



# WildlifeCampus

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## Magazine

**A brand new  
course!**

**December  
Wildlife Diary**

**Polar bears**

**Lessons from  
our rhinos**

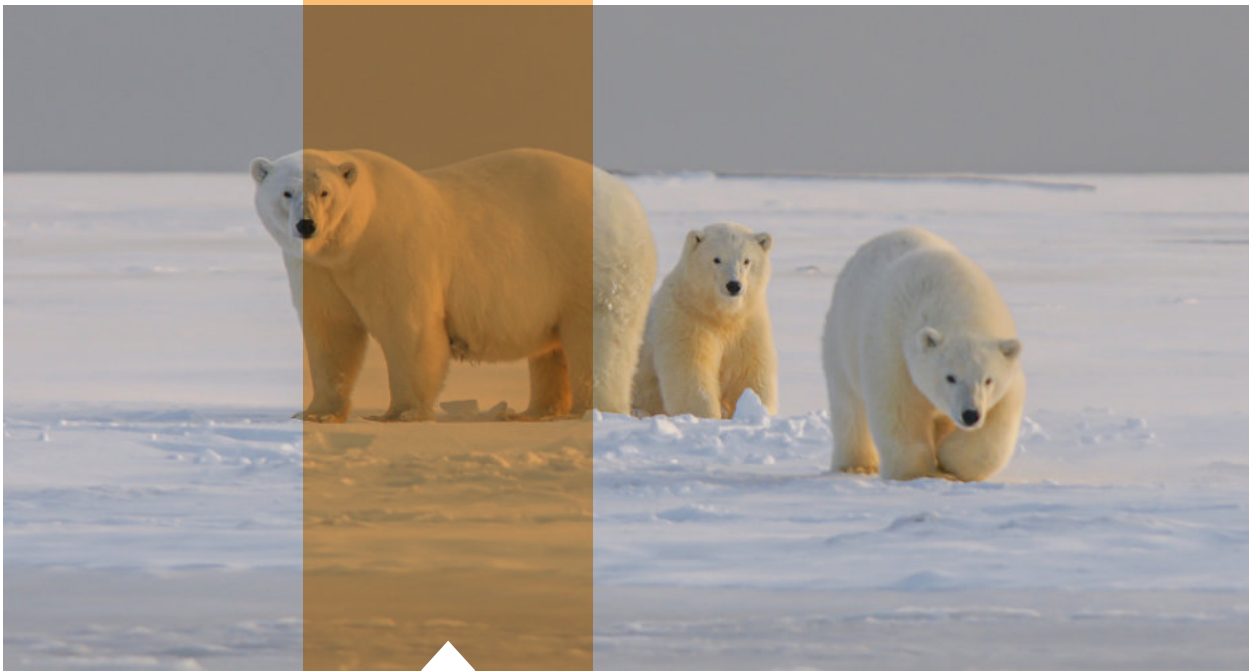
**Hospitality  
Vacancies**

**What is  
Front Of House?**

**2024 Sky Guide**



# 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 23

PAGE 4

02

Polar bears

In our final edition of the year, WildlifeCampus student, Amy Holt, takes a closer look at one of the most iconic species of the Arctic, the polar bear.

Learn more about them and what is threatening their existence.

PAGE 8

03

Skyguide for 2024

Whether novice, amateur or professional the annually published Sky Guide Southern Africa is a practical resource for all stargazers. It highlights the cosmic events for each month of the upcoming year, including planetary movements, predicted eclipses and meteor showers.

PAGE 12

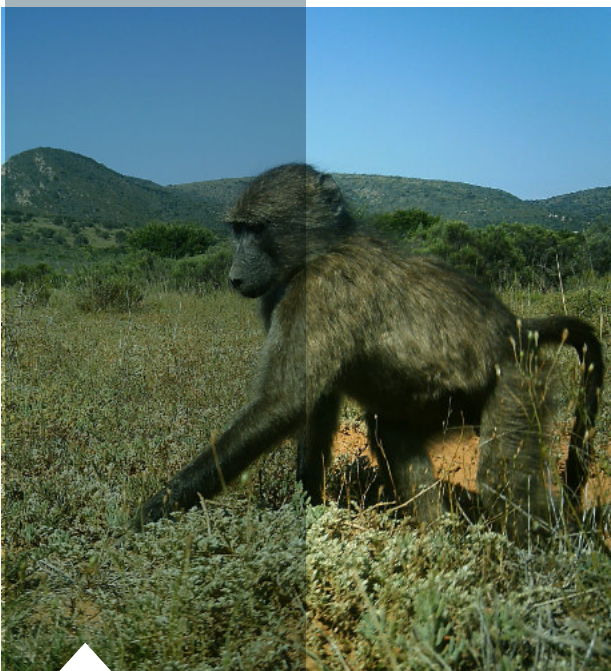
04

The leopards of Unguja

In this article, Chris and Mathilde Stuart take us on one of their many trips.

This time we travel to Unguja, the largest island in the Zanzibar Archipelago in search for leopards.

PAGE 14



05

December Wildlife Diary

Stuart on Nature highlights events to look out for in December along with some historical facts.

Find out what you can expect to witness on your next adventure in nature during the month of December.

PAGE 16

06

What is Front Of House

What exactly does the term Front Of House within the hospitality industry mean?

In this article, Wild Dreams will give you an insight to what Front Of House and its philosophy is.

PAGE 20

07

A brand new course!

We are proud to announce our newest course: Introduction to K9 Anti-Poaching. Written for WildlifeCampus by Luna Hounds.

Find out more about this great course on page 23.

PAGE 23

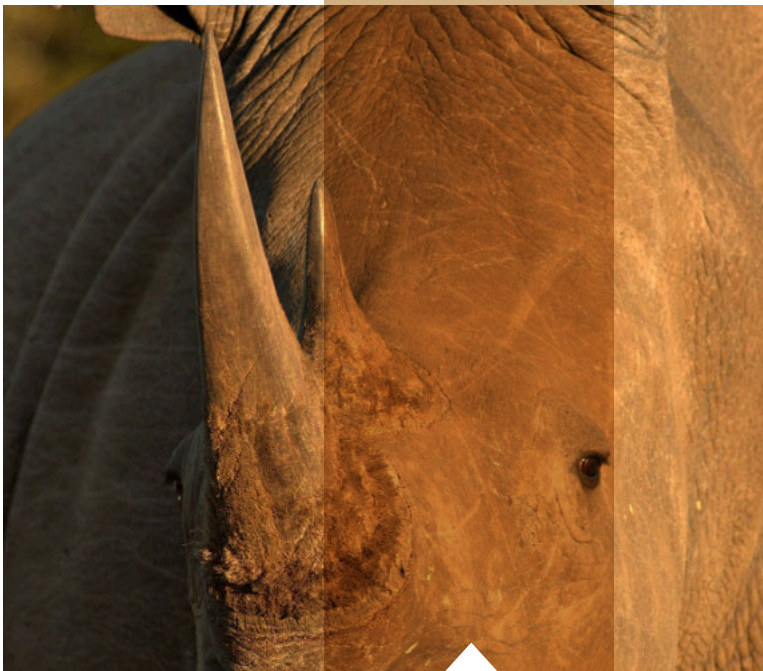
08

Lessons from our rhinos

In this edition David reflects on 2 incidents where he found himself standing next to a poached rhino.

