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Magazine

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By Amy Holt

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will you be?**
Part #3

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WildlifeCampus

What type of guide

Will you be? Part #3



WildlifeCampus CEO
Todd Kaplan

In this feature, Garth Thompson explores types of guides.

Guiding attracts a wide, diverse, and interesting group of people, those that have been in the industry for some time can quickly place guides into a number of different categories. We continue this roll-call with...

The Big "5" Guide

This guide prides himself in finding the 'Big 5' on every drive.

These wildlife sightings are achieved by listening to the radio and pestering all the other safari vehicles as to what they have seen. This guide then races from one of the 'Big 5' sightings to the next, driving like a rally driver between sightings, and missing the essence of all that the African wilderness has to offer.



Viewing their guests as 'checklist-ticking tourists,' they dash around their game reserve as if it was a theme park, bouncing from one good ride to the next. Naturally, everyone who comes out on safari would like to see the animals that make up the 'Big 5', but try to achieve this with creativity, sensitivity, understanding, and appreciation for all that is around you. The little five can be just as rewarding.



Most guests seek a deeply immersive bush experience - they want to enjoy all that these natural landscapes have to offer; with a Big "5" guide they could just have easily visited a zoo.

Is this the type of guide you want to be ?

And then there still is...

What type of guide Will you be? Part #3

The Escapist Guide

Guiding attracts any number of lost souls, some with substance abuse problems, strings of broken relationships and those who just can not seem to hold down a job for long.

They are often full of hard-luck stories. They seek a job in the bush to get away from all their responsibilities and failures. Note JOB, not a career, not a calling, not a passionate thrill to be in the bush, but a job, a paycheck.

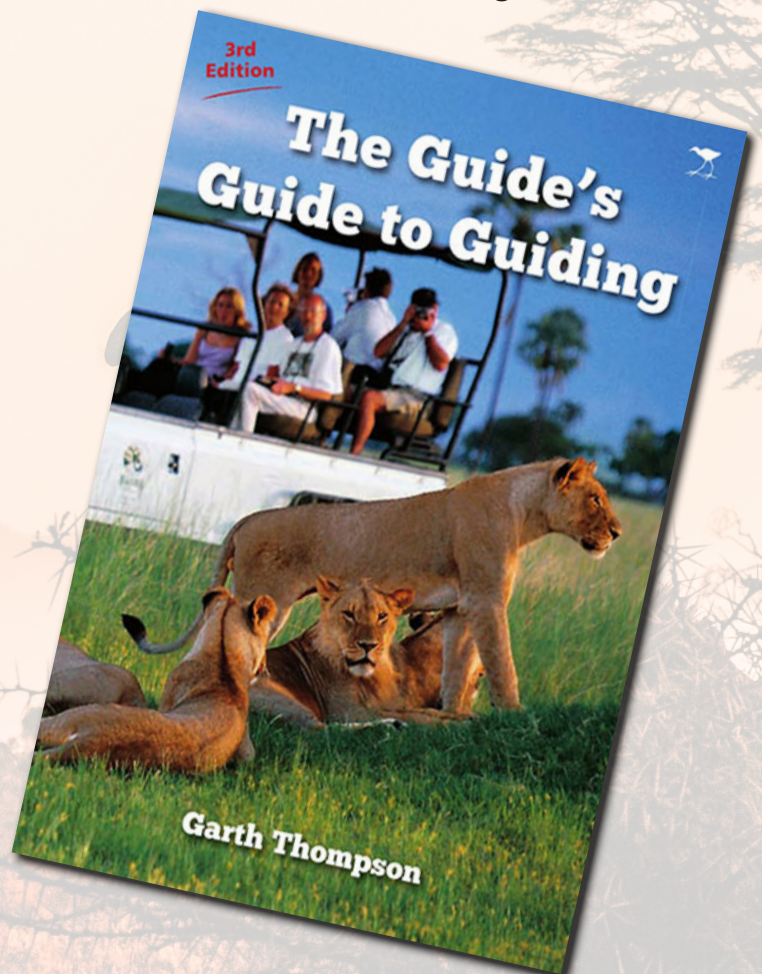
They frequently claim vast safari experience or having been a bush pilot or anti-poaching unit operative or game ranger with a host of unverifiable tall-tales, anecdotes, and name-dropping to back up their supposed stature. Don not be fooled!

