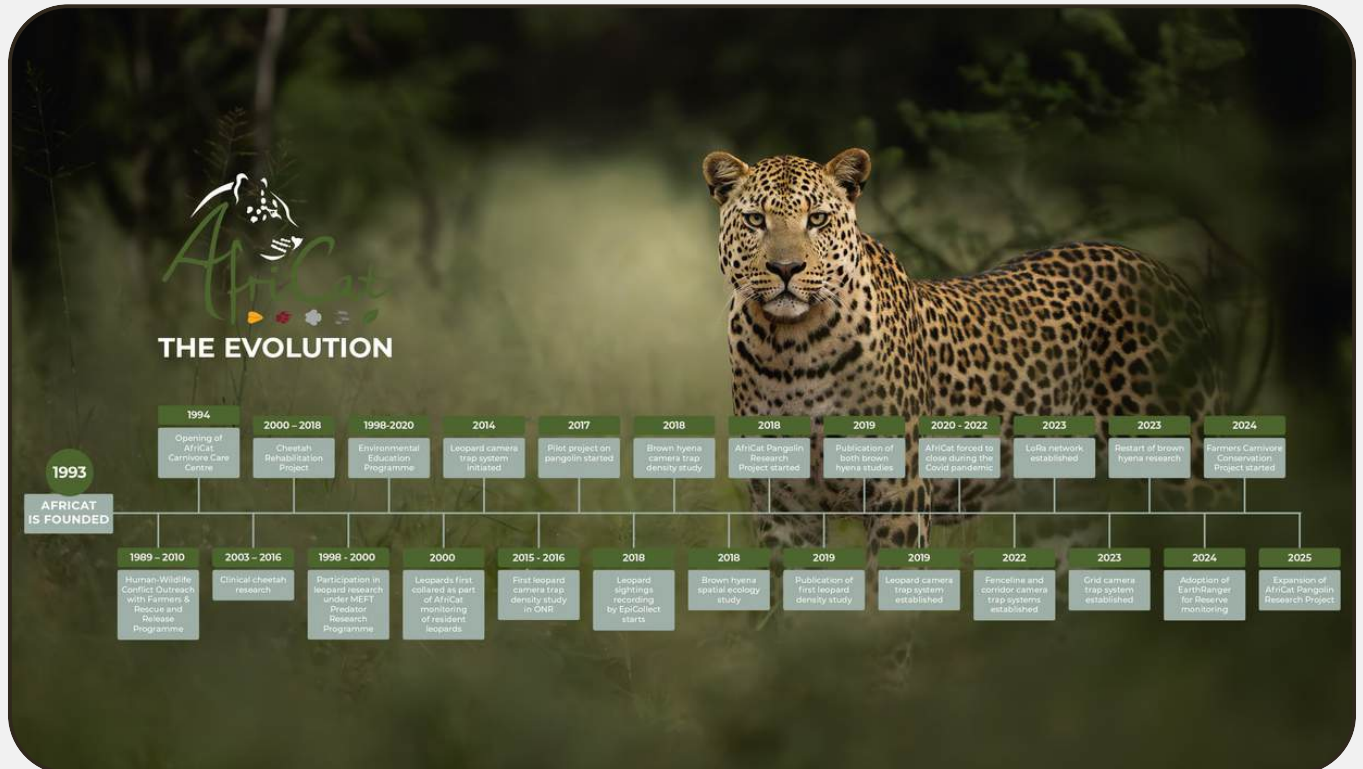


# Redefining Identity- The Evolution of the AfriCat Logo



# The Evolution of the AfriCat Logo



For more than 30 years, AfriCat's logo has symbolised its mission, its values, and the shifting landscape of carnivore conservation in Namibia. What began with a young Hanssen sibling family, farmer's children, not conservationists, fuelled by a naïve but unstoppable determination to protect the land they grew up on, the wildlife they lived amongst, and even the so-called "vermin predators" they had once been taught to fear, grew into a Foundation with purpose and direction. Their dream was simple but ambitious: to build a sustainable business that could fund meaningful conservation work.

