



Wildlife Campus

LEARN PROTECT SAVE

Magazine

**Winter
Special!**

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for elephant
management?**

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Vacancies

Discounted course combo!

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Thank you!

In this edition, WildlifeCampus would like to thank Wilfried Hähner for his amazing photographic contribution towards our field guiding/game ranging course.

A preview of some of his photographs used in the course has been included!

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Wild Dreams Hospitality currently has vacancies throughout South Africa as well as Tanzania and Namibia.

Have a look at the list quickly, maybe a career change is waiting for you.

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Does dropping fences help or is there a need for other measures?

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Walk this way

In this edition, we follow David along in one of his quests to get some leopard photographs.

Little did he realise at the beginning of the drive what pictures he would get.

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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 the WildlifeCampus magazine where this exciting journey starts.

“The Kruger Park signs on” - October 1998

Paul and Graham quickly realised there was a need for a few more cameras. Privately they wondered why they were getting so much traffic when there was so little content on the screen.

Initially, they needed to do all they could at Djuma. First it was the Djuma Crib, followed by Gowrie Cam (which later became Vuyatela). Jurie then came up with the idea of “wheelbarrow cam”. This was a camera on a wheelbarrow next to his house which he, or Pippa, would focus on smaller objects. Ironically, because of the control that Jurie and Pippa could exercise, there was a great deal of content on this, the most basic of cameras.

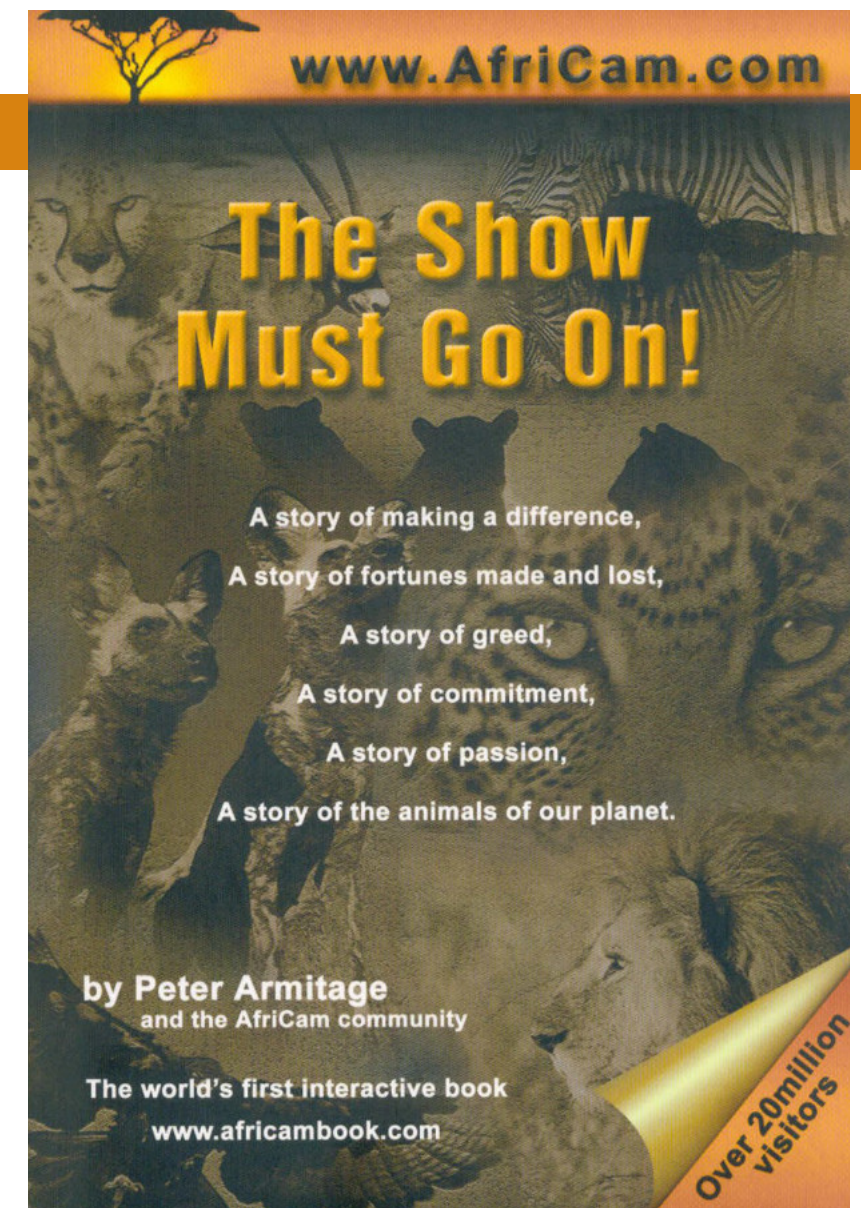
With a virtually non-existent budget, that Paul was funding, they needed to find cheap solutions. The world famous Kruger Park seemed an obvious target. The magnificent Kruger Park is the flagship of South African national parks and offers a

