



NACSO connects the communities and organisations that manage and conserve Namibia's natural resources

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Solar Power for Earth Hour

25 March, 2017



Game guards Edward (left) and Martin

Edward Mwaulika slips off his bicycle deep in the forest and listens. An elephant? Poachers? Edward is a game guard, one of 21 dedicated men who keep wildlife safe

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in Salambala Conservancy on the Botswana border, at the eastern tip of Zambezi Region.

Bikes are part of Salambala's conservation strategy. Cars break down and are noisy – easy for poachers to hear, and a game guard driving a car is unlikely to hear a gun shot. Boots are fine for getting through thick bush, but a bike gets you to the spot quickly and quietly.

But it's hard work, says Edward, who covers 30 kilometres a day on sandy tracks – or it used to be, before he got his new bike, which is electric and solar powered.

"I can leave my old Challenger bike right there," says Raymond in an interview with WWF. "This one is just super."

The solar charged electric bikes were constructed by Sun Cycles Namibia, which is selling off-road electric bikes to tour lodges and security firms, and seeking donors to provide bikes for conservation. The company is the brainchild of Bernhard and Marita Walther, who are champions of sustainable transport. They plan to install 8 bikes at Salambala, once negotiations with a donor are complete.

But like the game guards, Sun Cycles couldn't wait to get going, and with assistance from WWF in Namibia they brought the first two bikes to Salambala Conservancy in time for Earth Hour. A short film is available [here](#).

Ten years ago WWF created Earth Hour across the globe as a way of focusing the attention of the planet's population on the amount of energy its 6.6 billion people used. In 2017 planet Earth has 7.5 billion people, 4.1 which of live in urban areas. Earth Hour began by asking cities to turn off the lights for an hour, but has moved on to encourage every kind of ecological initiative. This year the slogan is 'Shine a light on climate change'.

With 1.2 billion cars on the road worldwide, each one using a hundred times more energy than an electric bike and producing greenhouse gasses that warm the planet, using bikes whenever possible is climate change action in motion. And in Salambala, the bikes are also powering conservation.

Steve Felton

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