

Etosha National Park is a national park in northwestern Namibia and one of the largest national parks in Africa.[1] It was proclaimed a game reserve in March 1907 in Ordinance 88 by the Governor of German South West Africa, Friedrich von Lindequist. It was designated as Wildschutzgebiet in 1958, and was elevated to the status of a national park in 1967 by an act of parliament of the Republic of South Africa.[2] It spans an area of 22,270 km² (8,600 sq mi) and gets its name from the large Etosha pan which is almost entirely within the park. With an area of 4,760 km² (1,840 sq mi), the Etosha pan covers 23% of the total area of the national park.[3] The area is home to hundreds of species of mammals, birds and reptiles, including several threatened and endangered species such as the black rhinoceros.

The park is located in the Kunene region[citation needed] and shares boundaries with the regions of Oshana, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa.

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History[edit]

See also: Origins of names of places in Etosha National Park

Discovery by Europeans[edit]

Explorers Charles John Andersson and Francis Galton were the first Europeans to record the existence of the Etosha pan on 29 May 1851.[2] The explorers were traveling with Ovambo copper ore traders when they arrived at Omutjamatunda (now known as Namutoni). The Etosha pan was discovered when they traveled north upon leaving Namutoni. The name Etosha (spelled Etotha in early literature) comes from Oshindonga word meaning "Great White Place" referring to the Etosha pan. The Hai//om called the pan Khubus which means "totally bare, white place with lots of dust".[citation needed] The pan

is also known as Chums, which refers to the noise made by a person's feet when walking on the clay of the pan.

People[edit]

Areas north of the Etosha pan were inhabited by Ovambo people, while various Otjiherero-speaking groups lived immediately outside the current park boundaries. The areas inside the park close to the Etosha pan had Khoisan-speaking Hai//om people.

When the Etosha pan was first discovered, the Hai//om people recognized the Ovambo chief at Ondonga but the Hereros did not.[4] The Hai||om were forcibly removed from the park in the 1954, ending their hunter-gatherer lifestyle to become landless farm laborers.[5] The Hai||om have had a recognized Traditional Authority since 2004 which helps facilitate communications between the community and the government. The government of Namibia acknowledges the park to be the home of Hai||om people and has plans to resettle displaced families on farms adjacent to the national park. Since 2007 the Government has acquired six farms directly south of the Gobaub depression in Etosha National Park. A number of families have settled on these farms under the leadership of Chief David Khamuxab, Paramount Chief of the Hai||om.

European settlers[edit]

In 1885, entrepreneur William Worthington Jordan bought a huge tract of land from Ovambo chief Kambonde. The land spanned nearly 170 kilometres (110 mi) from Okaukuejo in the west to Fischer's Pan in the east. The price for the land was £300 sterling, paid for by 25 firearms, one salted horse and a cask of brandy.[4] Dorstland Trekkers first traveled through the park between 1876 and 1879 on their way to Angola. The trekkers returned in 1885 and settled on 2,500-hectare (6,200-acre) farms given to them at no charge by Jordan. The trekkers named the area Upingtonia after the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. The settlement had to be abandoned in 1886 after clashes with the Hai||om[4] and defeat by Chief Nehale Mpingana.[6]

German South-West Africa[edit]

See also: German South-West Africa

The German Reich ordered troops to occupy the Okaukuejo, Namutoni and Sesfontein in 1886 in order to kill migrating wildlife to stop spread of rinderpest to cattle. A fort was built by the German cavalry in 1889 at the site of the Namutoni spring. On 28 January 1904, 500 men under Nehale Mpingana attacked Imperial Germany's Schutztruppe at Fort Namutoni and completely destroyed it, driving out the colonial forces and taking over their horses and cattle.[6] The fort was rebuilt and troops stationed once again when the area was declared a game reserve in 1907; Lieutenant Adolf Fischer of Fort Namutoni then became its first "game warden".