wildlife experience that ranks with the best in Africa. Established in 1898 to protect the wildlife of the South African Lowveld, this national park occupies nearly 2 million hectares, which is 35 times the size of the Sabi Sands. The Kruger Park is unrivalled in the diversity of its life forms and a world leader in advanced environmental management techniques and policies.

At a meeting with SANP IT manager Hilton Visser and Danie Rautenbach, they negotiated to use Kruger’s own bandwidth to broadcast from Satara. This installation was the most successful ever. With the experience they had garnered at Djuma, the installation took a mere seven hours and to this day Satara is the most reliable camera AfriCam has ever hosted.

Paul burnt a few bridges on the Kruger trip. On the night of the installation, Paul and Graham were invited to a braai with a number of high-ranking Kruger Park officials. While both Paul and Graham had a strong affinity towards wildlife and the bush, they had a practical view. Game lodge managers tend to have more idealism than pragmatism. After a few bottles of red wine Paul horrified the Park officials by sharing his view of how the Kruger Park should be run.

“The world is changing and a large proportion of people are looking for modern convenience and instant gratification,” Paul lectured. “The lodges in the Sabi Sands are making all the money – there is nowhere here to spend money after 7 o’clock in the evening. This place is stuck in the 1960’s, it needs a facelift and the main camps should have a franchised pub like an O’Hagan’s (one of SA’s largest pub and grill chains at the time) which is open after midnight.” The horror on their faces intensified when he went so far as to suggest that they open a McDonald’s franchise.



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

The status quo is a strong force at an institution like the Kruger Park. The restaurant closed at 9pm and some of the food facilities were reminiscent of a rudimentary corner café. It took over 15 minutes to get a greasy toasted sandwich. The officials argued against changing the ethos of the Park and pointed out that transport for staff late at night was an insurmountable obstacle.

Ironically, three years later the South African National Parks Board realised that they needed to catch up and commercialise. Visitor numbers were static to dwindling and they came to the harsh realisation that they were in fact competing with an ever-increasing number of tourist destinations. In 2001, the SANP outsourced the restaurants to private enterprise companies and a number of Paul’s suggestions are now in place, or at least being seriously considered.

Lacking the funding for another camera at the Kruger Park, AfriCam viewer Stormy/USA provided the finance for a camera at Orpen. In her words, “In September 1998 while watching a program on ZDTV, towards the end of each program they would describe “hot sites” to visit. That particular night I remember them telling us about AfriCam –

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“The world famous Kruger Park seemed an obvious target.”

‘Live images are captured every 30 seconds from our cameras located at two waterholes in the Djuma Game Reserve’. I could not get out of my chair fast enough to log on.”

“... I asked Leon (one of the first community members) if he would be my liaison with AfriCam as I wanted to donate a cam. Leon agreed to have a conversation with Paul and Graham at the Djuma Meet. I was very excited to think I could have the possibility of giving the community another cam to view. ... On February 17th 1999 Orpen made its debut. This was just magic. I hope you enjoyed viewing Orpen as much as I did.”

“Meanwhile back at Djuma” - August to November 1998

Paul and Graham were pursuing other camera opportunities, but the most obvious opportunity was to maximise the content from Djuma Game Reserve. After all, they had Q’s mobile camera equipment (which only worked sporadically before it was adapted for the conditions), but more importantly they had freedom to take full advantage of what the property had to offer.

Lion kills proved very popular and they had to come up with a strategy to maximise the number of lion kills they captured on the mobile camera. After all, it is nature’s way and cat “kills” happen in the Bush every day. They just had to find them. Paul and Graham made one initial mistake by offering Gavin Bullen R500 (about US\$50) for every lion kill that he got on the mobile camera.

