



2025

Annual Report

Knyphausen Foundation for Sustainability, Nature Conservation and Education

The non-profit Knyphausen Foundation for Sustainability, Nature Conservation and Education, founded at the end of 2015 and based in Lütetsburg in Lower Saxony, is involved in educational work for children and young people on the subjects of nature conservation and sustainability in Botswana.



Purpose of the Foundation:

The aim of the Knyphausen Foundation is to sensitize and inspire children and young people for their environment. The aim is to raise children's awareness of the importance of nature and encourage them to take responsibility for themselves and their environment.

Another focus of the foundation are educational measures and trainings for young adults Safari Guides as multipliers to improve the educational standard in the region, to found and establish new professions in the field of environmental protection and education as well as to strengthen local partners.

Foundation founder:



Since a trip to Botswana in 2012, Theda Gräfin Knyphausen has not let go of the beauty of the country.

She first started working for a Mobil Safari operator and in 2015 founded the Knyphausen Foundation.

Of every Safari booking received, 3% is forwarded to the Knyphausen Foundation.

Theda Gräfin Knyphausen develops foundation projects in cooperation with local partners and supervises the work directly on site.

She lives and works in Maun/Botswana.

„I would like to support the children and young people in Botswana in appreciating and preserving the environment that surrounds them. I focus above all on education and training to bring about lasting changes in the thinking and behaviour of children and young people“.

Legal and organisational conditions:

The Knyphausen Foundation is a private, legally independent foundation.

The foundation serves purposes of the promotion of youth and old people's welfare, the promotion of purposes of education and vocational training including student assistance, the promotion of purposes of nature conservation, landscape conservation and environmental protection, the promotion of purposes of animal welfare as well as the promotion of purposes of development cooperation. It was established in Lütetsburg in 2015 in accordance with the Foundation Act of the State of Lower Saxony.

Organs:

The organs of the Foundation are the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees.

Board of Directors:

Theda Gräfin Knyphausen (Chairwoman)

Benedikt von Kontz

Foundation council:

Tido Graf Knyphausen

Alvo Graf Knyphausen

Management:

Theda Gräfin Knyphausen

Benedikt von Kontz

Processing:

Jasmin Kolta

Tax recognition:

The Knyphausen Foundation is a non-profit corporation and is exempt from corporation and trade tax in accordance with the exemption notice of the tax office Norden.

Funding priorities:

The aim is to create sustainable structures for environmental education in Maun in order to provide children and young people in the region with the necessary technical, social and design skills in the fields of environmental protection and sustainability, which will enable them to participate in shaping the future, according to the motto: "People only protect what they know and appreciate".

Partner countries:

In 2025, the Knyphausen Foundation will be supporting projects exclusively in Botswana. Joint projects and collaborations with partners in other African countries such as Namibia, South Africa and Uganda are planned for the future.

Target groups:

The direct target group is children and young people from the Maun region, most of whom come from socially disadvantaged families.

The extended target group are the local partner organisations with whom one works in the individual projects on site. These are structurally strengthened and are helped to develop independently.

The indirect target group includes the parents and teachers of the participants in the Junior Ranger Programme. The Knyphausen Foundation works closely with them and the teachers take up environmental protection topics of the project and integrate them into their lessons. This benefits the pupils who do not participate in the foundation's program. Workshops on sustainable nutrition and nature conservation are now offered for the parents of the Junior Rangers.

Cooperation structures:

The Knyphausen Foundation operates locally in Botswana. The founder of the foundation, Theda Gräfin Knyphausen, is in close contact with local partner organisations, training institutes, schools, teachers and education officers.

Due to the personal contact with all actors, it is possible to react quickly and directly to the needs of the target group and to adapt the projects accordingly.

Partner organisations:

The Knyphausen Foundation and the Dutch foundation StartUp4Kids Botswana, based in Maun, have been working closely together since 2020. Since then, they have been jointly implementing various environmental protection and educational programs for children and young people, such as "Happy Green Botswana", and offering further training and workshops for young trainers who run the Junior Ranger program with the children and young people. The young Junior Ranger trainers are largely responsible for the implementation of the extracurricular educational units and the organization of the camps. The team consists of a project coordinator who is supported by 16 local volunteers for certain activities.

