



Wildlife Campus

LEARN PROTECT SAVE

Magazine

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VS
Vervets**
By Amy Holt

**Hospitality
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A mother's tale
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**Course
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Job interview tips
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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.

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Baboons vs Vervets

In this edition, WildlifeCampus student Amy Holt takes us on an adventure with the true troublemakers of the African bush, Chacma baboons and vervet monkeys. Are they really the notoriously bad neighbours we think they are?

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Tracker Manual

A new must-have by Struik! Featuring all-new spoor drawings, some 200 new photographs and an additional 35 species, this fully revised and updated edition of the ever-popular Tracker Manual is packed with the latest on the art of tracking.

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Special on our Field Guiding course

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Look no further than our FGASA Approved Field Guiding/Game Ranging Online Course!

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5 questions to ask after your interview

Wild Dreams Hospitality brings us a summary of 5 possible questions you could ask after your job interview.

Going to a job interview prepared is the key to success! So do not miss out on these great tips to help you!

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Farewell Chris Stuart

The industry suffered the loss of Chris Stuart, a pioneer in global wildlife research for over 40 years.

A last word by his wife Mathilde and WildlifeCampus COO Eloise Acx.

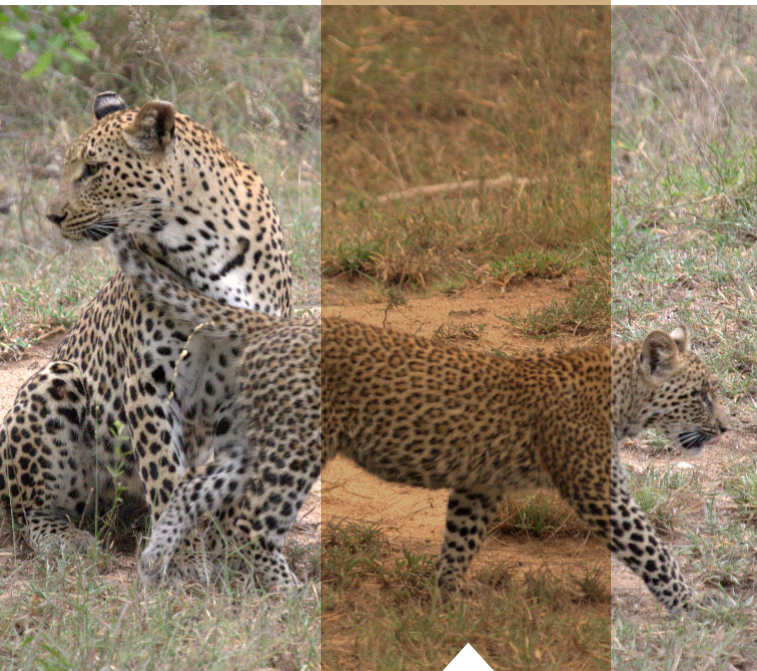
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A mother's tale

In his latest article, David tells us the tale of a leopard mother. A true testament to the beauty of simplicity, the resilience of maternal instinct, and the timeless dance of life in the wild.

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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 open the WildlifeCampus magazine where this exciting journey starts.

His other concern was one we found almost humorous. “At Merrill Lynch we operate only at the top end,” he said, sounding more than a little arrogant. “For us to generate a reasonable fee, we need listings which have critical mass and this means that we would need to raise US\$50m to US\$80m. Our fee will be in the region of 5 to 10% of that amount.”

We found the figures bewildering. The last transaction in the business was at a value of US\$17.5m, now we were talking about RAISING US\$80m, at a value which would be a multiple of that. All the bullish talk did not seem real to us. Back at the office I was tightening the screws on expenditure and we had less than US\$500 000 in the bank. If this discussion was taken to its eventual conclusion it would truly change all of our lives, forever.

Blackely gave his provisional approval and indicated that the way forward would be for some of the South African analysts to have a closer look at the business. This was as positive an outcome as we could have expected and we were all elated. We thanked Johan for setting up the meeting and later deliberated about how we could possibly spend US\$80m. Peter Henderson was very encouraged and the deal he had recently concluded with us was looking like the deal of the century.