Jurie found out about it and was incensed. This was not the way of the bush and Paul and Graham were quickly informed that this was not their reserve or staff. Paul and Graham had significantly more latitude on Djuma than any other reserve, but there were boundaries, they discovered. This was the first and last time (so far!) they saw this side of Jurie.

Paul and Graham had a number of interesting experiences trying to access content in those early days. Paul also had another child, Jamie, on 12 October 1998 and he did not see too much of her in her first month in the big, wide world.



Author’s thought: This is the first time in the book I was faced with the dilemma of whether to tell the full truth or the selective truth. The full truth won. Every company will have skeletons in its cupboards and if a book is to be representative, these need to be exposed. Readers might not want to read what follows ... but it is what happened.

It was proving more difficult than anticipated to get content on the PC screens of the viewers that were flocking to the site. Summer had arrived and the animals were dispersing throughout the bush, which was quickly becoming lush and green. In addition, the mobile camera was not proving to be as mobile as was anticipated.

Paul, Graham and Jurie discussed the options and a controversial alternative was discussed ... if the camera cannot get to the content, then get the content to come to the camera. Could they justify their thoughts? They collectively felt that they were not prepared to do anything that conflicted with the principles of AfriCam.

A week or two later, ranger Gavin Bullen came across a kudu that had been caught in a poacher’s snare. Because of the suffering that had been inflicted on the poor animal, the only option was to “euthanase” the buck and he did what he had to do. In the Sabi Sands this was only allowed if the “damage” was caused by human intervention.

Normally Gavin would have brought the dead animal back to the lodge, but he radioed back to the lodge to ask if they wanted to bring the mobile camera to where the kudu lay. Desperate for content and feeling partially justified, the mobile camera was put in place to follow the action. A pride of lions discovered the kudu and proceeded to fill their stomachs, which was caught on camera.

There is nothing illegal about this, but to this day it is not something that the AfriCam founders are proud of, or ever repeated. They did not go out to kill the animal, but they clearly took advantage of a set of unfortunate circumstances. They realised it was against the ethos of what AfriCam stood for – always live, always wild. It was just not natural and while it was great camera content, it came at a price.

In the Sabi Sands, as in almost all conservation areas, the culling of selected species is allowed and, in fact, necessary from an ecological perspective. Because conservation areas are fenced and the natural migration of animals is restricted, the population of certain animal species grow beyond what is optimal for the area. A count of the different animals is done every year and the anomalies are identified. Each land owner is then allocated a number of each species that they can cull. This process helps maintain the appropriate number of each species for the area.

The game farm owners also cull animals from abundant species like the impala for biltong, venison (which is served at game farm dinners) and for farm workers’ rations.

“Hunting” in a traditional sense is not allowed in the Sabi Sands, and guests may not pay for the right to kill animals (as in other designated hunting areas), but selective culling is a process that has happened for years.

This is a highly controversial subject and, for example, because of pressures from various conservation groups the necessary culling of elephants has not happened. This has resulted in the overpopulation of elephants in many areas of Africa, as the elephant has no natural predator.

This event was hushed from that point forward as Paul, Graham and Jurie realised that the viewers would rather not see a lion eating a kudu, if they knew the circumstances. They vowed never to talk about it again and it was never mentioned in the AfriCam offices in the ensuing three years. From that point forward, what viewers have seen on an AfriCam screen has been live and wild animals, on the animals’ terms.

The fearless team continued with their exploits and the emphasis was now on getting content that was real and not “manufactured”. On many occasions they risked their own lives in the interest of getting content for the viewers.





Does Earth need wild places?

By WildlifeCampus student

Amy Holt

Do we care? Do we actually care that we have left a lasting imprint on nature? Our planet is dominated by a single species: humans. Yet, we represent just 0.01% of all life on Earth. Humans have occupied every continent on Earth since the end of the last ice age, 12,000 years ago.

Nearly every step in human history has been accompanied by environmental degradation. And this has come with a cost. Only 23% of the planet's land surface (excluding Antarctica) and 13% of the ocean can be classified as wilderness. Thanks to us, humans, the world is less wild. So it begs the question: does Earth need its wild places?

The wilderness is defined as the undisturbed sections of land that humankind does not control or has not developed. Wild places are a fundamental asset to our everyday life and we simply cannot survive without them. They produce the oxygen we breathe, supply us with clean drinking water, control disease and pests, regulate the weather, recycle waste, provide insurance, and many other irreplaceable services. Wild places are deeply valued for their aesthetic, cultural and spiritual reasons. Indeed, they are a part of every human's natural heritage.

