



# WildlifeCampus

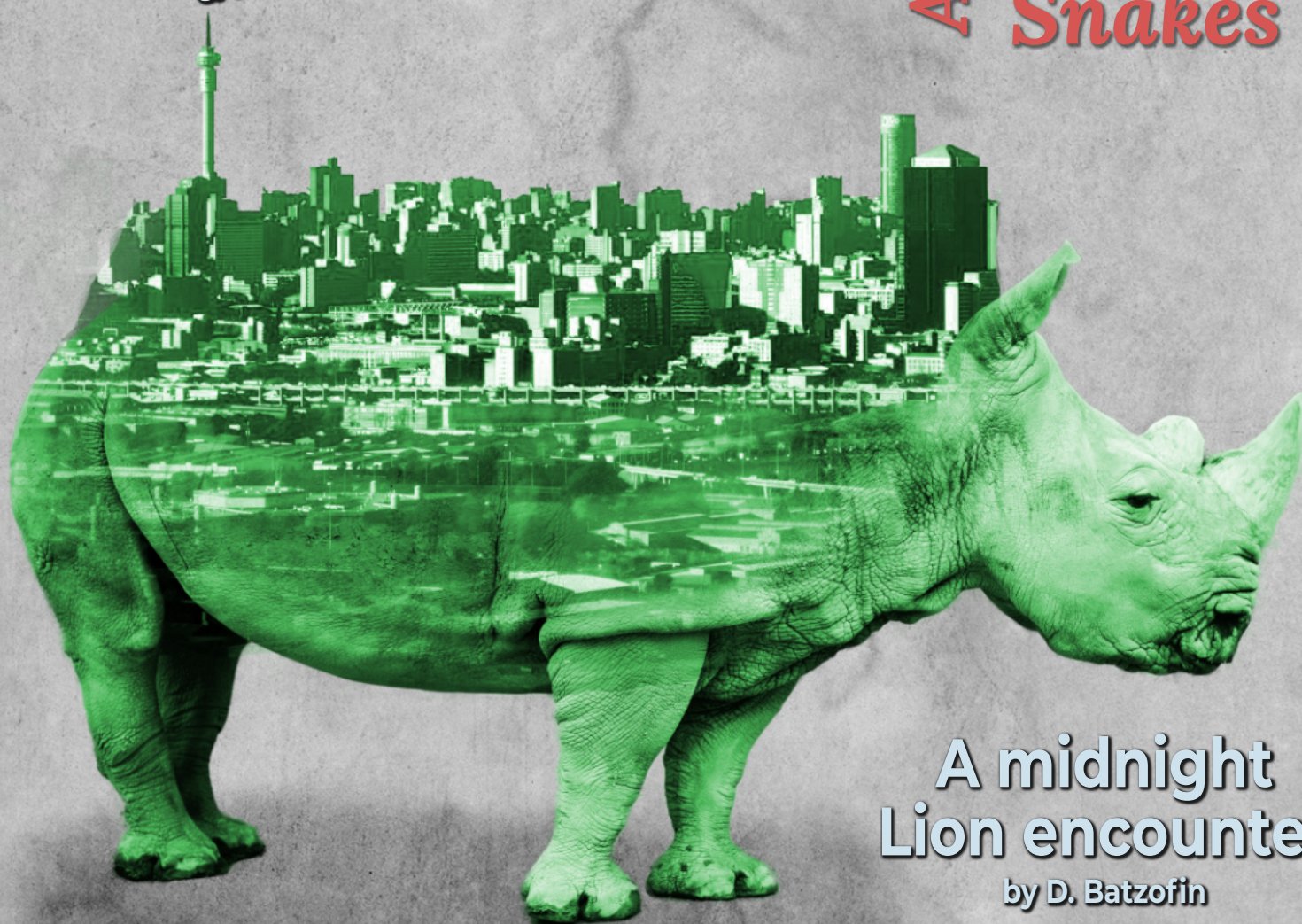
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# Magazine

NEW course combinations  
and packages

**\$1 Juvenile  
Snakes**



A midnight  
Lion encounter

by D. Batzofin

**WildlifeCampus Youth**

Hunter Mitchell

**RAISE THE BABY RHINO**



with Hunter

**Full WildlifeCampus  
Course Listing**



# WildlifeCampus

## Breaking The rules



WildlifeCampus CEO  
Todd Kaplan

Every so often I am asked which of the 50 WildlifeCampus courses is my favourite ?