Boundary[edit]

The present-day Etosha National Park has had many major and minor boundary changes since its inception in 1907. The major boundary changes since 1907 were because of Ordinance 18 of 1958 and Ordinance 21 of 1970.[2]

When the Etosha area was proclaimed as "Game Reserve 2" by Ordinance 88 of 1907, the park stretched from the mouths of the Cunene River and Hoarusib River on the Skeleton Coast to Namutoni in the east. The original area was estimated to be 99,526 square

kilometres (38,427 sq mi), an estimate that has been corrected to about 80,000 square kilometres (31,000 sq mi).[2] Ordinance 18 of 1958 changed the western park boundaries to exclude the area between the Cunene river and the Hoarusib river and instead include the area between Hoanib river and Uchab river, thus reducing the park's area to 55,000 square kilometres (21,000 sq mi). The Odendaal Commission's (1963) decision resulted in the demarcation of the present-day park boundary in 1970.

Etosha Ecological Institute[edit]

Main article: Etosha Ecological Institute

The Etosha Ecological Institute was formally opened on 1 April 1974 by Adolf Brinkmann of the South-West African Administration.[2] The institute is responsible for all management-related research in the park. Classification of vegetation, population and ecological studies on wildebeest, elephants and lions, and studies on anthrax were among the first major topics to be investigated.[2] The EEI has collaborations with researchers from universities in Namibia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, South Africa, Australia, Norway and Israel.

Geography[edit]

Etosha Pan[edit]

Main article: Etosha pan

The salt pans are the most noticeable geological features in the national park. The main depression covers an area of about 5,000 square kilometres (1,900 sq mi), and is roughly 130 km (81 mi) long and as wide as 50 km (31 mi) places. The hypersaline conditions of the pan limit the species that can permanently inhabit the pan itself; occurrences of extremophile micro-organisms are present, which species can tolerate the hypersaline conditions.[7] The salt pan is usually dry, but fills with water briefly in the summer, when it attracts pelicans and flamingos in particular. In the dry season, winds blowing across the salt pan pick up saline dust and carry it across the country and out over the southern Atlantic. This salt enrichment provides minerals to the soil downwind of the pan on which some wildlife depends, though the salinity also creates challenges to farming. The Etosha Pan was one of several sites throughout southern Africa in the Southern African Regional Science Initiative (SAFARI 2000). Using satellites, aircraft, and ground-based data from sites such as Etosha, partners in this program collected a wide variety of data on aerosols, land cover, and other characteristics of the land and atmosphere to study and understand the interactions between people and the natural environment.

Dolomite Hills[edit]

The dolomite hills on the southern border of the park near the Andersson entrance gate are called Ondundozonananandana, meaning the place where young boy herding cattle went to never return, probably implying a high density of predators like leopards in the hills, giving the mountains its English name of Leopard Hills.[2] The Halali area is also home to dolomite hills within the park, with one hill inside the camp and the nearby Twee Koppies. Western Etosha is also dominated by dolomite hills which is the only place in the park that has mountain zebra.

Climate[edit]

The Etosha National Park has a savanna desert climate. The annual mean average

temperature is 24 °C (75 °F). In winter, the mean nighttime lows are around 10 °C (50 °F), while in summer temperatures often hover around 40 °C (104 °F). As it is a desert, there is a large variation between day and night. Rain almost never falls in the winter.

hide

Climate data for Etosha Safari Lodge, Namibia (2010–2017 averages)

Month Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Year

Record high °C (°F) 41.2

(106.2) 40.2

(104.4) 38.3

(100.9) 36.9

(98.4) 34.1

(93.4) 31.9

(89.4) 32.3

(90.1) 36.3

(97.3) 39.2

(102.6) 40.9

(105.6) 40.1

(104.2) 41.2

(106.2) 41.2

(106.2)

Average high °C (°F) 34.3

(93.7) 33.5

(92.3) 31.7

(89.1) 31.0

(87.8) 29.5

(85.1) 27.4

(81.3) 27.2

(81.0) 30.9

(87.6) 35.0

(95.0) 37.2

(99.0) 35.5

(95.9) 34.4

(93.9) 37.2

(99.0)

Daily mean °C (°F) 25.5

(77.9) 25.7

(78.3) 24.0

(75.2) 23.2

(73.8) 21.4

(70.5) 18.6

(65.5) 18.0

(64.4) 21.3

(70.3) 25.3

(77.5) 27.5

(81.5) 26.6

(79.9) 36.0

(96.8) 24.4

(75.9)