The Knyphausen Foundation has been providing financial support to the local association Re Jala Peo since 2024. This secures the project positions of the trainers of the environmental protection projects and the Junior Ranger program financially:

- One full-time position as a supervisor, starting in July 2024
- One part-time position as a coordinator in the Community/Neighborhood division
- One part-time position as a coordinator in the Trees and Gardens division
- One part-time position as a coordinator in the Logistics division
- One part-time position as an educational materials developer
- Compensation for a social media manager on a fee basis
- Project-based pay for senior trainers (11 trainers)

The Knyphausen Foundation now has a long-standing partnership with the local organization Elephants for Africa, with which it offers educational units on the topic of “Biodiversity and elephant conservation” in camps lasting several days for junior rangers. There is also a cooperation with the local NGO Cheetah Conservation Botswana on the topic of “Animal welfare of endangered species”. The Knyphausen Foundation has access to educational material from the NGO and experts from CCB give talks at the environmental protection conference and in the Junior Rangers' extracurricular educational units.

Together with the local NGO Woman against Rape, the Knyphausen Foundation offers workshops on “Children's rights and child protection” for the Junior Ranger trainers.

Network & Partnership:

The Knyphausen Foundation is networked with the staff of EUROPARC Deutschland e.V., the umbrella organization of Germany's National Natural Landscapes, Naturwacht Brandenburg and the Bavarian Forest and Black Forest National Parks, which have been organizing and implementing extracurricular programmes with children and young people on environmental education topics since 2008.

Since 2025, we have been in contact with several Junior Ranger groups at the Wadden Sea National Park. This has led to an exchange facilitated by video messages from children and teenagers in both countries.

The scholarship holders complete their training as professional safari guides with local trainer Okwa Sarefo from Wild Expedition, who trained with EcoTraining in previous years. He and the Knyphausen Foundation have been working together for a long time. A four-week preparatory course to become a safari guide was developed together and held in 2023, as well as the train-the-trainer course developed especially for the young trainers of the Knyphausen Foundation, which has already taken place several times. The challenging theoretical and practical lessons take place at various wilderness camps.

The Knyphausen Foundation has a regular exchange with the teachers of the local schools, who take part in the weekly environmental and nature conservation education units as well as training courses on waste separation, recycling and waste avoidance as well as sustainable vegetable cultivation and school gardens (Waste Management and Sustainable Nutrition project). The aim is to integrate further environmental protection topics into the curriculum in the future.

The Knyphausen Foundation is also closely networked with local NGOs in the areas of environmental and animal protection, human rights and education.

Projects 2025

1. YOUTH WELFARE:

Project "Junior Ranger Program" all year 2025

Together with young local trainers, the foundation established a Junior Ranger program for children and young people at the beginning of 2017.

This takes place on a regular weekly basis at the participating schools in Maun (currently 14) and an orphanage. Most of the participating children and young people (over 250 participants) experience the local fauna and flora for the first time in their lives and deal intensively with animal and environmental protection issues.

The Knyphausen Foundation organizes camps lasting several days in the national parks and game reserves in Botswana, where the Junior Rangers experience community in nature and learn to understand the knowledge imparted in the programme.

Participation in the program is free of charge, so that it is also possible for children from socially disadvantaged families.

All extracurricular educational events and camps as part of the Junior Ranger programme are organized and carried out in cooperation with young local trainers.

Junior Ranger Program from February 2025

After a longer holiday break, the Junior Ranger programme starts again.

The trainers visit the partner schools once a week, the children come together in small groups and go through the topics of "biodiversity, animal welfare, waste avoidance, recycling and native plants together.

The school gardens established in 2021 are regularly maintained again and vegetables are newly planted. The new theme "Growing organically produced vegetables and sustainable nutrition" has become an integral part of the programme.

Vegetable growing project starts, all year 2025

The project "Sustainable Nutrition for Children, Youth and Young Adults" has been an ongoing project of the Junior Ranger Programme since its start in April 2021.

The project was financially supported by the Lower Saxony Bingo Environmental Foundation until the end of 2021. As a start-up aid, five school gardens with vegetable beds and fruit trees could be established at the primary schools Thito, Andrew Willow, Gxhabara, Thamalakane and Mathiba.

In 2023, four more gardens were created at the Moremi, Botswelero & Matlola primary schools and the Bana Ba Letsatsi orphanage.

In 2024, another garden was created at the Letsholathebe elementary school and the existing gardens were expanded further.

