



Wildlife Campus

LEARN PROTECT SAVE

Magazine



Leopards
by Amy Holt

August
Wildlife Diary

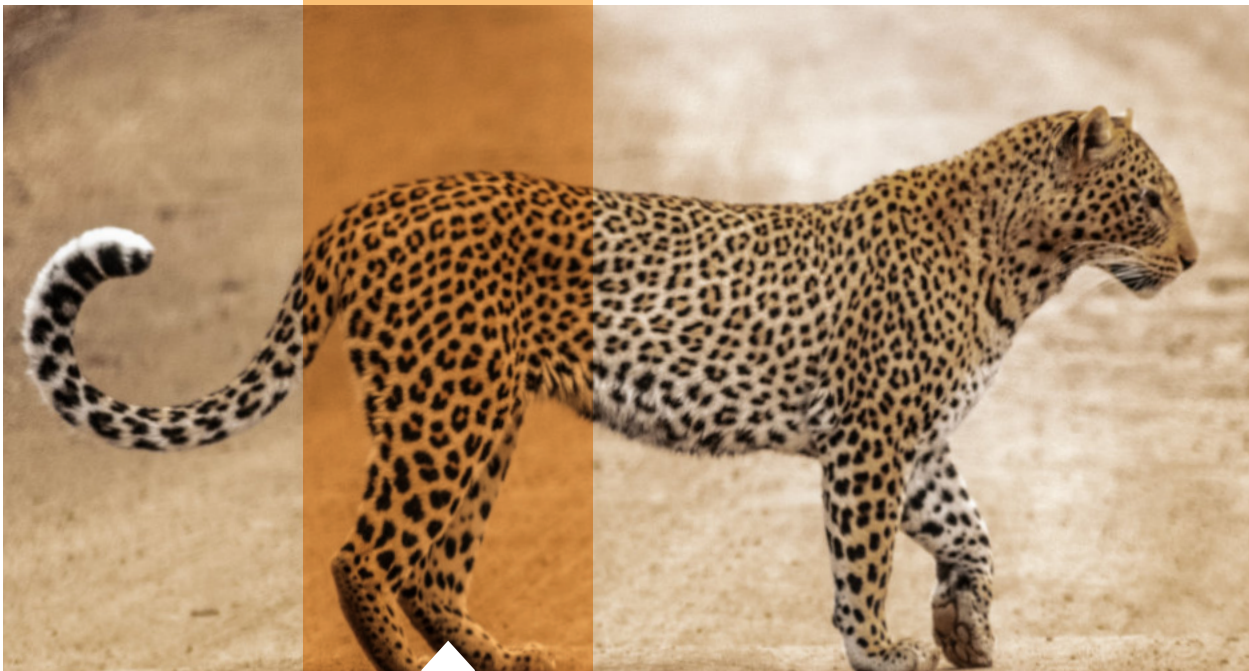
Hide, there are
animals outside

Dwarf antelope
and deer

From intern to
Duty manager

Course special

CONTENT



01

The origins of WildlifeCampus

“The show must go on”, a book written by Peter Armitage tells the birth story of a company called AfriCam. Read with us as the story unfolds, AfriCam grows and eventually, WildlifeCampus finds its origin.

Part 19

PAGE 4

02

Leopards

As elusive as leopards may be, their legendary adaptability has fostered the belief that they are widespread both inside and outside of protected areas. But is this really the case? Or is action to protect them needed? WildlifeCampus student, Amy Holt finds out for us.

PAGE 8

03

Course Special

Have a quick look at page 13 for an amazing winter special!

3 of our main courses at a highly reduced price!

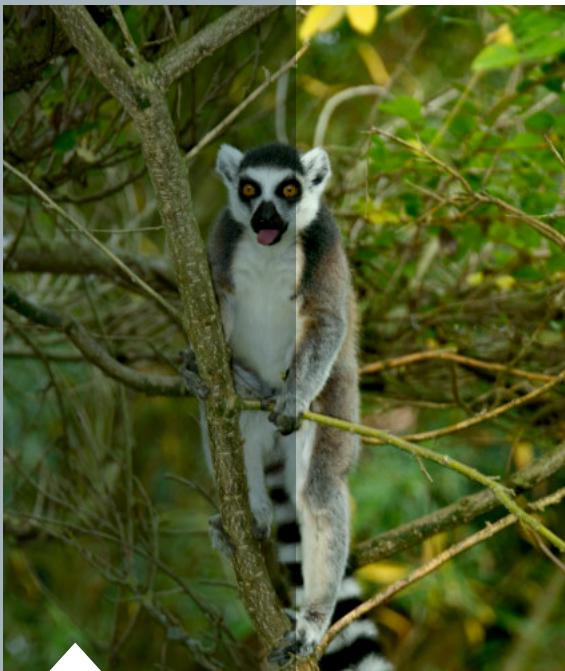
PAGE 13

04

Dwarf antelope and deer

Chris and Mathilde Stuart take us on a journey through Africa, Asia and South America highlighting dwarf antelope and deer, giving us an insight on species like chevrotains, mouse-deer and the dik-dik.

PAGE 14



05

August Wildlife Diary

Stuart on Nature, opens their “wildlife diary” to tell us what to expect, and look out for, during this month. Some historical facts along with some fauna and flora knowledge, keep your eyes open as there is plenty going on during August.

PAGE 16

06

Our junior club

Find out what the WildlifeCampus Junior Club is all about, for who and how to join.

Page through to page 19!

PAGE 18

07

From intern to duty manager

In this month's article by Wild Dreams Hospitality we get a valuable insight of how an internship could help job seekers land an incredible career.

PAGE 20

08

Hide... there are animals...

This month David is hiding underground. He has found another subterranean hide at a lodge and takes us with on his experience photographing some mesmerising wildlife up close.

PAGE 22

The show must go on!

The origin story of WildlifeCampus

01

By co-founder of
WildlifeCampus and
Anchor CEO

Peter Armitage



Missed the previous parts of this story? [Click here](#) to open the WildlifeCampus magazine where this exciting journey starts.

“AfriMusic” - Late 1999

Joel Berman also talked big, but in a South African, rather than a US manner. His father Rodney Berman is South Africa’s premier boxing promoter and Joel grew up seeing his father conclude the big deals. This was in Joel’s blood.