Africa: the home of wide open spaces and wild places. Or is it? The Great Migration is the largest herd movement of animals on the planet. Millions of wildebeest, zebra, and other antelope species make this breathtaking journey across Tanzania and Kenya every year. However, large fenced areas built to protect livestock and farmland are blocking these migratory routes. Fences are a problem. They impact the natural balance within an ecosystem. There is increasing pressure for land and resources to meet the demands of agriculture. This should not come at the cost of threatening the very existence of this world-famous wildebeest migration. If the people who live among wild places do not value nature, then nature will continue to deteriorate.

02

Of all the mammals on Earth, only 4% are wild. Wild mammals are outnumbered by livestock and humans. It is apparent that we are having an unprecedented impact on our natural world.

The wildlife for which Africa is famous, is vanishing at alarming rates. The African savanna elephant is endangered and the African forest elephant is critically endangered. Without these magnificent giants, entire ecosystems would be drastically different or even cease to exist. Since the Lion King first premiered in 1994, lion numbers have dropped by half. Indeed, the decline of lions is a devastating testament to our destruction and exploitation of the natural world. 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. Unless vital action is taken to protect these beautiful, solitary creatures who undoubtedly deserve to thrive... they could simply disappear from view forever! The fastest land animal on the planet, the cheetah, is quickly heading for extinction because of us, humans. With only 7100 cheetahs left in the wild, we must do more to conserve and coexist with this graceful animal. In 2018, the world lost the last male northern white rhino. The rhino is one of the last of the legendary megafauna to walk the Earth. At the start of the twentieth century, 500,000 rhinos roamed Africa and Asia. Now, South Africa is home to nearly 80% of remaining rhino populations. Because our greed and ignorance knows no boundaries, it fuels a dire time for the rhino. The world's tallest animal is facing a silent extinction. Since 1999, the giraffe population in Africa has decreased by about 40%. Wild animals cannot exist if there is no wilderness. What would Africa be without its wildlife? Without its wild places? It is unimaginable.

Clearly, we need wild places to survive and to keep Earth as we know it. But, how can we return nature to a wilder state? Rewilding nature focuses on how to restore balance and connectivity to ecosystems. By doing so, it increases biodiversity and mitigates climate change. Rewilding is the bigger-picture approach as it allows nature to take care of itself. Whereas, conservation is a target-based approach focusing on protecting specific species. A well-known example of rewilding is the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park. Although, rewilding doesn't just involve the reintroduction of predators. The West African giraffe was once widespread throughout West Africa but, it is now only found in Niger. 25 years ago there was only 49 of these giraffes left but, thanks to rewilding efforts, there are 600.

Not only does rewilding protect core wilderness areas and the species that depend on them, it also ensures the connectivity between these areas. Restoring connectivity involves creating corridors of protected habitat to boost

overall population size, genetic flow and diversity. Over 20 private reserves are situated west of Kruger National Park and over the years fences have been dropped, creating the Greater Kruger National Park. This has allowed for free movement of wildlife between Kruger and the private reserves. Further, Kruger forms part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and so, shares an unfenced boundary with the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique. This extended conservation area allows wildlife more room to migrate, disperse, reproduce, feed and ultimately thrive.



The Addo to Great Fish River Corridor initiative will likely be similar to the Greater Kruger National Park, where fences will be dropped to increase connectivity between core wilderness areas. In the end, rewilding will only be successful if we empower local communities. It is as much about nature, as it is about people.

We must continue to remind ourselves to see the bigger picture. To truly bring ourselves into harmony with the natural world, we must return to seeing humanity as a part of it. Rewilding is essential to rebuild ecosystem diversity, structure and resilience. And this is all important for our own wellbeing, economy and prosperity.


So the question is: what kind of world do you want it to be?

One where our planet is in crisis, missing its wild places and where we, humans, are disconnected from nature.

Or...

One where our planet is thriving, rich in wild places and where we, humans, have reconnected to nature.

You decide.



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Thank you Wilfried!

At the beginning of 2022, WildlifeCampus launched the **newly updated** Field Guiding/Game Ranging course.

The massive update of this the content was done in collaboration with a Field Guides Association of Southern Africa z (FGASA) assessor.

