



# WildlifeCampus

Learn-Protect-Save

## Nature calls

### WildlifeCampus:

The benefits of our courses  
for staff development

### A New Course

By WildlifeCampus

Hospitality  
Jobs

Recommended  
Struik Guides

### Birding

Online Course

African  
Folklore

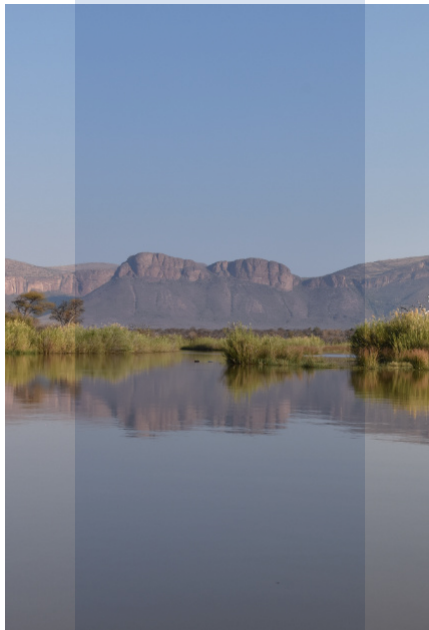
Anti-Poaching  
Courses

Old world  
monkeys

By Amy Holt



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Cover image: Leopard by Jonathan Acx

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# About WildlifeCampus

**WildlifeCampus is an online school specialising in wildlife education and hospitality.**

Our courses are industry-recognised, and we are an approved FGASA Delivery Partner.

Over the past 25 years, more than 30,000 students across 161 countries have taken our courses, which are considered the most comprehensive online offerings in wildlife and hospitality education.

We take pride in being leaders in delivering online wildlife education. We provide an authentic and unique e-learning experience, high-quality content, excellent value for money, and exceptional service.

There are no entry barriers, course deadlines, or set semesters. Students are welcome to register and begin any course at any time.

Many WildlifeCampus students have discovered that the knowledge gained from our courses has significantly enhanced their enjoyment of nature. As a result, many have found employment in the wildlife, hospitality, and tourism industries.







# WildlifeCampus

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## Study options

OPTIONS	BUY COURSES	MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION	LIFETIME SUBSCRIPTION
COURSE ACCESS	UNLIMITED ACCESS TO <b>THE COURSE/S YOU BUY</b> .	ACCESS TO <b>ALL COURSES <u>WHILE SUBSCRIBED</u></b> .	UNLIMITED ACCESS TO <b>ALL OUR COURSES</b> .
HOW DOES PAYMENT WORK?	BUY ONCE-OFF, OR PAY THEM OFF MONTHLY.	R300/MONTH - 24 MONTHS (CANCEL ANYTIME- <b>NO CANCELLATION FEES</b> ).	R 18 000 ONCE-OFF PAYMENT.
ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATE FEES	<b>NONE</b> . THE CERTIFICATE FEES ARE INCLUDED.	R250 PER CERTIFICATE REDEEMED.	<b>NONE</b> . THE CERTIFICATE FEES ARE INCLUDED.





# Reptile myths and superstitions

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By WildlifeCampus

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What makes an irrational fear of reptiles, especially snakes, worse is the sheer number of myths, misconceptions, superstitions, and exaggerated stories that surround them. From folk tales to urban legends, these ideas have been passed down for generations, often making snakes seem far scarier than they really are. Let us take a look at some of the most common ones with a rational perspective.



**Does the black mamba move faster than a horse?**

**No.** The size and speed of snakes are frequently over-exaggerated, probably as a result of the fright and panic situation resulting from a random encounter. Most people can outrun a snake easily, especially as reptiles can only go at full speed in short bursts.

**Do snakes only die at sunset?**

**No.** They die naturally at any time or when they get killed.

**Are snakes slimy?**

**No.** They do have a shiny appearance, but unless they have just come out of water, they are dry and feel dry. Some describe the texture as being very similar to glass.

**After a snake has envenomated prey or has been milked, is it harmless?**

**No.** Snake venom comes from modified saliva glands, and venom is often quickly replenished.

**Do snakes sting with their tongue?**

**No.** The tongue of a snake is used for smelling. It flicks more often when the snake is in a new environment, around people, or searching for prey. The forked tongue "picks up" air particles and brings them into the mouth, where an organ called Jacobson's Organ is located. This organ, found at the top of the mouth, processes the particles and translates them into scents that the snake can understand.

**Do snakes lick their prey before swallowing it?**

**No.** This belief probably originates from the way a snake will sometimes flick its tongue over the entire body of the prey before swallowing. This action allows the snake to accurately discern the animal's body shape. This is done to ensure that swallowing the victim headfirst which usually guarantees that limbs and hair will fold down when swallowed.