Joel moved in music circles and together with a friend called Josh they developed the idea of AfriMusic.com, a proposed joint venture which would sell African music CD’s to the AfriCam audience. He also offered to fund the joint venture, so there would be little risk to AfriCam. He seemed to be in awe of AfriCam.

He also talked of relationships with players globally and more specifically the CEO of MGM Grand in Las Vegas, who would potentially be keen on an AfriCam link.

I commented to Graham that “either this guy is a bullshitter, or he could be a serious player”.

Joel had told me that he was good friends with Sean Melnick, the CEO of Peregrine. Fascinated with this character, I phoned Sean for substantiation.

He informed me that “Joel is for real, very persistent and very well connected. In fact if I really needed to get a meeting with Bill Clinton, Joel would be the guy I would phone.”

That was enough for me. Joel is the type of guy you want to do business with: honest, with unwavering and unbridled enthusiasm. He had a simple philosophy about business contacts: “Everybody in the world is only two phone calls away. First the secretary and secondly, the contact. It is simple.” If there was anybody who could get past a secretary, it was Joel Berman.

“E-Commerce” - Late 1999

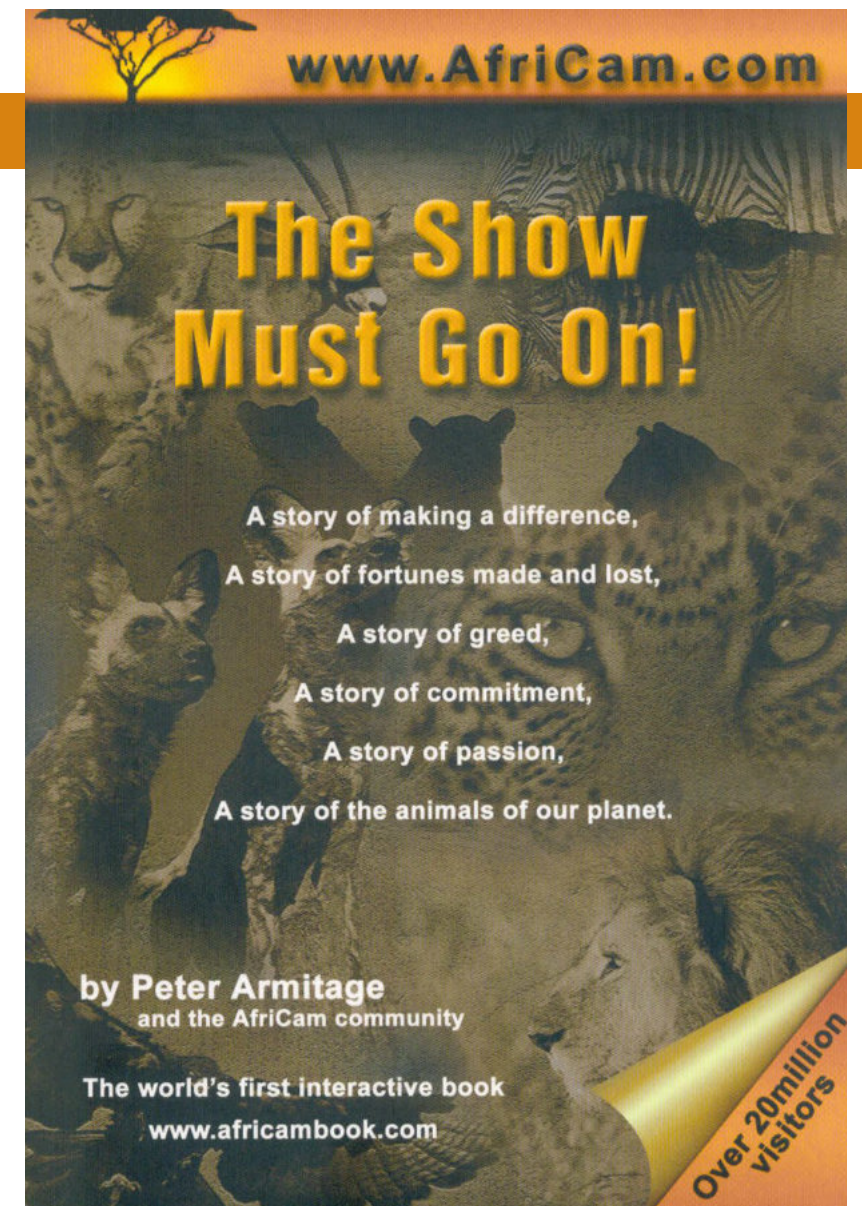
“Physical product e-Commerce” was always confusing for AfriCam. We never had a clear strategy, mainly because there was never any real volume. The bottom line was that the AfriCam surfer was not really interested in buying physical products.

Nkondi African Arts was an outright failure, Moteng sold a total of about ten products, Fingershopper did not see any big volumes from AfriCam traffic and when sold directly off the AfriCam site, 50 T-shirts or mugs was a victory. Hardly the stuff of a billion-dollar business.

E-Commerce became something of an embarrassment on the AfriCam income statement and there was no apparent solution. Darren Sims, the e-commerce manager was a lightweight (in years, rather than aptitude) and he patiently and willingly accepted all our misdirected attempts to leverage off the AfriCam traffic.

When Carl Pretorius and Mark Howard visited us, we thought this was the first time there was real potential.

Carl and Mark worked for Rainbow



“The Show Must Go On by Peter Armitage and the AfriCam community.”

Software, which has transactional software, and they both had experience in international trade. They told us what we wanted to hear: “We do not believe that consumers will purchase great volumes of products from a South African site, but AfriCam is a great platform for international trade to big buyers in the States.”

None of us knew anything about this, so we deferred to their judgement. In addition, they did not require cash from AfriCam so it sounded like it was worth giving a go. They were two impressive 30-somethings who were prepared to dedicate their efforts to making this work.

Shortly after they joined, what seemed to be an amazing opportunity arose. We got in contact with Hylton Appelbaum, a director of Liberty Life. Hylton is the son-in-law of insurance giant Liberty Life’s founder Donald Gordon. He is one of SA’s most respected businessmen. Liberty allocated just over 1% of its sizeable pre-tax profits to the Liberty Foundation, which Hylton managed.

The Foundation contributed to the development of SA and had developed a



business called Buy Africa, aimed at selling SA arts and crafts to the international market. Volumes were thin at Buy Africa and Hylton jumped at the chance to hand over the business to Mark and Carl’s venture. This business hence became known as BuyAfrica.com.

