

ADMG Deer People Training and Education Fund's first placement to Namibia



Jamie Renwick comes from a well-known Ullapool farming family. After undertaking the NC gamekeeping course at Thurso College in 2018 he gained a full-time position as beat keeper/stalker on Invermark Estate. As well as being top student at Thurso he was also SGA Young Keeper of the year in 2022. He left Invermark to travel in 2023 and applied for the first year of ADMG 'Deer People' placements in 2024 going to work with Alex Oelofse for Jan Oelofse Hunting Safaris on the Okonjati Game Reserve in Namibia in March and April. On his return he took up a new position as keeper/stalker on the Glenshee beat at Invercauld Estate. He writes below about his Namibia experience.

As the first person sent on one of these funded placements, this is a huge honour to me.

When I landed in Namibia, my transport to Mount Etjo safari lodge was a lorry, delivering 27 tonnes of alfalfa hay to the game reserve from South Africa. The hay is given to the animals to help them through the winter. From warthogs, to elephants and rhinos, and everything in between. A severe lack of rain meant the grass had failed to grow much. Lack of rain is something we don't have an issue with in Scotland. I'm not going to complain; the people of Namibia would give anything to get a fraction of the rain we get.

At Mount Etjo, the hunting season hadn't kicked off, so I joined in on the tourist safaris. The guides had

unbelievable knowledge of the game and knew where to find everything to give the guests the best experience. On my first ever safari, we had a big bull elephant false charge us; I was told elephants are bad for that!

After a week of helping with the game drives, the hunting guests arrived, mostly from North America. Every day started early, and finished late, and there's no better way to experience Africa. Every day the temperature was over 30 degrees C, with clear skies most of the time. Namibian sunsets are a spectacle I hope to see again, and the 360 degree lightning storms that happened in the evening on my first week.

I worked first with a PH (Professional Hunter) called Naftali, whose tracking skills are something you have to witness to appreciate, hunting springbuck, impala, gemsbuck, red hartebeest, blue wildebeest, giraffe, warthog, baboon, jackal, hyena, kudu and zebra.

I received strange looks when I asked if I could 'gralloch' a kudu one morning. Not the terminology they are used to. However, it was exactly the same as gralloching a stag.

There was a very memorable event that happened, one morning we were hunting red hartebeest on a neighbouring farm with a guest. We were successful in getting one, we delivered the carcass to the farmer, but we took the head. He was delighted, as it was the first meat he, his five workers and their families had eaten in two months. It really made me appreciate what I have.

I was also fortunate to be involved in capturing some rhino, sedating them, loading them on to trailers and relocating them. The reserve was constantly being patrolled day and night by armed anti rhino poaching teams. I also joined Alex on a ride in his helicopter around the reserve one morning, to observe the wildlife from above.

One of the best things about being in Namibia was the food. It is the best food I have eaten, and possibly will ever eat. Every night we ate some sort of African game. The most common meat we ate was giraffe, which is excellent.



I had a sleepless night one night, when a pride of lions circled the house, winding the dogs up. I came to Africa thinking lions would be the biggest threat, but I learnt that elephants, black rhinos and leopards pose the biggest risk, not to mention the numerous black mambas – and a big part of what made the trip so interesting was that a lot of the animals were dangerous. Even the gemsbuck and sable, both a type of antelope, have horns that could do serious damage. While heading back to the lodge one evening, we were driving along slowly in the Land Cruiser when suddenly a black rhino came crashing through the bush, snorting and at full charge, coming to within about 20 feet of us.

It was great to see how a large-scale hunting operation is run, alongside tourist safaris on the same ground. I didn't quite know what to expect in terms of carcass handling, but I can honestly say that the carcass handling and facilities were 'five star', and nothing goes to waste. They even had a full-time skinner who prepared the trophies to be shipped, and a whole butchery team, so all the meat we ate was hunted on the property.

Alex allowed me to join PH Steve while out hunting springbuck for meat. We selected two bucks that were mature, but not trophy grade. I was lucky for Steve to give me the rifle to shoot both springbuck, which I'm grateful for.



I will never forget, on my last night, we were sitting watching the sun go down by the pool with guests, when a herd of elephants approached the pool and drank from it, not even 10 metres from us, we watched in awe until they left, about 20 minutes after they arrived.

I would like to thank everyone who was involved in the 'Deer People' Placement Scheme, the ADMG, Alex and Annette Oelofse and their lovely, welcoming family and their team, Byron Pace and especially Richard Cooke. I would urge any young person working in the industry to apply as it may be the best thing you will ever do. You will learn so many valuable skills, some of which you could take back and apply to your work in Scotland.

[mount-etjo.com](https://www.mount-etjo.com)

Applications are now being taken for 2025 with placements in Africa and the USA and interviews will be held shortly. Information and the application form are available here: [deer-management.co.uk/links](https://www.deer-management.co.uk/links)