### **Do snakes travel in pairs?**

**No.** Snakes and most reptiles are solitary animals. They will only seek out other snakes during breeding season. They do not travel together. Once mating is complete, they move off in separate directions.

### **Do snakes seek out revenge when you have killed one of a pair?**

**No.** This is a myth. Snakes do not form pairs or seek revenge. The idea might come from the fact that some female snakes leave scent trails that males follow during mating season. If someone sees a female snake and then later spots a male following the same path, they might mistakenly assume the two are a pair. In reality, the male is simply tracking the female's scent.

### **Do pythons hang onto trees when killing prey?**

**No.** Pythons do not have a hook on the end of their tails. They also do not hang onto tree trunks. However, if a tree is nearby and the prey is pulling them, they may wrap their tail around a tree or bush.

### **Are chameleons venomous?**

**No.** They are harmless and cannot impose any real damage on anyone. The origin of this belief is not conclusively documented.

### **Why are some people scared of chameleons?**

One traditional belief is that when a person dies, their spirit goes to the nearest animal to go to the spirit world. If this is a chameleon, the spirit will never get there. Another is because the eyes of the chameleon can rotate independently from one another; an animal that can see into the future and the past at the same time is not to be trusted.

**For more, please explore our FREE Reptile of the Lowveld Course.**

**Click  
here**





# WildlifeCampus:

## The benefits of our courses for staff development



**WildlifeCampus**

Learn-Protect-Save

**WildlifeCampus courses offer a wealth of benefits to staff in organisations and industries connected to wildlife, conservation, tourism, and hospitality.**

### **Enhanced knowledge and expertise**

WildlifeCampus offers a wide range of courses, including lodge management, Front of House, wildlife management, field guiding, animal behaviour, and hospitality. Enrolling staff in our courses ensures they develop a deeper understanding of their work environment, enhancing their expertise in specific roles and improving the quality of their work.

### **Cost-effective training solution**

WildlifeCampus courses are cost-effective and accessible to teams of any size. Organisations can invest in scalable learning solutions that deliver high-quality content without the logistical challenges and costs.

### **Professional growth opportunities**

Offering access to WildlifeCampus courses demonstrates an organisation's commitment to staff development. Employees who feel valued and empowered with training opportunities are more likely to perform better, feel satisfied in their roles, and contribute positively to the workplace.

### **Improved communication and teamwork**

Wildlife-related jobs often require collaboration and communication between team members, particularly in field settings. Our courses equip staff with the soft skills to build better guest and colleague relationships.

### **Practical, industry-relevant skills**

WildlifeCampus courses are designed with real-world application in mind. Skills such as species identification, ecotourism management, and environmental education are valuable in the workplace and directly transferable to day-to-day operations. Staff trained in these areas can address challenges and exceed expectations.



### **Flexibility for ongoing learning**

WildlifeCampus's online format allows staff to learn at their own pace, making it easy to fit training into their busy schedules. This flexibility enables employees to balance work and study effectively, ensuring uninterrupted productivity while they gain new skills.

### **Increased confidence and performance**

Knowledgeable and well-trained employees are more confident in their abilities. This confidence translates into improved decision-making, better customer service, and greater contributions to the organisation's goals.

### **Alignment with conservation and sustainability goals**

For organisations focused on conservation and ecotourism, WildlifeCampus courses reinforce staff alignment with these core missions. Staff who are educated about wildlife, ecosystems, and sustainable practices are better equipped to support the company's environmental goals and contribute to a greener future.

### **Employee retention and morale**

Providing access to professional development opportunities shows employees that their growth is a priority. This investment in their future creates loyalty, reduces turnover, and boosts overall morale within the workplace.

**By empowering staff with the right tools and knowledge, organisations can build stronger teams, enhance operations, and contribute to the broader goals of conservation and sustainability.**





# Old World Monkeys:

## Drills and Mandrills



© M. Newnham

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**By WildlifeCampus  
student**

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**Amy Holt**

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The genus *Mandrillus* includes only two species: the strikingly colourful mandrill and its not-so-colourful cousin, the drill. Originally, they were considered to be a type of baboon, but they are actually more closely related to mangabeys. Both these Old World monkeys are characterised by their large sizes, downward-pointing nostrils, and stub tails.



Unlike other primate species that bare their teeth as a threat to show off how big and dangerous their canines are, drills and mandrills smile at each other as a friendly greeting. But what makes drills and mandrills different from each other?

Drills are far less colourful than mandrills, with brownish-grey hair and shiny black faces with a white fringe. Newborns have pink faces that take four months to start turning black. Males are more vibrantly coloured than females; they have a red strip under the lip, and their rumps are stained various shades of lilac, blue, and pink. The brightest coloured males have the highest rank within the troop and are the most sexually active. Despite female drills being more subdued in colour, when they are pregnant or ready to mate, their genitals swell and turn bright red. As a sexually dimorphic species, males are twice as large as females.

