



Wildlife Campus

20
YEARS
ANNIVERSARY

LEARN PROTECT SAVE

Magazine

What is
CITES?

Summer &
Snake Encounters

More about
veganism for
your lodge

Discover our
Spring Special

WildlifeCampus

Don't freaking feed The Wild Animals!

The origin story



WildlifeCampus CEO
Todd Kaplan

During the late Summer of 1989, sixteen of us were camping on the banks of the Chobe River in the Chobe Game Reserve in far Northern Botswana.

At the time there were no fences or barriers around the campsite at all, so being in the reserve was a completely immersive experience. Just walking from tent to toilet or tent to trailer had the potential to be quite an exciting experience involving the avoidance of elephant, buffalo or hippo in addition to lion, leopard and spotted hyena. This tale however is about a ground squirrel.

The squirrel made its introduction early on the first day of our arrival. It emerged from the riverine vegetation where we had set up camp. It was clearly quite tame and approached anyone who might be willing to feed it. Now the feeding of wild animals in any reserve, including or perhaps especially the “tame” ones is to be avoided. Not only is it illegal, but it also modifies behaviour and ecology, and can even be dangerous or deadly to introduce foods into a diet where their digestion cannot cope. However, with none of us being ecologists yet, (although three of us would achieve this years later) we soon had the rodent literally eating out of our hands.

Ground squirrels eat bulbs, fruits, flowers, moss, grasses, pods, bird eggs, herbs, berries, insects, gum and shrubs. To this we added corn and potato chips, granola bars, grapes, raisins, biltong, peanuts and even offered it a peculiar tinned combination of tuna and sweetcorn, not a hit, perhaps it was the mayo? They forage daily and do not hoard food. Indeed its daily foraging now consisted of begging for food constantly and increasingly boldly and belligerently. This resident panhandler went from cute curiosity to a petulant pest quite quickly when ignored or denied.

It also started quite early in the morning, as ground squirrels rise before the dawn. This was fine when we had planned our own early morning game drive, but was considerably less welcome when we planned a leisurely lie-in.

One early morning, we were again awoken by an incessant scratching on our canvas tent. After a few days this was now a common occurrence courtesy of the now, not-so-cute curiosity. It's that freaking (a similar but different expletive was probably used) squirrel

again. Over the course of a few too many early morning scratchings we had learnt that ignoring the ever-hungry rodent did not stop it. However, slapping the tent in close proximity did, at least for a while when it went to try its luck on an adjacent tent.

With that in mind, I slapped the tent, hard. My hand connected fairly solidly with something significantly more substantial than a 500g squirrel. The critter on the other side of the tent growled, then roared, in a somewhat unsquirrel like timbre. I don't think that's the squirrel, remarked one of the tent mates; no freaking (not-freaking) kidding observed another. It's a freaking (?) lion, a freaking (F), freaking lion, offered a third...

And so it was, and while none of us bravely ventured out to confirm, the huge paw prints discovered throughout the campsite bore stark evidence of this nocturnal visitor. That was also our final night in Chobe and all kept an eye out for the squirrel as we struck camp and headed on, it didn't appear, but a small parting gift of roasted cashews was left.

Authors Note:

I have subsequently witnessed several “eradication teams” at work on various reserves and game lodges where it had become unavoidably necessary to “permanently remove” a disturbingly varied collection of “pests” who have become destructive, aggressive or even dangerous to guests and clients. It may look like fun and you may have the best of intentions but it almost always ends badly.

Todd

In this *Magazine*

"Origin stories": Don't freaking feed the wild animals! 2

Spring Special! 4

Summer and snake encounters by ASI 5

Course spotlight Field Guiding/Game Ranging 7

How to join WildlifeCampus in 4 steps 8

Veganism for lodges: are you on the right track? 9

What is CITES and how does it work? 12

"Can a leopard change its spots?" by D. Batzofin 15

Spring Special

Start Spring with this incredible special!

Upskill yourself by taking our 4 main online courses
+ 1 additional course of your choice

- Field Guiding/Game Ranging
- Wildlife Management
- Game Lodge Management
- Anti-Poaching
- 1 online course of your choice

5 course combination
for only
R 5,999.00

Simply email: info@wildlifecampus.com and we'll help get you started!