In 1993, The AfriCat Foundation ([www.africat.org](http://www.africat.org)) was officially established as a non-profit organisation (T48/93). From that moment onward, AfriCat operated as a distinct entity, separate from Okonjima Lodge, though still based on the Okonjima farm. With a passionate commitment to protect Namibia's large carnivores, the AfriCat team began traversing the country to rescue unwanted or conflict animals, mainly cheetahs and leopards, from commercial farmland, with the hope of re-releasing them back into the wild.





This vision inspired the creation of AfriCat's very first logo. Its design captured both purpose and possibility: the name AfriCat, short for "A Free Cat", featured two "e's" above the "i" instead of a dot, symbolising freedom and optimism.

The outline of Africa in the background represented a dream to one day expand the project beyond Namibia's borders, to all corners of the continent where these magnificent cats roam.

However, reality soon proved more complex. Not all rescued carnivores could return to the wild. Many had been kept as pets and had become too habituated to humans; others were orphaned when their mothers were shot as perceived "vermin." Farmers who couldn't bring themselves to kill the cubs often handed them to AfriCat, where they were raised in captivity. In time, AfriCat and Okonjima found themselves caring for a growing number of orphaned and injured animals.

In these early years, most rescues became welfare-driven rather than conservation-oriented, a necessary response to the crisis at hand. Yet, the experience sparked a new ambition: to rehabilitate those fit for release once fully grown, and to create a protected area where such second chances could become reality. To do so, AfriCat needed land, land that would eventually become the Okonjima Nature Reserve. The two organisations were marketed together, with Okonjima recognised as *"The Home of the AfriCat Foundation."*



# Expanding Purpose: Education, Research, and Conflict Mitigation

In 1998, AfriCat introduced new programmes that broadened its purpose and reach. The Environmental Education and Awareness Programme aimed to inspire the next generation to understand and appreciate the vital role carnivores play in maintaining nature's delicate balance. At the same time, AfriCat focused on addressing farmer–predator conflict, promoting coexistence and tolerance through practical livestock protection methods and awareness campaigns within the farming community.

Working closely with veterinarians and researchers from around the world, AfriCat expanded its efforts to include large carnivore research and monitoring, both in the field and through essential studies involving captive animals under its care.



Meanwhile, fundraising became a full-time commitment, essential to sustaining AfriCat's growing operations. Dedicated supporters, private donors, and conservation partners played an increasingly vital role, while Okonjima Lodge continued to provide consistent financial backing. Monthly and annual royalties, combined with contributions from guests staying at Okonjima, ensured that tourism directly funded the Foundation's ongoing efforts to protect Namibia's carnivores.





By the early 2000s, it became clear that the original AfriCat logo, though meaningful, was impractical for printing and embroidery. More importantly, the organisation's focus was evolving. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism had begun tightening permit regulations, making it increasingly difficult to move carnivores across the country. At the same time, it became evident that many of the animals in AfriCat's care would never return to the wild.

The original logo no longer reflected this shift in purpose. It was time for change, a new symbol for a growing mission.

## A New Era “Conservation Through Education”



The introduction of AfriCat's second logo marked the beginning of a new direction. The bold cheetah face symbolised this evolution, connecting AfriCat to Okonjima through the shared use of the distinctive red colour, though Okonjima's logo featured a leopard face instead. Together, the two logos reflected a united mission: to protect Namibia's large carnivores through research, rescue, rehabilitation, and environmental education.

During this period, Team AfriCat dedicated themselves to long-term leopard research, working tirelessly to understand the behaviour and ecology of this elusive predator. Meanwhile, the AfriCat Carnivore Care Centre (ACCC) evolved into a sanctuary, offering shelter, sustenance, and expert care for young, orphaned, or injured cheetahs, leopards, and other carnivores. For some, this sanctuary served as a temporary home during recovery and rehabilitation before reintegration into the wild; for others, it became a permanent refuge.