Only later did we find out that we had a great supporter in Sid Rebe, my former boss at Merrill Lynch. He was aware that we were visiting London and, without our knowledge, had put through a call to one of the key research directors, Michael Marks, asking for his support. This had filtered through to Blackely and certainly helped in forming his opinion. It looked like we had a good chance of securing Merrill Lynch and this gave us a great deal of confidence in our next meeting with Chase. There could not have been a greater contrast. The bulk of the meeting was spent marketing their credentials to us, as opposed to the previous meeting where the name Merrill Lynch spoke for itself. Chase was there if we needed them.

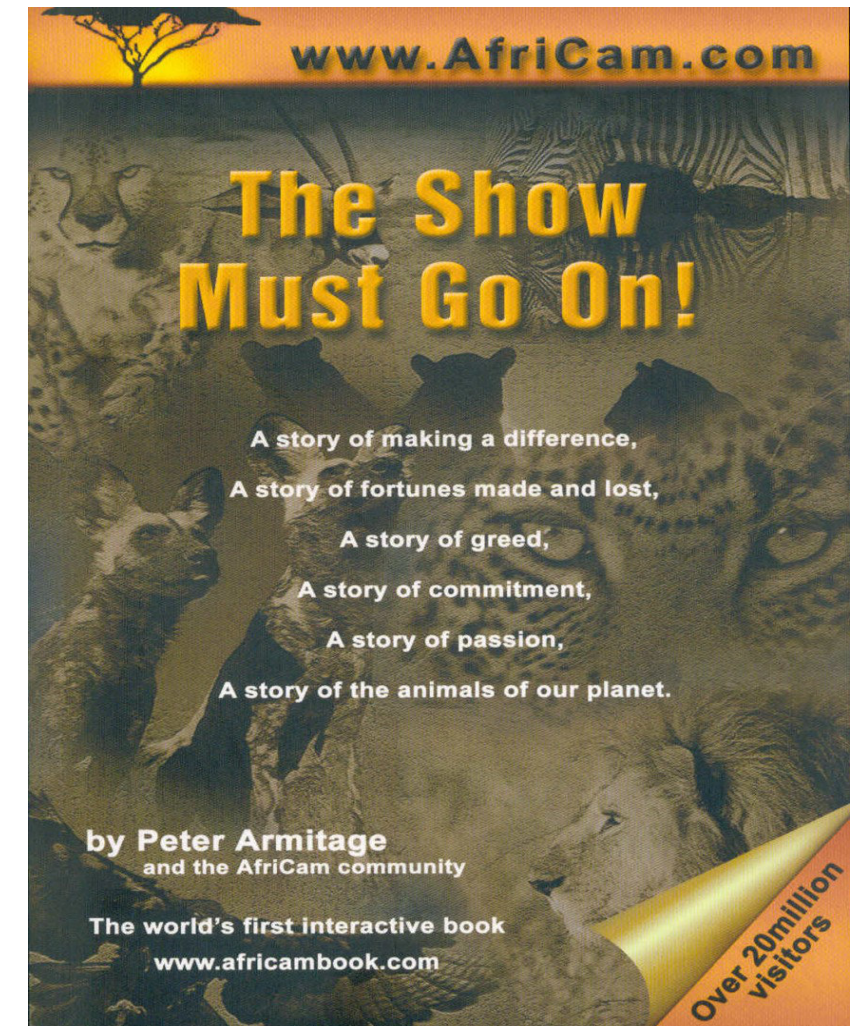
“Meeting Middlemas”

Our colleagues had already gone home when Duarte and I went to meet Michael Middlemas.

The bespectacled gentleman who opened the door could have been a well-dressed butler. He had an expensive home in central London and a demeanour to match. Tall and lanky, Middlemas appeared to be in his late 50's or early 60's and he was quietly spoken and deliberate. With his grey hair and square black spectacles he appeared the conservative type and I thought that he did not look like an internet investor.

He went to great lengths to tell us about his relationship with Donald Gordon, stopping just short of saying that he was the 2-i-c at Liberty.

Middlemas was very encouraged by the news of the Merrill Lynch meeting and explained that he had “researched” Duarte and myself and there were many opportunities for ourselves beyond AfriCam. He explained that he would still have vast resources of cash



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

available in South Africa after making the investments to which he had already committed.

“There are always delays in the transfer of such large amounts of money and you chaps should have your funds within a week or two,” he promised, treating his inability to fulfil on the terms of a signed contract as an administrative error. “I need partners like yourselves in South Africa and I hope this is the beginning of a very fruitful relationship.”