“WildFocus” - Late 1999

The last of the joint ventures was WildFocus.com. Graham is a keen photographer and got very enthused about Bernie Olbrich’s suggestion of selling digital images of wildlife on the internet. Like the others, Bernie saw huge potential in the AfriCam traffic. Bernie, however, was always at the back of the development queue and it was only 18 months later that his business launched.

“The pretenders” - Late 1999

At AfriCam we always joked that everybody had a webcam idea. It seemed to be a widespread congenital condition that remained latent until the advent of the internet, or a few beers. At every cocktail party, it was inevitable that one of us would get cornered by another webcam genius:

“What about a camera on a turtle’s head?”

“What about a camera on an elephant’s head?”

“What about a mini camera on a snail’s shell?”

“What about a camera on a shark?”

“Maybe a camera at The Ranch (a local stripclub)?”, were some of the most common ideas.

AfriCam was a natural fascination for most South Africans.

There were two aspects to the fascination; the concept of the webcam and the volume of traffic. We were continually approached by individuals who wanted to sell anything from honey to original art to the AfriCam punter.

A common proposal to us at our boardroom table was “Instead of us re-inventing the wheel, let’s do it together so that we do not compete with each other.” There were numerous AfriCam pretenders who believed that the launch of their business would be our demise, so that a merger of our business and their idea was a fair deal.

Trying to avoid arrogance, our standard offer was, “When you have a webcam up and running come back and talk to us.” None of them ever did.

We continually heard of impending new opposition to AfriCam:

- The most serious one was Dave Varty, the co-founder of Conservation Corporation. After spending a great deal of money on a beautifully equipped, but over-configured “broadcast vehicle”, they did not have the funding to proceed. Dave eventually offered the vehicle to us, which we turned down.

- Nic Gesina and Moss Morris Attorneys were always looking for capital to launch a competitive site, which they never pulled off. At a meeting at Moss Morris, Nic talked of funding of R100m and a “powerful global partner”. Nic joined us in a dive venture two years later.

- African Attractions, funded by Investec co-founder Larry Nestadt launched a site, based at the Pretoria Zoo. It worked, but the viewer does not come back to visit a zoo site.

- Ed Hern’s Rhino and Elephant Park proudly trumpeted in the Financial Mail that they were taking AfriCam head on, but never attracted any critical mass of viewers.

- LiveAfrica, whose shareholders included the formerly JSE-listed MB Technologies, eventually went bankrupt. They had launched a camera at the Lion Park, but never went any further.

- Wildnet Africa attempted to launch cameras, but withdrew with their tails between their legs.

The list above could be considered a braglist for AfriCam, but sadly it could also reflect the lack of a sustainable business plan in the industry. If it was such a good business, why was there never a credible competitor?

“The idiot award” - Late 1999

The intention of this book is to be a memorable light-hearted review of an amazing business and it is not our aim to humiliate anybody. But in the case of Carl van Acht, the Microsoft Word Thesaurus could not propose a more appropriate word than idiot. I received a secretive call from this character late one evening. “Had I heard of him?” he enquired. I had not. He proceeded to inform me that he was the first South African to register a website domain in 1994. I was not sure if this meant I should know who he was.

He requested an urgent meeting in Cape Town. Graham, Paul and myself were going down to Cape Town anyway the next week, so we decided to meet with Carl, just in case we were missing an opportunity. A tall and very presentable gentleman introduced himself as Carl van Acht, as we finished off our second beer, sitting outside at the Cape Town Waterfront. It was a superb day and we were in a jovial mood.

We started discussing business with Carl and after half an hour he still had not really told us anything. He was very proud of the fact that he was the first South African to register an internet domain. The fact that he had not done anything with it in six years did not say much for his ability to implement.

He discussed travel as a potential way we could work together, but did not have any firm ideas. He proudly presented a letter of support from the former Minister of Tourism Pallo Jordan. We politely raised the fact that this letter was two years out of date and he acknowledged that it

was not such a good idea after all and he in fact did not know too much about tourism.

By this stage I had lost interest in the guy and Paul and myself were stunned into silence by him. We both concentrated on our crisp, deep fried calamari which is particularly good at Fisherman’s Wharf.

Graham was always the talker, but he was getting a little irritated that I had set up this meeting and he was having to hold the conversation together. Carl was starting to squirm a little when Graham insisted: “Carl if you do not tell us something new or interesting in the next minute, then I am afraid we will have to draw this meeting to a close.”

“Well I have got one idea that I think could work,” Carl replied. We all looked up, waiting for the pearl.

“The death of Nelson Mandela,” was Carl’s headline.

“What?” said Graham. We all looked at him in disbelief and Paul sniggered loudly

“This will be the greatest publicity event of the next ten years.”

“And you want to make money out of this.”

“It is a perfect opportunity.”

“How?”

“Well you know, webcams, memorabilia, videos and stuff.”

The only reason the meeting went any further was out of a fascination for how this man’s mind worked. This was the worst and most distasteful idea we had ever heard. We sent him packing before ordering another Heineken.





Leopards

By WildlifeCampus student

Amy Holt

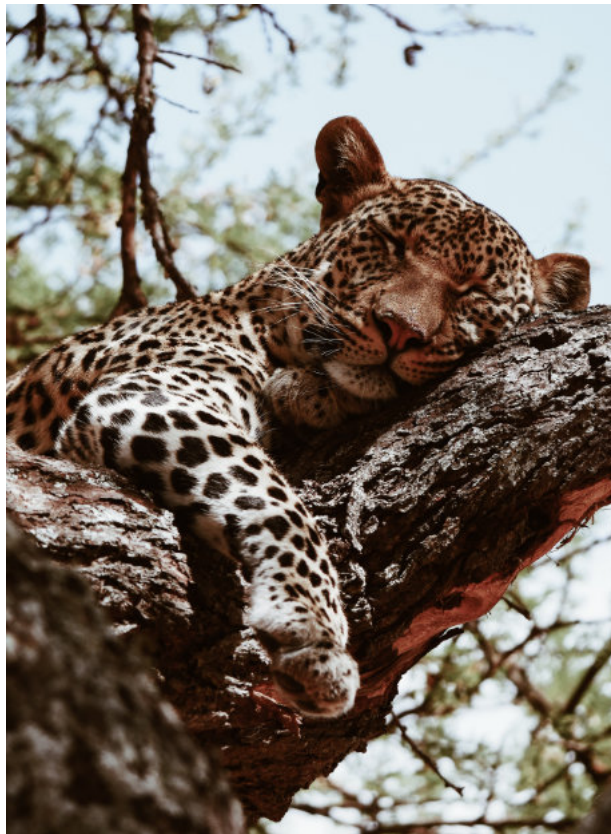
There is no other large carnivore as elusive and shy as the leopard. Historically, the leopard had the largest range of all the big cats but has now vanished from at least two-thirds of their historic range in Africa.