In his article he shares his Top 10 list of lessons he has learned while spending time with rhinos.

PAGE 24





# 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.

“Thoughts of television” - Early 2000

My phone rang one Monday morning. I thought it was one of the typical calls from an individual who had an idea of how to make money out of the AfriCam traffic. But I quickly realised that this one was different.

“My name is Peter Henderson. I am based in London and am coming down to South Africa next week and would appreciate a meeting with you guys.”

I agreed and a few days later, Paul, Graham, Peter Henderson and I met in the AfriCam offices in Lonehill.

Peter Henderson made an immediate impression. A burly man in his late-thirties, Peter is somebody that you immediately take seriously. He told us a little of his history, which impressed us even more.

Peter had a background in television and had left South Africa in his early-twenties to work as a cameraman for numerous international television channels, including CNN and the BBC. He had recently sold out of Newsforce, the business he had

created which was providing equipment and broadcast services to channels throughout Africa and Europe. As a result, he was independently wealthy.

“I have a vision of a live wildlife television channel. Viewers all over the world will be able to see wildlife live on television,” he explained.

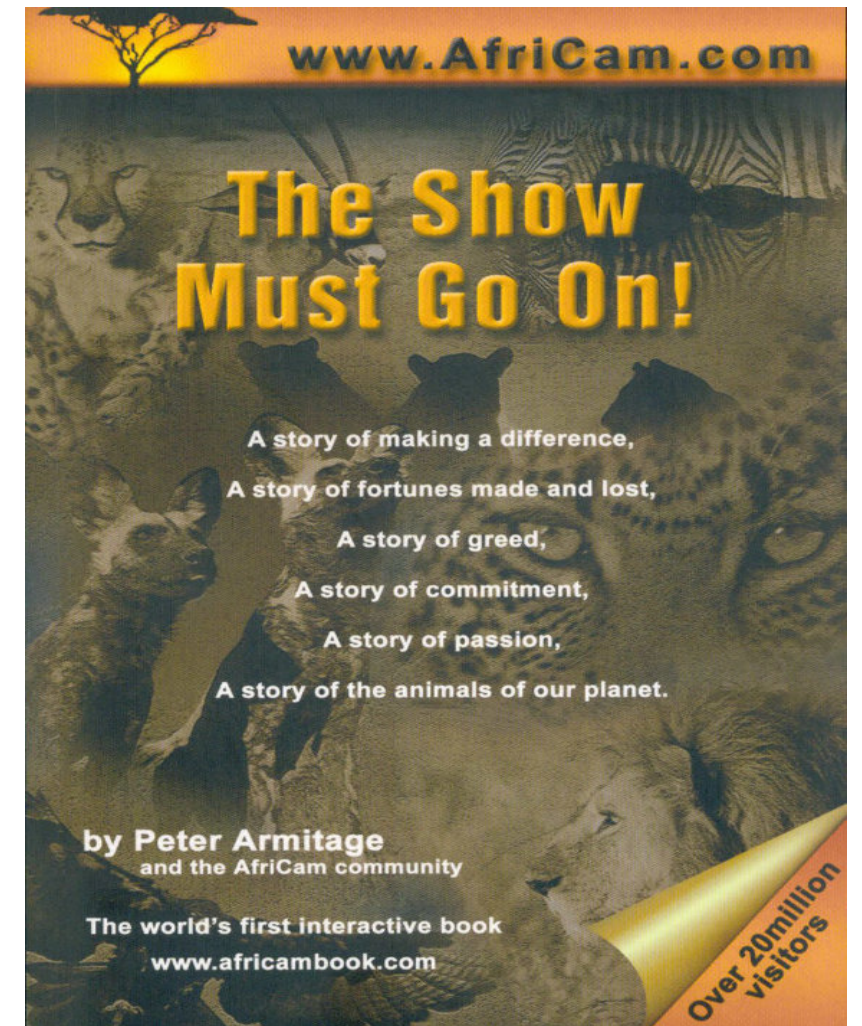
We had talked a lot about live television and Peter sounded like somebody who could help us make it happen. He was also a likeable guy. It was also the first time we had met somebody who looked capable of developing a business which could challenge AfriCam.

I particularly liked what Peter had to say, as television offered the prospect of bigger revenues in the short term. It was a proven model and he seemed capable of delivering on his vision. AfriCam TV had a ring to it.

He was interested in forming a partnership with us and we agreed to a subsequent meeting.

After his departure, Paul and Graham looked to me to come up with a possible structure. Peter clearly wanted a stake in AfriCam, but the equity was becoming increasingly expensive and it did not seem practical to introduce another partner. We all agreed to think about it, but we all knew instinctively that we would be doing a deal with Peter. If we did not, there was a chance that he could steal the “live wildlife high ground” which at stage unquestionably belonged to AfriCam.

Within days of the meeting with Peter, we had a similar approach from Jonathan Procter. Jonathan is one of South Africa’s leading television figures and he had a similar vision. His last serious job was running eTV and he was now looking for a new challenge.



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

We all agreed that Jonathan’s colleague Jacques van Niekerk would spend some time at AfriCam and present his ideas to us. We were very impressed with Jacques and a few weeks later they presented AfriCam TV to us. If it was not for Peter Henderson, we would probably have gone along with them right away.