After their sixth drink around the campfire, they attempt to obtain respect and sympathy for their plight and bore their clients with their mournful stories of fortunes won and lost, fictions of past heroism from some forgotten war, of being

a kind and loving father whose wife ran off with his best friend and the children. These are the most egregious of people in attempting to solicit unearned gratuities and favours, making clients uncomfortable and embarrassed; the exact opposite of how guides should treat their paying patrons.

This type of guide tends to drift from camp to camp, from job to job until their real worth becomes known in the industry.

Garth Thompson is one of the world's foremost field guides; author of the must-read Guides Guide to Guiding.



**Click the book to try the
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Many of the cobras and Rinkals will spread a hood when basking to increase their surface area and absorb more heat.

Hibernation pertains to animals that are able to shut down their metabolic system and drop their body temperature while remaining inactive in burrows, holes or dens for the cold winter months. The term mainly applies to warm blooded animals.

As snakes are cold blooded, their immediate environment plays a huge role on their body temperatures. Snakes in cold regions of the world, such as parts of north America and Europe, go into a state of torpor (inactivity) for long periods of time (up to 8 months in some areas) and often in dens, where hundreds or even thousands of snakes may share the same winter shelter



Many snakes will overwinter in termite mounds.

In reptiles, this state of inactivity is termed a state of torpor and it differs slightly from true hibernation.

Torpor is a state of inactivity and sluggishness directly linked to the environment. For example, in our southern African winters, reptiles will become inactive during cold fronts when temperatures drop and there may even be snow on the mountains. However, between cold fronts, our midday temperatures may be into the 20s and reptiles will become active for this period, moving around and basking.



The Rinkhals is an excellent example of this, as it is often seen basking just outside its hole when a winters day warms up to around 23 degrees Celsius. Even when we have frost on the Highveld and surface temperatures drop well below zero, these snakes are relatively warm a meter or two underground where the temperatures are stable and seldom drop below 10-15 degrees C, even in winter.



Puff Adders are known to bask throughout winter.

Some snakes, like pythons, Puff Adders and Black Mambas have their mating season in the cooler months of autumn and into winter.

When seeking a hide-out for winter, snakes will seek a shelter that has sufficient moisture to ensure that the snake does not desiccate (dry out) and one that cannot easily be located by predators. As it cools down snakes may move deeper into their holes, but they rarely remain motionless unless the temperature drops to close to zero degrees C.



Southern African Pythons mate in late autumn and winter.

Prior to winter there is a peak in snake activity as snakes build up fat reserves and seek a suitable shelter for the cold months ahead. During torpor their metabolism slows down significantly, and snakes generally do not feed during the cold periods.



With a dramatic drop in snake activity in winter, very few bites are reported and the majority of bites on humans are recorded in the warm summer months of January – April/May.

Step-by-Step guide to start a **vegan** kitchen in a lodge, hotel or restaurant



With veganism booming both internationally and in South Africa, it is important that safari lodges recognise this fast-growing movement and are not only “getting by” accommodating and catering to vegan guests’ requests but actually start attracting them to their lodges. Now is the time for innovation.

One major aspect of this, of course, is the meals.

Vegans unfortunately will more than likely have a few food-related horror stories (I know I do!) and the reality is that, when they go to stay at a lodge they are putting their trust in the staff, ultimately hoping that they can serve them based on their requirements.

When someone is on holiday, they really don’t want to worry about anything. It should be relaxing and enjoyable.

Consider this your 10-step guide on how to start a vegan kitchen and beyond...

Step 1. Do some research to really understand your vegan customer, what their wants are, what their needs are and why this is. If you do not understand them then you may be setting yourself up for failure before you have even looked at the food.

Step 2. You should review your current menus and see if you have any dishes that are already vegan that you were not aware of, or any that can be easily tweaked to be made vegan. Here, think of vegetable soup served on a winter’s night at your boma dinner, remove the cream or replace it with coconut cream and ensure that you only use veggie stock – simple, that is now always going to be vegan.

Step 3. In addition to reviewing your standard menus look at all the “extras” your lodge serves, such as the cookies, rusks, cakes, muffins, game drive snacks etc. and see what you can veganise here as standard. Think morning muffins, where typically you have one standard recipe which you change the

flavour of daily, why not use an amazing vegan muffin recipe as standard instead.

Step 4. Create some excellent, nutritionally balanced vegan meals for your menu, think macro and micronutrients. They need to look and taste great and fit into the theme/style and budget of your lodge.

Step 5. Label your menu clearly so that your vegan guests know exactly what they can and cannot eat. There can be no confusion, does your V stand for vegan or vegetarian? Do not forget to label your drinks menu too!



