



# WildlifeCampus

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## Magazine

**Winter  
special!**

**No wrong answers**  
By David Batzofin

**Cat wars!**  
By Stuart on Nature

**Owls, fierce predators**  
By Amy Holt

**Student cards are here!**



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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 first part of this story? [Click here](#) to the WildlifeCampus magazine where this exciting journey starts.

“Now for a website” - August 1998

This fledgling webcam company now needed a name and a website. One of Paul's addictions was registering website domains, and he had a smorgasbord of options for the operation. The leading options initially were Safaricam.com, Bushcam.co.za and Webcam.com. Webcam.com was the first choice, but partner MWeb felt that it was too close to their name. Bushcam.co.za was initially used, but quickly abandoned as Bushcam.com was launched as a pornography site very shortly thereafter by some cheeky individual wishing to take advantage of the Bushcam.co.za traffic. At this point, Paul's wife Helen came up with the right name, AfriCam, which stuck. That name has now become a global brand for most people involved in the safari industry.

The business of internet domain names is an intriguing one. The total number of domain names registered peaked in June 2001 at 32.4 million, according to Verisign. Registrations doubled in 1999, tripled in 2000, but only increased by 2% in



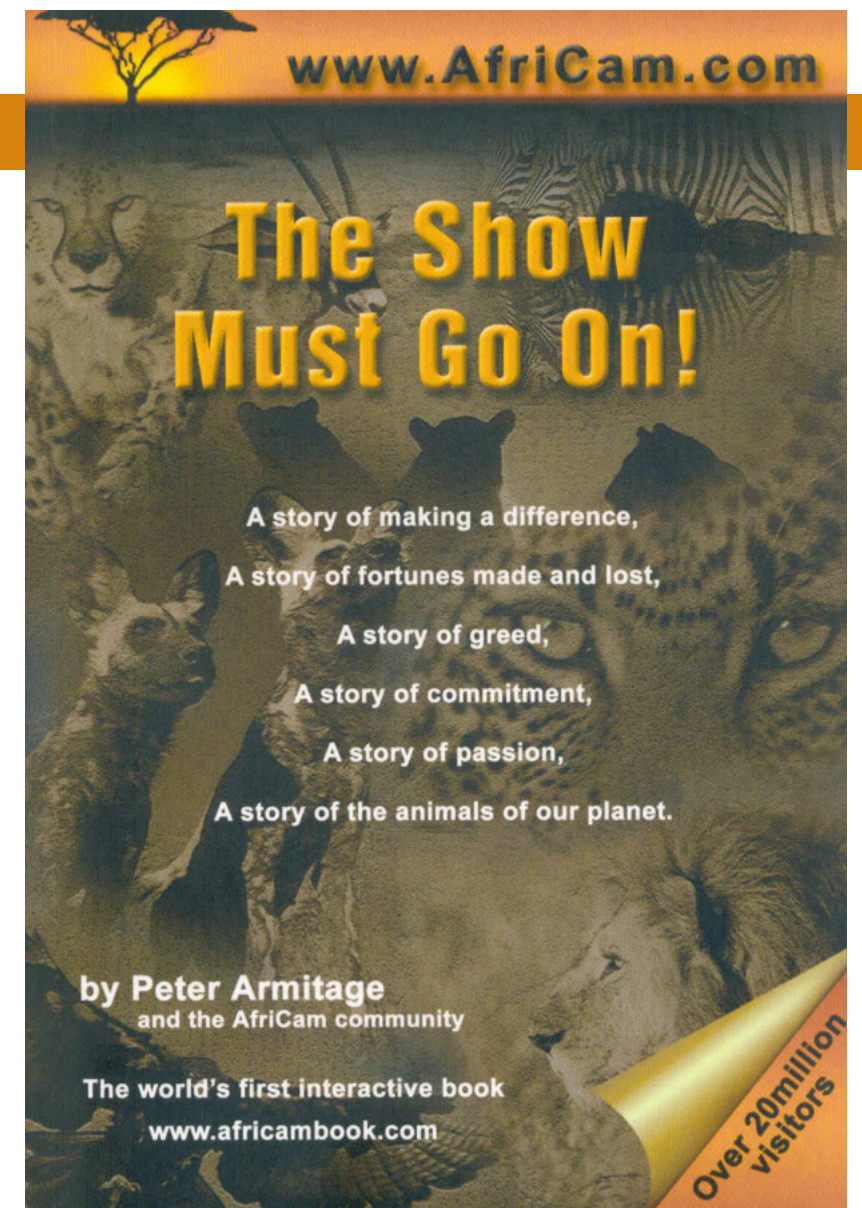
2001. By my calculations, that means there is about one internet domain name registration for every five internet connections. After registering sought-after domain names for about US\$30 a year, scores of speculators were able to resell them for hundreds of thousands of dollars. A few names even commanded seven figures, including US\$7.5m for business.com in late 1999 and US\$3m for loans.com in January 2000. The total amount of money spent globally on domain name registrations and annual fees is over US\$1bn.