Unequivocally it is our version of [Garth Thompson's Guides Guide to Guiding](#). Not only is it my favourite, but I firmly believe it is also the most important and invaluable course available to the aspiring guide and anyone who works in the safari lodge industry.

Over the next few editions of my editorial I will be highlighting excerpts from this vital resource, delightfully illustrated by Dov Fedler.

We will begin with an astounding cautionary tale, Garth takes up the story ...

"I had just finished a busy and successful safari season and flown out my last safari guests who were well known personalities in the African wildlife industry. I was elated at finishing on such a high. I had flown to Botswana where I was travelling around by myself to a variety of premium safari camps. I was familiarising myself with the various properties as I was about to embark on a trip around Australia to market a variety of lodges for a particular safari company.

I had been through a few of the camps where I was spoiled with an exclusive vehicle and guide. It was late September and animal populations and behaviours were at their peak, I had taken a multitude of amazing photographs and could not wait to show these gems to the Australian public and travel operators.

I had come to Savuti Camp which had a unique photographic 'hide' built of huge leadwood logs in an open square, only metres from one of the busiest waterholes in Africa. The boreholes which feed this pan couldn't keep up with the consumption by multitudes of animals who attempted to satisfy their thirst each day. Every night the elephants siphoned out the entire contents of the lodge's swimming pool.

In the afternoon while sitting in the hide alone, I was surrounded by over 100 elephant who had marched long distances to this isolated waterhole. I sat in the safety of the hide, watching and photographing to the accompaniment of thirsty screams, rumbles and trumpets as they all jostled for an opportunity to drink from these life giving waters.

Early the following morning I went down alone to the hide. Within the confines of the 'Log Pile Hide' I wedged my camera between the gaps in the logs and photographed a never-ending procession of zebra and wildebeest as they filed down to the pan. I could not get quite comfortable or in the right position to take what I thought would be the 'perfect shot'. I threw caution to the wind and took the canvas chair from within the hide and wedged it into some of the logs on the outside of the hide.



# WildlifeCampus

## Breaking The rules

**M**y silhouette now covered by the logs behind me, I settled down to fill up numerous SD Cards as a stream of baboons, zebra, warthog, impala, kudu and wildebeest drank unsuspecting, only metres from me and my overworked camera.

My bear-banger was not on my belt where it lives for every safari day of the year, it was in my camera bag. I had no escape route from where I sat, but I fooled myself that elephant only came down to drink at lunch time and I would be out of there by then.

All the rules I abide by when guiding guests began to fall by the wayside, and complacency at having no guests to look after began to set in. I was alone, euphoric and feeling more bulletproof by the minute. I had ten minutes left in the hide before I had to go up to the camp and get ready for my flight to the next camp. It was the first lull in wildlife activity since I had been down there that morning. I was reading the learned words from Derek and Beverly Joubert's book; 'Hunting with the Moon' when unexpectedly four grey ghosts floated silently past me.

I was elated, four elephant bulls, my favourite animal, rushed through what was left of the waterhole and desperately sucked from the fresh water pipe that slowly topped up the pan. 'What a great send-off' I thought as my camera shutter rapidly snapped away.



© D. Batzofin

Out the corner of my eye, which was pressed into the camera body I noticed more movement. A small family of elephant cows and calves hurried past me to drink, their bums only metres from where I sat. I now realised that I was in a tight spot and as soon as the first opportunity arose, would have to move quickly from where I was wedged into the front of the hide and climb into the safety of its confines.