Step 6. Make sure you have the correct protocols in place in the kitchen to avoid cross contamination, such as, are you using the deep fryer to fry battered fish as well as your chips? Are you using the same chopping board that you cut up a steak on to cut up your tofu?

Step-by-Step guide to start a **vegan** kitchen in a lodge, hotel or restaurant

By Hayley Cooper

Step 7. Make sure both the kitchen staff and the Front of House staff such as the servers, bar staff, hosts are trained in understanding vegan customers, what dishes on the menu are vegan, what ingredients are used, how each is cooked, and how to serve vegan customers. For example, are they going to offer a vegan butter or an olive oil/balsamic vinegar with the bread rolls, did they give them the bread rolls without the egg wash on?

Step 8. Advertise you are vegan-friendly! I cannot stress how important this is. Doing marketing about this and being as detailed as possible is critical. Use food photos to showcase your new vegan options, show photos of your staff being trained, talk about what you have in place to ensure your vegan guests have the same experience as your traditional guests and if they come to your lodge, they will not need to worry about anything and can just relax, like everyone should when on holiday.

Step 9. Look at what other aspects you can change or become vegan-friendly. Remember veganism is not only about the food, your spa products, room décor and amenities, wine and drinks list are all part of it.

Step 10. Think bigger picture! Sustainable travel is not just a "buzz word" this is what not only vegans but most of your traditional guests are taking into account when they book their holiday. If you have proven sustainable practices in place, you can let your guests know, having plant-based options on your menu all the time, encouraging all guests to try them, lowers the impact we have on the planet through animal agriculture and fishing. Do your bit for the planet and get bookings from this at the same time.

This may sound a bit daunting and if you need assistance creating a vegan-friendly environment in your lodge or hospitality establishment (above and beyond the food too) then reach out to me for a free consultation.

I am a hospitality professional with 22 years of experience in the industry, both locally and internationally.

I am currently the only certified vegan hospitality consultant in Africa and my mission is to help the industry become vegan-friendly in Africa and beyond.

My services are tailored to your company's requirements and can be offered in person or as a fully remote service.

I am also the first person offering personalised trainings on veganism to lodge-specific staff such as field guides.

For more information go to my website and click on vegan consulting or send me an email.

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Insects, unsung heroes

by Amy Holt
WLC Student



Critical for all life on Earth



Creepy crawlies, bugs, critters, insects, whatever you wish to call them may be small, but they outweigh humans 17 times.

They are everywhere and involved with everything. Insects are at the heart of every food web. They pollinate a large majority of plant species, keep the soil healthy, recycle nutrients, control pests, and so much more. Still, insects are often overlooked, but these unsung heroes are critical for all life on Earth. Indeed, the decline in insects will lead to the loss of essential, irreplaceable services to humanity.

The demise of insects appears to have started at the dawn of the 20th century, accelerating during the 1950s and 1960s, and reached alarming proportions over the past two decades. Further, the conversion of land dramatically intensified during the so-called Green Revolution of the 1950s, when agriculture turned to industrial fertilisers, irrigation, and intensive farming with the aim of growing enough food for rapidly expanding populations. It was hailed as one of our greatest achievements, but at what cost? We are now faced with the sixth mass extinction, where over 40% of insect species could go extinct in the next few decades. This rate of extinction is eight times faster than that of mammals, birds and reptiles.



Amy Holt

The sustainability of African agriculture is crucial to the continent's food security. Much of the continent's agriculture continues to use traditional methods of crop management, including the use of natural pollinators and pest-control functions of the surrounding natural ecosystems. However, pesticide usage has been increasing worldwide at an alarming rate, especially in developing countries. This is because in developing countries, pesticides are typically less regulated, and their use is more haphazard-where farmers are often untrained and unprotected. Neonicotinoid insecticides have become the world's most widely used group of insecticides. They are now registered and used in most, if not all, African countries. South Africa is one of the continent's biggest consumers of pesticides, with neonicotinoids used on several crops, including apples, barley, canola, citrus,



Megan Fisher

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by Amy Holt
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cottonseed, grapes, cucurbits, maize, oats, peaches, sorghum, sunflower seed, tomatoes and wheat.

Neonicotinoids are water-soluble and non-selective, meaning they can contaminate the environment, causing collateral damage to non-targeted organisms. Studies have found that, when neonicotinoids are used as seed dressings, up to 95% of the active ingredient does not enter the plant. It washes away, contaminating the soil and plants growing in neighbouring fields, and leaches into water bodies, where aquatic insects are exposed to it. Further, the active ingredient spreads into pollen and nectar, where pollinating insects can ingest the neonicotinoids. After all this mounting evidence showing negative effects on insects, EU members banned the use of most neonicotinoids in 2018.