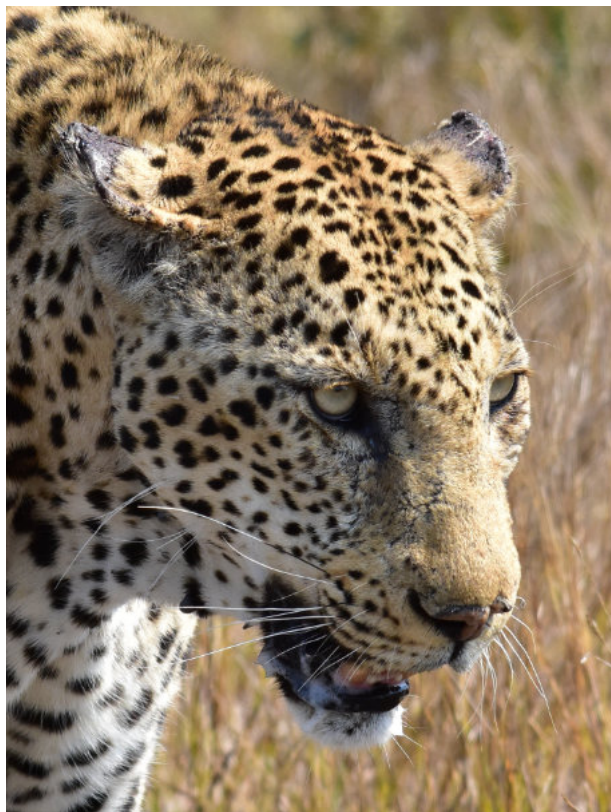
Jonathan’s proposal had one key difference – we would collectively raise capital to finance the TV project. Peter came with his ideas and cash, while Jonathan just had the idea. It was an easy decision to make. Even though the listing and the Middlemas investment would provide capital, we needed to list with the television project well advanced. Working with Jonathan did not provide this opportunity.

“Back at the office” - Early 2000

We had now rented a building close to Paul’s RTTC office in Lonehill’s Studio Park and AfriCam had started to feel like a real business. With a listing on the horizon AfriCam had begun hiring aggressively as we needed the staff to help us fulfil our







vision. The obvious business focus was to increase US advertising and we hired Keith Wallington, Graham's brother. Keith's task was unambiguous – to increase advertising revenues. We were now generating over R100 000 per month in advertising in South Africa, but the US revenue was stagnant. Keith was asked to spend some time in the US to develop relationships with partners who could sell our advertising.

From a technology perspective, things were moving a little slower than we had hoped. Dimension Data's Internet Solutions were still scoping our project and it was proving to be a bigger task than anticipated. Our Board was expecting the new site to launch in February and the pay-per-view streaming video section of the site to launch by June. Timing was critical for the launch of our subsidiaries, from a revenue and listing perspective. The camera content on the site was improving all the time. Andy Parker had concluded a deal with the KwaZulu Natal Conservation Services and we installed another virtual game drive at Hluhluwe National Park.

Hluhluwe plays a special role in South African conservation. Midway through the 20th century the black rhino (*Diceros bicornis* (Burchell 1817)) was in very real danger of extinction and led by internationally-acclaimed conservationist Dr Ian Player, Hluhluwe became the reserve where the future of the black rhino was secured. AfriCam sent a team of rangers to run a virtual game drive which gave viewers regular sightings of black rhinos, together with numerous other species.

As WildlifeCampus.com explains; "Conservation of Rhinoceros of both local species has been phenomenal in South Africa. With the increase of European settlement into Southern Africa in the 17th Century, all game species, but particularly the rhino, were severely affected by hunting. By the end of the 19th Century only 50 - 100 white rhino remained alive, and these were confined to the KwaZulu / Natal region.

As a result of this the Umfolozi - Hluhluwe Game Reserve was proclaimed in 1897. The black rhino did no better and only 100 individuals were left by the early 1930's with both species being completely extinct in all of their former habitats with the exception of KwaZulu / Natal. Due to enormous and dedicated efforts, these species were literally pulled back from the brink of total extinction. To date nearly 3500 white rhino and 200 black rhino have been bred and translocated back into areas where they once existed. Today the white rhino numbers 6000 - 7000 and the black rhino just under 2000."

Cape Cam was next and AfriCam began another moving cam in the Cape region, showing the best of what the Cape had to offer. This included seals, whales, Chacma baboons and Bontebok.

#### "Panthera Pardus"

At around the same time we were approached by another individual whose name we knew well. We were very interested in meeting with Kim Wolhuter.

Kim is an experienced wildlife photographer and wildlife film-maker. He had won the 1998 Agfa Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award and been involved in productions for the likes of National Geographic and the BBC. The one we recalled was Beauty and the Beasts - leopard and warthogs.

Kim, like many others, had an internet idea. But this one we were very happy to take seriously.

I recalled the name Harry Wolhuter and a search on the internet refreshed my memory. Harry Wolhuter is one of the most famous characters of the Kruger Park and the website www.lowveld.com recites the legend: "At the turn of the century, Harry took a job as a ranger in what was then the Sabie Game Reserve and is now part of the Kruger National Park.

"In August of 1904, whilst riding south after patrolling not far from Tshokwane, he and his horse were set upon by two lions. Unseated by the first rush, he was seized by an adult male lion even before he hit the ground and dragged by the right shoulder nearly one hundred metres.

"In extreme pain from being trampled by the huge forepaws and with the great bite in his shoulder, Wolhuter managed, with his left arm, to reach around and grasp his knife - a cheap 6 inch blade made only of soft steel.

"Left handed, he struck twice for where the lion's heart would be, but the lion did not die. It took another blow with all his strength to sever an artery, whereupon the huge beast sprang back and Wolhuter staggered to his feet, shouting and swearing in the hope of stopping any further attack. He was fortunate. The lion had been mortally wounded and turned back into the bush where Wolhuter heard its growls turn to moans and then to silence.

"Bleeding copiously, Wolhuter climbed into a tree as best he could, only to find the second lion returning to the scene after unsuccessfully chasing his horse. This lion now attempted to attack him.

"Constantly harassed by Wolhuter's brave dog, it retreated into the bush.

Wolhuter was later rescued from his tree, but his troubles were not over. His rescuers took five days to carry him to Komatipoort from where he was taken to Barberton hospital, his life hanging in the balance for weeks. Happily, he recovered and continued as a ranger for many years afterwards."

"Yes, I am related," said Kim, "Harry is my grandfather." With legend like that in your family history, it is no surprise that Kim is inspired by a passion for the African bush.

Sitting at our outside boardroom he explained his latest project: "I am going to spend 18 months stalking one male leopard called Tjololo on the southern part of the Mala Mala Game Reserve. I will eventually produce a documentary on the behaviour of this leopard for National Geographic."

We discussed different permutations of a commercial relationship. Kim wanted to make money out of the internet rather than television and was convinced that he could get massive sponsorship for the project. Even the traditional film-makers were bitten by the idea of the internet and many of them had ideas of how to use the internet to make money. Kim's idea was to broadcast the making of the movie live streaming on the internet.

"It is a brilliant idea, but live streaming is not an option," explained Paul. "The bandwidth on the internet is just not big enough for a meaningful number of users to access a live stream and the costs are huge.

"You have no idea how big this could become," Kim assured, motivating for all available technology to be thrown at it. We agreed to meet again a few days later. After Kim left, Graham enthused about the project.

"This will kick arse."

"I agree."

"That oke has got it. He is also a handsome dude and the AfriCam females will log on every day just to see Kim."

