New Calves Observed
8

Average Herd Size
3.1

Individuals Spotted
240

Total Sightings
647

Percentage of Population Spotted
46%

Distance Travelled
16,500 km

Field Days
78

Angolan Giraffe Per River System:

	Females	Males	Juveniles	Total
Hoanib River	92	78	1	171
Hoarusib River	89	90	4	183
Khumib River & Far North	61	87	3	151
Total:	**242**	**255**	**8**	**505**



Angolan Giraffe Per River System (2022-2025)

