

BotswanaWild Bird Trust



EDUCATORS CONSERVATION WORKSHOP REPORT

Familiarization of Educators to Wilderness
January 2019



MISSION STATEMENT

“Sensitizing educators of Etsha, to the natural and cultural heritage of the Okavango Delta, through practical interactions, in order to appreciate and integrate their contacts with nature into their academic routines/curriculums”

Background

The Botswana Wild Bird Trust recently hosted its first week-end workshop for educators. Mopiri Camp in the Okavango Delta graciously hosted the workshop over the weekend of 24-25 November 2018. The aim of these workshops is to aid the local community based educators with the teaching of nature and conservation to the school children of various ages. It can be adapted to include more relevant practical scientific workshops.

The villages of Etsha 1-13 lie along the western side of the Okavango Delta and are the closest communities to our Botswana Wild Bird Trust (BWBT) research camp: the Mopiri Research Station. Schools in the North-Western district of Botswana, which are divided into the Ngamiland and Okavango sub-districts, have historically performed poorly in terms of academic results. This workshop has been the first step in improving the results through empowering these teachers.

Through the use of science and research by the BWBT and its National Geographic Okavango Wilderness Project (NGOWP) team, as well as the traditional and indigenous knowledge of the people of the Delta, we have been able to facilitate knowledge sharing with the educators, in order that they better appreciate and understand the precious environment that their students will one day be custodians of.

The workshop offered a unique experiential knowledge for nine(9) educators who came in from Etsha 6 and Etsha 7 primary schools, as well as Etsha Junior Secondary school and facilitated specialised knowledge transfer to teachers which will aid in the improved overall results of their students. The practical experience the workshop has given these educators is a way of thinking “outside of the box”, in order to ensure the understanding of all of their students. There aren’t many organizations in the area who work specifically with teachers, regarding the enhancement of conservation education.

The Weekend Workshop

Mopiri Camp Guide “Chilli B” and the BWBT’s very own Water Sethabosha hosted the group. This hands on connection allowed the guides an opportunity to share their guiding knowledge, as well as their indigenous knowledge of how tibe such as the BeYei, were able to survive in the Okavango Delta for as long as they have. This transfer of information will be sure to bring these teacher closer to their students, when referring to culture in Social Studies and nature in Environmental and Science Lessons.

Upon arrival in camp each teacher was handed:

- A Shweshwe covered diary(Handmade by Koketso)

- Species List- To be filled out with Identifications and characteristics of Birds, Mammals and Reptiles/Amphibians
- NGOWP Cap

Various practical sessions were held including:

1. NATURE WALK (Research Camp Island) – Studied the formation of termite mounds, medicinal purposes of trees and roots, importance of having a balance in nature;
2. MOTOR BOAT EXCURSION – Identifying as many birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians that they can see on the way to the Mokoro Island; and
3. MOKORO EXCURSION (Mopiri Camp Mokoro Island) – Experienced the tranquility of the Okavango Delta from the perspective of being on a mokoro with a professional Mokoro Guide. Identifying the plant life, watching elephants and hippo, and learning from the Mokoro guides the indigenous knowledge of the way of life in the Delta.

The workshop covered various topics such as:

- Formation of the delta- from source to sand;
- Conservation issues and their impacts;
- NGOWP Expedition Experiences;
- Basic bush knowledge which will include identification of keystone species and the roles they play in the ecosystem;
- Bush safety practices;
- Storytelling that imparts local knowledge.

Overall, the inaugural educators' conservation workshop was successfully conducted in close co-operation with Mopiri camp.



Findings

The nine educators were handed a very brief survey to gain a better understanding of their levels of wildlife interaction, and below are the results of the given survey:

- The gender make-up of the teachers was 7 female and 2 male.
- 66% of the participants have had a wildlife experience within the Etsha community, where their common animal encounters were with:
 - Elephants
 - Hippos
 - Zebra
- Those who have been able to see these animals expressed excitement and happiness.
- A third of the educators had admitted that their students DO NOT go on nature excursions.
- Only one of the participating teachers has had a mokoro experience
- More than half of the group have experienced a motor boat ride and a professionally guided nature walk.



The initial success of these workshops and feedback from the educators, has resulted in the following and recommendations for future workshops:

- Use the NGOWP materials, such as videos, images, maps, tech equipment, data etc. to better connect the teachers with the fact that the Okavango Delta is a shared natural resource as well as empower them to confidently guide their students in the conservation, natural resource management and their indigenous knowledge;
- Conduct in-house workshops in the school for the teachers and their counter-parts at the school to educate them on the research efforts of the NGOWP team, and encourage question sessions;
- Continue to create opportunities for teachers to interact with nature and provide them the tools to help produce curious students.

A few of the teachers had their own suggestions when asked the questions; *“Describe the most effective way you think the BWBT team could help share the research and expedition experience with educators in your school?”*

- BWBT should form clubs to protect and sensitize other learners on bird conservation. More posters should be displayed, and bill boards erected in our schools showing bird sanctuaries;
- Assisting with access to magazines and videos;
- Continue to engage educators through practical experiences such as boating and walks as that will involve educators practically and visually, because they learn easily when they see, touch, feel and hear;
- To have presentations about wild animals in the school and game viewing activities with professional guides;
- Conducting educational seminars and taking educators on nature excursions.



Going Forward

Future workshops will allow the teachers in the area to better appreciate the geographical, environmental and social aspects of the communities that they serve. Apart from the adventure, this workshop aimed to evoke a sense of creativity and create a practical curiosity within the teachers that will be imparted onto their learners.

The practical experience and knowledge imparted onto these teacher and with future workshops, the BWBT aims to make the learning experience easier for the students to better understand what lessons are being taught.

The Educators Conservation Expeditions intends to continue to grow each year by:

- Stimulating dialogue among the teachers in the area, so that they are able to identify common challenge and possible support each other in terms of sharing knowledge and experience;
- Engaging the Management of the surrounding schools, to also understand the importance of these workshops and there for facilitate and support the teachers' development;
- Facilitating opportunities for our scientific research and to be available for the teachers to use as supporting Aids for their Science, Environmental and conservation lessons.

All of these efforts, will require a great amount of practical knowledge of nature, which we hope will result in the students gaining a far better understanding of the environment around them as well as conservation issues, which will hopefully reflect both academically and socially.



The workshop was undertaken by the BWBT Country Director Koketso Mookodi, as well as Water Setlabosha, with help from the BWBT team and Mopiri Camp. The workshops are designed to be low impact, camping trips which offer a new experience to teachers. We look forward to undertaking more workshops in 2019.

Kind Regards

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(Photos in this report were taken by Edwin Morolong, a Maun based photographer)