He was very vague about the mysterious deal that would result in him earning US\$600m, but we felt it impolite to probe too much. After all, if we received our cash we did not really care where it came from.

Duarte and I were both from the banking world and a source of capital was very attractive.



“Don’t steal him,” I jokingly cautioned Duarte after the meeting. “He is mine. I found him.” But if his big talk was reality, there was plenty of money to go around.

Neither Duarte nor I knew quite what to make of Middlemas, but we both agreed that it was worthwhile waiting before taking any action against him for breach of contract.

“Maybe he is just the butler,” Duarte said with a chuckle.

“He probably just sets up meetings when the real owner of the house is away,” I concurred.

But we both desperately did not want to believe that.

“The roller-coaster starts to creak” - March 2000

If you had boarded the internet investment roller-coaster at any time in 1999, you had experienced an exhilarating and very profitable ride. The market was volatile, but it took three steps up for every one step down.

Early in March the Nasdaq index peaked and what followed was one of the most volatile periods on any stock market in the world. Over the ensuing three months the Nasdaq index declined from 4700 to 3500 and daily gyrations could easily be 5-10% in either direction. This meant that the collective value of Nasdaq companies was increasing and decreasing on a daily basis by tens of billions of dollars. It simply made no sense.

Investors had bought into the internet dream and it was not easy for them to accept that they might have been duped. Most significant dips in the Nasdaq were followed by steep rises as analysts talked of “buying opportunities”.

Within weeks of visiting London the landscape had changed. Valuations remained at extraordinarily high levels, but the roller-coaster was starting to creak and blind and unquestioning confidence was starting to take a knock. Greed remained, but fear was starting to creep in.

The merchant bankers continued to keep in contact with us, but exuberance had already started to slowly switch to “wait-and-see”. They did not want to lose the opportunity of listing AfriCam, but they also did not want to list a business in a falling market and get egg on their face.

“15km and counting” - March 2000

Peter Henderson deposited his first tranche of cash in March 2000 and this was a sign of commitment, before the final agreements were eventually signed in June 2000.

Peter started to spend a great deal of time in South Africa and a visit to Madikwe was an exciting sign of things to come. Peter had learnt of a new technology called COFDM (coded octagonal frequency divisional modulation). Whereas previously images could only be broadcast within a few metres, or within line of sight, from an outside broadcast unit (OBU), this technology enabled a moving image to be transmitted to an OBU from a number of kilometres away. To AfriCam this meant one thing – live video game drives.

Peter phoned to tell us the news and flew a demo unit over from London to test in South Africa. We set up a visit to Tau Game Lodge, which is situated in the Madikwe Game Reserve in South Africa’s Northern Province. We had already installed some webcams at some waterholes at Tau.

We visited Newsforce South Africa (the company that Peter Henderson previously owned) and secured the use of an OBU and made our way to Tau, about a six-hour drive from our Lonehill office.

Graham, Paul, Peter, Tiffany Purves (our new FD) all made the trip to Tau for a live demonstration of our future. Early in the day we set up the systems close to the lodge and tested the satellite link. Images were transmitted and successfully received in Johannesburg.

The next step was to test the COFDM equipment in the field. We made our way to the highest point we could find in the vicinity. The rain had been heavy in the prior days and the road was very muddy. The Mercedes OBU was not built for

the roads in the bush and on a number of occasions we had to all push the vehicle through a muddy patch.

As we were all pushing the vehicle through one particularly difficult stretch of road a lion roared loudly, not far from the vehicle. Peter responded instinctively and raced to the game drive vehicle, with his last stride on to the vehicle resembling a winning leap in a long-jump competition. It reminded him of his experience years back when a lion’s savage power had almost seen him lose his hand.

Instinct is a powerful force. In the wild, impalas run off when they sense danger long before humans see, hear, or smell anything. Human beings often ignore instinct and “gut-feel,” leaving them exposed. Peter listened to his preservation instinct.

Within an hour we were on top of a koppie, and the game drive vehicle was fitted with the COFDM transmitter. The OBU satellite dish was aligned in order for it to transmit a satellite image to Johannesburg, where Andy Parker and other AfriCam staff members were eagerly awaiting seeing a live image from the bush at the Red Pepper studios.