However, this update would not have been possible without the valuable photographic contribution of our students and partners.

Want to be featured?

We would love to hear your story!
Please let us know how the
WildlifeCampus courses influenced
your life!
info@wildlifecampus.com



In this this edition, WildlifeCampus would like to thank **Wilfried Hähner** for his amazing photographic contribution towards our courses.

Wilfried is from Namibia and has been with us since 2017. In that time, he has completed a whopping 19 online courses! He has a deep passion for everything wildlife related which includes conservation, education, research, travel and photography.

Wilfried certainly inspires us and reminds us that life is a beautiful adventure and every moment is to be used wisely.

Keep up the great work Wilfried and THANK YOU for everything you do. Your contribution towards conserving our precious planet is invaluable.

To try the free component of our recently updated Field Guiding/Game Ranging course, [CLICK HERE](#).



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wild dreams Hospitality

Vacancies

05

Wild Dreams Hospitality currently has vacancies throughout South Africa as well as Tanzania and Namibia. Wild Dreams Hospitality is recruiting for the positions listed below. To view these vacancies in detail, the requirements, packages and how to apply, go to www.wilddreams.co.za and click on recruitment/jobs. Make sure you submit everything as per the job advert and state the title of the position you are applying for in your email subject line. If you need assistance with your CV then use our free CV template on our CV advice page.



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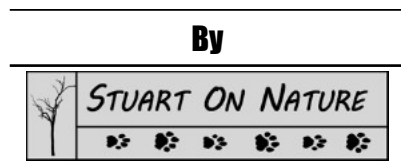
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Probably one of the most controversial aspects of wildlife management in southern Africa is what to do about burgeoning human and elephant populations, and the conflicts resulting from this?

First some background on the overall African situation with the two species involved, the Savanna Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) and the Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*). The Forest Elephant is restricted to the Congo Basin and isolated forest pockets in West Africa and it has seen massive declines in recent years as a result of poaching for their tusks and meat.

In 1930 it was believed that there were as many as ten million elephants of both species combined in sub-Saharan Africa but today that has dwindled to about 415,000 elephants, of which perhaps 100,000 are Forest Elephants. One has to bear in mind that counting forest dwelling species, including elephants, is notoriously difficult. Because of these massive population drops the Forest Elephant is now classified by IUCN as Critically Endangered and the Savanna Elephant as Endangered.

Conservation efforts have reversed the declines of Forest Elephants, especially in Gabon and Republic of Congo, with Savanna Elephants in East Africa also seeing rising populations in some countries.

The bright “spot”, some would say too bright, is in southern Africa, especially northern Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Within southern Africa human populations are growing rapidly, placing increased demand on land and resources. Habitats occupied by elephants are being squeezed, modified and destroyed forcing these “gentle giants” into more limited areas, with negative results for habitats and the other biota that occupy them. Some parks are now ringed by elephant-proof fences that restrict movement and those that are not fenced result in conflict between elephants and humans, their crops and settlements. Livelihoods are lost when elephants devour and destroy crops, human lives are lost when people try to protect their crops, structures, or themselves.

We have observed these depredations and people killed in conflict areas, we have also seen first-hand how elephant populations have modified habitats to the extent that other species disappear as areas are no longer suitable for them to survive. Recently we spent time on a reserve in Greater Kruger where fences were dropped to that park a few years ago and one already sees major changes in that large numbers of Marula and Knob Thorn trees have been “felled” by elephants.

Within Greater Kruger it has been estimated that the ideal elephant population is around 6,000 but today there are some 36,000 of the pachyderms. Habitats have been massively modified and some species of both plant and animal have been greatly reduced, or are on the verge of disappearing.

On the one side one has the plethora of organisations advocating elephant conservation at all costs, bearing in mind that many of these enjoy comfortable lives in the western world, without taking into account the masses of poverty stricken people living within or around areas inhabited by elephants. When you see your meagre maize or millet crop being devoured by elephants you can look forward to starvation, whereas those advocating conservation no matter what can merrily pop along to the supermarket, ensuring they will not starve. The tourist travelling in a safari vehicle rightly enjoys watching elephants feeding, wallowing and interacting with each other but how many give a thought to those living permanently with these sometimes not so gentle giants?