But AfriCam had its domain name registered and could get on with its business. Graham knew that the site needed to be something special, and he called on an old friend, Martin Meerholtz, who worked at iafrica.com. Graham explained the idea to Martin, and in a ten-minute phone call, the basic layout was conceptualised. Sarah and Graham got to work and developed the site. At the time, if they had known that it would be viewed by millions of internet users all over the world, the first logo would probably not have come from Microsoft clipart. The second logo was a tree against a sunset, which they scanned in from the cover of a book authored by a Japanese photographer.

One of the key early additions to the website was The Boma (a message board which is used to this day). This can be accessed at the following address: [www.AfriCam.com/wwwboard/wwwboard.html](http://www.AfriCam.com/wwwboard/wwwboard.html).

The message board functionality was taken from a free website, Matt's Script archives, which can be found at [worldwidemart.com/scripts](http://worldwidemart.com/scripts).

The chatroom also used free software, and these two communication platforms formed the home of the AfriCam community that would develop over the next few months. Often, good ideas do not need large chequebooks.



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

Over at MWeb, Pieter van der Dussen uploaded the pics and spent a great deal of time getting the site working properly. He was to join AfriCam a few months later. Everything was in place. Paul and Graham did not know it, but their lives were about to change forever. They had whispered the domain name to a few friends, and it spread quickly, generating over 20 000 page impressions a day in August 1998.

Viewers flock to the site

“The first addicts” - 1 September 1998

As soon as the site was launched, AfriCam's traffic started to rise rapidly. It became obvious that AfriCam would be a runaway success.

People often wonder why AfriCam attracts such a massive viewership, and this is particularly the case with South Africans, who have the bush on their doorstep.



# “ At one time, I never even knew what a waterbuck was. ”

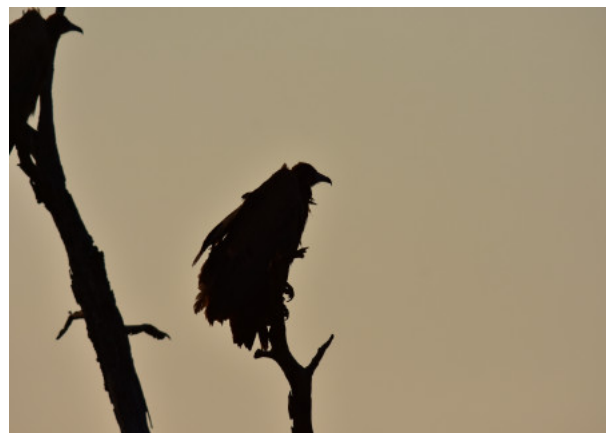
The phenomenon is well depicted by community member Bill Lofton, who describes his first encounters with AfriCam: “There was only one camera at Djuma, and the Boma didn't even exist when I saw my first animal 'live'. Somehow, being able to view the animals in the wild made me feel connected with the country that I had fallen in love with on my previous trips. I was instantly addicted!”

It was a phenomenon Graham often refers to as “telepresence” – the feeling that you are there. Conceptually, the idea of watching a picture update every 30 seconds is boring to many. But for those that have a fascination with nature and the wild, the fact that it is live makes it very forgiving. Never before on any medium could you see nature wild and live, on its terms. This was something special, and viewers were very forgiving. A half-hour television documentary shows only the best of hundreds of hours of filming. It is very polished, but somewhat contrived. AfriCam is the opposite, raw and unpolished, but live and real. The site was now up, and now it needed two things: content and marketing.

In those early days, the content on the site was sparse. It was the beginning of summer, which meant the rainy season had arrived, and animals did not need to visit the waterholes as much. There was a sole camera on the Djuma crib, and the mobile camera worked very erratically. There would be an animal at the Djuma waterhole probably 5% of the time which meant two things; a lot of staring at a hole full of water, but also immense excitement and a sense of achievement when an animal was spotted.

The community that had started forming would chat for hours on the chatroom and Boma and alert each other when there was a “critter” on the cam. The early cammers included: Brian McMahon (Brian/SA), Bill Lofton/California, .....

14 September 1998 was a critical day in the history of AfriCam. The local Reuters correspondent had heard of the early successes of AfriCam and decided it would make an excellent global story. This was one of the greatest assets of AfriCam – it made for a great story: “World's first virtual game reserve”, “Watch game from your armchair”, “Virtual waterhole site a



great success”, and “African waterhole in your lounge” were headlines that sub-editors all around the world enjoyed writing.