AfriCat's Environmental Education Programme became one of the Foundation's flagship projects, and the message "Conservation Through Education" was adopted as its guiding motto. Schools from across Namibia, and even abroad, were invited to spend weekends or week-long camps at AfriCat, experiencing nature first-hand and learning about ecological balance, predator behaviour, and coexistence.



At the time, the Okonjima farm (No. 128) covered just 5,400 hectares. As AfriCat's ambitions grew, Okonjima began acquiring neighbouring farms, eventually expanding the property to form the 22,000-hectare (55,000-acre) Okonjima Nature Reserve. Building on the early successes of the Rehabilitation Programme, which began in 2000, AfriCat identified suitable captive cheetahs from its Care Centre for release into the newly enlarged Reserve, offering them a true second chance at freedom.







## Expansion and Global Reach



In 2010, AfriCat expanded its conservation reach by joining forces with the Afri-Leo Foundation, subsequently rebranded as AfriCat North. Its mission focused on developing and implementing practical solutions to the ongoing farmer–lion conflict in northwestern Namibia. The new logo variant featured the face of a lioness, symbolising this important extension of AfriCat's work.

By this time, two internationally registered charities, AfriCat UK and AfriCat America, had also adopted the updated logo, proudly representing the Foundation's achievements in rescuing, caring for, and researching Namibia's large carnivores.

Then, in 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic brought nearly all projects to a standstill. Travel restrictions and lockdowns halted nearly every programme, except ongoing leopard and pangolin research. Researchers returned to their home countries, and operations were scaled back as the world waited to see how conservation would resume once normality slowly returned.

## A photograph of a herd of antelope, likely reedbuck, standing in a savanna landscape. The antelope are in the foreground, some facing the camera and others looking away. They have light brown bodies and white underparts. In the background, there is a fence made of wooden posts and wire, and a dirt path or road. The landscape is covered with green grass and scattered trees. The sky is blue with some clouds.

The scarcity of long-term data on habitat fragmentation highlights the crucial role that AfriCat and the Okonjima Nature Reserve can play in shaping the future of conservation. Today, AfriCat is committing its resources to extensive and enduring research aimed at understanding how habitat fragmentation affects species survival and ecosystem balance. These efforts encompass not only endangered, threatened, or vulnerable species such as leopard, brown hyena, and pangolin, but also lesser-known and ecologically vital species like porcupine, armadillo, honey badger, and rhinos that inhabit the Reserve.







After three decades, the AfriCat logo has become instantly recognisable, synonymous with Namibia's commitment to wildlife conservation. A complete redesign would risk losing this recognition. Instead, AfriCat's new logo honours the past while embracing the future.

It retains a leopard head, a continued symbol of AfriCat's partnership with Okonjima and a tribute to its longest-running research project, while introducing stylised tracks representing multiple species. These tracks symbolise AfriCat's broader mission: the Foundation is no longer species-specific, but dedicated to the interconnected survival of all wildlife and their habitats.

This new visual identity reflects AfriCat's expanded purpose and aligns with its new slogan: Research. Protect. Restore.

Sharing discoveries now stands at the heart of AfriCat's mission. The Foundation's research findings feed directly into environmental and wildlife programmes, ensuring knowledge is shared with scientists, students, and visitors alike. AfriCat continues to collaborate with universities, conservation agencies, and government to contribute to a deeper understanding of how protected areas can sustain Namibia's biodiversity.



Every day, the Okonjima Nature Reserve teaches us more about coexistence, resilience, and restoration. The future of AfriCat lies in science, in learning from the land, protecting what remains, and restoring what has been lost. This is our new era: built upon more than 30 years of research, driven by knowledge, and committed to ensuring that Namibia's wildlife and wild spaces endure for generations to come.