Sadly that moment never came. Suddenly the area where I sat darkened as a huge cow with beautiful matching tusks, possibly the matriarch, halted on her way to the pan and stared down at me. I fell beneath her shadow and the piercing glare of a fiery orange eye that had seen other two-legged beasts shoot members of her family only eight years ago when hunting had stopped in this concession. She put her head down and charged, lifting my body onto one of the logs. I had both hands on her enormous forehead, only inches from my eyes. I recall seeing the small particles of mud embedded between the little round grey dots that make up elephant skin. The short hairs on her forehead prickled the palms of my hands. Her pungent elephant smell filled my nostrils. She pinned me down, my hands feebly pushing against her giant head; I felt great pressure on my chest. I could not believe how my luck had changed! One minute I was sitting there reflecting on how fortunate I was and the next I was being squashed to death. This was my retribution for breaking the rules I had survived by all these years.

She stood back up, towering over my pitiable form, now lying prostate on a carpet of elephant dung which covered the ground. I was trying to pull away from her; my right leg lay useless as it dragged by my side awkwardly. I pulled myself across the dirt on my hands like a paralysed beggar.



# WildlifeCampus Breaking The rules

As she stood over me, I looked around and assessed my situation; my favourite shirt was torn apart, my beloved camera lay open on the carpet of dung, my one shoe was off and the other broken. As she put her head down and came again, I saw my hat fly through the air and hit her on the wide part of her trunk. I had unknowingly thrown it at her; she stepped back and stood tall looking down at my pathetic form when suddenly I heard the familiar whoosh as a bear banger smoked past me and exploded above her. With this she turned and ran off. This was closely followed by a second banger and the whole herd stampeded off. I lay there feeling such a fool having caused so much disruption to these intelligent beasts who had walked so far to slake their thirst. The camp manager and his assistant had both fired the bear bangers that they were required by company policy to carry, thus extracting me from probable death.

I was flown out by helicopter to Maun and then by medical evacuation jet and rushed into one of South Africa's best trauma hospitals. There I spent the next four days in intensive care. I had sustained a dislocated femur, broken hip, fractured pelvis, broken ribs and fractured vertebrae.

I have recovered one hundred percent and am extremely fortunate to have been spared by an animal that could have squashed the life out of me within seconds and by two guides who were living by the rules that they had been taught. I broke the laws that we live by in association with wild animals. I hope my lesson will save any other guides the trauma of being blinded by complacency."

Garth Thompson is one of the world's foremost field guides.

Todd

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**option on page 15 of this magazine.**



**WildlifeCampus**

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# CourseListing

Course	Components	Price
Field Guiding / Game Ranging	82	R 6,000.00
Wildlife Management	42	R 4,000.00
Behaviour Guide to Mammals of RSA Lowveld	73	R 2,950.00
Behaviour Guide to African Herbivores	63	R 2,600.00
Animal Tracks & Signs of Africa	36	R 2,500.00
Capture & Care and management of Wildlife	27	R 2,500.00
Game Lodge Management	23	R 2,500.00
Intensive Wildlife Production	18	R 1,950.00
Marine Biology for Guides, Divers & Enthusiasts	39	R 1,950.00
Survival	44	R 1,950.00
Anti-Poaching	18	R 1,700.00
Behaviour Guide to African Carnivores	38	R 1,600.00
Geology, Palaeontology Evolution	21	R 1,500.00
Front of House Lodge Operations	10	R 1,500.00
Digital Wildlife Photography	18	R 1,300.00
Guides Guide to Guiding	16	R 1,300.00
Trails Guide	16	R 1,200.00
Game Guard Management	12	R 900.00
FGASA Exam Preparation Practice Questions	30	R 800.00
Human-Wildlife Conflict	12	R 800.00
Game Ranch Economics	9	R 800.00
Behaviour Guide to African Primates	14	R 800.00
Wilderness Navigation	12	R 700.00
Anti-Poaching Junior	10	R 500.00
Cultural Guiding: Free State Province	14	R 1,550.00
Cultural Guiding: Gauteng Province	17	R 1,550.00
Cultural Guiding: Kwa-Zulu Natal Province	20	R 1,550.00
Cultural Guiding: Limpopo Province	9	R 1,550.00
Cultural Guiding: Mpumalanga Province	13	R 1,550.00
Cultural Guiding: North-West Province	10	R 1,550.00
Cultural Guiding: Northern Cape Province	17	R 1,550.00
Cultural Guiding: Western Cape Province	22	R 1,550.00