Reuters proposed two media “products”, a written release and a short video clip for news reports. Paul and Graham got to Djuma early that morning (after stopping at The Castle), ensuring that they were there before the Reuters crew. Paul had brought a fancy desk with him from Johannesburg. Paul and Graham carried it into the office that Jurie had allocated AfriCam. The film crew were to arrive at 12 noon, and the office was a mess. All the wires and electronic components were quickly packed away, the desk put in place, and two PCs were neatly placed on top of the desk. This suddenly started to look more like a business than a hobby.

The Reuters crew filmed for the day and made a three-minute video clip which was distributed to TV channels globally. Simultaneously, a short newspaper press release was sent out. Both of these products found their way on to millions of TV screens and newspaper front pages.

The Reuters press release read, simply, as follows:

“DJUMA, South Africa (Reuters) - South Africa's famous wildlife, once inaccessible to most of its inhabitants, is being paraded into cyberspace by two Internet enthusiasts. Using video machines, cameras and computers, Briton Paul Clifford and South African Graham Wallington have begun beaming

images of wild animals in their natural environment around the world via the World Wide Web. The idea is not new. Similar projects have been carried out showing a live human birth in the U.S., ospreys in Scotland, badgers in Seattle and a solar eclipse in the Caribbean. "But this is the first time a Web camera has been installed in the African bush," Wallington said. The site can be accessed at <http://www.AfriCam.com> .”

The Reuters publicity had a phenomenal impact on AfriCam, and even a year later, the video clip would appear on a television channel in some far-flung corner of the globe. AfriCam's traffic would sporadically spike by 20% to 30% in a day from a specific country when the clip was shown. AfriCam attracted viewers from over 150 countries over the next few years.

By mid-November 1998, AfriCam was generating over 840 000 page impressions per day. This was more than the rest of the South African internet industry put together.

Some of the AfriCam community members recall their experience:

**Louise Duke (Fennec/UK) from the UK recalls:** “I stumbled across AfriCam in October of 1998 and spent many hours sitting watching that one cam focused on a tree! One cam grew into many, and the experiences grew with them. At one time, I never even knew what a waterbuck was.”

**Anniecat/UK remembers what a consolation it was on a cold UK night:** “Sitting at my computer ... in 1998, I tried out a site that was listed in a magazine. That night my life changed forever to a world that embraces AfriCam and all of the joys and sadness that have unfolded over the years. I remember being so excited (I still am) at the prospect of a wild animal appearing on my screen. In the early days, true patience always paid off!”

**For Freda/SA, it was about friendships:** “I was fortunate enough to find the AfriCam site in the December of its first year and have been there ever since. I have made hundreds of friends from all over the world and met lots of them at meets in London, Boston and here in South Africa. May the spirit of AfriCam and its followers continue for many years to come.”

**For “Finland”, AfriCam had a lasting impact:** “AfriCam truly changed my life forever as it was in AfriCam Chat that I met Steve, another op. He was in England, and I was in Finland, PA, USA. Steve and I got to be friends, and I decided to travel to the UK for the first International AfriCam Meet in London. We met then, in April of '99, for the first time, and that was that. I have been travelling back and forth between the UK and the USA for the last 3 years... but no more. Steve and I will be married this coming April (2002), on the anniversary of my first trip, and I will "officially" settle in England. So, thank you, AfriCam!!!! Without you ... well ... you get the picture.”

One of the amazing things about AfriCam is the amount of time that people spend on the site.

**BIGFRANK/Canada recalls:** “It took a few early mornings and late nights before I finally saw my first Zebra at Satara, and I was hooked! Back then, there was no safari camera, just a wheelbarrow cam ... what an innovation that was. Soon I was tuned in every day for hours, eventually finding my way into the AfriCam chat to pass time while waiting for animals to make an appearance. I got to know a core of 30 people who logged in around midnight my time for breathtaking sunrises at Gowrie cam.”







# Owls, strikingly beautiful predators

By WildlifeCampus student

Amy Holt

Owls are strikingly beautiful but, fierce predators. They first appeared in the fossil record around 60 million years ago during the Palaeocene epoch—examples include *Berruornis* and *Ogygoptynx* (the oldest owl fossil on record). However, since ancient times, owls have been linked with death, evil and other superstitions. Also, they have been associated with Halloween and horror movies, and portrayed as symbols of magic and witchcraft. These beliefs and superstitions, along with habitat loss, pesticides and rat poison are threatening the very existence of owls.