Drills are endangered, with fewer than 10,000 individuals left in the wild. They are native to Cameroon, Nigeria, and Bioko Island in Equatorial Guinea. These Old World monkeys are omnivorous and opportunistic, with forest fruit being their preferred food source. They frequently eat fiddle-leaf fig, cola palm tree, and African corkwood tree. Their long canines and hard molar teeth have been evolutionarily designed to eat a wide variety of food. For example, ants provide a rich source of protein.

These monkeys are most likely to socialise at



© W. Warby

dawn and dusk. Depending on the season, troops may move location in search of accessible resources. Once a new home is established, members will remain within five square kilometres of their designated sleeping tree for the entire season. They will leave the tree every day in search of food. Drills are very good climbers thanks to their specialised forearm muscles that allow them to cling vertically to tree trunks and forest vines. At night, drills find shelter and protection in the trees. When confronted by predators, such as leopards, crowned eagles, and Central African rock pythons, drills prefer to flee high into the forest canopy rather than to fight. However, they do have the ability to fight fiercely if required.

Drills live in multi-male and multi-female troops that consist of fifteen to seventy-five individuals. For every twenty troop members, there is one adult male. Sometimes, multiple troops come together to form giant super troops made up of over 100 individuals. When a dominant male drill is ready to mate, he will grin and smack his lips at an attractive female. They fight for dominance by performing mate guarding. This is where the male guards the female away from other males and is aggressive to those who approach the female. Mate guarding helps actively exclude other males from accessing the female. Dominance lasts for about three years and is gained by males competing with each other through a series of displays in an attempt to show off. Fights for dominance are rare, but when they do occur, the one who inflicts the most damage is deemed the winner.

Female drills give birth to one baby at a time. Adult females are the primary carers, but juveniles often help groom and socialise with their siblings. Females reach sexual maturity at the age of three, while males reach it at the age of six.

Mandrills are the largest monkeys in the world, and they are unmistakable thanks to their colourful faces. Charles Darwin said, "No other member in the class of mammals is coloured in such an extraordinary manner as the adult male mandrill." These monkeys are recognised by their olive-grey hair, blue noses with red stripes, golden beards, bright red lips, and vibrant red, blue, or purple rumps. Like drills, mandrills display sexual dimorphism, with males being larger and more colourful than females. The vibrancy of a male helps indicate their testosterone levels. Dominant males are the most colourful, with the colour fading as status decreases. The vibrant colours are advantageous, as female mandrills prefer males that are more colourful. When mandrills are excited, the colouring on their rump brightens. In females, this typically signals that she is in oestrus and is ready to mate. However, brightening of the rumps can indicate submissiveness in both sexes.

Mandrills are native to Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. The diet of mandrills mainly consists of figs and other fruits, but they also eat seeds, insects, lizards, rodents, soil, and clay. Mandrills have been observed eating other primates, but never other mandrills. These Old World monkeys spend most of the day foraging; adult females and young forage together, while adult males forage alone or in small groups. Once night comes, they sleep high up on tree branches to avoid predators, such as leopards and Central African rock pythons.

These monkeys live in multi-male and multi-female groups of forty individuals. These groups exist within larger groups known as hordes that include 600 to 800 mandrills. In the smaller groups, mandrills maintain and rearrange their complex social networks and hierarchies through grooming, aggressive displays, and bonding behaviours. Each group contains a distinct male and female hierarchy. A dominant male occupies the top of the male hierarchy. This male receives greater access to females during mating season. He is usually the largest and strongest mandrill in the group, and he protects the group from threats.

He maintains dominance through threatening vocalisations, facial expressions, physical postures, and scent markings.

In female hierarchies it is a bit more complicated with several females reigning over. The dominant females are usually the oldest and most experienced group members. They receive greater access to food and high-status males. The sisters and offspring of dominant females hold higher status than other females. Grooming helps maintain dominance hierarchies, resolve conflicts, and strengthen social bonds.

Males and females mate with multiple partners. Females give birth to one or two babies at a time. The infants hold their mother's fur and nurse frequently. Mandrills partake in alloparenting, which is where unrelated females may assist with child-rearing. Females reach sexual maturity at the age of four, while males mature by age seven.

These Old World monkeys are renowned for their vibrant colouration and complex social structures. Despite their distinct colours and interesting lives, the survival of both drills and mandrills is increasingly threatened by human activities. Their habitats are threatened by deforestation, driven by logging and the conversion of forest land for agriculture. Bushmeat hunting offers local communities a reliable source of protein while pushing these monkeys closer to the brink of extinction.

As seed dispersers, the conservation of drills and mandrills is critical for the biodiversity of Africa's forest ecosystem.





