WORKING MATERIAL 3.14 · CHAPTER 3 — THE INTERNAL AUDITOR'S LENS · SETTING: KASANE, BOTSWANA

Auditing Nature: Biodiversity, Animals and Tour Providers

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7b — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 3.14 (book page 175)

GUIDING QUESTION

The last five criteria of the standard concern what lives around the hotel, and much of that lies beyond the hotel's own fence: in the protected areas next door and in the activities sold at its reception desk. How does an internal auditor test what happens to animals and habitats when the hotel's guests are in someone else's boat?

1 · Verification Pact: market claims against the standard

Copied from the book. The last column is for your property: what holds here, and how you know it.

What is claimed	Binding?	What actually holds	In our property
Activities run by outside operators are not the hotel's responsibility	No	D11.1 requires the hotel to ensure that the providers of wildlife tours it offers comply and follow responsible practices	
A licensed operator is a responsible operator	Only partially true	A licence may show regulatory permission; D11.1 also asks for responsible practices that prioritise animal welfare	
Feeding birds in the garden is harmless and guests enjoy it	No	D11.3 prohibits feeding and other close contact within the directly managed environment	
D12 applies only to zoos and sanctuaries	No	It applies to any animals the hotel keeps, owns or manages, including those temporarily present	
A criterion can be marked not applicable without explanation	No	An auditor records the reason, so that the judgement can be checked by others	
Wildlife souvenirs are acceptable if sold openly in local markets	No	D13.3 permits trade only where strictly regulated, demonstrably sustainable and explicitly approved by competent authorities	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

Tick each mistake you recognise in your own property, and note where it shows.

☐ Limiting the audit scope to what the hotel operates and ignoring what it sells or recommends.

☐ Treating an operator's licence as evidence of responsible practice towards animals.

☐ Accepting a disclaimer on a voucher as a substitute for evaluating the provider.

☐ Overlooking feeding of wild animals in gardens and terraces because guests enjoy it.

☐ Marking D12 or D11.4 as not applicable without recording the reason.

☐ Ignoring guest feedback that names specific activities and describes what happened.

☐ Intervening during an observed activity instead of recording and reporting what was seen.

☐ Checking garden plants by appearance rather than against a documented invasive species list.

3 · A Checklist for Auditing Nature and Tour Providers

The book's checklist, with a column for your own answer.

Question	Why it matters	Our answer
Has the auditor listed every activity the hotel offers, sells or recommends?	D11.1 applies to the wildlife tours the hotel offers, not only those it runs	
For each provider, is there an evaluation, a written commitment and a date of review?	D11.1, A13.12 and A13.13 require more than a licence	
What do guest comments say about each activity, by name?	Feedback reveals practices the hotel has not seen directly	
Is there any feeding or close contact with wild animals on the hotel's grounds?	D11.3 prohibits it within the directly managed environment	
Has the hotel listed protected areas and species, and invasive plants, with credible sources?	D9.1, D10.1 and D13.1 underpin every other nature indicator	
Where a criterion is marked not applicable, is the reason recorded?	A judgement that cannot be checked cannot be relied on	

4 · What would show this is working

Questions drawn from the subchapter's reading of the standard and its practical application. Indicator references point to the GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0; where the evidence lives is this book's practice, not a requirement of the standard.

Question	Where the evidence lives	Seen?
Are tour providers evaluated for compliance with wildlife regulations and responsible practice (D11.1)?	Provider evaluation forms and written commitments	☐
Is all close contact between visitors and wild animals prohibited in the directly managed environment (D11.3)?	Observation of terraces and grounds; guest information	☐
Are guests given information on responsible behaviour with wildlife where interactions are the main activity (D11.4)?	Guest briefing cards; activity vouchers	☐
Are protected areas and species and nationally protected species documented (D9.1, D13.1)?	Species and protected-area lists with sources	☐
Is there an invasive species list and a plant inventory (D10.1, D10.4)?	Garden plant inventory checked against an invasive species list	☐
Is any not-applicable decision (e.g. D12, no animals kept) written with its reason?	Audit checklist: reason column	☐

> *What this sheet is not: the GSTC Hotel Standard does not prescribe this form. It is a working aid drawn from the book; the standard's criteria, indicators and guidelines govern the real case. Independent material; not affiliated with or endorsed by the GSTC. The standard's own text at www.gstc.org prevails.*