Our Spring Special starts 01/09/2020 and ends 01/10/2020 due to the massive discount this package is only available for the cash price and cannot be paid off monthly. Once you have purchased your courses, you can start anytime. There are no deadlines or entrance requirements.



Wildlife Campus

LEARN PROTECT SAVE

WildlifeCampus Magazine 4

SUMMER AND SNAKE ENCOUNTERS



Spring is here and we're heading into snake season in southern Africa. Snake season is from September until around March/April – this is when the snakes are busiest and most human / snake encounters occur.

As the temperature increases, snakes come out of their winter inactivity and are on the hunt, both for food and mates. When the first rains arrive, we see a spike in snake sightings, as snakes are often flooded out of underground burrows. The rain also brings out a huge number of frogs – a favourite meal for a number of snakes.



Brown Water Snake eating a frog.

In many of our snake species, mating takes place in spring to early summer. The female snakes leave a trail of pheromones, which attract the males – sometimes more than one. This meeting of multiple males often ends up in the males fighting for the right to mate with the female and we see a number of male combat images on social media during the mating season. The two males twist around one another, attempting to push each other to the ground – the winner of the wrestling match gets to mate with the female. Some snakes, like the Mole Snakes, bite one another and leave visible wounds that heal up quickly.

Female snakes can mate with multiple males and are also able to store sperm – this means that babies from a single clutch may have multiple fathers.

Eggs are usually laid in summer and the babies can take up to three months to hatch. The females (except for two species) do not guard their eggs and the babies, once born, disperse in all directions and are not cared for by the mothers. Both the Southern African Python (*Python natalensis*) and the Spotted Skaapsteker (*Psammophylax rhombeatus*) are known to protect their eggs during incubation, but once the babies are born, they disperse. A few of our snake species, like the Puff Adder (*Bitis arietans*) and Rinkhals (*Hemachatus haemachatus*) give birth to live young, but once the mother has dropped the babies she moves off and the babies fend for themselves.



Spotted Skaapsteker hatching.

With an increase in snake sightings in summer, we're often asked what one must do if a snake is encountered. This varies from situation to situation, but there are some important basic guidelines to follow.



A Berg Adder basking

For a number of the readers, their snake encounters will be in the bush. Perhaps while walking a trail, or out on a game drive. In this setting it is a fantastic opportunity to connect with nature and observe the animal's behaviour.

In the bush, snakes have numerous options for escape (unless mistakenly trodden on or grabbed) and they generally move off as quickly as possible. Occasionally snakes move towards people, as they haven't seen them, and are looking for an escape route. This is often mistaken for snakes chasing humans, which they don't do.



Southern African Python in ambush mode

If you're a safe distance (5m +) from a snake when it is spotted, you can stand still and watch the animal. If you are a bit too close, rather slowly back off a few paces – there is no need to run. If you are 5 meters or more away from any snake you are perfectly safe and cannot get bitten.



An alert Black Mamba looking for an escape route.

Unfortunately, some guides believe it is their duty to catch snakes to show to their guests up close. This often ends in bites, but luckily we are seeing more and more lodges implement protocols, that prevent hands on contact with wildlife, as per FGASA guidelines.

If the snake is in an enclosed space such as a room at a game lodge, and if it is possible, immediately back off 5 paces or more and call reception. They will arrange to send one of their trained snake removers to catch the snake. Watch the snake from a safe distance (5m +) while you wait for the snake remover to arrive, as knowing where the snake is assists them greatly.



Prevention.

When walking around lodges and campsites at night, wear closed shoes and use a torch. A number of our snakes are nocturnal and they are often attracted to human dwellings by food sources.

When out walking, step onto logs and rocks and not over them. Snakes love to bask at the base of logs and rocks. The sudden presence of a foot will frighten the snake and may result in a bite.

Be careful picking up firewood – snakes and scorpions are often encountered in piles of firewood.

Bird hides and outdoor bathrooms often have resident snakes that like to use the structure to hide in. Some snakes also like to hunt the geckos which are drawn by insects attracted to outside lights.