# Anti-Poaching Courses

**WildlifeCampus offers three anti-poaching courses that provide essential knowledge for those committed to wildlife protection and conservation.**

Together, they build a comprehensive foundation, equipping learners of all levels to contribute meaningfully to anti-poaching efforts in Africa and beyond. Upon completion, students receive industry-recognised certificates that reflect their dedication to safeguarding our natural heritage.

## **Anti-Poaching:**

This in-depth course covers the core principles of anti-poaching operations, including tracking, patrol techniques, bushcraft, and the legal framework behind wildlife protection. It's ideal for anyone looking to understand or support frontline conservation efforts.

## **Introduction to K9 Anti-Poaching:**

Focusing on the unique role of trained dogs in anti-poaching units, this course explores how K9s are used for tracking, detection, and deterrence. Perfect for those interested in working with conservation dogs or supporting K9 units in the field.

## **Anti-Poaching Junior:**

Designed for younger learners or beginners, this course introduces the concepts of conservation and anti-poaching in a simplified, engaging format. It's a great starting point for inspiring the next generation of conservationists.





# Highly recommended

By WildlifeCampus

**Struik Nature Guides are the perfect complement to our online courses**, offering practical, in-depth field references that enhance your learning experience. While our courses provide the theoretical knowledge needed to excel in wildlife and hospitality industries, Struik Nature Guides feature thousands of species to assist with identification, paired with detailed illustrations and expert insights.



## PROTEAS

OF THE FYNBOS

JOHN MANNING



WildlifeCampus Magazine

- 14 -



**Proteas are South Africa's wildflower celebrities: the King Protea is emblazoned on the National Coat of Arms and our proteas give their name to the country's cricket team.**

A total of 330 protea species are found in the fynbos of the Cape Floristic Region – the botanical treasure house at the southern tip of Africa.

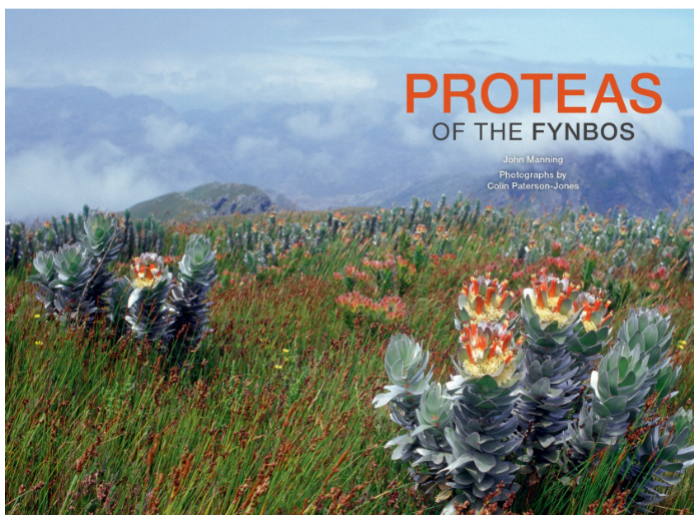
Proteas of the Fynbos features 165 of the region's more common or showy species, with pointers to many more. Each species account details diagnostic features, flowering times, habitats and distribution, while colour photographs showcase the beauty and diversity of this charismatic plant group.

An informative introduction explores the biology, pollination, origin and conservation status of fynbos proteas, and highlights features to aid identification.

Arranged in clearly depicted groups and subgroups for easy identification, this innovative guide enables flower enthusiasts to confidently identify over half of all fynbos protea species.

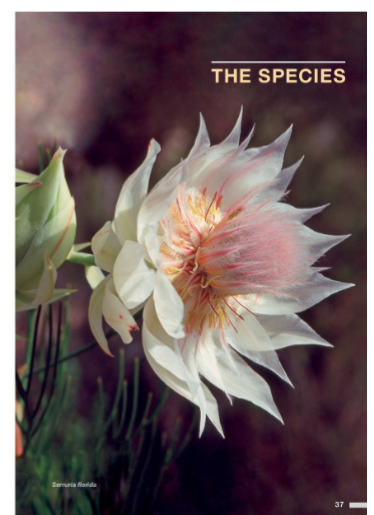
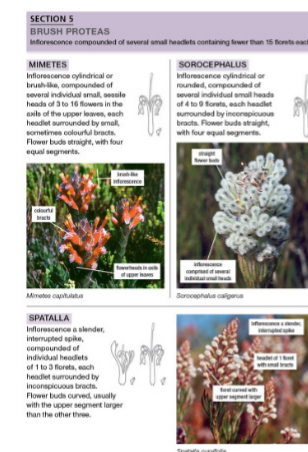
**John Manning is an internationally acclaimed botanist at the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).**

A prolific writer, illustrator and photographer, he has authored and co-authored numerous scientific papers, magazine articles and books on South Africa's flora, including Field Guide to Fynbos, Pocket Guide Fynbos, Field Guide to Wild Flowers of South Africa and Ericas of the Fynbos.