## 02

In Southern Africa, there are 12 owl species ranging from the largest owl in Africa (the Verreaux's eagle-owl) to some tiny owls, like the African scops owl and pearl-spotted owlet. The pearl-spotted owlet is easily identified by the false eyes on their nape (back of neck). While, the Verreaux's eagle-owl is unmistakable thanks to its pink eyelids.

There are two families of owls - barn owls (*Tytonidae*) which, are distinctively recognised by their heart-shaped facial disc, and typical owls (*Strigidae*). African grass owls are species of barn owl and are regarded as vulnerable in South Africa, with less than 500 individuals. They occur in wetland habitats and roost in tall grass, on the ground. Nesting on the ground makes their nests vulnerable to getting destroyed easily. African grass owls face rapid declines in their population due to habitat loss because, of urbanisation and industrialisation. Their nests also get destroyed in grassland fires. Pel's fishing owls belong to the *Strigidae* family, they're the second-largest owl species in South Africa and, are also vulnerable. A major threat facing the Pel's fishing owl is the damage being done to the rivers and lakes that contain their prey. They are reliant on healthy river systems for their diet. Therefore, these birds can be considered an indicator species for valuable river ecosystems, as their presence suggests a healthy river system and freshwater habitat.

Owls are natural pest controllers—vital for regulating the environment. They are one of the most economically valuable wildlife animals for agriculture. Owls are often more effective than poison in keeping down rodent pests. They play a crucial role at the top of the food chain, by removing individuals from prey populations that could be considered surplus.





Owls have extremely sensitive hearing. They do not have visible ears. The ear tufts are actually display feathers used to indicate moods, such as fear, anger and excitement. Instead, the ears are located at the sides of the head, behind the eyes, and are covered by the feathers of the facial disc. The facial disc is the concave collection of feathers on the face, surrounding the eyes. It serves as a satellite dish sending sounds towards the ears. Many owl species have asymmetrical ears located at different heights on the owl's head. In simple terms, this means one ear is slightly higher on the owl's head than its other ear. This helps sounds reach the owl's ears at different times so they can pinpoint the location of sounds in multiple dimensions.

Owls are known as silent predators of the night. Normally with birds in flight, air rushes over the surface of the wing, creating turbulence, which makes a gushing sound. But, thanks to the owl's feathers, many owls fly silently. They have large wings relative to their body mass which allows them to glide silently with little flapping. The structure of their feathers serves as a silencer. Comb-like serrations on the outer edge of the forward wing feathers, break up the turbulent air that typically creates a swooshing sound. The smaller streams of air are further dampened by a velvety texture unique to owl feathers and by a soft fringe on the rear-wing feathers. These structures together streamline the air flow and absorb the sound produced. Silent flight is vital for owls. This is because, their prey cannot hear them coming and so have less time to escape. Also, silent flight helps avoid wing noises blocking their own hearing.

A group of owls is called a parliament of owls. In C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the parliament of owls was an organisation of talking owls that met during the night to discuss the state of affairs in the land of Narnia. The Hundred Acre Woods is home to Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends, including owl who is considered a bit of a know-it-all. But, why is it we associate owls with wisdom? Owls portrayed as being wise probably originated with legends of the Ancient Greek goddess Athena. Athena was known for her wisdom and other talents. Owls are commonly associated with the wisdom that Athena carried. The little owl became Athena's symbol because they could be found everywhere in Athens.

Birds of prey are regarded as indicator species and

Most wildlife populations produce more offspring than their habitats can support. These surplus individuals eventually die of starvation, disease or predation. Although, starvation and disease may affect individuals throughout the population, predators tend to remove the weakest members of the population. In doing so, predators, like owls, help maintain the health and viability of prey populations.

Owls hunt using their super senses. Their large eyes enable them to see in low-light conditions. The large facial rings surrounding an owl's eyes help to reflect light towards their eye, further improving the efficiency of their low-light vision capabilities. Owl eyeballs cannot move, instead they have tube-shaped eyes which, are set in place by bones. They have a total field of vision of 110 degrees and 70 degrees binocular field vision. Owl eyes, unlike most birds, are in the front position which allows for a perfect estimation of depth and 3D vision—known as binocular vision. To overcome their poor total field of vision, they are able to rotate their heads up to 270 degrees. This is thanks to an owl's long and very flexible neck which, has 14 vertebrae in it—this is twice as many as humans. Owls have three eyelids - each serving a different purpose. The upper lid closes every time the owl blinks. While, the lower lid closes when the owl is sleeping. There is a third eyelid known as the nictitating membrane, and it is a soft eyelid that closes diagonally across the owl's eyes. All birds have this eyelid, which is used to clean and protect the bird's eyes. This is especially useful for owls as it protects their eyes from any injury while attacking their prey.

if they should decline, it gives conservationists an early warning of the health of the food chain and the wider environment. Due to their position at the top of the food chain, owls are sensitive to change within the ecosystem. When predators, like owls, are abundant and healthy it is usually a sign of a balanced ecosystem. If health or numbers of predator species decline, something may be occurring within the environment that is altering the natural food web. Therefore, it is important to monitor owl populations for conservation as a whole.