*Click on the name of a course to view its summary*



# JUVENILE SNAKES AND VENOM



*Juvenile Green Mamba (Dendroaspis polylepis)*

A few years ago, one of the popular wildlife programs on television claimed that juvenile snakes are far more dangerous than the adults of the same species. They speculated that the venom of juvenile snakes is more potent than that of the adults and that juvenile snakes are dumb and cannot control the amount venom injected when biting. What research this was based on (if any) is still not known. But the statement is not true.

Like adult snakes, juveniles are more than capable of controlling their venom. The venom yield of a juvenile snake will obviously be smaller than that of the adult, as the venom glands are not as large. An adult Black Mamba, for instance, may have a venom yield of around 280 mg (up to 400 mg in the literature but that is unlikely) and require around 15 mg for a fatal bite on a human. The venom yield of a hatchling Black Mamba measuring around 50 cm in length will be a fraction of that of an adult.

Snake venom evolved as a means to immobilise prey and aid in digestion and has the secondary function of self-defence. It is not a great means of self-defence as the venom cannot immobilise a large attacker, like a human rapidly, and the attacker has plenty of time to kill the snake before severe effects from the venom take place. This is probably the reason snakes are so cryptic and avoid predators and attackers as best as possible. For example, Black Mambas hatch at 45 – 60 cm in length and may reach 1.8 meters after the first year. We very rarely see Black Mambas between 60 cm and 1.5 m. They seem to hide for the first year of their life, probably spending their time in the trees feeding on hatchling birds.

By the time Black Mambas reach two meters in length, they are largely eating mammals such as rats, dassies, bushbabies and tree squirrels. The venom of a juvenile snake is comparable to that of the adult but may differ substantially and change over time as their diet changes.



Although we generally divide snake venom into three groups - neurotoxins, cytotoxins and haemotoxins, it is far more complex than that and most snakes have a mixture of various toxins including a variety of toxins that are seldom mentioned. There is good evidence to suggest that the venom of a specific snake species may also vary from region to region and in some cases significantly so. Though not well researched, it is commonly said that the venom of the Cape Cobra from the Northern Cape, southern Namibia and southern Botswana is a lot weaker than Cape Cobra venom from the Western Cape.



*Juvenile Boomslang (Dispholidus typus)*

Juvenile snakes certainly have a larger range of predators and even smaller birds such as shrikes, kingfishers and rollers are a real threat to young snakes.

In Puff Adders it has been suggested that they have around a 5% survival rate from being born to becoming a reproductive adult. This may make juvenile snakes more nervous and likely to bite if confronted. However, adult snakes are high up on the menu for many of the smaller predators, from birds of prey to meerkats, mongooses, serval, honey badgers to jackal and even other larger snakes. So even adult snakes are quite nervous when confronted and try to get away from danger as quickly as possible.

Snakes do have control over their venom glands and we anticipate that defensive bites may differ from feeding bites in the amount of venom injected.



*Forest Cobra (Naja subfulva) hatching*

Often, bites to humans -especially snake catchers, are “dry bites” and in these defensive bites, little to no venom is injected. These dry bites are rarely seen in juvenile snakes and they usually give a full bite.

In Puff Adder bites, a high proportion of recorded bites are from juvenile snakes. This is likely due to the fact that they are more mobile in search of prey and resources and are more frequently encountered and tend to be a bit more defensive.