As elusive as leopards may be, their legendary adaptability has fostered the belief that they are widespread both inside and outside of protected areas. Consequently, the species has received little conservation attention but the loss of habitat and prey, coupled with high levels of demand for skins, is threatening its very existence.

Large carnivores are generally sensitive to ecosystem changes because their specialised diet and position at the top of the trophic pyramid are associated with small population sizes. This, in turn, leads to lower genetic diversity in top predators compared to animals lower down the food chain. Genetic diversity is crucial for a species' survival and adaptation to future changes. The genetic diversity of African leopards is exceptionally high: twice as high as the lion's and almost five times higher than the cheetah. During evolutionary history, the leopard roamed the African continent more freely than virtually any other mammal species, exchanging genetic material. It has a unique ability to succeed in almost any habitat and climate, thereby avoiding population crashes. The exceptionally high genetic diversity could give the African leopard an advantage in coping with environmental challenges, including climate change. However, habitat fragmentation is a severe threat to all large animals, even those as adept at dealing with human presence as the leopard.



02



even smaller areas. In some populations, it has led to inbreeding—something that can have long-lasting, catastrophic effects, impacting the cat's resistance to disease and climate events like drought, and even resulting in local extinction.

Sadly, in the past, these cats' beauty has contributed to their decline towards extinction - demand for leopard skin and other body parts has driven a robust poaching market. Leopard skins have become a status symbol throughout many cultures of the world, reflecting traditions and modern wealth. In Southern Africa, as many as 2,500 leopards were killed annually for their skins. Traditionally, only Zulu royalty was permitted to wear leopard skins; however, the Shembe Church adopted them into their ceremonial costume. Shembe Church may have 13,000 to 18,000 illegal leopard skins. After discovering that Shembe Church followers were using as many as 15,000 illegal leopard skins, Panthera initiated the 'Furs for Life' project in 2013. The project is seen as a practical and culturally sensitive solution to addressing the illegal leopard skin trade, and thanks to the support of Shembe leaders, the faux skins have gained increased acceptance as viable alternatives to real leopard skins.

The human-made changes to natural habitats are occurring at a pace that is likely too fast for almost any wild animal species to adapt to—including leopards. In South Africa, where reserves and national parks are surrounded by farms, roads and developments, leopards have been forced into

Leopards are increasingly killed in retaliation for the real and perceived threat they pose to livestock. 35% of all leopards killed in retaliatory actions are reproductive females. Such removal of females leads to reduced survival of leopards in non-protected areas, and thus, affects long-term population viability. In the Western Cape, the loss of wilderness areas is



resulting in reduced habitat for leopard prey, such as hyrax and small antelopes, increasing the likelihood of leopards relying on livestock for food. An array of non-lethal techniques available to manage predation, such as using livestock guarding dogs, building robust enclosures, and herding livestock, can be more effective at reducing predation than killing predators.

Leopards are one of the most sought-after big-game trophies. They are demographically sensitive to over-harvesting, and an increased turnover of adult males may cause inflated rates of infanticide, which are already naturally high in leopard populations. Further, the killing of males leads to a greater risk of inbreeding, which threatens the offspring's genetic makeup. When adult males are no longer present to force younger males to disperse, the young males stay close. This means siblings are more likely to mate, and the gene pool, in turn, is more likely to suffer, leaving leopards more susceptible to genetic defects and disease. Left unregulated, the unsustainable exploitation of leopards will have severe ecological and evolutionary costs.

In South Africa, leopards have lost 80% of their past range, with 62% of the leopard's known range outside protected areas. Sabi Sand leopards are one of the world's best-protected populations and, as a result, can be found here in their greatest density of any region on the African continent. However, as humans continue to put an incredible strain on leopards, the need for protected wildlife corridors to help connect disjointed ecosystems becomes more urgent. The threat of extinction becomes ever more real when one considers that fewer than 5,000 leopards remain in South Africa, with their numbers continuing to decline at an alarming rate.

The leopard is too remarkable and valuable to lose. But, unless vital action is taken to protect these beautiful, solitary creatures who undoubtedly deserve to thrive... they could simply disappear forever!





It's time to
Learn
- WITH WILDLIFECAMPUS -

ABOUT US

WildlifeCampus is a world-renowned international virtual campus. We offer a wide variety of wildlife-related, natural science, ecotourism and hospitality courses. We cover the spectacular diversity of life found on our planet, specifically on African savannas.