Whether you associate owls with death, witchcraft or wisdom, they are still playing an extremely important role in the ecosystem.

So, it is time you give a hoot about owls.



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# Thank you Maggel!

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  
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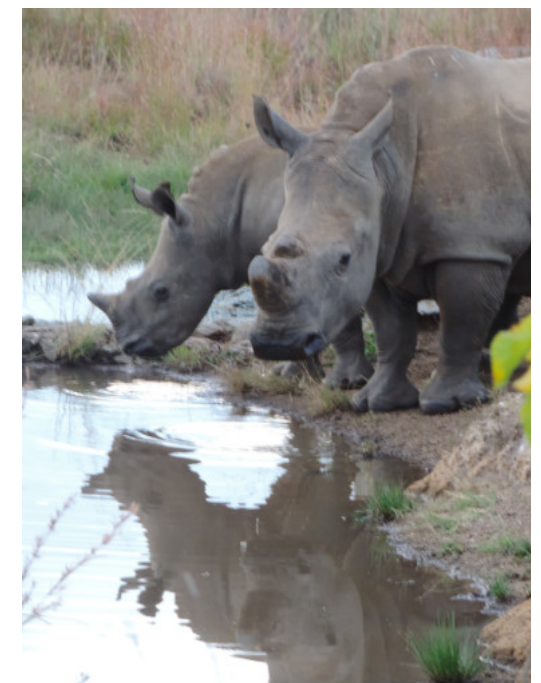


In this this edition, WildlifeCampus would like to thank **Maggel Els** for her amazing photographic contribution towards our courses.


Maggel is South African and is the WildlifeCampus Student Manager.

Thank you Maggel! We look forward to our students seeing your incredible work throughout the Field Guiding/ Game Ranging course.

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







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\*Special ends 31/08/2022  
No monthly payment options are available for discounted packages

04

# WildlifeCampus Birding course

Take an exciting journey with us as we explore the amazing world of ornithology! In this beautifully illustrated course, you will learn about bird biology, identification, behaviour, feathers and their structure, flight, ethical birding, and so much more!

This course is directly derived from our Field Guiding course. It can be taken as a separate course. Do not purchase this course if you already have access to our Field Guiding course.

More info: [info@wildlifecampus.com](mailto:info@wildlifecampus.com)

Try the free component of this course by clicking the picture below.







# The remote interview

It is becoming more and more common that employers are conducting interviews remotely. Sometimes this is as an initial interview before an in-person one which we always advise employers to do where possible, but in many cases, remote only interviews are the only option.

I have personally employed people via remote interviews only, so I know that this method can work for both employer and employee. Wild Dreams is slightly different in the sense that we all work remotely, too, so there is no office environment that we all share. We try to all get together as much as possible, but as our team grows and we hire team members from different regions, this will become harder to do, but I believe with regular communication and working as a team, you can all work together very successfully in this way, and we are proof of this!

However, both parties may be concerned that by not meeting in person, you may not feel as confident in either hiring the candidate from the employer's point of view or from the employee's concerns may be around if this is really the right position for you.

When interviewing remotely, you won't have the opportunity to meet the people you'll be working with face-to-face, visit the organisation's offices and generally get a feel for the place.

Regardless of whether you're interviewing remotely or face-to-face, there's always a lot to think about when judging whether an opportunity really is the right one for you, such as:

- Is the role aligned to your skill set and future career goals and aspirations?
- Do the salary and benefits on offer make this a financially viable choice for you?
- Where will the role be based, and will there be opportunities for you to work flexibly should you need to?
- Are there learning and development opportunities available which will allow you to further develop your

career?

- Are you genuinely interested in the organisation's products and services?
- Is the organisation's culture appealing to you? Will you feel included, valued and engaged?
- Do you think you'll have a good, supportive relationship with your new team and boss?

It is important to listen to your gut too! Your intuition will help you decide whether the opportunity is the right one for you. Here are 5 tips on how to know if a job is right for you when you only interview remotely:

## 1. Do your research

Analyse the language used in the organisation's job adverts. What can it tell you about what it might be like to work there? Is the language they use inclusive, accessible and relaxed? Do they use diverse imagery and language? Are the role responsibilities clear?

It's also essential that you review the organisation's website, finding out more about their vision and purpose to see how well they align with your values – just as you would do before a face-to-face interview. Visit their social media pages, too; many organisations will create videos that will give prospective employees an idea of what it might be like to work there.