In recent years some areas overpopulated by elephants have had this partially alleviated by the capture and translocation of numbers of these magnificent animals to parks that have greatly depleted populations. The African Parks organisation have led this commendable effort, especially in Malawi by moving hundreds of elephants from Majete and Liwonde to such parks as Nkhotakota, Nyika Plateau and most recently to Kasungu. Other organisations have been making similar efforts in southern Mozambique. But now comes the problem, we are running out of places to relocate these animals, and there will come a time when these parks and reserves are also overpopulated by elephants.

Many parks and areas are already overpopulated by elephants, so what do we do, let them destroy and drastically modify habitats, resulting in the demise of other species? Is it acceptable to allow this to happen/continue, do we let elephants starve to death when drought strikes, as it does in southern Africa? We experienced this in late 2019 in Mana Pools in north-east Zimbabwe and it is not a pretty sight to see elephant carcasses and skeletal elephants.

The problem is that some areas heavily populated by elephants are already beyond the point of no return. So what is better to manage these elephant populations now, or manage populations before it gets to this stage. Preserve elephants at all costs and to hell with the consequences for everything else, or do we control populations?

So, what are the solutions? Contraception in wild elephant populations is very expensive and by and large impractical. Move elephants from over-populated areas to depleted areas



Young elephant, victim of drought.

but as mentioned this is a growing problem as there are few places left where this can be done in the region.

And then there is the taboo word CULLING! Many years ago when Zimbabwe was Rhodesia, Harare was Salisbury and Hwange was Wankie, Chris was invited to observe the culling of elephants in Wankie National Park. It was a very unpleasant experience but two sharpshooters moved into a small herd, first taking down the matriarch and within seconds the deed was done! Unpleasant but it was a wise thing to do! Human populations surrounding these parks benefit from cheap or free protein reducing the need for meat poaching, hides can be tanned and sold. The ivory, well that is a whole story on its own for another article!

We are the first to admit that culling is unpleasant but we can honestly see no alternative going forward. With the attitude to conserve at all costs untold damage is being done but those sitting in their “ivory towers” need to climb down and take a closer look at the realities on the ground.



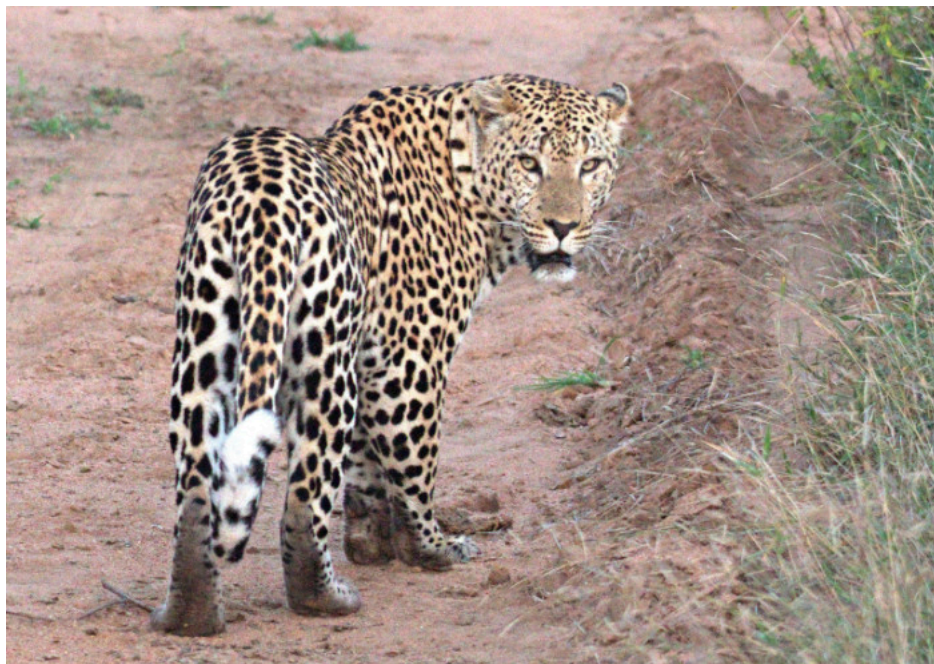
Elephant feeding on dead bark.

08

Walk this way

For me, one of the most iconic predator cat species has to be the leopard.

Ask any guide who has been led on a merry chase while trying to follow one of these cats as they wander through drainage lines, up and down embankments and finally disappear into thin air, leaving guests with a brief glimpse and often no photo opportunities.