"Maybe part of the contract should be that he does not wear a shirt," Paul joked.

We were especially excited about the project because Kim was filming through the night and this would solve one of our biggest problems – night-time viewing. With over 50% of our viewers from the US timezone, there was a distinct lack of content at the peak US viewing time because it was the middle of the night in Africa. Leopards hunt at night and the content would be compelling.

In addition, the filming would be done on the revered Mala Mala land. This was ironic as it was the first game reserve that AfriCam had approached and we had been rejected. The Leopard Cam project would get us on to Mala Mala "through the back door". Mike Ratray, the owner of Mala Mala, was happy for Kim to conduct the project on his land, but it opened a can of political worms for AfriCam.

We concluded an agreement with Kim, which was heavily weighted in his favour.

"You guys must realise that I am putting my balls on the line here," Kim explained. "Doing this as an internet venture could result in me getting much less from National Geographic.

"I am going to spend 18 months filming and the normal revenue would be around US\$500 000. Nat Geo could halve that because it has already effectively been broadcast."







# Polar bears

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**By WildlifeCampus student**

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**Amy Holt**

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**Polar bears are one of the most iconic species of the Arctic. They rely on this fragile sea ice habitat for travelling, hunting, resting and mating. But how have polar bears adapted to life on the ice, and how is climate change threatening their existence?**

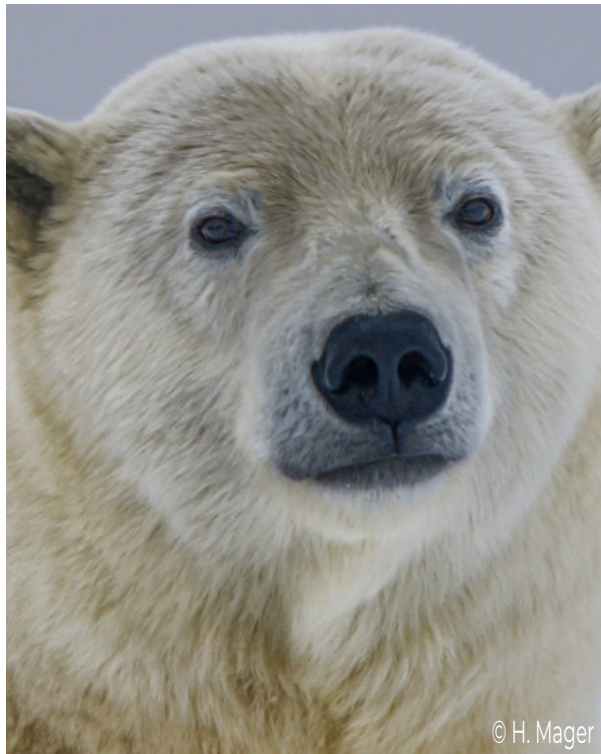
# 02

The Arctic's top predator, the polar bear, evolved within the last 500,000 years when a population of brown bears travelled north into the Arctic during a warm period and became isolated. The bears were forced to adapt to the colder environment when temperatures dropped again. Polar bears have a thick layer of body fat and water-repellent fur to prevent heat loss. Small ears and a short tail also help to limit heat loss. Despite appearing white, polar bears have translucent fur and black skin. The black skin helps keep the polar bear warm as darker colours better absorb heat from the Sun. Meanwhile, the fur lacks pigmentation and reflects visible light, making the polar bear appear white.

Polar bears are powerful swimmers. They have elongated bodies, heads and noses to enhance streamlining and to allow the bears to thrust their heads through snow and ice. Their forepaws act like large paddles, while their hind paws act as rudders. These specialised paws are enormous, measuring up to 30 centimetres across. They help distribute the polar bear's weight as it walks on the ice, preventing it from breaking through thin ice. The bottom of each paw is covered by small, soft bumps (papillae), which grip the ice and stop the bear from slipping.

Polar bears spend 50% of their time hunting for seals. As patient hunters, they can remain motionless for hours above a seal's breathing hole in the ice, waiting for the seal to emerge. These bears have such a strong sense of smell, that they can detect a seal in the water beneath a metre of compacted snow. Polar bears use their thick, sharp and powerful claws to catch and hold slippery seals and to gain traction on the ice. They also have sharpened molars to tear off pieces of frozen seal.





Polar bears play a critical role in controlling seal populations. Without polar bears, seal populations would explode and diminish populations of crustaceans and fish, which are an important food source for local communities and other Arctic wildlife.

Polar bears can communicate with each other through scent trails left by their paws. This helps potential mates find each other in the spring. Once a potential mate is found, the polar bears spend about a week together before returning to their solitary lives. During the summer, the start of fasting is when the bears live off their fat reserves or follow the ice in search of food. Pregnant polar bears start digging dens in snow drifts on land or sea ice by autumn. These dens are used for resting and keeping warm. After about two months in the den, the mothers welcome cubs into the den, usually one or two. Denning is the most vulnerable time of a polar bear's life. The survival of every single cub is important. The mother and her cubs leave the den in March or April to get the cubs used to the outside temperatures so they can learn to live and hunt on the ice. After two years together, the family will disperse, and the cycle will begin again.

Female polar bears don't become pregnant at the time of breeding. The tiny embryo (blastocyst) will not implant in the female's uterus until autumn. Delayed implantation allows the female to physiologically assess her condition before starting gestation. The actual gestation only lasts about 60 days.

Extensive research of the Hudson Bay population has shown that the female must reach at least 490 pounds (222 kilograms) to have the blastocyst implant and start gestation. If this weight isn't achieved, the blastocyst will reabsorb, and the female will continue to hunt seals all winter to be fatter a year later. The conditions developing in Hudson Bay mean females will no longer be able to give birth and successfully raise a litter of cubs. Adult bears will die of old age when this occurs, and then the population will face local extinction.

Polar bears have home ranges but don't have territories. The size of a polar bear's range depends on the sea ice quality and the availability of their seal prey. There are four Arctic sea ice ecoregions where polar bears occur. The seasonal ice ecoregion is located in central/eastern Canada. Here, sea ice melts completely in summer, forcing polar bears ashore. Climate change is causing the ice to melt earlier in spring and freeze up later in the autumn. This means the polar bears have to go longer without food, which leads to unhealthy bears and lower reproduction rates. There is also higher cub mortality because mother bears cannot gain enough weight in spring to provide sufficient milk. The divergent ice ecoregion extends around the Arctic from coastal Alaska to Svalbard. Here, polar bears used to be able to stay on perennial ice year-round (ice that doesn't melt during the summer months). Warmer weather means new ice stops forming, and the retreating ice becomes smaller. This leaves the polar bears with two options: come ashore where there is little to eat, or follow the sea ice over the deep polar basin where food is extremely scarce. Over four million people live in the Arctic.