The game drive vehicle set off and we were amazed as we watched a live moving image from the game drive vehicle on the TV receiver which was in the Mercedes OBU. This was a dream come true for all of us. A live, moving video game drive was something that had never been seen by any TV viewers anywhere in the world.

Peter looked on in awe.

“This is fucking amazing,” said Paul.

“This has got to be valuable,” Tiffany concurred.

“Gentlemen, millions of people all over the world will be watching this in their lounge in a few months time. It will educate people all over the world about wildlife,” Peter added, clearly chuffed with the result.

The next test was distance and we watched on the TV as the game drive vehicle drove further and further away from the OBU.

“5 kilometres,” Peter shouted.

“6,” I added a few minutes later.

Because it had taken us so long to get to our destination the sun was starting to set and the rangers on the game drive vehicle began to use their spotlights. This provided a riveting image and as the dark descended, the rangers came within

10 metres of a rhino. We all cheered and this beast of the bush had no idea that his image was being viewed live on a TV screen by some game lovers back in Johannesburg.

“10 kilometres,” Graham enthused.

“11”

“12”

“13”

“14”

“15”

The image finally started to break up, but we managed to get intermittent images until 18km, which was astounding. The ramifications of this experiment were extreme; we really could broadcast a live video game drive.

Peter cracked a bottle of bubbly and we all downed out of the bottle, thinking about the prospect of changing the wildlife media world and what this would do for wildlife, and ourselves.

The next morning we needed to get back to Johannesburg in a hurry after staying an extra few hours so that Heather Dugmore, a GQ magazine reporter could interview us. Peter was still in high spirits and spontaneously phoned and chartered a helicopter to fly us back to Johannesburg. We were living in style and for that moment, a car was just not good enough.

The GQ delay backfired on us a little as the ensuing article portrayed us as reckless, arrogant IT billionaires. The headline talked of the “Billionaires of the Bush” and made much of our helicopter trip back to Johannesburg, “before jetting off to London to plan the listing”.

Graham regretted jokingly telling Heather that the way that you value an internet company is to “look the investor directly in the eye, think of the highest number you can say without flinching and double it”. He was quoted verbatim and it did not come across in the spirit in which it was intended.



Chacma baboons vs Vervet monkeys



By WildlifeCampus student

Amy Holt

02

Chacma baboons and vervet monkeys are true troublemakers of the African bush. They both have a bad reputation as pests because they often steal food or raid crops. This inquisitive behaviour is frowned upon, making both the chacma baboon and the vervet monkey true nuisance neighbours. However, as human settlements and infrastructure continue to overlap onto their natural range, are they really notoriously bad neighbours, or are humans?

Chacma baboons and vervet monkeys are Old World monkeys that share more than 90% of human DNA. They are very similar, but each has some distinctive characteristics. Chacma baboons are much larger and heavier than vervet monkeys. They are instantly recognisable for their dog-like muzzles, heavy brows, and beady, close-set eyes. Their coarse fur ranges from grey to nearly black. The males have long, razor-sharp canine teeth and a dark mane on their neck and shoulders. Both species are sexually dimorphic, with the males bigger than the females. Vervet monkeys are medium-sized primates with silvery-grey coats, black faces, and long tails. They are both diurnal species, walk on all fours, and can adapt quickly to various habitats. A noticeable difference between the two species is that baboons spend most of their day on the ground, whereas vervet monkeys spend most of their time in trees.

As highly gregarious species, they form large troops. Usually, baboon troops are bigger than vervet monkey troops. A hierarchy system organises these troops. Chacma baboons can live in troops of up to 200 individuals. The adult males form a dominance hierarchy, which is very unstable, as high-ranking males often lose their status to younger males. This hierarchy is established and maintained through fighting. Females remain in their natal troop and form strong hierarchies that transcend generations. The hierarchy within a troop influences access to food and, for males, access to mates. Females prefer to mate with the dominant male. Swollen red bottoms occur only in female baboons and signal their readiness to mate. Females give birth to a single baby every two years, with gestation lasting about six months. Infants are weaned at six months but remain dependent on their mothers until they are two years old.



Parental care is mostly provided by the mother, however, males are highly protective of their offspring and may occasionally care for them. Infanticide is common in chacma baboon troops. A new dominant male will kill the young offspring of their predecessor, in order to bring the lactating females back into oestrous. Males are also known to induce miscarriages through harassment of pregnant females.