From the very beginning, the children learn everything about sowing seeds, the right soil, marking out beds and watering them, how to use tools for gardening, the importance of insects for plants and pollination, and how to grow tree seedlings in pots. The theoretical educational units complement the practical work in the gardens. In addition, the trainers teach the Junior Rangers

how to process the vegetables and fruit they have grown themselves for a balanced diet. The Junior Rangers come together in small groups once a week for the extracurricular educational sessions with their trainers.

All Junior Rangers are trained to implement what they have learned on their own property at home with as little effort as possible and are supported by older participants of the project as well as the staff of the association.

The harvested vegetables and fruits are distributed to the children of the programme and their families.

Since March 2025, the Knyphausen Foundation has hired young coach Letso Ngwanaletsatsi for a part-time position as school garden coordinator in order to establish the project more professionally within the program.

Our goal is to expand the project and establish school gardens at all schools participating in the Junior Ranger programme. We hope that as many children and young people in the region as possible will learn to grow vegetables for their own consumption and to process them for a balanced diet.

Biodiversity and animal welfare project, all year 2025

The "Biodiversity and animal welfare" project, which was funded from July 2021 to June 2022 with financial support from the Schmitz Foundations, has become an integral part of the Junior Ranger programme.

The trainers deal with the complex topic of biodiversity and species conservation with the children every week in the educational units.

The young conservationists can look forward to many exciting excursions and camps lasting several days, during which experts from the fields of elephant and cheetah conservation, for example, give talks.

Exchange with German Junior Rangers, all year 2025

Since 2025, we have been in contact with several Junior Ranger groups from the Wadden Sea National Park. This has led to an exchange facilitated by video messages from children and teenagers in both countries.

Video meetings are planned for the future, during which the Junior Rangers can discuss current topics.

Yoga for our Junior Rangers, year-round 2025

The yoga sessions for the Junior Rangers are an integral part of the Junior Ranger program. The children love the variety, and the young instructors regularly incorporate the various poses, meditation exercises, and breathing exercises into the environmental education lessons, thereby making the theory more engaging.

We are convinced that yoga is a wonderful tool for children and teens, teaching them to be mindful of their own bodies and minds as well as the environment. Our instructors learn from a yoga teacher in Maun how to introduce yoga to children in a playful way. We've also created yoga cards and a small booklet featuring children's asanas, which all our participants receive for free.

For most children in Botswana, there are no after-school programs or opportunities to learn yoga privately.

World Ranger Day, 31.07.2025

Around the world, rangers play a very important role in conservation as they perform a variety of tasks to preserve nature, such as monitoring protected areas, observing wildlife, preventing poaching, involving local communities in conservation, helping communities resolve human-wildlife conflicts and supporting tourism. The latter are particularly important issues in Botswana. World Ranger Day is celebrated every year on 31 July to thank rangers worldwide and to recognise the valuable work they do to protect nature. The day also commemorates rangers who have been killed or injured in the course of their work - which can sometimes be dangerous. This year, the Junior Rangers Botswana are raising awareness about the importance of preserving the environment for their own future with a tree planting campaign.

We are proud of our young rangers, who are committed to their work and support them in their shared vision of a healthy and clean world worth living in.

In a small video message, the Botswana Junior Rangers greet the young rangers from Germany on this special day.

Big harvest in the school gardens, August 2025

In the school garden of Ghxabara Primary School in Maun, the Junior Rangers were able to harvest a lot of vegetables this week. The harvest was so plentiful that it could be generously distributed to the pupils and teachers. The Junior Rangers are very proud to support their families with their harvest.

The children and young people have now become really good gardeners! Bon appétit!

Junior Ranger in Khwai, August 2025

The Junior Ranger program in Khwai, a village in northwestern Botswana, already has 60 participants! The children and young people from the primary school were recently visited by Theda Countess Knyphausen and a few of her Consafarity guests during a short stopover. The young rangers are very committed and showed the visitors with great enthusiasm what they have already learned about environmental protection and biodiversity.

The Junior Ranger Program in Khwai is financially supported by the African Bush Camp Foundation. We are happy that the program is now also being implemented regularly outside of Maun and hope that other schools in Botswana will become part of the environmental protection project.

Hydroponics System for School Gardens, October 2025

We are thrilled to share some great news with you from our Junior Ranger school gardens! Spring in Maun is in full bloom, and our ten Junior Ranger school gardens are a hive of activity: seeds are being sown, plants are being planted, and crops are being harvested. Our school garden coordinator, Letso, supports the Junior Rangers and, together with them and their instructors, develops strategies to overcome the major challenges posed by soil conditions and summer water shortages in order to practice sustainable agriculture.