As polar bears spend more time onshore, there is increased conflict with humans. Longer journeys due to sea ice becoming smaller and further apart means polar bears must swim farther and risk drowning. These bears are even more vulnerable to the sea warming and ice decline because they are used to feeding through the summer. The convergent ice ecoregion is found in eastern Greenland, the northern Beaufort Sea and Queen Elizabeth Islands. Here, locally formed ice and ice transported from the divergent ice ecoregion collects along the shore. This provides polar bears access to seals over productive waters throughout the summer. The archipelago ecoregion includes the Gulf of Boothia, Kane Basin, Lancaster Sound, M'Clintock Channel, Norwegian Bay and the Viscount Melville Sound. This area has historically been covered by sea ice all summer and remains the last refuge for polar bears.

Over the last three decades, the Arctic's oldest and thickest sea ice has declined by 95%. As sea ice continues to decline, polar bears are becoming less diverse. Less mating between the different groups decreases the genetic flow between them. These fragmented populations are at risk of inbreeding, which makes them more vulnerable. Without sea ice, polar bears will not survive. However, it is not just polar bears who will suffer. When sea ice melts in the Arctic, coastal communities on the other side of the world feel the effects of rising sea levels. The Arctic sea ice is the Earth's insurance policy against climate crises. White surfaces, like Arctic sea ice, reflect the Sun's energy into space, which keeps the planet cool. Without this sea ice, the darker ocean and land will absorb most of this heat. This is predicted to increase the planet's warming by up to 40%.

To save the polar bear is to save the Arctic.







**2024**

# **SKY GUIDE**

## **Southern Africa**

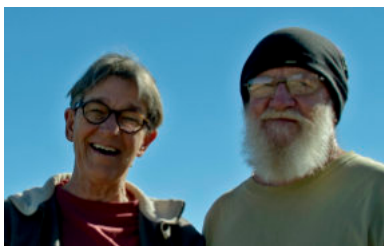
**An astronomical handbook**



# The leopards of Unguja



Badly mounted Unguja Island leopard in the local museum



By



Unguja is the largest island in the Zanzibar Archipelago, the others being Pemba and Mafia islands, and several smaller islands. The names conjure up an image of tropical splendour, an exotic destination that lies off the coast of Tanzania, with our focus on the 1,600 square kilometre Unguja. The publicity brochures refer to Unguja as Zanzibar but this is incorrect, it is a stand-alone island that is part of the archipelago. Unguja lies some 40km from the African mainland and its highest point is just 110 metres above sea level. There are two parallel, north-south running ridges, Machui and Masingini, that form the island's principal topographical features, and much of the coastline is fringed by coral reefs.

The gently undulating coastal plain averages 5-6 kilometres in width and in the east it is dominated by what is known locally as coral rag thicket, low but dense woodland that grows on ancient raised coral rock. There are small patches of higher forest trees, such as at Jozani in the south, and extensive areas of mangrove woodland that fringe Chwake Bay and the sheltered inlets to the south of the settlement of Pete. The central and western areas have the most fertile soils and therefore the highest human population densities and extensive areas have been put to the cultivation of rice, cassava, bananas and other crops, with little remaining of the natural vegetation.

Despite the human pressures the island's fauna is surprisingly diverse, with 47 mammal species, more than 100 birds, and at least 19 amphibians (we had the privilege to discover a new species), 35 lizards and snakes. Here is the only place on our blighted planet where the Zanzibar Red Colobus (*Piliocolobus kirkii*) lives, with approximately 6,000 mature individuals. Probably the most important population of Ader's Duiker (*Cephalophus adersi*) also calls the forests here home but heavy hunting pressure has probably reduced their numbers to less than 300 individuals.

So, how did we become involved with Unguja, certainly not beach lounging and snorkelling. The Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) once occurred on the island but it was believed by many to be extinct, with the last records from the 1980s. Rumours of its survival persisted however, into the 1990s, and even today. We were approached by various organizations to establish the facts, so in 1997 we headed to Unguja.

You may well ask about the origins of the apparent records that seemed to indicate that Leopards did still survive on the island. Witchcraft and belief in magic still play a very important role in the lives of many Zanzibaris and this has extended to the Leopard. On the island it is generally believed that there are two types of Leopard, truly wild individuals, and so-called "kept" Leopards.



Zanzibar Red Colobus

The latter are said to be under the control of "leopard keepers" by the application of magical actions and they are "kept" for various reasons. These latter include the use of threats to terrorize individuals as a means of commanding respect, to force the "victim" to hand over food and other items to the "keeper", and as a means to guard wealth and privacy. It is said that "kept" Leopards are under the control of their keepers and that they are imbued with super-natural powers, such as not leaving pugmarks or showing signs of their passing.

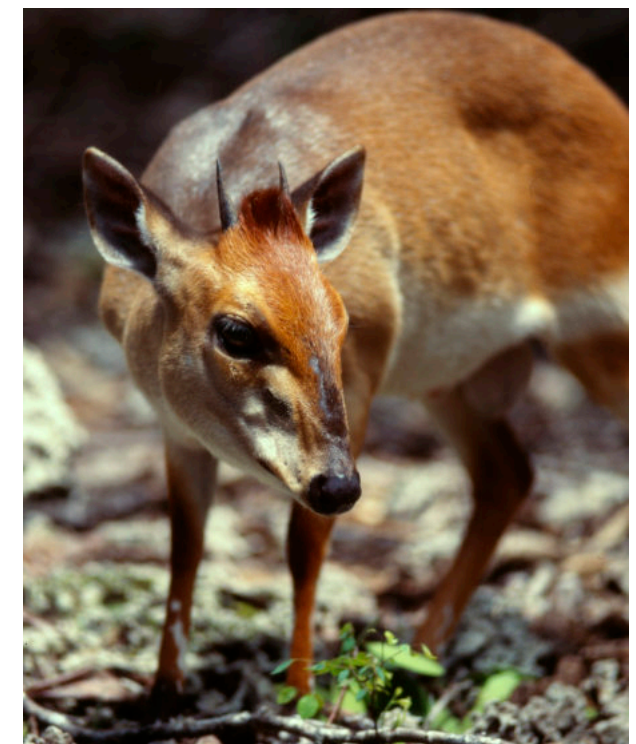
Obviously, from the scientific point of view this concept holds no basis in reality but of course the concept of "kept" Leopards is very real in the minds of many of the islanders. Although Leopards still prowl the minds of the islanders, it now seems highly unlikely that these magnificent spotted cats survive on the island. After having found no indication that "wild" Leopards are still present on the island we looked for reasons why so many apparent records of kills, sightings had been reported over the years since the last positive record. We concluded that a number of the earlier records were probably valid but deliberate falsification of records had taken place in order to attract the interest of visitors and researchers, as they tend to bring money and rewards, and possibly for reasons unknown to us. There were also cases where records put forward as being of recent origin were in fact years old, and incidents of mistaken identity cropped up repeatedly.