Remember that when you are at a lodge, campsite or similar venue, you are in a natural environment. There are bound to be wild animals and it is our duty to respect them. A number of people are petrified of snakes and will not travel to remote locations for fear of seeing one. The truth is that very few people actually encounter snakes.

Course Spotlight

Field Guiding-Game Ranging

The most comprehensive course of its kind offered anywhere in the world. This is the perfect course for those entering the industry and for those looking to fully prepare for their FGASA theory exams (including the Advanced and Specialist Field guiding levels). It is also the perfect course for those who simply want to learn more about the bush, online and in your own time!

If you are an aspiring or established game ranger, game guide, game guard, trails guide or field guide or merely have an interest in this field, this course is for you!

How to become a qualified Field Guide?

FGASA require that applicants wanting to gain a FGASA qualification do the following:

1. Become a member of FGASA
2. Write the theoretical examinations
(This course will fully prepare you!)
3. Be practically assessed



Practical Training

Endorsed Practical Training Providers, such as **Bushveld Training Adventures**, offer a practical and preparatory course, which runs over 25 days.

This is the **perfect opportunity for the WildlifeCampus students who have completed their theory**, to take a shorter, but intense practical training course and complete the FGASA qualification.

This includes First Aid Training (another FGASA requirement) as well as the practical assessment. Feel free to contact them directly for further information.



We have an entire website dedicated to this specific subject. For full info, visit:

www.fieldguiding.com



How to join *WildlifeCampus*

WildlifeCampus has been a FGASA-endorsed distance learning provider since the year 2000. Over 25,000 students in more than 154 countries have used WildlifeCampus to enhance their knowledge of our valuable Wildlife and Nature!

Are you a wildlife enthusiast, up for a career change, a professional in the wildlife/tourism industry or simply curious in all that involves natural sciences and wildlife?

Then our courses will be your thing!

In **4** Simple Steps

- Go to www.wildlifecampus.com
- Left on top of the homepage click the "Register Online Courses" button
- Complete the registration form
- Click the "Register for free" button to complete your registration



**Or click the wax seal to start filling
in our registration form.**

Veganism

Is your lodge ready?

The popularity of veganism has exploded worldwide over the past few years, fuelled by ever-increasing concerns about a healthier diet, animal welfare, climate change, but also by social media.

The current global pandemic has only fast tracked this movement as people start to make the connection that certain diseases may come from consuming animals and the reality is more pandemics might occur in our future unless we make some changes fast!

With veganism booming and studies showing a 700% increase in the movement over the last 3 years, the hospitality industry in South Africa needs guidance on how to become 'vegan-friendly' as quickly as possible.

Interest in veganism is at an all-time high in South Africa, so sizeable that South Africa shows a higher interest in veganism than countries like France, Italy, or Brazil.

The study was based on Google trend data, a reliable source of big data which lets you compare veganism popularity across the world. Google looks at vegan-related searches made in any language such as "vegan recipes", "vegan restaurants", etc. and assigns a score based on the number of searches for a given topic to all searches made in Google for that particular location. (Source: thesouthafrican.com)

This means that the hospitality businesses who cater for the local market need to move with the times or risk getting left behind in this, already challenging and competitive industry.

The lodges and hotel sector is also seeing more and more requests for vegan food from their overseas guests.

To give you a few statistics:

- Vegans in the UK quadrupled between 2014 and 2019, the UK is the fastest-growing vegan population, with Australia the 2nd.



- In Europe, we saw an increase of 93% for vegan food/drink businesses opening in 2019.
- There was a 600% increase in people going vegan in the USA between 2014 and 2017.
- In Germany 1 in 5 and even 1 in 10 people (depending on their age) purchase meat alternatives.

These statistics are your guests!

South Africa is currently listed as the 23rd most popular destination for vegans to visit on holiday and the faster the country moves up this list, the more tourists will visit.

Experts are also predicting that by 2040 only 40% of the global population will be consuming meat as we know it today. (Source: vegansociety.com)

Veganism

Is your staff cooking?