In Africa, low awareness of the beneficial role of insects combined with low levels of awareness of potential toxic effects mean that there is little awareness of any risks associated with neonicotinoids on wider ecosystem services within the farming community. There is a need for better basic education for farmers. Insects are not just pests but can provide many beneficial services, including pollination and natural pest control. Also, farmers need to be encouraged to use agroforestry practices, where trees and hedges are planted around

fields, as well as planting wildflowers around crops, to attract pollinators and beneficial insects that will control and prevent a pest outbreak. The African continent does not need to follow the same mistakes as the developed world. There are significant opportunities now to act on existing knowledge about the harmful effects of neonicotinoids, to protect ecosystem services and thus African biodiversity and agricultural sustainability.



Megan Fisher

South Africa is one of the most significant areas of dragonfly endemism on the African continent, harbouring the most relict species. Endemic species are geographically constrained to one particular place on the planet. About 20% of the order Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) are endemic to South Africa. Odonata is considered to be good indicators of environmental health and water quality because all the species within this order are dependent on water for the development of their pre-adult stages (commonly known as nymphs).



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Dragonflies play a vital role in the ecosystem-catching and eating mosquitos, thereby doing their part to keep these and other insect numbers in check. Threats to the local Odonata population includes shading of natural habitats by invasive alien trees (e.g. black wattle), predation by alien fish (e.g. rainbow trout), habitat removal for plantation forestry, overextraction of water for agricultural activities, damming of streams, pollution from domestic washing, siltation of streams from cattle trampling of the banks, and habitat replacement by industrial development.

The Nuwejaars Wetlands Special Management Area (NWSMA), close to Cape Agulhas, is a unique conservation venture made up of 25 landowners who have signed title deed restrictions to protect the area. These wetlands play a key role in securing regional groundwater flow for downstream communities and towns. A vital part of the work at Nuwejaars is the restoration of palmiet, a unique indigenous plant that helps to purify water and sequester carbon. Thousands of years ago, dense stands of palmiet dominated these wetlands. Over the centuries, they likely formed the basis of the peat-like soils found here. Peat wetlands are crucial in the fight against climate change, storing carbon for as long as it remains waterlogged while helping to reduce the impact of floods. For wetlands to continue to provide a sanctuary for dragonflies, they should ideally be healthy or at least resilient.

South Africa is home to nearly 800 species of dung beetles, and Addo's flightless dung beetle is a rare subspecies endemic to a few small areas in the southeastern part of the country. Conservationists believe these insects once populated much of the country, but as some of the beetle's favourite dung producers - elephants, rhinos and buffalos - died off, so too did the beetle, which could

not flee to new territory as easily as its winged relatives. The flightless dung beetle is classified as vulnerable. It is thought to be prone to extinction because of its large body size, low dispersal capability, narrow geographic range, and only producing a single offspring per year. Dung beetles are ecosystem engineers. They help recycle nutrients in the soil when they bury the dung. By removing dung, they prevent populations of parasitic flies from breeding in the fresh faeces of mammals. Dung beetles can act as dispersal agents-taking seeds deposited in dung to places far away, plus providing the seed with nutrients from the dung for germination. As they roll, dig and tunnel, their actions aerate and mix the soil which, increases the organic matter content of the soil. Addo National Park's expansive elephant population makes it a haven for this scarce dung beetle.



Recent studies in South Africa, show dung beetles use the Milky Way to navigate their way at night. It is the first known species to do so in the animal kingdom. They can orient themselves to the bright stripe of light generated by our galaxy and move in a line relative to it. Light pollution is a significant but overlooked driver of the rapid decline of insect populations. Most of the night sky in urban areas is obscured by 'Skyglow'.

Insects, unsung heroes

by Amy Holt
WLC Student



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The diffuse illumination of the night sky by a scattering of light from artificial sources. Light pollution can outshine the light from the Milky Way, thus severely hindering the navigation abilities of dung beetles. However, unlike other drivers of decline, light pollution is relatively easy to prevent - simply switching off lights that are not needed is the most obvious action.

Presently, it is unknown whether insect populations in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent have remained stable, increased or have declined. In South Africa alone, 90% of insects do not even have a name - insect species will likely be lost before they have even been discovered.