Most people come for the coral reefs and beaches

Most of the latter involved the African Civet (*Civettictis civetta*) which is fairly common, and even the much smaller, introduced, Javan Civet (*Viverricula indica*). It also became apparent that despite obvious differences in size and overall structure and form, most people identified the tracks of the African Civet as being those of the Leopard.

So-called trackers escorted us to likely sites in forest and coral rag thicket. We were shown cattle and hornbill tracks that we were told were left by "kept" Leopards in disguise because foreigners were not privy to seeing the real thing. We do not ridicule or disparage this as in mysterious ways we realized that many locals really believed these tales. At the end of the survey we had an "audience" with the environment minister who was adamant that there were Leopards on Unguja and we Europeans just were not allowed to see them!



Ader's Duiker

We arrived on Unguja at the height of the rainy season, which had the advantage of easing the location of fresh animal tracks, but the disadvantage that we spent part of almost every day soaked to the skin! We employed several survey techniques that had worked well for us in other parts of Africa. We used automatic cameras, laying of scent lures, each day we walked many kilometres on trails and jeep tracks looking for tracks, scat and scratching trees, as well as urine scrapes but all of our best efforts drew a blank. After the month we had allocated to the survey came to a close we had to, sadly, conclude that indeed the Leopards of Unguja were probably no more.



# December Wildlife Diary



Chacma Baboons foraging in natural vegetation

- In midsummer 1775, Swedish naturalist Carl Peter Thunberg found Chacma Baboons (*Papio ursinus*) so numerous on Table Mountain, Cape Town, that they were making frequent raids on farms and gardens on the mountain's slopes- as they are still doing to this day. The difference, these days there are many more people and more goodies to choose from. Raids tend to peak during the dry summer months and after mountain fires, when little natural food is available to the baboon troops.
- In December 1781 Francois le Vaillant, who travelled extensively in southern Africa, shot a blaubok (Blue Antelope *Hippotragus leucophaeus*). Fortunately, he preserved the skin and described the species, as he saw only two on his entire travels. He mentioned, however, that others had been killed at Soetmelk's Valley, near the settlement of Riviersonderend. By 1799 the last of the species had probably been wiped out.



The largest Cape Fur Seal colony is located at Kleinzee, Northern Cape (not accessible to the public)



Lesser Jerboa

- By December 1958, over 660,000 head of game had been shot in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) as part of a futile policy to eradicate the Tsetse. Of these, 374 were Hook-lipped Rhinos (*Diceros bicornis*). By the end of the following month, 10,210 Eland (*Tragelaphus oryx*) and 6,509 Savanna Buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) had been killed, amongst many other species.
- The first issue (December 1831) of The Graham's Town Journal had an article about the sale of Leopard skins and ivory which stated that: "On the Graham's Town market, tiger [leopard] skins sold for 5 rix-dollars; and elephant teeth by the pound." Grahamstown, in South Africa's Eastern Cape, was a major ivory trading centre in the 19th century.
- Algiers, on the Mediterranean coast, receives its peak rainfall of some 130mm in December. But it's a dry time for Khartoum, in Sudan, where no rain is expected to fall.
- Births of the Putty-nosed Monkey (*Cercopithecus nictitans*) peak in December. This monkey of west-central Africa inhabits forest, where it feeds on fruits, seeds, flowers and foliage, as well as some invertebrates.
- The Ethiopian Hedgehog (*Paraechinus aethiopicus*) hibernates in at least part of its North African range from December until February. These desert inhabitants often use abandoned rodent burrows as their retreats during hibernation.
- Cape Fur Seals (*Arctocephalus pusillus*) are in full breeding swing at their colonies along the west coast of South Africa and Namibia, the largest being at Kleinzee and Cape Cross. Most births of the black-pelted pups

takes place at the beginning of December. Within 5 to 7 days of parturition, the cows will be mated by territory-holding bulls.

- The Jerboa (*Jaculus jaculus*) is producing litters now in some areas of its North African and Arabian range. This strange, kangaroo-like mouse occurs widely in deserts, where it favours both stony and sandy substrates.
- Leatherback Turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) breed along the shores of north-east South Africa in Maputoland, from November to February, with a December peak. Females haul on to the beaches and dig nest holes above the high water mark, laying about 80 per clutch and up to 8 clutches in a season. Hatchlings emerge about 60 days after laying.
- The Sneezewood tree (*Ptaeroxylon obliquum*) produces its last flowers in December, having started to first blossom in August. It takes its name from the fact that its sawdust can cause violent sneezing. The first red-brown fruits appear from December to February. The timber is both durable and beautiful. In parts of its range, such as South Africa's Eastern Cape, it was harvested and used as fence posts as the wood is not attacked by termites or woodborer beetles. Some of these posts can still be seen in use along fencelines and may be well over 100 years old.



Sneezewood plank polished



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# What is Front of House?



**Front of House, also known within the hospitality industry as just "FOH" is not as simple as it sounds! In this article, we explain what all aspects of this term mean starting with what we believe to be the philosophy of Front of House.**

There are three main points that relate to the philosophy of FOH

- 1. Guest experience** and going the extra mile – Making sure the guests have the best experience possible and that they are satisfied with all aspects of their stay.
- 2. Atmosphere** – Making sure the atmosphere of the lodge is inviting at all times and a place where people feel comfortable and relaxed.
- 3. Being the communicator** – Being a warm, friendly and welcoming face to the guests, communicating with them but also passing on information to the other departments to enhance the overall operations of the lodge.

The term "Front of House" has a few different definitions within the hospitality industry. Listed below are the typical ones that are important for you to understand:

The term covers many different "job titles" within the hospitality industry. 'Front of house' refers to a *position within the industry for someone whose main job is to interact with guests directly.*

Your job title may simply be 'Front of house', but the same position can also be called by other names but still have the same duties, for example:

- Guest Relations
- Guest Liaison
- Anchor
- Host or Hostess
- Receptionist
- Guest Experience Manager
- Hospitality Manager

Bar personnel, waiters and waitresses would be considered to work *IN* the "Front of House" department or "food and beverage" depending on how the lodge is structured but their job title will not be "Front of House".

It also is a *term used to describe a duty* so you may see a position for a manager, or a guide advertised that states in the requirements something like:

*'Must have excellent Front of House skills'*

This typically means they need to be good with guest relations, interacting with the clientele but also overseeing the Front of House operations.