The Junior Rangers at Sedie Elementary School, in particular, are very motivated this season. They have doubled the cultivation area of their school garden and have even managed to grow vegetable varieties that require more care.

The bountiful harvest allowed the children to take vegetables home and even sell some to neighbors. These successes fill the young gardeners with pride, and they are already thinking about how they can expand their garden even further next season.

We are thrilled by this enthusiasm and recognize the children's exceptional achievements. In Botswana, soil quality is often suboptimal due to the high sand content, and limited water resources pose a challenge throughout the year. In fact, most of the vegetables and fruit are imported from South Africa.

Our Junior Rangers want to prove that sustainable vegetable farming is possible.

In the school garden at Botswelelo Elementary School, where previous harvests have not been optimal, Letso has therefore developed a special solution. Together with the trainers, a hydroponic system was installed. This specialized system is designed for over 400 plants and offers a soil-independent cultivation method that uses nutrient-rich water to optimize plant growth. By introducing the hydroponic system, we are setting an example in Maun for innovative farming solutions in times of water scarcity and poor soil quality.

We are also planning to install such a hydroponic system at the Andrew Wellio and Thito Junior Ranger elementary schools, as well as in the garden of the Bana Ba Letsatsi children's home.

Large Junior Ranger Camp, December 2025

At the beginning of December, the annual Junior Ranger Camp took place again for over 200 children and young people. Over a period of two weeks, groups of 20 children each traveled into the bush for two days with their trainers and teachers, experiencing exciting game drives and encounters with wild animals. In addition to conservation and respect for the wilderness, this year's special focus was on "migratory birds and their habitats."

The Junior Rangers were thrilled and had a great time.

Our special thanks go to Okwa Sarefo (Okavango Walking Safaris), Pat Malatsi (Okavango Bushlife Academy) and their wonderful team, as well as to BK and Ednah, who started as a Junior Ranger a few years ago and later successfully completed her training as a professional safari guide with a scholarship from the Knyphausen Foundation. Now she accompanies the young Junior Rangers into the bush and is a shining example for the children.

With unforgettable impressions, the Junior Rangers have now gone on their big vacation. We would like to share a few of them with you.

2. EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL TRAINING:

Projects further education

5 new scholarship holders, March 2025

We start the new year with good news!

Five young women (Bontle, Direlang, Ednah, Nancy & Ndabokas) are currently doing a four-week intensive safari guide course in the Moremi Game Reserve. The course is led by the highly experienced guide and instructor Okwa Sarefo from Wild Expedition. The young women, who all come from Maun, are staying at Kaziikini Camp during the course and are overjoyed to have real opportunities to work as professional safari guides after successfully passing their exams. The

profession is highly respected in Botswana and the salary is good, but unfortunately it is mainly men who work as guides.

Our aim is to give young women in Botswana the opportunity to work as professional guides with the help of a scholarship so that they can provide for themselves and their families.

Train the Trainer course, April 2025

Our trainers were on safari tour in the bush! They were taught in two groups on site by the very experienced safari guide and trainer Okwa Sarefo (Wildexpedition Safaris). This special “Train the Trainer Course” lasted three days from 17.04.-20.04 and 21.04.-24.04.2025. Our 14 young dedicated trainers received detailed information on expedition-relevant topics such as safety, respect for wildlife, tracks and signs.

All the trainers were enthusiastic about this unique experience in the bush, as most adults from Botswana are not familiar with the unique wilderness of their country. It is important for us that our trainers also have this experience in nature. This prepares them optimally for their lessons with the Junior Rangers and brings them closer together as a team.

Scholarship recipient works as a safari guide, September 2025

We are delighted that Ndaboka, one of our young safari guide scholarship recipients, has been offered a two-year training contract with safari operator Roots and Journeys!

She is now working there as an assistant guide and will have the opportunity to take on a permanent position afterwards.

Ndaboka passed the preparatory course, conducted by our partner and long-time friend Okwa Sarefo, with flying colors and is one of very few young local women in Botswana who has the opportunity to work as a professional safari guide. We want to continue to provide young women with this opportunity in the future. The profession of safari guide, which is highly respected and provides a good income for supporting a family, is still dominated by men in Botswana. With our very ambitious young female guides, we will change that!

Congratulations, dear Ndaboka! We are very proud of you!