The industry has many challenges when serving vegan guests. Below we highlight a few of the typical responses you may expect to hear from managers, chefs, Food and Beverage managers when asked what difficulties they face:

- *"Vegans do not always call in advance, so we are not prepared for them."*
- *"Vegans ask us to take cheese off a dish, but then return it to the kitchen when they find out afterwards that there is butter in the meal."*
- *"Our kitchen is not always stocked with vegan-friendly ingredients."*
- *"It can get complicated with additional dietary requirements they have, for example what do we even serve a gluten free vegan?"*
- *"Vegans are often here at peak times and we do not have time to create dishes for them, as well as the other guests."*
- *"Vegan ingredients are expensive and not always in our budget."*
- *"Service staff may get confused by vegan requests which cause a problem with the order."*



If any of these responses sound familiar, then you are not alone, and this is where you need an industry expert to help you.

Hayley Cooper, CEO of Wild Dreams Hospitality is a certified vegan hospitality consultant and industry leader with 20 years in hospitality management.

Her company is in Greater Kruger National Park, South Africa, and serves clients in Southern Africa, including businesses in Botswana, Swaziland, Malawi and beyond. Her services are also offered as a fully remote package worldwide.

She is passionate about helping game lodges, restaurants, hotels, and any other hospitality establishment, to reach their full potential in attracting and serving the modern hospitality guest. She provides services in menu planning to expand your customer base, wine lists and tastings, vegan customer service training to support both front and back of house staff, as well as vegan and allergy-friendly amenities.

Hayley's extensive hospitality experience in a range of different establishments and environments, both internationally and locally, allows her to quickly and effectively create customised plans to take her clients to the next level of service. She has combined hospitality expertise with a passion for helping businesses to create an exceptional vegan experience for their customers and guests.

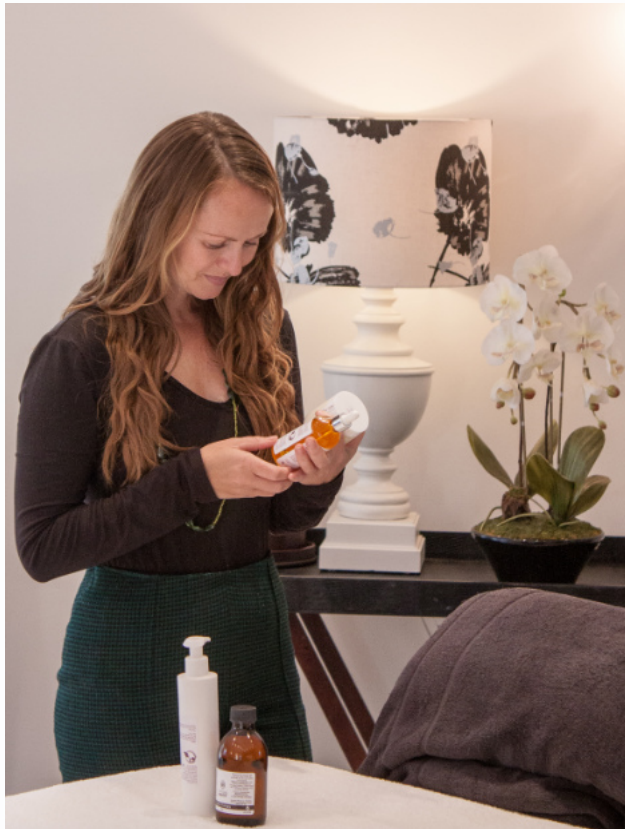
Hayley's enthusiasm comes from a deep love for animals, dedicating much of her life to rehabilitating wildlife in South Africa. Her approach to living sustainably and a passion for plant-based nutrition is what drives her to provide an expert service to her clients.

Her company Wild Dreams is well established, has excellent testimonials and prides itself on providing a professional and personalised service to the hospitality industry.

Veganism

In a nutshell

Hayley guarantees to make your 'wildest dreams' come true during this process which will help to ensure your company moves with these exciting times, in this ever-growing industry.



The Vegan Hospitality Consulting is personalised to your company, and includes the following services either in-person or remotely:

Menu evaluation

Recipe and menu creation

Menu labelling (food and drinks)

Wine list with descriptions, wine tasting template, wine and food pairing

Staff training - Chefs, Housekeepers, Waiters, Bar, Managers and Hosts

Sourcing of products - food, room, and spa amenities

Social media marketing of new menu/vegan-friendly offerings

Hayley is currently offering a free 30-minute consultation, where your specific challenges and struggles when serving vegans are discussed. She will also find out your reason for wanting to become more vegan-friendly. It is important to note, if you are not currently getting requests for vegan options then this may be due to you simply not attracting vegan customers to your establishment. She will explain how she could assist you based on your individual requirements and packages are tailored to these.

