



Republic of Namibia

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

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Editors and Journalists

Elephant Bull Translocation from Swakopmund to Na'an Ku Se

The Swakopmund elephant translocated to Na'an Ku Sê recently is observed to be doing well in the first two days in the Nature reserve. Initially the elephant was kept in a one-hectare temporary release pen to ensure he is healthy and released into the nature reserve on the 20th April 2020.

On the 18th April 2020 the bull was successfully darted, loaded and transported to Na'an Ku Sê Wildlife Reserve from the Swakopmund river near the Rossmund Golf Course in a successful collaborative operation funded by Na'an Ku Sê.

The Ministry made the decision to translocate the elephant bull because he posed a risk to human lives as a result of a high number of people moving in and around the river. Furthermore, the elephant was reported frequenting the golf course causing some damages to plants and vegetation; also posing a risk to the lives of the residents. Additionally, the vegetation in river was not suitable for the nutritional needs of the elephant thereby raising health concerns.

Overall, the Ministry appreciates the concerns/ interests demonstrated by members of the public over this elephant and hereby assures that we will do everything possible for the elephant's survival and wellbeing. Our dedication to the protection of our wildlife resources has been demonstrated beyond any doubt by our continued intervention to situations such as this one.

We also want to reject insinuations that the Ministry prioritises wild animals over people's lives given the magnitude of this operation. We wish to clarify that our mandate to protect wildlife is done to sustain our livelihoods as people. Wildlife is a resource that government has committed to protect, so that collectively as a country we all benefit. Because of our wildlife, the country generates revenue from tourists and

tourism businesses that come to explore and experience Namibia. Tourism, also creates employment and income opportunities for our people. MEFT wildlife protection and management demonstrates how much we value the lives and livelihoods of our people.

Contrary to the critics, we believe that this was the right decision given the time and resource constraints that we were faced with. The Nature Reserve where the elephant has sufficient vegetation, water, other elephants and veterinary services in case of any health concerns. The Ministry is optimistic that the elephant will find a happy and peaceful new home here now and in the future. Blood was drawn to scan for any diseases and he was vaccinated against a variety of possible infections as well as anthrax.

The entire operation from darting until offloading took 11 hours and he travelled extremely well under the escort of the Namibian Police. The Ministry would like to appreciate the contribution of Wildlife Vets Namibia for supplying all the translocation equipment, darting and monitoring the elephant to ensure he arrived safely and unharmed. We extend our appreciation to the Namibian Police for controlling the crowds and escorting the truck to ensure there were no unnecessary delays which could compromise the welfare and well-being of the Bull; Cowboys and Swakopmund Hire Sales & Services for the incredible heavy machinery which made this operation successful; The management and staff of Na'an Ku Sê game reserve for funding the operation and offering to keep the elephant. MEFT staff that have guided and looked after the elephant to ensure his safety and wellbeing.

History: On the 24th December 2019 a bull elephant was sighted on the outskirts of Swakopmund residential area. He was very thin and clearly lost. The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), with the help of the Namibian Police, Swakopmund Town Council and a few conservations orientated volunteers, guided him away from the residential area for his and the public's safety. He was given water and food and MEFT started to guide him back towards the Omaruru River. The journey to the Omaruru River took a several days and he was supplied with water and given time to browse daily.

On the 22nd January 2020, MEFT collared him in order to track his movements daily. He settled in an area that had abundant browse and access to water until the 8th February 2020 when he once again walked towards the coast! MEFT quickly responded and he was left to settle in the Swakopmund River until recently when the need translocate him emerged.

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