Vervet monkeys live in troops of up to 50 individuals. Like chacma baboons, adult males form a dominance hierarchy established and maintained by threat and aggression. Meanwhile, females remain in their natal troops and form strong hierarchies based on maternal social status. Daughters often inherit status from their mothers. High-ranking females have access to higher-quality food, which increases their overall health and reproductive success. With higher stores of fat, these females are likely to have higher milk quality, which contributes to faster infant growth. Males are known to change troops several times in their lifetime. They usually leave their natal troop just before or as they reach sexual maturity (five years old). Young male vervet monkeys transfer alongside older brothers or peers to reduce the risk of predation when moving to a new troop. Immigrating into neighbouring troops is based on the presence of closely related male relatives. This helps decrease potential conflict. After about two years, males transfer to a new troop. However, this time, the adult males do not move with another male or join troops with close relatives. As seasonal breeders, vervet monkey babies are born after the rainy season when food resources are plentiful. Unlike male chacma baboons, male vervet monkeys never help raise their young, but all the females of the troop help. Allomothering helps young females learn how to take care of infants. It may also help increase their social status in the hierarchy. Both species partake in allogrooming to reinforce social bonds and help remove parasites.



Within each species' complex social structure, there is an intricate system of communication that includes vocalisations, body language and facial gestures. Chacma baboons have a wide range of vocal signals. The 'bokkum' double bark is an alarm and aggressive call given only by high-ranking males when there is aggression between males, or a predator is nearby. Lower-ranking troop members have a shrill single bark as an alarm call. A single dog-like bark is given when one part of the troop re-joins another. Grunts can signal contentment, desire for contact or mild aggression. For example, females in oestrus emit a muffled growl during copulation. Visual displays of aggression between male chacma baboons include staring, displaying their canine teeth and chasing.

Vervet monkeys have different alarm calls to avoid specific predators. Short tonal calls are used in the presence of leopards. Low-pitched grunts signal the presence of eagles. Meanwhile, high-pitch chatters signal the presence of snakes. When threatened or aggressive, vervet monkeys use an eyelid display as visual communication.

A vervet monkey's eyelids and adjacent areas have a light colouration that contrasts sharply with the dark face. By retreating the eyebrows, these light areas are exposed. A defensive threat display occurs with an eyelid display while the vervet monkey is in a crouching position. On the other hand, an upright body position with an eyelid display functions as an aggressive display.

Both chacma baboons and vervet monkeys are opportunistic omnivores, and so are able to change their diet based on what is available in their environment. They may choose to directly steal food from homes or game lodges, especially if people have previously offered food in these locations. Chacma baboons are known to feed on bulbs, shoots, seeds, fruit, small vertebrates, fungi and lichen, with the baboons of Cape Point foraging on seafood. Vervet monkeys usually feed on leaves, seeds, grasses, fruit, flowers, fungi, invertebrates, birds' eggs, etc. Their excellent colour vision allows them to distinguish between ripe and unripe fruit. Both species have cheek pouches that allow them to quickly escape predators whilst storing their food to consume later. Chacma baboons and vervet monkeys play an important role in aerating soils and seed dispersal. Seeds pass through their digestive systems intact and are deposited in their dung. This can help recover degraded habitats. They also play an integral part in the local food web as they are a food source for many animals, including leopards.

The behaviours and social interactions of chacma baboons and vervet monkeys can often mirror our own lives. Indeed, their curiosity and mischievous mannerisms are very similar to that of a child. When you observe chacma baboons and vervet monkeys in the African bush, one can become quite fond of them. We fail to appreciate nature when it invades our space, but it was our human development that encroached on their wild territories.

TRACKER MANUAL

A practical guide to animal tracking in southern Africa



Alex van den Heever, Renias Mhlongo,
Karel Benadie & Ian Thomas



All royalties go to Tracker Academy, an NGO that teaches wildlife tracking in southern Africa



Featuring all-new spoor drawings, some 200 new photographs, and an additional 35 species, this fully revised and updated edition of the ever-popular Tracker Manual is packed with the latest on the art of tracking.

Based on information developed by some of southern Africa's best traditional trackers, the Tracker Manual now offers even more guidance on identifying the spoor of some 190 animal species. Individual chapters cover carnivores, large mammals, antelopes, small mammals, primates, hares and rodents, amphibians and reptiles, birds and insects.

