



Namibian Desert Elephant Project - “Operation Tracker”

Introduction

The most endangered elephant population in the world is scratching out an existence in the vast western deserts of Namibia. This adventurous project to tranquillise and equip two bull desert elephants with advanced tracking collars is now real. Dr K Leggett PhD, a researcher who has been battling to achieve the necessary permits to attach GPS collars to these elusive and magnificent beasts, has at last been successful. Once attached the collars will provide data of the areas and habits these animals cover, providing unique data which will be used to monitor their progression and sustainability. After last years very successful darting operation we are planning to expand the essential ecological data and movement patterns of these elephants.

The northwest area of Namibia, home to thousands of wild animals, is where the project will take place. The team will use will helicopters, 4x4's, motorbikes, trackers and local knowledge to search for the best two examples of these creatures for the data that Dr Leggett requires. Once they are collared with these state-of-the-art tracking devices information can be collected every three months for the next two years without having to disturb the elephants again. The information will show where the elephants have been every day and this can then be used to protect their roaming grounds, and them.

The elephants of the Hoanib River catchment represent a small but economically and socially significant group in terms of their potential to attract tourism and the problems they cause to communities in northwestern Namibia. The only significant study to be undertaken in this area was conducted during a period of high stress for the elephants. At the time of the study, Namibia was suffering from a drought event that resulted in a high mortality rate amongst domestic stock and wildlife. The stress on the elephants was further compounded by an independence war that facilitated a period of intense poaching activity. The only other study was undertaken at the end of the civil war but it did not carry out an in-depth analysis of the elephants in the northwest.

Continued...

Detailed Itinerary

Day One

Arrive in Windhoek, Namibia. Be met by the Operation Tracker team and flown by Helicopter to the far western part of the area next to the world famous Etosha National Park. The base for Operation Tracker is a 4 star lodge and you will be given some time to settle in. Full board.

Day Two

This will be an information day, with a full introduction of the teams, the aircrew and ground crew that you will be working with. Dr Leggett will give you the team briefing on the project logistics and concept, how important it is and the part it will play for the next ten years. Each individual will play an important part of the operation. Full board.



Day Three – Searching for the Bull Elephant

The aerial search will begin to identify a bull elephant that meets the necessary criteria (maturity, size, health and dominance). The area has to be carefully identified and the positioning of the ground vehicles needs a lot of forward planning. Once we have located the animal we will return and plan every last detail of the darting operation. Full board.

Day Four – Collaring the Elephant

Early rise, everything has to be in position before we can dart. Helicopters will leave to locate the elephant and communicate with the trackers you will remain with the elephants to make the operation as efficient as possible. We dart the first elephant with a very strong sedative and ensure that everything is safe before putting the collar on. The collar is then put on and checked to be transmitting. The animal is then woken up with the anti-dote and is followed by the team for a number of hours to prevent predators preying on it in its drugged state or to stop it wandering into local tribal lands. Trackers are left with the animal to monitor its recuperation. Full board.

Day Five – Checking our Progress

Early out with the helicopters again and the team will be dropped within walking distance of where the position of the elephant. The team will accompany the elephant on foot for the rest of the day making sure that it is fit and relaxed with the collar. At the end of the day the team will be picked up by the helicopter and flown back to the lodge. Full board.

Day Six to Day Nine

The whole procedure for the next four days is the same as the first elephant, searching, darting and tracking to ensure everything is ok and the whole operation is a success. Full board.

Day Ten

Take the helicopters down to the world famous area of Sossusvlei, the most photographed area possibly in the world. A full day at a top quality lodge, a 4x4 safari into the Sand Dunes, a very special area! Full board.

Day Eleven

After seeing sunrise over the 1,000 ft dunes we will depart and fly back to Windhoek for our final night in Namibia, staying at the Kalahari Sands Hotel. Full board.

Continued...

Day Twelve

Depart back to London. Breakfast included.



Includes:	Meals, activities and insurance as detailed in the itinerary
Excludes:	International flights, trips and gratuities, travel insurance
Price per person:	POA
Best time to travel:	September/October
Is it for you?	Start here