Insect decline continues to attract insufficient attention, even within the conservation community. Conservation efforts have mostly been focused on charismatic megafauna that elicits strong emotions for most people, with little thought on ecosystem connectivity. Further, human attitudes towards insects are often negative. Words associated with insects include scary, disgusting, ugly or dangerous, which has led to a society that attempts to eliminate insects from daily life. There are widespread misconceptions that insects are generally harmful to human health and well-being. Only about 1% of all known insect species cause crop losses of 20-80%, and fewer than 1% of mosquito species transmit diseases that kill.

For over 400 million years, insects have been embedded in terrestrial ecosystems. Individually, we can help them to continue to thrive simply by planting more native plants. You can have a particularly strong impact by looking into which plant species are especially productive for supporting insect diversity in your local region. Native insects have tight ecological relationships with

native plants that have been shared for millions of years. Through this coevolution, many insect species became specialists, relying on specific plants for food and to deposit their eggs. An estimated 13,000 plant species have been introduced outside of their native range due to human activities. With non-native plants replacing native habitats on a global scale, it is difficult to measure the level of impact on insect declines. Do not be a part of the problem. Instead, be a conscious gardener - make your green space insect-friendly by growing plants that attract pollinators, plant more native plants, do not think of insects as pests, and just leave some parts wild.

There is no doubt that we need insects for our own survival. But, we rarely protect what we do not know or appreciate. Through movies, the Bible and media sensationalism, insects continue to receive a bad reputation - they are scary, ugly, dirty, disgusting, annoying, killers, pests, the list goes on. But in reality, insects are extraordinary, beautiful, strange, bizarre and incredibly important. They are the caretakers, cleaners, waste processors, and so much more. They undoubtedly deserve increased conservation efforts.

So, change your perspective and appreciate what matters. Because without insects, nature as we know it would cease to exist - threatening the liveability of Earth, our only home.



Megan Fisher

The lioness, the tree *And the drinks stop*

By David Batzofin



Many of us read 'The Lion, the witch and the wardrobe' by C.S Lewis when we were children, or perhaps we only discovered the book when we were adults? Or you have never read it and the reference makes no sense to you at all.

But persevere dear reader and all will be revealed...

The only reason that I mention the book was that the paraphrased title came to mind after this incident that occurred on a recent trip to a reserve in the Waterberg.

Those who have been on game drives, either morning or evening, invariably get to a point where a 'comfort break' starts to take precedence over any game viewing. Your mind becomes focused on that special tree that we all know so well... the lavatory (pronounced lava-tree).

This particular drive was no different. I together with two other guests and our guide had been bumbling around for a while with no success as far as predator sightings were concerned. That was not an issue as there had been more than sufficient plains game as well as 3 of the Big 5 species to keep us occupied and entertained.

However, it had come to that point in the drive where our ranger was looking for a vantage point for us to stop for our evening sundowners and to watch the spectacular sunset that this area is well-known for.

I always check with the guide before I get off a game viewer, and this time it was no different.

"All clear to get off and take a comfort break?" I asked. The guide scanned the surrounding area and pronounced it safe for all of us to get out and stretch our legs while he set up the table with beverages and snacks.

My usual modus operandi when walking into the bush is to clap my hands, thus warning any animals, large or small, of my impending arrival. And this time was no different, as I walked noisily towards my chosen spot.

There was a moment after I unzipped, that the hairs on the back of my neck started to rise but then quickly settled again and as a result, I thought no more about that. I finished up and walked the 20 or so paces back to the vehicle.

The four of us stood around, socially distanced, chatting about what we had seen, what we were hoping to see and what we could expect on the drive back to the lodge. It was the usual relaxed banter that a game drive engenders in guests.



There was a lull in the conversation and our guide quietly said, "Could everyone get back in the vehicle please" and he looked to the bushes not far from where I had recently taken my break.

The lioness, the tree *And the drinks stop*

By David Batzofin

From this spot emerged a rather large lioness that looked at us askance while walking purposefully on a path that took her parallel to where we were now seated back in the vehicle with camera lenses trained in her direction.

The snacks were of no interest to her as she never wavered from her chosen direction and only stopped to look at us momentarily before vanishing into the bushes and the encroaching darkness.

What did the encounter teach me? First, trust your instinct and if something does not feel right, move to a safer spot.

And second, obey your guide without first questioning him or her. They are trained for situations like this. I have to stress that at no

time during the encounter were any of us in danger, neither did the lioness show any signs of aggression towards us.

In retrospect I wonder how different I MIGHT have reacted if this apex predator had stepped out WHILE I was 'watering' the vegetation.



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