The lower venom yield of a smaller snake certainly makes the bites less severe, but they are still potentially dangerous. We see far too many images of people with highly venomous baby snakes on their hands asking for an ID.

The bottom line is that juvenile snakes of venomous species are still capable of inflicting severe bites and should be treated with caution, but are not more dangerous than the adults as has previously been claimed.



*Juvenile Puff Adder (Bitis arietans)*



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# WildlifeCampus Youth

Serious about conservation



When it comes to conservation and being actively involved in helping to save a species, there is not much that young Hunter Mitchell has not already learnt, done or experienced.

“In South Africa, we are so privileged to be home to some of the world’s most incredible animals,” says Hunter. “I remember when I was very little, most kids would be watching Thomas the Tank Engine or something like that on TV, but I loved watching Animal Planet or National Geographic.”

While keeping up with a busy school schedule, Hunter spends almost all of his extra time helping save rhinos.

In 2015, on New Year’s Eve, Hunter heard about a newly born rhino calf that had been found abandoned by his mother, on a game reserve in the middle of the night. The young calf was rescued and named Osita.

After following Osita’s story on social media, Hunter decided he had to do something to help. He started by saving his pocket money and gathering donations from friends and family. Through his determination and passion, he raised over R250 000 for Osita and other orphaned rhinos.

It did not stop there though! Hunter went on to successfully design, launch and sell [rhino socks](#) through Pick ‘n Pay Clothing, who fully supported turning this dream into a reality.

Additionally, Hunter raised funds for another NGO, Rhino Art, doing invaluable work in communities around game reserves.

Started in 2013 by one of South Africa’s most well-known humanitarian adventurers, Kingsley Holgate, in conjunction with Project Rhino.




Hunter actively spends time in the field with some of the country’s top vets and wildlife heroes including Dr William Folds (*image above*), Dr Grant Folds and Dr Johan Marais (from [Saving The Survivors](#)).



Kingsley Holgate and Hunter



A young boy with light brown hair is shown in profile, gently touching the horn of a rhinoceros. The rhinoceros's head is large and textured, with its eye visible. The background is a soft-focus savanna landscape with dry grass and some green shrubs under a bright sky.

“We as kids are the future of  
our planet, and we need to stand  
up now and make a difference  
before it’s too late!

I do not want to grow up without  
the privilege of having these  
amazing animals in my future,  
or my children to grow up without  
ever seeing them in the wild.”

– Hunter Mitchell



# WildlifeCampus Youth

## Serious about conservation

Hunter spreads valuable conservation awareness by doing educational talks at many schools and events around the country and even abroad.



When speaking at the World Youth Wildlife Summit in 2019, held at the South African Wildlife College, he said:

*"We have not caused this crisis! We have been born into it, and I believe we can have a bigger impact and be more powerful because when we talk and when we act, we start to make adults feel guilty because they are the ones that have stolen rhino and other wildlife from our future. There is not enough time to wait for us to grow up and be the ones that make the decisions – we must speak out now and make the changes now and only then can we prevent extinction from happening."*

Some of the awards and recognition Hunter has received include:

- The International Young Eco-Hero award by the environmental organisation Action for Nature.
- 111th Commonwealth 'Point of Light' from her Majesty the Queen. Presented by Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.
- Enviropaedia Eco-Youth Gold award winner at the Eco Logic Awards.



**RAISE THE BABY RHINO**  
with Hunter



In 2020, Hunter became one of the youngest students ever to complete the [WildlifeCampus online anti-poaching course](#)!

Completed with top marks and in record time, we are extremely proud of this young conservationist and all of his achievements!

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20





# *Lions roaring*

## *In the middle of the night*

By David Batzofin



A different type of alarm clock! Did you know that the roar of a lion can be heard from as far away as 8km?

At about 1m, the roar can reach 114 decibels, which is similar to the noise of a rock concert or a leaf blower.