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# Animal Tracks & Signs

## Scent marking

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By Chris and  
Mathilde Stuart

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For more on our  
Animal Tracks and  
Signs of Africa course:

**Click  
here**

Chris (1950–2024) & Mathilde Stuart are the highly regarded authors of a range of books, field guides and mobile applications on African mammals, wildlife and conservation. Much of Chris (1950–2024) & Mathilde Stuart are the highly regarded authors of a range of books, field guides and mobile applications on African mammals, wildlife and conservation. Much of their time has been spent travelling the world in search of wild mammals and promoting their conservation with the written word. Mathilde holds a doctorate in medicine from the University of Innsbruck and Chris an MSc from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.



Scent marking is a method used by numerous mammals to "signpost" their presence in a home range, either to warn off or attract other members of the same species. Animals use droppings and urine for this purpose; in addition, many species have glands that produce secretions which they paste on rocks, twigs, leaves or the soil. Unfortunately, most of these scent marks are easily overlooked.

Many antelope species have glands on the face that produce small quantities of dark secretion to act as "notice-boards" for other members of the same species. Usually, a twig tip or firm grass stalk is stuck into the gland and so coated with a dark, tar-like substance. These marking points are often used over long periods of time. Here a klipspringer ewe is marking a twig. The marks are usually associated with large accumulations of dung pellets.



The three species of hyaena and the aardwolf paste grass stalks with secretions from their anal glands, but only the brown hyaena deposits two distinct secretions on the same grass stalk; this can be clearly seen in the **photograph below**. Only the very observant are likely to find this type of sign. The pastings may be found throughout the home range.



# Travel Buggz

## Adventures

**T**he Travel Buggz are helping Alyssa Carter with fund raising - see how you can help?

"The Buggz are helping a young girl, Alyssa Carter, to raise funds for the rhinos - you can support them too by buying a Travel Buggz book.

"I am a proud daddy," Alyssa's father, Brian posts, "last night Alyssa won a certificate at the Rhino Conservation Awards". "She also met Prince Albert II of Monaco," Bella Butterfly shows the Buggz on Facebook, "and she was nominated by Animal Radio in America as their Hero Person for the week". "She really is important now," Lucy's eyes sparkle, she's a good person doing a good deed. More of us need to be like her".



"Imagine if there were no more rhinos," Aiden Ant scratches his chin. "If they were extinct like dinosaurs," he ponders. "We would only know about them from books and movies," Lucy shudders. "And if humans keep killing off our wildlife, our Earth will be a lonely planet," adds Alyssa. "Yes and it will be bad for our whole ecosystem," Bella Butterfly comments. "An ecosystem?" questions Lucy. "The cycle of everything living on our planet", Aiden scoffs.

For every Travel Buggz "Save The Rhino" book purchased from this promo, R50-00 will be donated to the Rhino Foundation.

Books are R85-00 each

WhatsApp to order :  
+27 82 908 7125

All Travel Buggz story books are also available in Afrikaans and the Kruger edition in iSizulu.



The time has come, the Travel Buggz are visiting the Kruger National Park. Binoculars and bird books ready, they scan the bushveld excitedly looking for wild animals. "Stop. Over there," Aiden Ant is first to spot something grazing, "I see a mommy and baby rhino". "The baby is so small, see how it grazes in front of its mommy so she can protect it". Bella Butterfly clicks her camera, hastily capturing the special moment.



"How do the poachers get into the Kruger?" Lucy Ladybug questions. "Sadly, the Kruger Park shares a long border with Mozambique, one of our neighbouring countries. Some poachers creep across the border through Mozambique's connecting national park," Bella Butterfly explains. "Others," Aiden adds, "pretend they are tourists visiting the park. They come in normal cars and enter just like we do. When they are inside, they sneak off into the bush and hunt down the rhinos."

"Whrr, Whrr, Whrr, a strange sound gets louder and louder overhead. "What animal is that?" Lucy looks around. "It's not an animal you noodle, it's a helicopter!" Aiden roars. "There," Bella points. "It's landing in the road". Aiden gasps, "they're pointing rifles at two men lying on the ground and look, there's Alyssa's dogs. They must have sniffed out the poachers and their handlers called the helicopter". "We'll stay out of the way", Bella confirms. .



““I am happy Alyssa’s dogs are doing a good job. It proves that young people, can make a big difference,” Bella Butterfly assures the Buggz. “What Alyssa is doing is a victory for her generation. We are proud to have her support,” the Chairperson of the SAN Parks Honorary Rangers posts on their website. “We have learnt heaps from Alyssa and I feel so proud of her,” Lucy Ladybug beams, “we must keep supporting her”.