Another technique you can use to help you build a picture of the organisation as an employer is to read their Glassdoor reviews, although Glassdoor mostly has reviews for the larger corporate companies.

Research current employees on LinkedIn. Their activity may give you clues into their company culture.

## 2. Assess the organisation's culture during your remote interview

The employer might offer you a virtual office tour, for instance, or provide you with short videos that employees have recorded about their role, expertise or experience of working at the organisation..

You may even have the opportunity during your interview to have virtual introductory meetings with team members. If these aren't immediately available or apparent to you during the interview process, ask your recruiter if they are. All of this will help you to get a glimpse into the organisation's culture and to better understand what it would be like to work in that office, with that team, on those projects – and assess whether all of that would suit you.

Also, keep a lookout during your remote job interview for any other clues as to the company culture. As communication and behaviour expert Mark Bowden explains: "How we live, and the objects we keep around us are a big unconscious indicator to others of what you value and therefore the values you hold." Is there anything about the interviewer's background or environment on the video call that indicates what it would be like to work there? Or anything that gives you a feel for what it would be like to have that person as your manager? If they're in the office, what is the design and branding like? Or perhaps they're at home where you can see and hear their children – demonstrating their flexible and relaxed approach.

## 3. Ask the interviewer the right questions

Remember that all interviews, regardless of whether they are conducted face-to-face or remotely, are a two-way process. They don't just give the interviewer the chance to find out more about your suitability for the role, but they also give you the chance to assess the role's suitability for you. Therefore, the questions you ask the interviewer and the answers they give, especially during a remote interview, can be extremely valuable in helping you to decide whether this is the right opportunity for you or not.

There are certain questions about the role, team, interviewer, company and learning and development opportunities that will give you a better idea of what it would be like to work there.

- "What does a typical day in this role look like?"
- "What constitutes success?"

## 4. If you are being interviewed by the hiring manager, use the remote interview to understand whether they would be the right boss for you

You need to have confidence in your new boss – your relationship with them will be as important a factor as the job itself, if not more so. It's fortunate, then, that even a remote job interview still presents plenty of opportunities to suss them out.

During the interview, analyse your potential manager's communication skills. As your interview progresses, assess their clarity of thought, how they communicate their expectations for the role and for the successful candidate, and whether they seem to be listening to you. This will give you an idea of what it would be like to work with them. Do you think this communication style would suit you and help you to form a strong relationship? Be mindful, too, of the language used when your questions are answered and throughout the interview. If they use 'I' rather than 'we' when speaking, that could suggest a non-collaborative approach.

Also, assess whether the interview feels more like a conversation than an interrogation. If it feels natural and almost effortless, and the two of you seem to share many of the same motivations and values when it comes to your career and the workplace, then these are signs that you would get on well.

## 5. Reflect on the experience you've had throughout the interview process

Assess how your interview process, from start to finish, has been handled. Does the company appear to be well-organised? Are you, as a candidate, at the centre of the process? Has communication and feedback been prompt and detailed? All of these things, paired with your knowledge and experience of the company to date, are signals as to the company culture and whether it's the right opportunity for you.

Using these tips and combining them with your gut feeling should give you a good indication of if this is the right job for you.

If it is... great! If not, move on and see what else is out there.

**See the available vacancies by Wild Dreams Hospitality by [clicking here.](#)**





# The WildlifeCampus student cards are here!

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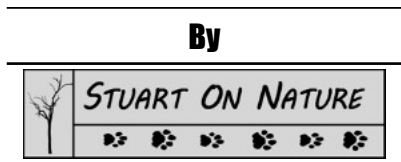
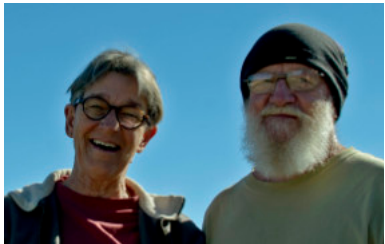
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  - A head and shoulders photo of yourself.
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We will include your student number on your card for you.





# Cat Wars



The domesticated cat (*Felis catus*) descends from the African wild cat (*Felis libyca*), with domestication extending back in time to some 9,500 years before present. As human settlements became established and food was grown and stored, rats and mice relished this centralized “pantry”. Wild cats also benefitted by having a large food source available and by catching rodents in the settlements - it was a win-win situation for man and predator. Realizing that having the cats in the neighbourhood helped preserve their food stocks, the humans no doubt supplemented their food to keep them in close proximity.