A detailed and richly illustrated manual to the region's most common animal tracks and signs.

Get your copy of
Tracker Manual
here!

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This complimentary introductory course is a prelude to the 9 Provincial Cultural Guiding Courses. We have also included an overview of each province (each overview is taken from its full provincial course), in which we feature one town, city or place of interest in that province.

How to access our free courses

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Log in

Once registered, log in with the log in name and password you created, and go to your “my courses” page.

Note: here, you will see the full list of ALL the online courses we offer, including a FREE component in each, for you to view and try. No certificates are issued for completing free components.

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05

Regular price: R6500
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Monthly payment options available



When concluding a job interview, it is essential to ask thoughtful questions to demonstrate your interest in the role and gather valuable information. You do not need to have loads of questions ready, but keep in mind that you may have prepared a question that they answer during the interview.

However, we suggest having a minimum of 5 prepared. There is also nothing wrong with writing these down in a notebook that you may have with you; it will look professional that you have come prepared.

Here are examples of five questions you can consider asking:

1. What are this role's key priorities or objectives in the first few months?

Asking about the expectations and priorities for the role shows your commitment to making an impact from the start. It helps you gain a clearer understanding of what will be expected of you and enables you to assess if your skills align with the immediate needs of the position.

2. Can you tell me more about the team dynamics and the company culture?

Understanding the team dynamics and company culture is crucial to determining whether you would thrive in the work environment. This question allows you to gain insights into how the team collaborates, the company's values, and whether they align with your own work style and values.

3. How does the company support professional development and growth?

It is important to demonstrate your commitment to ongoing learning and growth. By asking this question, you show your dedication to continuous improvement and

highlight your long-term career goals. Understanding the company's approach to professional development will help you assess if they offer opportunities that align with your aspirations.

4. What are the next steps in the interview process?

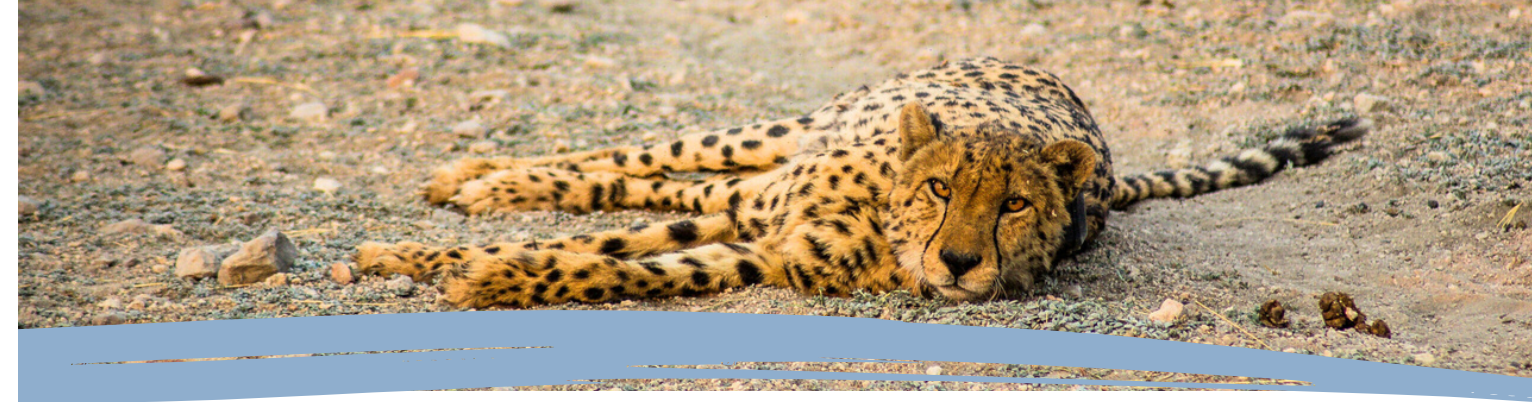
Showing enthusiasm and eagerness to move forward in the process is important. Asking about the next steps demonstrates your interest in the role and allows you to prepare for what comes next. It also shows that you are proactive and organised in managing your job search.

5. Is there anything else I can provide or clarify to support the decision-making process?

This question allows you to address any interviewer concerns, provide additional information, or clarify any aspects of your qualifications. It also shows that you are open to feedback and willing to go the extra mile to ensure they have all the necessary information to make an informed decision.