For more information on this service and to apply for the consultation go to her website: wilddreams.co.za

Also, if you are interested in "mini trainings" for free on veganism and many other hospitality topics make sure to follow her on social media:

Wild Dreams Hospitality on Facebook and @wilddreamshospitality on Instagram.

Contact and more information on:

hayley@wilddreams.co.za

What is **CITES** and how does it work?

by Taryn Ingram-Gillson



If you're interested in wildlife or conservation, you have most likely come across the acronym CITES, and you might be wondering why it is so important in the conservation world. The CITES annual CoP (the Conference of the Parties) may have popped onto your radar if you follow wildlife conservation news.

CITES stands for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The Convention was established in 1975 to protect wild animals and plants from overexploitation through international trade.

With approximately 178 countries having signed CITES, more than 30,000 plant and animal species are now protected.

It is important to note that CITES is legally binding. Any supplier who owns a CITES specimen should comply with the Convention. Specimens are defined as being alive, or dead parts and derivatives of the species, for example, rhino horn, animal bones or coral jewellery. Any supplier who is in contravention of CITES is operating illegally and they risk prosecution.

At the CoP18, the subject of trade in rhinos and rhino horn was a thorny issue. We summarise the arguments in a case study at the end of this article.

How CITES works

CITES outlines three levels of protection for species in international trade:

Level 1: Species may not be traded internationally for primary commercial purposes. However, these species may be traded internationally for non-commercial purposes. CITES import and export permits are required to trade.

Level 2: Species may be traded internationally for commercial purposes, but this trade is strictly controlled. CITES export permits are required for trade (no import permit required).

Level 3: this is a voluntary Appendix in the CITES document to which any Party can unilaterally add species. This indicates that the species is subject to regulation within the Party's jurisdiction and needs the cooperation of other parties to monitor and control trade.

Enforcing CITES

CITES Parties are expected to implement and enforce the Convention using domestic legislation. Each Party has a CITES management Authority and a CITES Scientific Authority. The former issues import and export permits, monitors trade in CITES species and compiles annual trade reports. The latter authority provides scientific expertise in import and export decisions.

CITES encourages precaution – in uncertain cases, trade should not be allowed unless there are sufficient safeguards to ensure that a species is protected from overuse.

What is **CITES** and how does it work?

by Taryn Ingram-Gillson

Determining the impact of trade

If a Party wishes to export a CITES-listed species, the exporting country should have a Non-Detriment Finding (NDF). An NDF is a finding that the export will not be detrimental to the survival of that species.

The NDF should be based on scientific studies of the status of the wild population of which the animal was taken. A scientific assessment should show that trading the animals, or their parts, will not deplete the wild population.

An NDF is not required to be formally written or published. Enquiries about NDFs need to be directed to the exporting and/or importing country.

Transporting animals

A CITES export permit for any live specimen of a species listed on CITES Appendix 1 or 2 may only be granted when the Management Authority of the exporting country is satisfied that the animal will be prepared and shipped to minimise the risk of injury, damage to health, or cruel treatment.

A CITES import permit may only be granted when the Management Authority of the importing country is satisfied that the proposed recipient of a living specimen is suitably equipped to house and care for it.

Key points

To summarise the key points so far:

- CITES is legally binding and protects wild animals from overexploitation through international trade.
- CITES applies three levels of protection to endangered animals in international trade.

- CITES import and export permits are issued when trading listed animals or their parts
- CITES is enforced using domestic legislation in each country

Case-study: The Southern White Rhino



All rhino species were originally listed in CITES' Appendix I in 1977. This means that the commercial trade in rhinos or their parts was banned. Then, to allow the export of live animals and hunting trophies of the Southern white rhinos in South Africa and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) the subspecies was transferred to Appendix II in 1994 and 2004 for each country, respectively. The international trade in rhino horn remained banned.