OUR COURSES

Can be done online from anywhere - no deadlines - no requirements

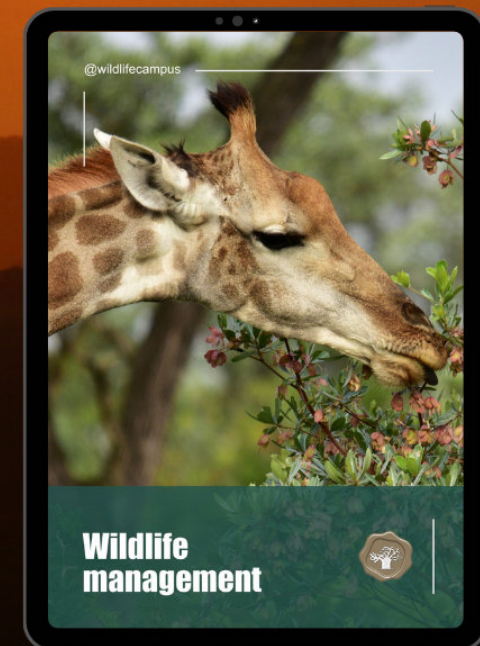
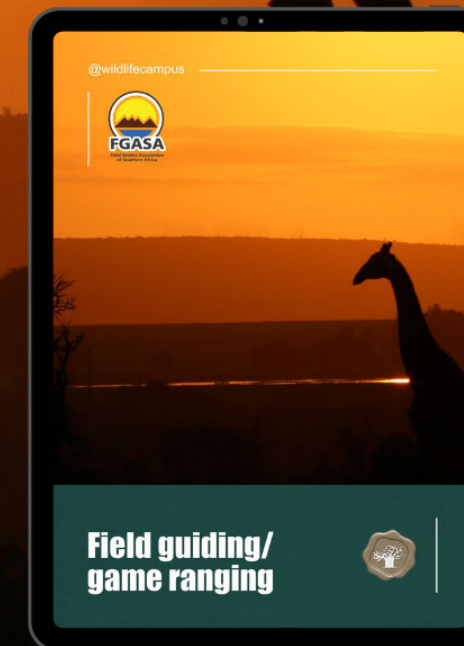
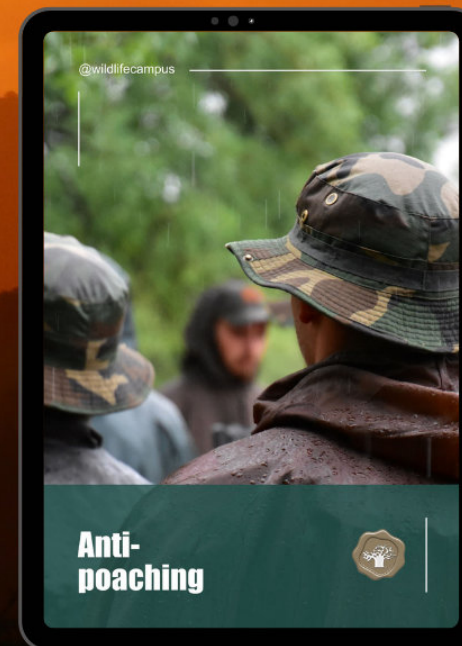
Register for free anytime

Visit our website and download our
full info brochure (top right)

www.wildlifecampus.com



**WINTER ONLINE COURSE
SPECIAL**
3 COURSES - R7999



-Anti-poaching
-Field Guiding/Game Ranging
-Wildlife Management

-Anyone may join
-Register anytime
-Study online in your own time



REGULAR PRICE: R12 950
SPECIAL PRICE: R7999

Valid until 31 August 2023. No monthly payment options available on special.
However, can be paid off over 2 monthly installments.



Suni male



By



The ungulates are mainly hoofed mammals, although there are exceptions, in the Ungulata clade. The most familiar are cattle, sheep, goats, antelope and deer (*Artiodactyla*), the even-toed ungulates have a split hoof, and the odd-toed ungulates (*Perissodactyla*) that includes the horse family, tapirs and rhinoceroses, with a single hoof on each leg that touches the ground, or a group of three toes that come into contact with the ground.

Here we are only going to take a look at the dwarf antelope and deer that are artiodactyls and have split hoofs. We are all familiar with the larger antelope and deer but there is a great diversity of species that are less than 10kg in weight, and some below 5kg. The greatest diversity of these small herbivores is in Africa and Asia, with two species of dwarf deer, pudu, in southern South America, although some of the brocket deer are close contenders on that continent.

Let us first take a look at the many African contenders with top of the pile the Royal Antelope (*Neotragus pygmaeus*), the smallest horned antelope on the planet, tipping the scales at 1.4-2.8kg. It occurs in the forests that extend between Guinea and then eastwards to the Volta River in Ghana. The very similar Bates's Pygmy Antelope (*Neotragus batesi*) that weighs between 2 and 3.5kg, occurs mainly in the northern Congo Basin from Gabon and Cameroon, to north-east DR Congo and extending marginally into the forests of western

Uganda. Another member of the dwarf grouping is the Water Chevrotain (*Hyemoschus aquaticus*), coming in at 8-15kg, with males usually less than 10kg. This is a member of a grouping of 10 species of mouse deer that occur in south-eastern Asia, these often also referred to as chevrotains.



Royal Antelope - smallest antelope in the world



Damara Dik-dik

Other small species occurring in Africa, the dik-diks (*Madoqua spp.*), that are inhabitants of areas of drier woodland, often but not always, associated with the bases of rock outcrops or seasonal river courses. All have an erectile crest on the top of the head and a somewhat elongated and flexible snout. Seven species are currently recognized with a weight range from 2 to 6kg, with the smallest being Piacentini's, or Silver, Dik-dik (*Madoqua piacentinii*) from the coastal plain of Somalia. Only one species occurs in southern Africa, the Damara Dik-dik (*Madoqua damarensis*), with the other six species in East Africa. Then there is the elusive Suni (*Nesotragus moschatus*) that occurs mainly along the eastern coastal plain but extending inland in places, such as along the lower reaches of the Zambezi River. They occupy areas with dry thickets and densely bushed riverine areas. This beautiful antelope tips the scales at between 4.5 and 6kg. Then we meet the two grysbok species, Cape (*Raphicerus melanotis*) and Sharpe's (*Raphicerus sharpei*) that weigh between 7.5 and 11kg, the former endemic to the south of South Africa and Sharpe's more widely spread from north-east South Africa to Tanzania.



Sharpe's Grysbok female

There is the Beira (*Dorcatragus megalotis*) coming in at between 9 and 11.5kg with a very limited range in Somaliland, Djibouti and the Marmar Mountains of Ethiopia. A few of the duikers are also contenders, including the endangered Ader's Duiker (*Cephalophus adersi*) that weighs between 7 and 11kg, that occurs on Unguja Island, Tanzania, then the three "blue duikers". Both the Blue Duiker (*Philantomba monticola*) and Walter's Duiker (*Philantomba walteri*) are in a weight range of 3-6kg, with both species using a wide range of forest and fairly dense woodland. Walter's Duiker occurs to the east of the Volta River to the Niger River in West Africa but the Blue Duiker has a much wider distribution across Central Africa into East and southern Africa.