So started the long association between humans and the cat. Unfortunately, the ending has not been a happy one! The domesticated cat can be separated into three groups, the house cat, the farm cat and the feral cat. The former is the one that lives in millions of homes around the world, the second is an aloof predator on the farm that will accept supplementary food but shuns attention, and then there is the feral cat that is a free agent, shuns human attention and lives fully off the land.

In the human world there are the cat lovers, those that are indifferent or prefer dogs, and those conservationists that are realistic and are well aware of the menace cats pose. On the one hand you have such organisations as Alley Cat Alliance, that in 2019 condemned the Australian plan to heavily cull

feral cats in that country as - “barbaric, reprehensible and a morally flawed choice.” And at the other end of the spectrum Pete Marra, a conservation scientist in the USA, published a book - Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer. A major problem is that the cat defenders and their organisations are well funded and vocal but in our view their stand is flawed.

Before you accuse us of being unfair, brutal or nasty (we have been called far worse because of our stance) read the following, remembering this applies as much to the cat in your home, as to the farm and feral loners.



**Feral cat at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA**

In a series of studies in recent years it has been estimated that cats kill many hundreds of million birds each year. During a 5 month study in the UK house cats (note not feral) were estimated to have killed 57 million small mammals, 27 million birds and 5 million reptiles and amphibians. On an annual basis on that island one estimate for losses tops out at 270 million animals. For such a small island that is a pretty heavy toll. In the Netherlands, a small chunk of real estate, it is estimated that house cats (again note not feral) kill 141 million animals every year. In Poland farm and domestic cats are estimated to kill 136 million birds and 583 million small mammals every year.

In the USA there are an estimated 58 million pet cats and between 30 and 100 million ferals and strays. In a 2013 study published in the prestigious journal Nature it was estimated that 22.3 billion native animals are killed in the USA every year by cats.

Then of course we have to visit the feral cat capital of the World, Australia! In that far off island continent there are an estimated 3.8 million domestic (house) cats that kill an estimated 390 million, mainly native animals, every year. But this pales into insignificance if one looks at the 2.1 to 6.3 million feral cats roaming virtually throughout the land. It has been estimated that they kill about 2 billion animals every year, with each averaging 390 mammals, 225 reptiles and 130 birds each year. Feral cats in Australia have been responsible for the extinction, or near extinction, of over 100 species of native mammals and birds.

Until recently no similar studies had been undertaken in South Africa but this has changed with research undertaken in Cape Town, with particular emphasis on the areas abutting the Table Mountain National Park. It has been estimated that there are about 300,000 cats living in Cape Town homes but no total is known for feral cats. The house cats in and around Cape Town are estimated to kill an average of 27 million animals each year, including mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

In all the above scenarios no estimates are available for invertebrates killed.

Many solutions have been thrown into the feline pot. The Australians have resorted to extensive poisoning using 1080 to which native animals are largely immune, as well as trapping and shooting but these latter two are not cost effective. Elsewhere some advocate the use of collars with bells but these are largely ineffective, even muzzling has been suggested but this is impractical! Some animal rights groups advocate neutering and castration, then release of feral cats but this is not cost effective and released ferals continue to hunt.



**Farm cat Eastern Cape, South Africa**

Registering cats to keep tabs on numbers has limited impact. House cats should be kept indoors whenever possible, especially at night.

In our view feral cats have no place as introduced interlopers (humans fault in the first place) as they do considerable damage to the natural biota and ways of humane eradication should be found. House cat numbers should be limited and ways found to restrict their depredations - responsible ownership? But then, does the human own the cat or the cat the human?

In Africa and in Europe house and feral cats interbreed readily with the African wild cat (*Felis libyca*) and European wild cat (*Felis silvestris*) producing fertile young. This has led to the near disappearance of pure African wild cats in some areas, especially within South Africa.

So, whether you are a cat lover, cat hater or a realist the above should be pause for thought!



**African wild cat *Felis libyca***



# No wrong answers...

By David Batzofin



Not only do field guides have to be a font of information when out on a drive, but they also have to answer some interesting questions posed by their guests.

Google will have most of the regular answers required, however, there are still questions that even Google has no answer to.

And it is those that will inform, entertain and educate both the field guides as well as the other guests on the game viewer (or around the fire at the end of the day).

Often it is all a guide can do to try and answer that sort of question with a straight face, not embarrassing either the guest or guide.



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



Here are some of my favourites, in no particular order...

**When do Zebra moult and lose their stripes?** How long does it take for the stripes to re-grow? There is NO answer to that sort of question...

**Do Baboons lay eggs?** This was because guests had noticed that baboons in a particular reserve slept on top of the nests of Buffalo Weavers on the powerlines. The answer is that, no, baboons do not lay eggs, but they found the nests comfortable to be down on for the night and the buffalo weavers did not seem to mind the extra protection from predators.