Average low °C (°F) 18.4

(65.1) 19.5

(67.1) 18.0

(64.4) 16.5

(61.7) 13.9

(57.0) 10.3

(50.5) 9.6

(49.3) 12.1

(53.8) 15.8

(60.4) 18.0

(64.4) 18.3

(64.9) 18.8

(65.8) 9.6

(49.3)

Record low °C (°F) 10.2

(50.4) 14.3

(57.7) 10.2

(50.4) 9.8

(49.6) 8.3

(46.9) -0.2

(31.6) 2.6

(36.7) 1.6

(34.9) 2.8

(37.0) 11.2

(52.2) 10.9

(51.6) 11.6

(52.9) -0.2

(31.6)

Average precipitation mm (inches) 129.5

(5.10) 74.9

(2.95) 78.2

(3.08) 28.8

(1.13) 0

(0) 0

(0) 0

(0) 0

(0) 0.2

(0.01) 2.1

(0.08) 25.2

(0.99) 79

(3.1) 418

(16.5)

Source: [8]

Vegetation types[edit]

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See also: Angolan mopane woodlands and Zambezian and mopane woodlands

In most places in the park, the pans are devoid of vegetation with the exception of halophytic *Sporobolus salsus*, a protein-rich grass that is eaten by grazers like blue wildebeest and springbok. The areas around the Etosha pan also have other halophytic vegetation including grasses like *Sporobolus spicatus* and *Odysea paucinervis*, as well as shrubs like *Suaeda articulata*. Most of the park is savanna woodlands except for areas close to the pan. Mopane is the most common tree, estimated to be around 80% of all trees in the park.[9] The sandveld of north-eastern corner of Etosha is dominated by acacia and *Terminalia* trees. Tamboti trees characterize the woodlands south of the sandveld. Dwarf shrub savanna occurs areas close to the pan and is home to several small shrubs including a halophytic succulent *Salsola etoshensis*. Thorn bush savanna occurs close to the pan on limestone and alkaline soils and is dominated by acacia species such as *Acacia nebrownii*, *Acacia luederitzii*, *Acacia mellifera*, *Acacia hebeclada* and *Acacia tortilis*. Grasslands in the park are mainly around the Etosha pan where the soil is sandy. Depending on the soil and the effects of the pan, grasslands could be dominated by one of the *Eragrostis*, *Sporobolus*, *Monelytrum*, *Odysea* or *Enneapogon* species.

Fauna[edit]

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The park has about 114 mammal species, 340 bird species, 110 reptile species, 16 amphibian species and 1 species of fish (up to 49 species of fish during floods).[10][11]

History[edit]

By 1881, large game mammals like elephants, rhinoceroses and lions had been nearly exterminated in the region.[2] The proclamation of the game reserve helped some of the animals recover, but some species like buffalo and wild dogs have been extinct since the middle of the 20th century. A writer from Otjiwarango was appointed game warden in 1951, and he considered the grasslands to be severely overgrazed. A bone meal plant was constructed near Rietfontein, and culling of zebras and wildebeests began in 1952. Official records indicate 293 zebras and 122 wildebeest were processed at the plant, but conservationists claimed thousands had been culled and successfully forced the plant's closure during the same year. The drought that began in the year 1980 resulted in the largest capture and culling operation in the history of the park.[2] 2235 mountain zebras and 450 plains zebras were captured, culled or sold. 525 elephants were culled and

processed at a temporary abattoir near Olifantsrus.

Since 2005, the protected area is considered part of a Lion Conservation Unit.[12]

Mammals[edit]

Commonly seen mammals in the park, past and present, are listed in the table below

Mammal Status Additional Information

African bush elephant common Etosha's elephants belong to the group of elephants in northwestern Namibia and southern Angola. They are the tallest elephants in Africa, but mineral deficiencies mean that they have very short tusks.[13]

Southern white rhinoceros rare Reintroduced recently after a long absence[14]

South-western black rhinoceros not disclosed publicly Odendaal Commission's plan in 1963 severely reduced the habitat of the rhinoceros as most of their preferred habitat fell outside the park.[15] Relocation programs have existed since then to increase the population of rhinos within the protected boundaries of the park.