Blue Duiker

The chevrotains, or mouse-deer, have in their midst the smallest of all ungulates, or hoofed mammals, the Java Mouse-deer (*Tragulus javanicus*) that is a mere 1-2kg when adult. Even the largest species in Asia, the Greater Mouse Deer (*Tragulus napu*) does not tip the scale at more than 8kg. All nine species occur in forests in South and South-East Asia, are either solitary or live in pairs and are exclusively herbivores. The chevrotains, or mouse-deer, have remained virtually unchanged for about 34 million years and they are a good example of a primitive ruminant form. They lack antlers or horns but both sexes have elongated canine teeth that extend beyond the lower lip and are particularly well developed in males. Apart from their deer affinities they also have a number of similarities to pigs, hence the reason they are sometimes called pig-deer. One species, the Vietnam Mouse-deer (*Tragulus versicolor*) was feared to be extinct as it had only been sighted three times since its discovery in 1910 on the southern coast of Vietnam. A specimen was obtained in 1990 in the same area but only again in 2019 but the population appears to be small and declining.

As mentioned earlier there are only two lightweight contenders in South America, the Southern Pudu (*Pudu puda*) and the Northern Pudu (*Pudu mephistophiles*), tiny deer with the males carrying short antlers. The Northern Pudu is the smallest weighing in at 3.3 to 6kg, whereas the Southern Pudu is a comparative heavy weight coming in at 6.4-13.4kg. The Southern Pudu occurs in temperate rainforests in south-west Argentina, southern Chile and on Chiloe Island, with the Northern Pudu living at altitudes of between 2,000 and 4,000m above sea level in the northern Andes in Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru. They are very secretive and for this reason we know little about their behaviour. We know that they are largely solitary, defend territories and are losing ground to habitat loss and hunting.



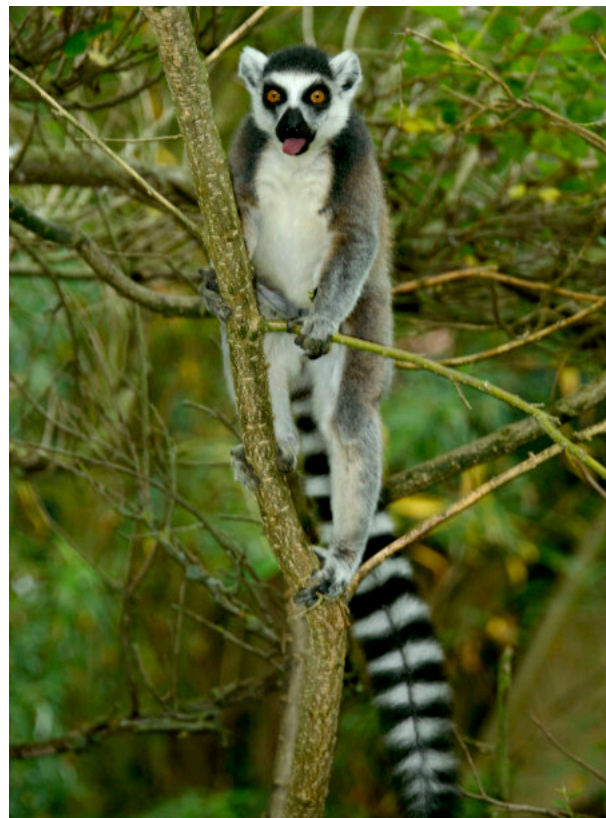
Southern Pudu male

August Wildlife Diary

By



- In early August 1778 the traveller and naturalist William Paterson saw numerous Oryx/Gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*) and shot two, in the area known as the Bokkeveldberge, on the escarpment between Van Rhynsdorp and Calvinia in south-west South Africa. A scant 50 years later, reports of the time indicate that this once common species had been virtually wiped out. Today it is common once again in conservation areas and on farms.
- In August 1797, however, John Barrow recorded seeing Springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) between Graaff-Reinet and Aberdeen, Eastern Cape, “in numbers that are almost incredible.”
- In August 1823 the explorer George Thompson found Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) to be common in pools in the Orange River both up- and downstream of the Augrabies Falls in South Africa. Today they are extinct along the entire length of this river, with the last believed to have been shot in the early 1920’s.
- Free Town in Sierra Leone will receive about 900mm of rain in August, the highest monthly total out of an annual average of 3,434mm. That desert capital of the Sudan, Khartoum will also have its highest monthly average- just 70mm out of a meagre annual 158mm.