**Are rhinos carnivorous?** This question was asked by a medical professional when we came upon a white rhino sleeping in the middle of the road. What prompted him to ask it, I have no idea, but it certainly caused controversy on the vehicle! The guide answered it with aplomb and I was able to get my own back on this particular guest when I asked him later during a drive if he knew how giraffes slept at night? When he said that he did not, I launched into a detailed description about how they place their heads in the fork of a tree and then retract their legs like landing gear to keep themselves safe from predators. The guest swallowed the story hook, line and sinker and was eventually rescued by the guide who told him that I was pulling his leg...

Sometimes it is the guides that fall fowl (pun intended) of their imagination. At one training provider, the aspirant guides used to go for training runs along a particular stretch

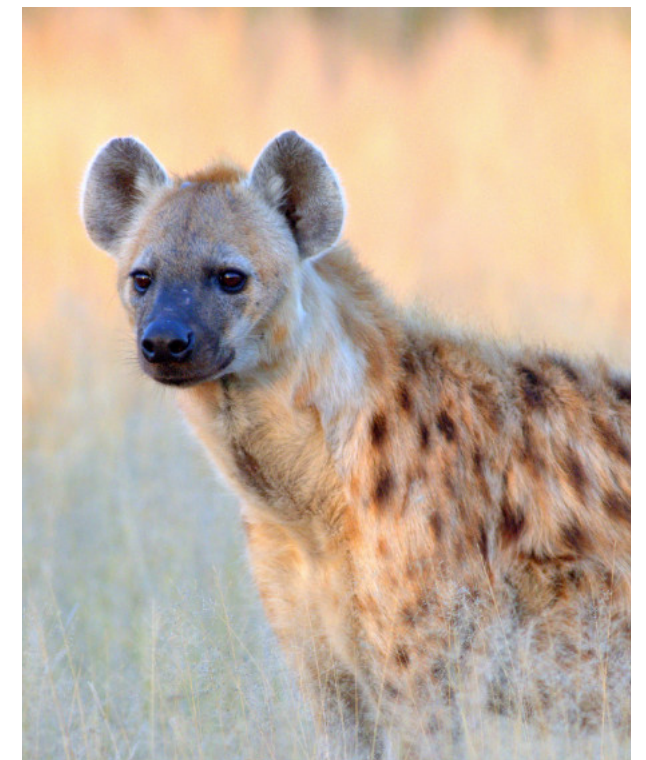
of road. While running and chatting on one such run, one of the apprentice guides thought that he had a leopard trotting along in the grass close by. It was only when a guinea fowl broke cover and almost caused him to have a heart attack that he could laugh about the incident.

Another perennial question often revolves around the sexuality of the hyena. The female spotted hyena is well known, among connoisseurs of this sort of thing, to have among the most 'masculinised' external genitalia of any known female mammal. As a result, they are difficult to sex and guests are often confused when it comes to feeding the cubs. "Do both the male and females suckle their young"? Of course, the answer is only the females, but it takes a strong guide not to laugh out loud at this type of question.

And finally. The words that I always wanted to say to a guide occurred while I was on a trip to a reserve in the Waterberg. Our guide had left the vehicle to try and locate a lion that was vocalising close by.

He was unsuccessful and was walking back to the road when I shouted out; "THERE IS A LION BEHIND YOU"! He laughed and continued to amble back to the vehicle. It was only when I repeated the statement more forcefully that he looked around and noticed the lion padding along behind him. Needless to say that he increased his pace to arrive safely at the vehicle before the lion, which proceeded to flop down next to the vehicle and watch us watch him for a while.

So before you ask, take a moment and ponder. "Will my question end up in an article like this"?





# **WildlifeCampus registration FAQ's**

**Q: Do I need to wait for a semester to begin to register?**

**A: No, you may register and begin a course at any time that is convenient for you.**

**Q: Are there any entrance requirements?**

**A: There are no entrance requirements. Anyone may join our courses from anywhere in the world!**

**Q: Are there any deadlines to complete courses?**

**A: No, you study in your own time, at your own pace. Once you have created a profile and started courses, it will always be available to you to access.**

**Q: How do I register and begin?**

**A: You can register directly on [www.wildlifecampus.com](http://www.wildlifecampus.com) (top left-hand side) or by simply clicking [HERE](#).**

Upon registration as a student, you will create a password to log in and access your online profile. Registration is completely FREE of cost and any obligation (you will also be able to access the free content once you have created your profile).

## **Course purchase options:**

**Credit card:** via our online shop

**PayPal:** via our online shop

**EFT:** Email [info@wildlifecampus.com](mailto:info@wildlifecampus.com) to request an invoice

**All courses can be paid off monthly.  
To view our monthly payment options: click [here](#)**