Since then there has been a massive debate as to whether the southern white rhino should remain in Appendix 2 or not, and several proposals for the international trade in rhino horn have been submitted.

In short, some parties believe that the international trade of live rhinos and their horns should be legalised, and others believe that the stricter classification of Appendix 1 should be applied to southern white rhinos.

What is **CITES** and how does it work?

by Taryn Ingram-Gillson

The first group believes that if the trade in rhino horn is legalised, it will result in more controlled movement of rhino horn, reducing the need for illegal poaching, and enabling the harvesting of rhino horn sustainably and humanely.

The second group believes that by legalising the trade in rhino horn, more opportunities and loopholes will be created for the criminal poaching syndicates to exploit. Some members of this group also raise the question about viewing these animals as a mere commodity, the risk of game farmers breeding excessively until they're left with rhinos that are essentially domesticated, and possibly even unethically from a gene pool perspective. Group 2 highlight that the funds from the sale of rhino horn would greatly benefit the protection of the species, their habitat and other wildlife. Group 1 raises the concern that the motives of the second group are purely monetary and not sustainable in the long terms. Each group expands much more deeply on their arguments, with this case study serving as a summary.



With the rhino conservation community remaining so polarised, the question is how does everyone work together in the best interest of the southern white rhinos. How do we ensure that our future includes this magnificent animal still roaming the wilderness?

Further reading:

CITES: <https://www.cites.org/eng>

Save the Rhino: <https://www.savetherhino.org/africa/cites-18th-cop-whats-the-verdict-for-rhinos/>

<https://www.savetherhino.org/thorny-issues/legal-trade-in-rhino-horn/>

Daily Maverick: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/special-investigation/cites_rhino_files/

Traffic: <https://www.traffic.org/what-we-do/perspectives/trade-in-rhino-horn/>

National Geographic: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/08/rhino-horn-trade-proposal-cites/>

International Rhino Foundation: <https://rhinos.org/tough-issues/cites-and-rhino-horn-trade/>

Wilderness Foundation: <http://www.wildernessfoundation.co.za/projects/forever-wild-rhino-protection-initiative>



Worldwide Experience, a WildlifeCampus partner, offers students and volunteers from around the world the opportunity to gain hands-on practical conservation experience in the field.

Can a Leopard

By David Batzofin

Change its spots?



As a guest at a lodge, the last thing you expect is that the wildlife will come to you. But occasionally this happens and usually, it is one of the antelope species that use the lodge grounds as their habitat, knowing that being inside the fence is safer than being outside in the wild.

This incident occurred when my wife and I were in a camp in the Sabi Sands, an area well known for its thriving leopard population.

We had been out for our morning drive with no predator sightings and had completed breakfast while discussing how good it would have been to have found one of the cats during the drive.

Food done, we went into the lounge to have coffee and relax while we waited for lunch. (As an aside, trips to game lodges invariably revolve around sleep, food, and game drives) I decided to use the time to catch up on some work and my wife plopped into an armchair with a book.

Silence enveloped us both and peace reigned in the lodge. Suddenly my wife exclaimed, "There is a leopard in the outside bar"!

My initial reaction was to say "Nonsense" and the word was forming on my lips as I looked up from my keyboard, only to be greeted by the sight of a LARGE male leopard padding quietly through the bar near the outdoor dining room where we had enjoyed breakfast not too long ago. My wife's shout had alerted management who came running, only to explain that the leopard was a regular visitor and that if we liked we could go outside and track it as it wandered through the grounds.

Camera in hand, I was the first out the door and we followed it as it zigzagged past the swimming pool, down the alley to the hide and then over the top of the structure and off to a nearby waterhole. It had made a kill in the area and we found the remains on the morning drive the following day.

Turns out that this particular lodge has become well known for leopard visits, with the cats often found either curled up on patio furniture or in one particular case, making a kill at the front door of the main lodge building.

Once our adrenaline had dissipated, I could look at my images and marvel at the fact that not only had we been relatively close to a predator, but contrary to most beliefs, it was extremely relaxed in our presence.

Treated with respect, most wildlife will go about their business without feeling the need to attack for no reason.

Another exciting encounter to add to my list.