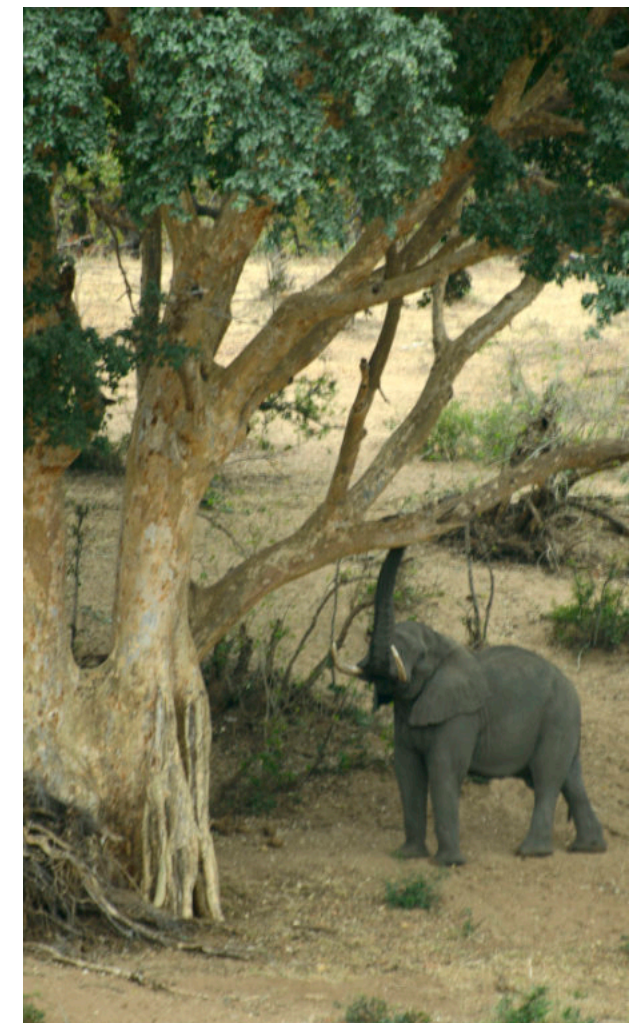
Ring-tailed Lemur



Small or Cape Grey Mongoose

- The White-bearded Wildebeest (*Connochaetes taurinus*) and the Plains Zebra (*Equus quagga*) are now concentrated in the Maasai Mara sector of the Serengeti ecosystem in East Africa. It is a time of dust, massed hoofs and dangerous river crossings. Each crossing results in drownings, serious injuries and a feast for the waiting crocodiles.
- The Damara Dik-dik (*Madoqua damarensis*) in Etosha NP in Namibia has two mating peaks, July/August and again in January-February. The new born lamb weighs just 500g and could fit in the palm of your hand.
- In southern Africa, the first Small Grey Mongoose (*Herpestes pulverulentus*) litters are being dropped and this will continue to December. The first Water Mongoose (*Atilax paludinosus*) litters of one to three young entering the world in this month.
- Southern Right Whale (*Eubalaena australis*) cows are moving close inshore in southern South Africa to give birth, with the peak reached in August. The calves are 4.5 to 6 metres in length and weigh about 1 ton, the same weight as the pair of bull whale testes.
- The Ring-tailed Lemur (*Lemur catta*) in the dry spiny forest of southern Madagascar experiences its peak birthing in August to September. These are the most terrestrial of the lemurs.
- Several bird species in the southern ranges are starting the seasonal cycle of courting, mating and egg-laying. The first Cape Gannet (*Morus capensis*) eggs are being laid in raised, concave mounds of seaweed, feathers and guano- what a nursery bed!

- In one study at a number of Southern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus calvus*) colonies, 86% of egg-laying took place between the 10th August and 20th September.
- The Niam-Niam Parrot (*Poicephalus crassus*), which occurs over a limited area of Central Africa, is believed to have its peak breeding during this and next month.
- Knob Thorn trees (*Senegalia nigrescens*) are starting to flower in parts of its range and will continue to do so through to November.
- One of our favourite trees, the Karoo Boer-bean (*Schotia afra*), flowers from August to October, in the south of South Africa.
- The ripening fruits of that giant fruit-bearer, the Sycamore Fig (*Ficus sycomorus*), will be eagerly attended by frugivorous bats, primates, birds and a host of insect species. Those that are not adept at climbing, or incapable of flight, such as duiker, hyrax and Tenebrionid beetles, will prowl the ground feasting on fallen fruits.



Elephant bull next to Sycamore Fig

Animal tracks and signs of Africa

By Chris and Mathilde Stuart

Take an exciting virtual adventure with us as we explore the Animal tracks and signs of Africa, written exclusively for WildlifeCampus by world-renowned authors - Chris and Mathilde Stuart. This course is perfect for anyone who loves nature and wants to learn more about the animals that live in it.



www.wildlifecampus.com



JOIN THE WILDLIFECAMPUS JUNIOR CLUB TODAY!

What is the WildlifeCampus Junior Club all about?

The WildlifeCampus Junior Club is all about youth and education! The future conservationists, field guides, tour guides and guardians of nature! It is up to you to help us ensure we save our wildlife and natural areas from vanishing.

What must I do to join the WildlifeCampus Junior Club?

With your parent's permission, it is **SUPER** easy! All you need to do is take our Guardians of Nature Oath (to be found in our free Big 5 Junior Course), fill in your name and sign the oath. Once done, email us a copy of your signed oath (you can send it as a photo if you like). We will officially welcome you to the club with a digital (emailed) certificate that can easily be printed out from anywhere in the world!

How much does being part of the club cost, and who can join?

The WildlifeCampus Junior Club is free to all children under 16 from all over the world!





We are thrilled to share a personal story of how an internship at Wild Dreams (WD) provided valuable insight into the industry and paved the way for an incredible career.

As a recruitment company deeply committed to nurturing talent and giving back to the hospitality and lodging industry, we take pride in investing time and effort into helping people, which is why we have chosen to take on an internship that facilitated growth and exposure for an intern's future. In this blog, we will delve into the inspiring journey of one of our past interns, Alyssa, who started with us and eventually secured a job as a duty manager position at a renowned safari lodge. Join us as we explore how this internship experience became a stepping stone towards a new career in the lodging industry.

Can you tell us about your journey from being an intern at WD to becoming a duty manager at a safari lodge? How did the internship contribute to your career growth?

I was very lucky to be able to do my internship with WD. After my internship, I was offered a job as a general assistant at a safari lodge. The skills and knowledge I gained from my internship allowed me to excel in my position as a general assistant and I was soon promoted to duty manager.

What specific skills and experiences did you gain during your internship that prepared you for the duty manager position?

The skills that I gained would be being able to speak to clients/guests in a professional, but friendly manner. This allowed me to speak to guests in a way that makes me look professional and also makes guests comfortable when speaking to me. I experienced that many people have a difficult time understanding others which helped me to adjust the way I was speaking and the words that I used to assist guests when they do not understand.

How did your internship at WD help you better understand the hospitality industry and its unique challenges and opportunities?

During my internship, I would often go through the job requirements and responsibilities as well as the job description of the vacancies available. This helped me to understand what would be expected of me, had I been in those positions. I learned that there are many challenges when it comes to working in the hospitality industry, but growth opportunities also come with all the challenges.

What were some of the key responsibilities and tasks you handled as an intern? How did these responsibilities contribute to your professional development?

One of the responsibilities that I had was to do reference checks on candidates, I had to note down what the references were saying. This taught me to pay more attention to what people are saying and take in more information. I also had to transfer CVs onto the WD company template. This taught me to always be precise and look very carefully for information as it may be there, you are just looking in the wrong place.

Can you share any memorable experiences and challenges you faced during your internship?

My memorable experiences would be when I was able to meet with my mentor and learn from her, even when working remotely. Another memorable experience was when I was told that one of the candidates was chosen by the employer for the job that they applied for, that was an amazing feeling. A challenge that I experienced was contacting references as many people do not keep up to date with the contact details of their references.

How did your internship experience contribute to your knowledge and understanding of customer service? How do you apply those learnings in your current role as a duty manager?

During my internship, I had to communicate with other people to find out information about candidates. This taught me that professionalism is incredibly important but you also need to be friendly at the same time. In my current role as a duty manager, I work with clients/guests the entire day and sometimes there might be miscommunication down the line. When speaking in a professional and friendly manner, it often resolves the situation much quicker.

What advice would you give aspiring interns looking to turn their internships into successful career opportunities, just like you did?

Never give up. It may sometimes feel like you are getting nowhere, but all the hard work pays off. Always make sure you read the requirements and job description carefully and do not lie on your CV if you do not meet the requirements.