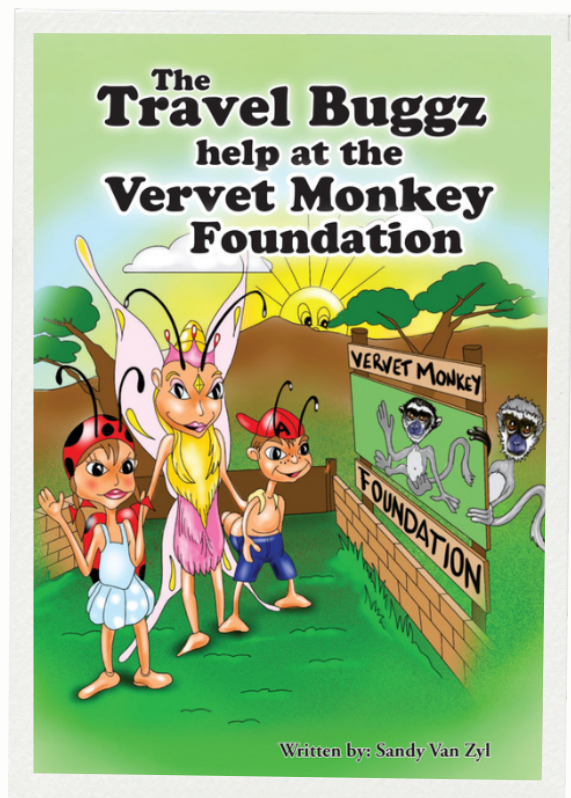
The Travel Buggz stories are an exciting illustrative collection of children’s stories based on the travel experiences of three humanized Buggz who enjoy the world of experience and knowledge they gain with every trip they go on.

**More stories in the collection:**

- The Travel Buggz are off to the Kruger National Park
- The Travel Buggz go to the Seaside
- The Travel Buggz take their First Flight
- The Travel Buggz must stay Home
- The Travel Buggz go Camping



Catch up with us next month to find out what adventure the Travel Bugg will be going on next.



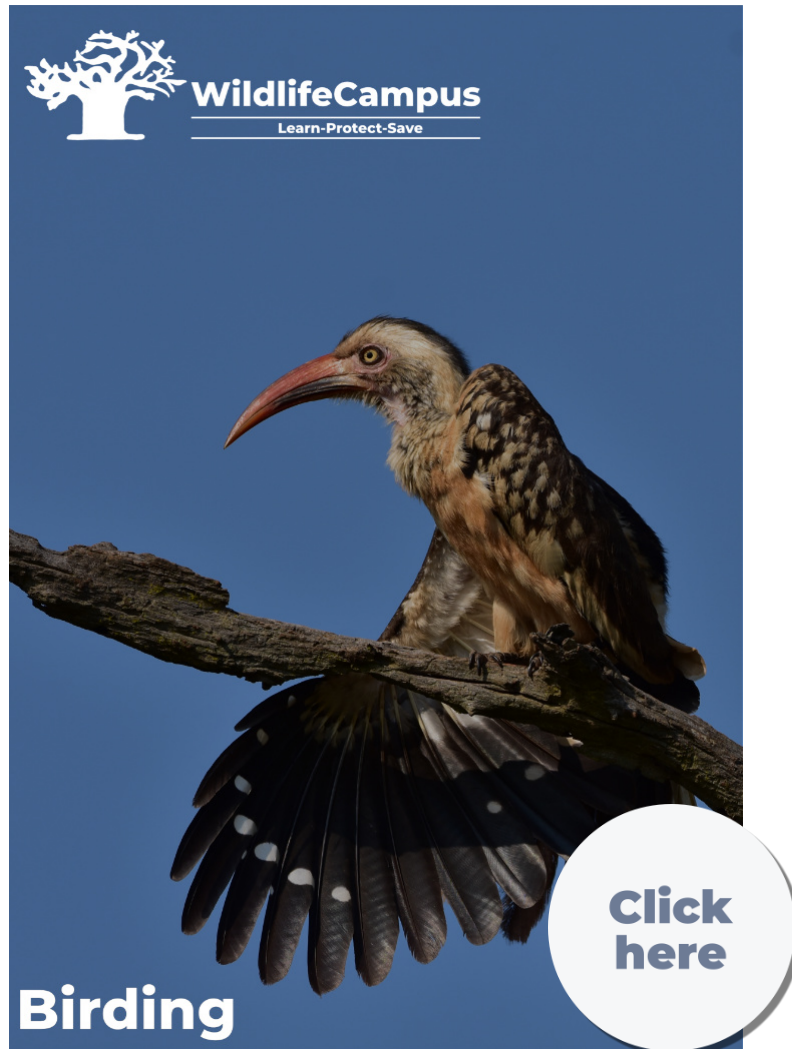


**P**rint this picture in colour and put it up as a poster in your room.



The Travel Buggz stories are a series of children's story books about the adventures of the author and her two children. If you would like copies of any of the ten titles, contact : [sandy@travelbuggz.co.za](mailto:sandy@travelbuggz.co.za). +27 82 908 7125

# Course Spotlight



**For bird enthusiasts everywhere, our Birding course offers a unique opportunity to explore the habits and behaviours of our feathered friends from the comfort of your own home.**

Covering bird identification, behaviour, migration patterns, and conservation, this course will help anyone become a knowledgeable birdwatcher.