But why are these facts pertinent to my story?

Pull up a seat, make yourself comfortable and I will share my tale of potential stupidity with you.

The cry of a fish eagle, the plaintive howl of a jackal, the trumpeting or deep rumbling of a feeding elephant herd are all part of the audio landscape that entertains guests while they are enjoying their time at a lodge in any of the reserves in South Africa.

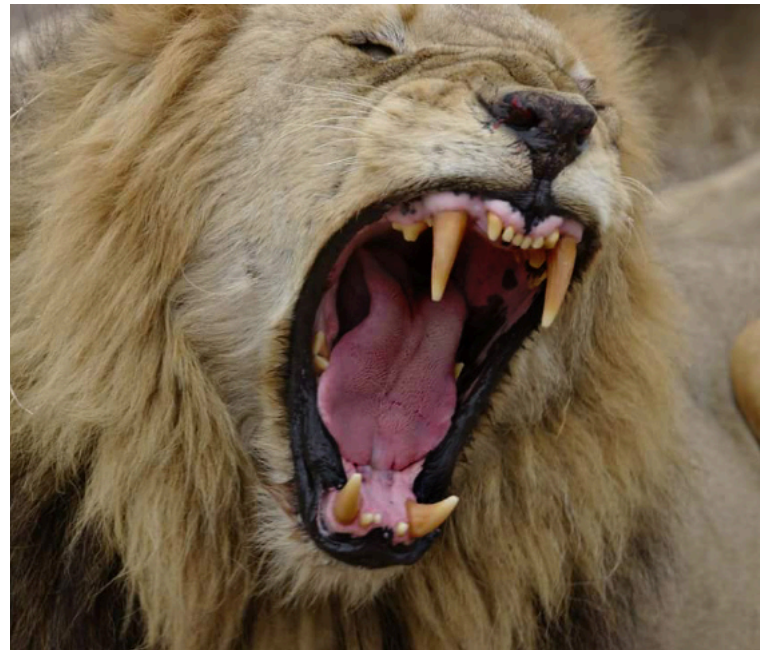
However, at the top of this list must be the deep, resonating roar of a large lion. Either looking for a potential mate, proclaiming territory, or warning off rivals, it is a sound that once heard will never be forgotten.

Having spent a few days at a lodge in one of my favourite reserves, I was longing to hear this sound that had eluded me up until that point on the trip.

It was the end of a busy day, which culminated in an afternoon drive filled with wonderful sightings and returning to find a spectacular dinner waiting in the open-air boma. There is nothing quite like dining under the stars while the night chorus of frogs serenades the guests.

### *But I digress...*

For me, when in the bush, I do not so much drift off as crash into sleep. The comfortable bed, the delicious meal, and the exciting sightings all combined to make certain that I was asleep faster than I could name the Big5.



My sleep was rudely interrupted in the early hours of the morning by the incredibly loud roar of a lion from what sounded like right outside my bedroom window.

I had left a recording device on the nightstand, which I grabbed for in the darkness, as I headed for the veranda door to record the call for an article I was working on.

As I opened the sliding door, focused on the levels on the recording device, I became aware of two important facts:

1. I was naked.
2. I had no idea where the lions were as a second roar had joined in harmony with the first.



# Lions roaring

## In the middle of the night

By David Batzofin

But, being the intrepid writer that I am, did I let either of these facts stop me? Of course not!

It turned out that I had left a torch out on the deck and I now decided that discretion was the better part of valour as I scanned the open ground in front of the chalet.

My persistence finally paid off when a set of eyes reflected in the torchlight, not too far away from me. I am uncertain who was the more surprised, him or me.

It turned out that he was more intent on meeting up with his brother than worrying about a pale, naked human with a microphone thrust in his general direction.

We were all winners that night. I got the recording and he got to head off into the darkness with his brother.

Knowing that I was in no danger, I remained in the darkness listening to the two as their grunting roars faded slowly into the distance.

Just another night in Africa!



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