How did the internship at WD help you build valuable connections and networks within the industry? How have these connections supported your growth in your current role?

My internship allowed me to work with recruiters, which could very well help me in the future in my personal life, and my professional life. During my internship, I was assisted in creating/updating, my LinkedIn account, which gained the attention of industry professionals and Lodge Managers in the industry.

In what ways did your internship provide you with a glimpse into the responsibilities of a position within the safari lodge industry? How did this shape your decision to pursue a career in this field?

Being able to speak to people who know the responsibilities of a position within the safari lodge industry allowed me to learn a lot about what would be expected of me. This helped me pursue a career in this field by giving me all of the information I need. I initially wanted to go into the field because of my love for animals and this allows me to share this passion with people from all over the world who do not get to experience these animals every day.

What are some of the most important lessons you learned during your internship that have stayed with you throughout your career as a duty manager?

One of the most important things that my internship taught me is to always be respectful of others and to be kind. You should always have patience with others, whether in your personal or professional life, as not all people are ready to climb out of their shells. When working with other staff members/colleagues, it is always important to help them in areas that they need help in, get to understand them to help them grow professionally and broaden their knowledge.

We are reminded of the power of internships in shaping the futures of aspiring professionals.

The story of our intern-turned-duty manager exemplifies the incredible potential that can be unlocked through dedicated mentorship and exposure to an industry. We have witnessed first-hand the impact of investing in an intern, and we are really proud to have played a role in helping someone open new doors into the lodging industry and help them find their dream job.

Hide, There are animals outside

According to the dictionary, a 'hide' is a camouflaged shelter used to observe wildlife at close quarters.

During a recent visit to a lodge in the North West Province, the experience I enjoyed in their subterranean photographic hide certainly lived up to that description.



By David Batzofin



Situated just a short distance from the main lodge buildings, it can be easily accessed at any time of the day or night, given that the camp perimeter is securely fenced to protect the guests and the various game species that call the reserve home.

Most of my back-page articles for this magazine have involved me being out on a drive or walking when events transpired. However, in this case, all I had to do was sit and wait for the animals to come to me. Sitting in the hide waiting for the wildlife to arrive reminded me of the "If you build it, they will come" line from the Kevin Costner movie *Field of Dreams*. And just like the baseball players in that movie, the animals arrived in droves.

Personally, I believe that winter is the best time to visit a reserve given that there is a shortage of both grazing and especially water; hence herds of buffalo and elephants will make their presence felt where there is a regular supply of both.

Even as a seasoned wildlife photographer, my excitement was almost palpable as I settled into the dimly lit hide. I had been here before but had spent only a limited time due to the stay at camp being short and I had to fit in game drives.

On this visit, I was prepared to forego game drives in anticipation of witnessing wildlife up close and undisturbed. This hide offers guests a front-row seat to a mesmerizing spectacle - an oasis where elephants, buffalo, kudu, impala, warthogs, and an array of birds congregated to quench their thirst.

It blends in seamlessly with the surroundings, ensuring minimal disturbance to the animals' natural behaviours. As I gazed through the viewing slot, the scene before me was a symphony of life. As the sun rose it cast a golden hue over the landscape, offering me lighting perfection for the early arrivals.



First to arrive were often the impala, ever cautious, always on high alert, but the lure of water too strong to resist. As they sipped from the water's edge, their reflections were mirrored in the tranquil surface, creating an almost surreal mirage. They were followed by a small herd of male kudus that emerged from the tree line, their spiral horns glinting in the morning light. Their regal presence demanded respect, and they approached the waterhole with deliberate grace. Their eyes scanned the surroundings for any potential threats before lowering their heads to drink.

I was promised that a herd of buffalo would arrive, as they always did, at 08h00. And they did. Thundering towards the water the large and powerful adults were accompanied by a couple of youngsters who looked at the water in a confused manner. All of a sudden the entire herd turned tail and left the waterhole at speed. Why? I was soon to discover that the breeding herds of elephants that utilise this water source do not like to share.

The family of elephants made their grand entrance, with the matriarch leading the procession, followed closely by the younger calves, their exuberant energy contagious. Sitting within meters of these enormous pachyderms and listening to the water being slurped up in their trunks and squirted into their open waiting mouths was a sound not easily forgotten. It was not only waiting mouths that received the liquid refreshment. As it turned out, I was on the receiving end of a

trunkful squirted at me by one of the large females. Luckily for my camera gear, I had interpreted her body language correctly and they were already stowed out of harm's way when the water hit my face and shoulder. I couldn't help but believe that I heard her chuckle as I wiped my face.

The larger species were not the only ones to try and claim this 'spot' for themselves. A family of warthogs, with their 'endearing' faces and characteristic kneeling stance, darted in and out, quenching their thirst with swift efficiency. At one particular point, one of the young warthogs almost ended up in the hide with me as it tried to navigate around the legs of a large elephant drinking in front of me. It swerved at the last moment when it noticed my movement in the subdued light of the hide.

I returned to the hide after dinner to see what, if any, nocturnal animals would come to the water under cover of darkness. The silence of the night was broken by the 'whoop, whoop' of a resident hyena clan and it was not too long before one of them came out of the darkness to have a drink. With the stars shimmered above, and a quiet waterhole in front of me, I decided that it was time to make my way back to bed as I would have an early return to the hide in the morning.

The wildlife spectacle didn't end with the terrestrial species as early arrivals were about a dozen different bird species, which took advantage of the quiet water before thundering hooves and splashing trunks made it difficult for them to drink peacefully.

In the embrace of this hide, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the opportunity to be a silent observer of nature's theatre. The blend of tranquility, raw power, and natural beauty left an indelible mark on my soul, reminding me of the importance of preserving these pristine habitats for generations to come.

At the end of my stay, I left the hide and the camp with a heart full of cherished memories and a newfound reverence for the wonders of the wild.



David is an award-winning blogger whose work can be found at www.travelandthings.co.za

WildlifeCampus Magazine
- 23 -

08

Photography competition!



Open to all wildlife photographers

Submit your entry and stand a chance to see your picture featured on the backpage of our magazine.

Send your picture with relevant story, location and credits to info@wildlifecampus.com

If your picture gets chosen you win 1 month of WildlifeCampus subscription. During this month you will be able to access ALL WildlifeCampus online courses! (T's and C's apply)