It is also a *physical area within a hospitality establishment, meaning the main communal areas that guests or customers can use* for example:

- Dining area
- Lounge
- Bar
- Reception

This term is used by all hospitality industries including many different sectors such as:

- Lodges
- Hotels
- Restaurants
- Cafes
- Cruise ships/yachts
- Bars
- Airlines
- Catering/Event venues
- Resorts
- Clubs

## Why is FOH important?

All positions within any hospitality establishment are vitally important but FOH positions are what hold the daily operations together, as this person is the communicator to all departments regarding guest requirements, requests and general information and will often be the first person to know of any requests. Communication is key in this position.

FOH is seen as the "face" of the lodge and is considered the "go-to" person for the guests for questions, complaints and guidance so should represent the lodge at all times which is a very important job. This includes when they aren't at work, they should be supportive of their work environment and represent them at all times.

This person also would be the main person to make sure that the guests are not aware of any crisis happening related to operations to keep everyone calm and not worry the guests about things that are the job of the staff to worry about. Guests should never know that there is a problem with the acceptance only of an emergency where they have to follow instruction

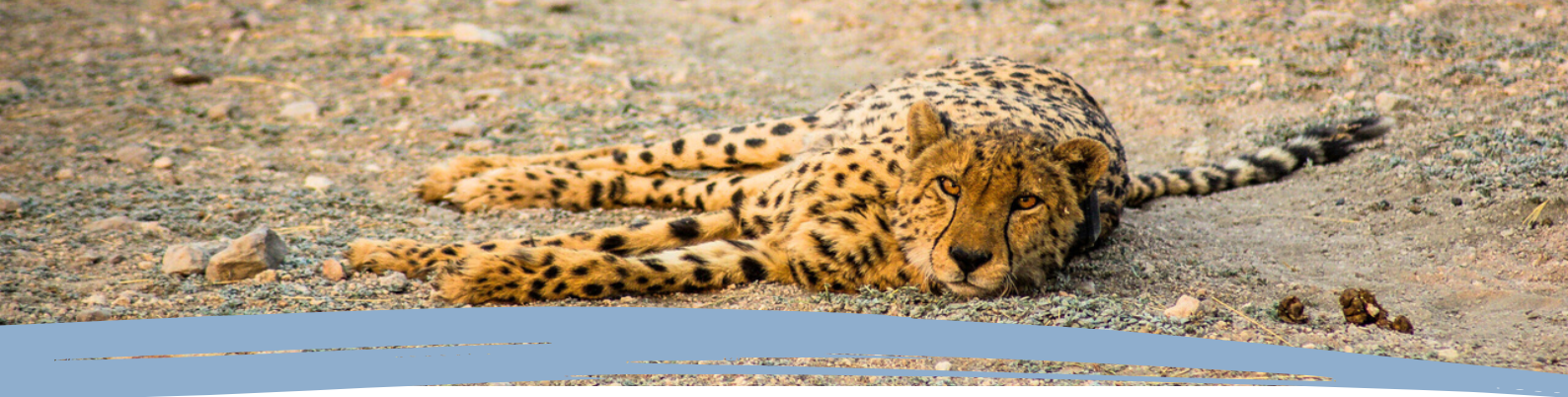
If you are interested in learning more about this role, especially with a focus on the safari lodge sector then be sure to check out the Front of House lodge operations course we created for our industry partner, WildlifeCampus who is the leading online course provider within this area.

You can find out more about the course and even do a free component to "try before you buy" [by clicking here.](#)

The course would also make a fantastic Christmas gift for someone you know who wants to upskill themselves or learn more about the industry to either further their career or start one within hospitality and tourism! (click the picture for a synopsis of the course)







## WILD DREAMS JOB VACANCIES

Wild Dreams is a prominent company in the hospitality industry, specialising in recruitment and consultancy. We mainly focus on the safari lodge sector, as evident from our clientele. Our clients range from small lodges that accommodate only a few individuals to well-known large lodge groups with properties scattered throughout Africa.

At Wild Dreams, we are always on the lookout for field guides with various levels of experience. Additionally, we have positions where guiding knowledge is required, but the role is more focused on front of house or management responsibilities.

As a company, we prioritise conservation and actively support wildlife sanctuaries. We are deeply involved in community work and collaborate with numerous non-profit organisations in the wildlife and conservation field.

While we believe that most of you may find the aforementioned positions interesting, we also have constant vacancies in areas such as reservations, maintenance, and chef roles. To access these job opportunities, you can scan the provided QR code to visit our main jobs page. If you come across a job that catches your interest, you can submit your application online. However, if you don't find a suitable job at the moment, you can still upload your application directly into our database.

Furthermore, we have dedicated pages offering interview advice and CV tips. We even provide a free CV template that you can download. Our founder, who is a certified career coach, is deeply passionate about assisting individuals in finding their dream jobs.

Wishing you a successful job search!  
The Wild Dreams team.

[www.wilddreams.co.za](http://www.wilddreams.co.za)