Perfect for nature lovers, whether as a hobby or career path, the course is designed to be beginner-friendly while offering enough depth for seasoned birders.

This course is an extension of our field guiding (nature guiding) course and can be taken separately. Do not buy this course if you already have access to the field guiding (nature guiding) course.



# African Folklore

## Mamba: reincarnation of Kings



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By Credo Mutwa

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The content that follows is written from transcribed tapes recorded by the late Credo Mutwa, one of Southern Africa's most celebrated Sangomas. The content therefore is not scientific but rather represent the feelings, beliefs and experiences of this exceptional man.

These stories are written in precisely the same way that Credo Mutwa tells them, with all their original colloquialisms and styles.

In the land of the Zulus the mamba is a very sacred creature indeed. Zulu people believe that their kings will, after death, reincarnate as mambas.

And when a mamba - whether a black mamba or the deadly green mamba - invades a Zulu homestead after the death of a royal person, it is held to be that the royal person has come to say good bye to those he or she has left behind and has come in the form of a mamba.

It is said that only good kings are given the right, by the gods, of being reborn as mambas.

And let me tell you that in Africa, everywhere, snakes are not held to be evil creatures - far from it! To our people, a snake (no matter of which kind) is seen as a symbol of regeneration and rebirth, because every year a snake sheds its skin to become a new creature again.

In olden days, if a person was bitten by a mamba, it was believed that that person, or a relative of his or hers, had committed an act of treason against the reigning king, or was planning to commit such an act.

One of the strangest things that I've come across in my travels to many parts of the world is that there are beliefs that are identical.

And one of these beliefs that I have come across is this one: In central and southern America, the Native Americans there used to believe in a serpent, a great snake, which had a huge crest of green feathers.

This crested serpent was known as Quetzalcoatl. Amongst the Zulu people, whose culture bears amazing similarities to that of Native Americans, there is a belief in a mamba - a huge serpent with three tall feathers growing from the top of its head. This mythical reptile is called Indlodlo, and is exactly as the case with the Quetzalcoatl, a crested serpent.

The Zulu Indlodlo is directly associated with the sun god, Umvelinqangi. And the similarity between the story of the Native American sun hero, Quetzalcoatl, and that of the Zulu Umvelinqangi, are uncanny. Umvelinqangi loses one of his legs in a terrible battle against a huge dragon called Denkanyamba.

And Quetzalcoatl was also believed by some Native Americans to have lost one of his legs in a battle against a huge reptile that dwelt in a great river. Some say he deliberately sacrificed his leg to the creature.





No matter where I have gone, I have found people whose beliefs resembled those of Africa. In ancient Greece there was a place called Delphi and it was a place of oracles and divinations to which people went in search of healing and in search of knowing about their future.

There was a temple in which there dwelled a python and a priestess who was known as the 'pythoness' who would tell the people about their future.

Everywhere on earth I have found that ancient people used to hold the serpent with reverence. Only in very few places did I find people holding the snake to be an evil creature. In fact, even in Judaic culture, at one time a snake was held with reverence. And what proof do we have of that?

There was a symbol in ancient Israel, a symbol of healing, known as a nechushtan, a symbol which consisted of a forked length of wood upon which a serpent, made of gold or bronze, was draped.

Moses used such a healing device to save people who had been bitten by snakes, in the great story of Exodus.

And when an ancient man of Israel called another one a nachash, which meant a snake, he was not insulting him, he was calling him an expert in a certain field. It was only much later, in the Christian religion, that the snake was given a bad press.

One of the most revered reptiles in South Africa, a reptile that is painted in bushmen caves again and again, is the ntlangwana, the horned viper - a snake with growths on its head that seem like little horns.

This snake was revered by our people and believed to possess supernatural powers.





# Unseen Wonders

## Impalas deserve your attention



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**By David Batzofin**

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David is an award-winning blogger whose work can be found at [www.travelandthings.co.za](http://www.travelandthings.co.za)

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Picture this: You are on a thrilling safari adventure, the sun shining generously over the endless expanse of grassland. Your heart races at the prospect of spotting one or more of the Big 5. Especially the predators, lions, and leopards. Perhaps a belligerent buffalo herd, a lumbering rhino or an elephant. Suddenly, there they are—a dazzling herd of impalas, gracefully dotting the landscape like elegant dancers against a lush green stage. But wait! Did everyone just collectively sigh and shift their gaze, scanning the bush for the next big thrill? Yes, they did.