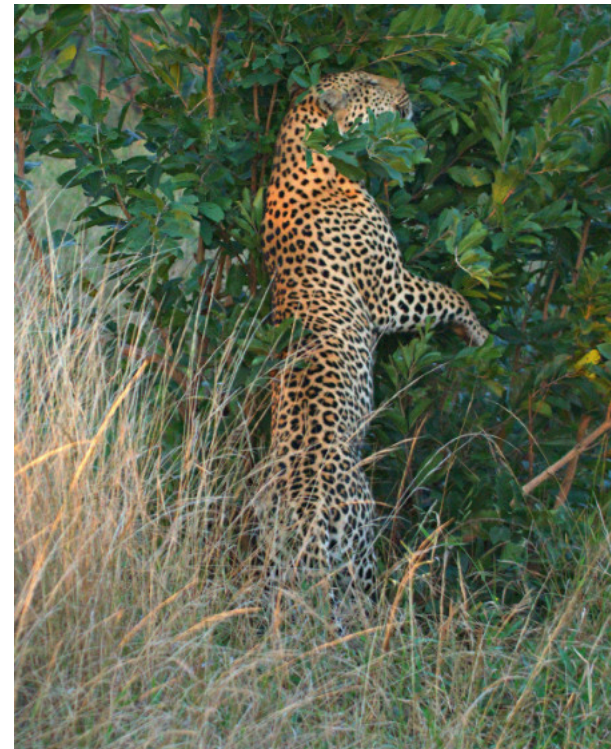
David is an award-winning blogger whose work can be found at www.travelandthings.co.za

By David Batzofin



So it was with a sense of excitement that I, together with our guide, tracker and guests set out from a camp recently, hoping to not only find one, but to have a decent sighting and images to prove that they are present on this particular reserve.

We were still getting settled and had only gone a few kilometres when I



quietly asked our guide; “What is that in the road ahead”? Lo and behold, a large male appeared from the vegetation on the side of the road and strode off at a purposeful pace not too far in front of our game viewer.

For the longest time, or so it seemed, we had a great view of his rear end as he meandered...if a leopard can be seen to meander...from side to side, marking his territory along the road that ran parallel to a boundary fence.

Although I have seen these cats often, territory marking of this magnitude was a first for me. Trees, shrubs, and blades of grass all bore the brunt of his urine stream, which, believe it or not, smells like popcorn. We followed at a respectful distance after having been stared down on one occasion when I believe that he felt we had gotten a little too close to his perambulations.

What I had not seen was these animals rearing up on their hind legs to reach high into the branches of trees to leave scent at a height that would make them look larger than they were to other males. We think that we, as humans, are clever, but these iconic predators have a bag full of tricks to fool rivals into moving off to seek other territories.

As we were unable to pass the leopard on the narrow road to get ahead and let him walk towards us, we had to settle for a series of butt shots that would, I thought, be all that we saw. And then the sun rose, painting the road with golden light and bathing this magnificent animal in its glow. The shadow that it caused made it look as if the animal had become a roadblock.

Once the sun rose the lighting returned to a more subtle hew and after posing to look at us (one of the few times that it turned) it moved off again.

The guide and the tracker had decided that they knew where the leopard was headed and were keen to try to get ahead. To paraphrase Scottish poet Robbie Burns; “The best-laid plans of leopards and men often go awry”.

It was at this point that the leopard seemed to have the feline version of “Did I leave a tap running at home”? It turned around and headed BACK the way he had been walking!

It passed so close to our vehicle that we could have leaned out and stroked his back.

He seemed to have decided that he had walked far enough and was headed back to wherever ‘back’ was.

It became a scramble to get the vehicle turned around to follow him once again, and the radio now crackled into life with other vehicles wanting to join in the sighting.

I suppose that the leopard was feeling somewhat ‘cocky’ as he thought that he knew what lay in the road ahead, so he got quite a fright when he discovered a blind snake in the road that had not been there earlier.

He leapt into the air and then, somewhat embarrassed I assume, vanished into the long grass.

Try as we might, we could no longer track his movements and none of the other vehicles could find him either.

Perhaps this answers the question; “Can a leopard change his spots”? It certainly seems that way.

When we stopped for our morning coffee, we chatted about how lucky we had been to spend almost an hour with this magnificent animal. A sighting that will not easily be forgotten.





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