3. NATURE CONSERVATION, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:

Project „Waste Management“ in 16 Schools in Maun all year 2025

The Knyphausen Foundation’s “Waste Project,” which was further established in 2017, remains an integral part of the 16 schools and the orphanage in Maun participating in the Junior Ranger Program in 2025. In addition to the Junior Rangers, the other students in the environmental clubs (20–30 children) also participate and sort the trash weekly. They are supported in this effort by the Junior Ranger trainers.

New colorful recycling garbage cans, July 2025

Our Junior Rangers at Letsholathebe School have painted old garbage cans brightly and very creatively. These bright, expressive works of art are now used at the school for waste separation and are a visible statement for recycling and environmental protection.

The Junior Rangers want to promote the topic of waste management at their school and inspire other institutions to separate waste as well. Unfortunately, this is not yet a matter of course in Botswana. The Junior Rangers want more awareness of waste management in Botswana, they want to arouse the interest of their neighbors and remind everyone that a cleaner environment starts with each individual.

Environmental awareness conference, 29.11.2025

On November 29, 2025, the fifth annual environmental awareness conference took place at Maun Lodge. This time, the theme was "Protection for Migratory Birds." Many migratory birds embark on a risky journey from the north to Africa. All Junior Rangers had the opportunity to contribute to this topic. This resulted in some fantastic plays, presentations, and lectures. Experts in the field of wildlife conservation gave inspiring speeches and reported on current conservation initiatives. We are overjoyed to have experienced such an unforgettable event with our dedicated team of trainers, the Junior Rangers, their parents, and many interested visitors! We have never had as many visitors as we did this year.

Once again, our young environmentalists have shown that together we can make a difference!

4. ANIMAL PROTECTION:

Project "Elephants for Africa" and project to protect endangered animal species

Cooperation with Elephants for Africa, September 2025

The Knyphausen Foundation cooperates with the organisation Elephants for Africa, which actively promotes the protection of African elephants,

(<https://www.elephantsforafrica.org/>) and has made the booklet "The Mammals around us" available to the schools with which EfA works on projects.

The children were enthusiastic and learned to identify mammals with the help of the booklet during their environmental workshops in Moreomaoto.

The educational material will also be used in other regions of Botswana.

Further joint projects are planned for the coming year with Elephants for Africa and the local NGO Cheetah Conservation Botswana.

Further camps lasting several days are planned in Makgadikgadi National Park for the participants of the Junior Ranger Programme under the supervision of Elephants for Africa education officers on the topic of "Human-Wildlife Conflict", among others.

Cooperation with "Cheetah Conservation Botswana (CCB)", November 2025

The Knyphausen Foundation is cooperating with the local NGO Cheetah Conservation Botswana (CCB), which is actively involved in the protection of cheetahs in the Botswana bush (<https://www.cheetahconservationbotswana.org>). The CCB staff will support the Junior Rangers with the content of the preparations for the conservation conference at the end of November. They also come as guest trainers to the extracurricular lessons of the Junior Ranger program and inform the children about how to protect the cheetahs in the Botswana bush. The NGO provides educational material and experts who make an important contribution as guest speakers at the conference.

Further joint projects are planned for the coming year with Elephants for Africa and the local NGO Cheetah Conservation Botswana.

5. DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION:

Support of local young trainers

The Knyphausen Foundation has been cooperating with the charitable foundation StartUp4Kids since 2021. The “Happy Green Botswana” project was founded and expanded together.

There is a regular exchange in order to found and establish joint projects for extracurricular educational work in the region on the topic of environmental protection and sustainability.

Together, young people are supported in their vocational and further training. Workshops and training courses are regularly organized for them on specific environmental topics and on working with children in nature with experts. In this way, both foundations aim to create local career prospects in the field of environmental protection.

The non-profit local association Re Jala Peo, which pursues similar goals to the Knyphausen Foundation and is able to implement the project ideas in an optimal, low-threshold manner on site, receives joint financial support. This will secure the following project positions for young trainers of the environmental protection projects and the Junior Ranger Program:

- One full-time position as a supervisor, starting in July 2024
- One part-time position as a coordinator in the Community/Neighborhood division
- One part-time position as a coordinator in the Trees and Gardens division
- One part-time position as a coordinator in the Logistics division
- One part-time position as an educational materials developer
- Compensation for a social media manager on a fee basis
- Project-based pay for senior trainers (11 trainers)