# A brand new course!

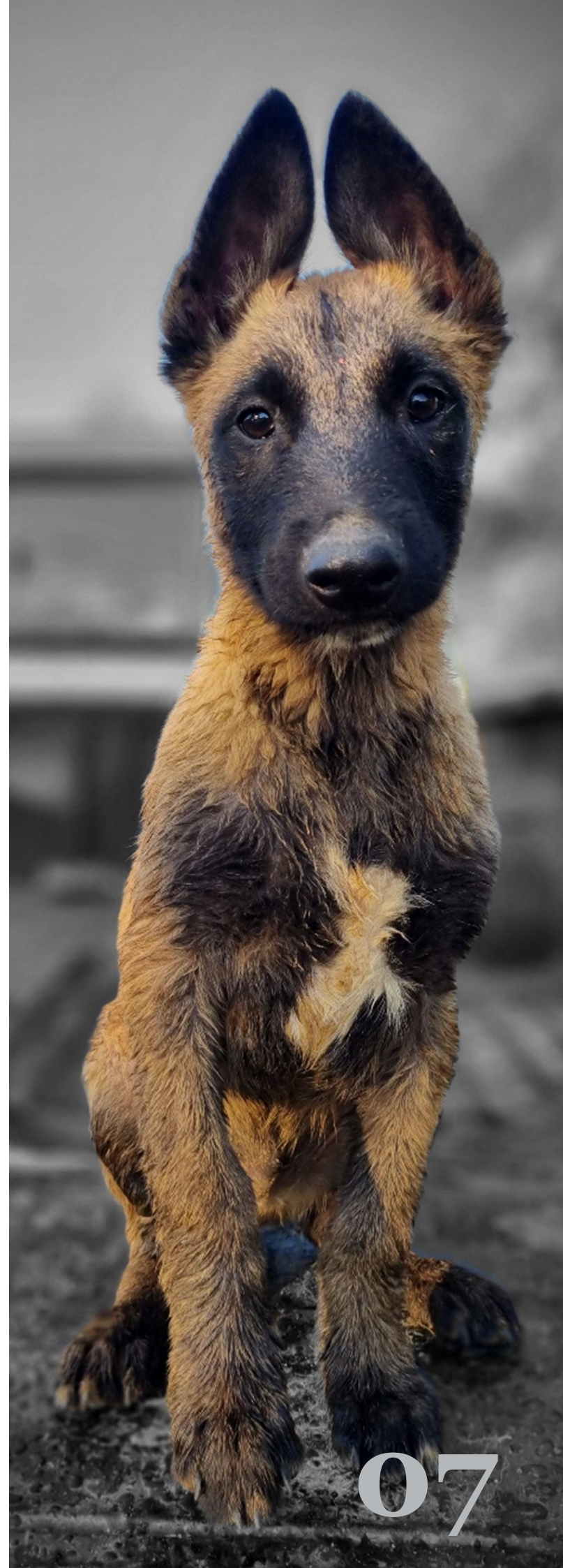
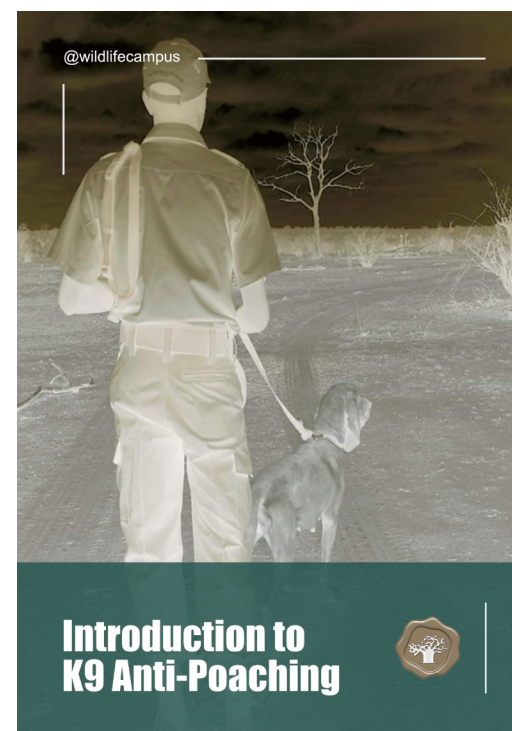


## Introduction to K9 Anti-Poaching

Written for WildlifeCampus by Robynne Wasas of Luna Hounds, this course will delve into the fundamental knowledge necessary for entering the working K9 industry.

We aim to provide individuals from diverse backgrounds with enough information to make an educated decision about pursuing this career path and to start this journey a foot ahead of the rest in their knowledge base.

**Click on the image below for full course info:**





# Protecting the giants of Africa

## Lessons from our rhinos

By David Batzofin



Normally my back page articles involve incidents that have happened to me during my travels in game reserves in and around Africa and beyond. Most have left me with tales to tell, usually at my expense. However, two instances have remained burned into my memory for all the wrong reasons. Both involved me being at the sites of recently poached rhinos.

Standing beside those freshly slaughtered animals still evokes a visceral and raw emotion. Therefore, in this article, rather than focus on that, I would like to offer my opinion on how we can protect these magnificent creatures for future generations to enjoy in the wild.



In a far from perfect world, rhinos are emblematic of a pressing challenge: poaching for no reason other than greed. Despite a lack of proven medicinal value, this ruthless trade persists. As we grapple with this grim reality, the lessons we glean from observing rhinos in their natural habitat are invaluable. Visitors to our game reserves bear witness to these lessons, even when encountering de-horned rhinos. In the pursuit of saving this Big 5 species for future generations, these majestic giants impart wisdom that transcends their massive frames. I would like to share my Top 10 list of lessons I have learned while spending time with rhinos in the wild.

### Lesson 1: The dilemma of dehorned rhinos

Dehorning rhinos, a controversial conservation strategy evokes mixed emotions among visitors. It is a painful reminder of the poaching crisis, and some feel disheartened seeing these magnificent creatures stripped of their iconic features. However, this intervention is often necessary to deter poachers and safeguard the rhinos' lives.

### Lesson 2: Adaptability

Rhinos, both horned and dehorned, teach us resilience. Their ability to adapt to adversity is remarkable. Despite the loss of their defining feature, they continue to thrive in their natural environment. It's a testament to nature's resilience, reminding us that even in the face of daunting challenges, life finds a way.

### Lesson 3: The value of community

Rhinos, like humans, are social creatures. Observing them reinforced, for me, the importance of community bonds. They rely on their fellow rhinos and other species for safety and companionship. In our world, nurturing strong communities and fostering cooperation are equally vital for addressing conservation challenges.

### Lesson 4: Silent strength

Rhinos epitomise silent strength. Despite their imposing presence, they are gentle giants, and witnessing their tranquil grazing and interactions teaches us the power of quietude and harmony. Their serenity is a poignant reminder of the beauty of peaceful coexistence in a world often marred by noise and conflict.

### Lesson 5: The urgency of conservation

Witnessing them in their natural habitat underscores the irreplaceable value of biodiversity. It serves as a call to action, motivating visitors to support conservation efforts and protect our planet's ecological treasures.

### Lesson 6: The complex web of life

Rhinos are not solitary beings; they are integral components of intricate ecosystems. Their grazing patterns shape landscapes, providing food for other species and even influencing plant diversity. Their presence highlights the interconnectedness of all life, reinforcing the need for holistic conservation approaches.

### Lesson 7: Collaboration is key

Successful conservation efforts depend on the synergy of various stakeholders working together toward a common goal. The rhino's survival hinges on humans coming together to protect their future.

### Lesson 8: Community engagement

Rhinos are not an isolated concern; their conservation involves local communities. Engaging these communities in conservation initiatives fosters understanding, cooperation, and a shared commitment to safeguarding rhinos and their habitat.

### Lesson 9: The power of education

Knowledge empowers individuals to make informed choices and advocate for conservation. Visitors who witness rhinos in the wild often become ambassadors for their protection.

### Lesson 10: Innovation saves lives

Rhino conservation has spurred innovation, from anti-poaching drones to DNA analysis for tracking horn origins. The lesson here is clear: when faced with a crisis, human ingenuity can provide solutions that protect endangered species.

### And the future for rhinos?

Despite the challenges, their presence in the wild serves as a beacon of optimism. It reminds us that even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, the fight for preservation continues, and a future where rhinos thrive is within reach. The lessons we learn from them inspire hope and galvanise our determination to ensure that future generations can witness these magnificent creatures in the wild.

Rhinos are not just icons of Africa; they are ambassadors of nature's resilience and the enduring spirit of conservation.



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