Cape buffalo extinct The last known record of buffalo in the park is from an observation of a young bull killed by lions on the Andoni plains in the 1950s.

Angolan giraffe common A 2009 genetic study on this subspecies suggests that the northern Namib Desert and Etosha National Park populations form a separate subspecies.[16]

Lion common

Leopard common

Cheetah uncommon

Serval rare

Caracal common

Southern African wildcat common

Black-footed cat very rare

Black-backed jackal very common

Bat-eared fox common

Cape fox common

Cape wild dog extinct

Brown hyena common

Spotted hyena common

Aardwolf common

Meerkat common

Banded mongoose common

Yellow mongoose common

Slender mongoose common

Dwarf mongoose uncommon

Common genet common

Common warthog common

Scrub hare common

Springhare common

African ground squirrel very common

Honey badger common

Aardvark common

Crested porcupine common
Ground pangolin (*Manis temminckii*) uncommon
Plains zebra very common
Mountain zebra locally common Seen only in western Etosha
Springbok very common
Black-faced impala common
Gemsbok common
Common duiker uncommon
Damara dik-dik common
Steenbok common
Red hartebeest common
Blue wildebeest common
Common eland uncommon
Greater kudu common

Birds[edit]

This overview is only one indication of the diversity of birds in the park and is not a complete list.

South African ostrich

Vultures

Lappet-faced vulture

White-backed vulture

Eagles

Martial eagle

Tawny eagle

Bateleur

Booted eagle

Circaetus eagles

Verreaux's eagle

Secretarybird

Other hawks

African harrier-hawk

Pale chanting goshawk

Shikra

Kites

Yellow-billed kite

Black-winged kite

Falcons

Lanner falcon

Greater kestrel

Lesser kestrel

Pygmy falcon

Red-necked falcon

Peregrine falcon[17]

Red-footed falcon
Amur falcon
Owls
Giant eagle owl
Barn owl
African scops owl
Storks
Abdim's stork
Marabou stork
White stork
Blue crane
White pelican
Flamingos
Lesser flamingo
Greater flamingo
Waterfowl
Red-billed teal
Egyptian goose
Knob-billed duck
Cape teal
Galliformes
Helmeted guineafowl
Red-billed spurfowl
Coursers and pratincoles
Temminck's courser
Double-banded courser
Three-banded courser
Black-winged pratincole
Waders
Spotted thick-knee
Three-banded plover
Crowned lapwing
Blacksmith lapwing
Rollers
Lilac-breasted roller
Purple roller
Hoopoe
Hornbills
Monteiro's hornbill
Southern yellow-billed hornbill
African grey hornbill
Crows
Pied crow

Cape crow
Sandgrouse
Namaqua sandgrouse
Double-banded sandgrouse
Pigeons and doves
Namaqua dove
Emerald-spotted wood dove
African collared dove
Laughing dove
Other passerines
Red-billed quelea
Southern masked weaver
Lesser masked weaver
Sociable weaver
Cape sparrow
Cape starling
Herero chat
Bustards
Kori bustard
Northern black korhaan
Rüppell's korhaan
Red-crested korhaan
Shrikes and Bushshrikes
Red-backed Shrike
Lesser Grey Shrike
Southern white-crowned shrike[17]
Magpie Shrike
Crimson-breasted Shrike
Grey-headed Bushshrike
Gorgeous Bushshrike
Orange-breasted Bushshrike
Waxbills
Violet-eared Waxbill[17]
Black-faced Waxbill
Blue Waxbill
Orange-breasted Waxbill
Common Waxbill
Bulbuls
African Red-eyed Bulbul[17]
Dark-capped Bulbul
Larks
Dusky Lark
Sabota Lark

Rufous-naped Lark
Monotonous Lark
Eastern Clapper Lark
Spike-heeled Lark
Red-capped Lark
Flappet Lark
Fawn-coloured Lark
Herons
Grey heron
Cattle egret
See also[edit]
Okonjima