Don't get me wrong; the allure of predators is hard to resist. Our primal instincts kick in; we're drawn to the drama of nature's kill-or-be-killed saga. Yet, in the flurry of excitement to spot those animals with teeth and claws, we often overlook the splendid subtleties of everyday life around us. And that's where the impalas shine—a homegrown spectacle unfolding right under our noses!

When we think about nature's ultimate performers, we tend to envision the ferocious and the fearsome. Lions roaring, cheetahs sprinting, and hyenas scrapping over scraps can seem like the main attraction. But let's take a moment to appreciate the impalas. While they might not inspire the same gasps of awe, trust me, they have the potential to mesmerize those who take a moment to sit quietly and observe.

This herd, with its perfect tan coats and white markings, exuded an air of effortless grace. Watching them play out their daily drama is like viewing a tranquil yet thrilling movie. Are those two rams engaging in a friendly squabble or a serious showdown? Spoiler alert: it's usually both! The clashing of horns can be surprisingly thunderous, echoing through the trees like a natural symphony composed by nature itself. Combined with their loud grunts, it's a free performance, and the impalas take their roles seriously.

My mind often drifts to the uncharted territory of animal psychology while observing these creatures. As apex prey, impalas are hyper-aware; they possess a keen ability to sense even the slightest disturbance. And yet, in their tranquil state, there is a distinctive lack of fear as they go about their business of munching on grasses and frolicking between shafts of light.

The interaction between the rams unfolds like an opera, full of fierce competition and playful rivalry. Who will reign supreme? Who will win over the admiration (or at least the attention) of the ewes?

My encounter at Sun Destinations Nambu Camp, set within the stunning surroundings of Balule Game Reserve, was a case study in the persistence of patience. As I sat immersed in the moment, the rams eagerly practised their horn-locked dance, the earth

stirred beneath their clashing bodies as dust swirled in the air. Who needs the roar of a lion when you have the dust and drama of two impalas going head-to-head?

Every game drive offers opportunities for unexpected learning moments. Something as seemingly ordinary as a herd of impalas can unveil profound insights into the behaviour and social structures of wildlife. After all, the drama of the wild isn't just about the chase—it's about understanding the intricate tapestry of life that consists of multiple interwoven species.

In the grand tapestry that is the African wilderness, the impalas serve an essential role. They are the delicate threads sewing everything together, reminding us that adventure sometimes whispers.

Next time, don't rush past the impalas. Take a moment to pause, lean in, and witness the quiet narrative being played out between the rams and ewes. You might just discover the charm and wonder that these graceful antelopes possess, proving that in nature, every creature has its story worth telling, and every moment has the potential for enchantment.

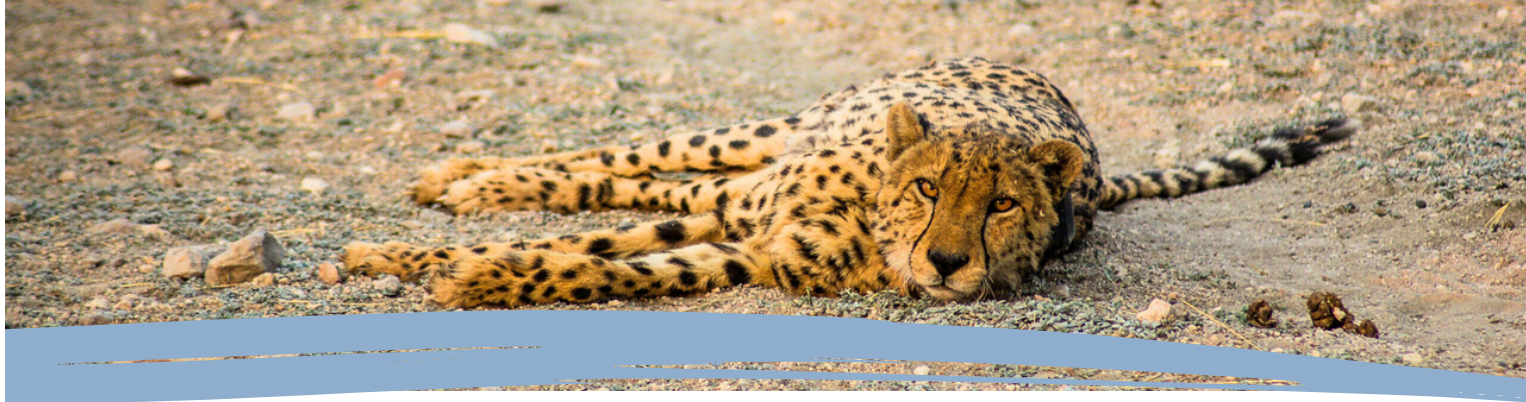




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