Remember, these questions are pretty general, and you should be tailoring questions to the specific job and company you are interviewing with. They demonstrate your engagement, preparation, and interest in the role while providing you with essential insights to make an informed decision if an offer is extended to you.

If you have an interview coming up and you would like Hayley's assistance in preparing, book an interview prep coaching session with her at hayley@wilddreams.co.za.



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





Chris started compiling a tracking manual long before I met him in 1983, that was his first idea for a book he did not know where and how to publish. And it only became the third Field Guide Struik published, after the Mammal Guides proved successful. Chris was never a very patient face-to-face teacher, and then only for already advanced students, but with the written word it was different, through the books, apps, and online courses he got his messages across much better. He was delighted when Todd approached us with the idea of doing this Tracks & Signs course with Wildlife Campus. Putting together the stories of 'which animal did what' when walking through the bush was his passion.

Mathilde Stuart

The WildlifeCampus Team was deeply saddened to learn of Chris Stuart's passing. Chris and his wife Mathilde have been involved in wildlife research and book writing for over 40 years. Chris attended school in England and South Africa and graduated with an MSc in wildlife ecology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Our journey with Chris and Mathilde Stuart started back in 2004 when the late Todd Kaplan (WildlifeCampus CEO) met with them to discuss turning one of their books into an online course. Over 20 years later, our Animal Tracks and Signs of Africa Course remains one of our top courses.

In May of 2022, the WildlifeCampus Team was honoured to have the Stuarts visit us in Sabie, Mpumalanga. While it was a short weekend, it was filled with the finest, most memorable moments. We shared some good laughs, interesting stories and even enjoyed a meal on a train. We will always cherish the memories we have of Chris.

His passion for life, education and wildlife is truly inspirational. Our thoughts are with Mathilde and those who knew and loved him. The industry has lost a legend, but his memory will live on. Rest easy, Chris.

Eloise Acx
WildlifeCampus COO



A mother's tale of solitude, survival, and simplicity

By David Batzofin



In the unforgiving expanse of the wild, where survival hinged on instinct and adaptability, life for female leopards was a solitary journey marked by resilience and self-reliance. Unlike their counterparts, the lions, who benefited from the protection of a pride, female leopards navigated the challenges of the wilderness alone, shouldering the responsibility of fending for themselves and their cubs in every aspect of their existence.

The unique dynamics of leopard life played out in stark contrast to the more social structures of other big cats. Mating was the only time when the paths of males and females intersected, and once the brief encounter was consummated, the male withdrew, leaving the female to deal with the intricacies of survival on her own. For female leopards, life was a constant balancing act of hunting for sustenance and protecting her cubs who depended on her for guidance and care.



As an observer, I was granted a glimpse into a world where priorities were starkly defined. Unlike the human quest for daily validation and self-worth, the leopard mother embodied a simplicity of purpose. Her entire existence was devoted to the primal tasks of protecting and nurturing her young. There was no need for elaborate displays of prowess or constant striving for recognition. The essence of her being lay in the unwavering commitment to the survival of the next generation.

In the quiet shadow of the tree where the female leopard had sought refuge, the cubs napped peacefully, unaware of the perilous dance that life in the wild demanded. It was a tableau that invited reflection on the human condition—a reminder that, in the pursuit of being our best selves, simplicity and devotion to core values could be powerful guides.

The female leopard, in this stage of her life, epitomised a singular focus: the well-being of her offspring. As the cubs rested in the grass, the mother remained vigilant, her watchful eyes scanning the surroundings for any potential threat. It was a scenario that prompted contemplation on the human capacity for distraction and the muddling of priorities in the pursuit of myriad goals.

The simplicity of the leopard's existence served as a poignant contrast to the complexities of human life. If only we, as observers of nature's drama, could distil the wisdom from this scene and adopt a page from the leopard's playbook—embracing the purity of purpose, cultivating a relentless commitment to what truly mattered, and navigating life with a clarity that transcended the noise of the daily grind.

As we returned to the lodge for breakfast, the leopard family remained an indelible image—a testament to the beauty of simplicity, the resilience of maternal instinct, and the timeless dance of life in the wild. Intertwined with the sound of our tires on the gravel was a whisper from the heart of nature, urging us to embrace the essentials, protect what mattered, and, in our daily pursuits, strive to become the best humans we could be.

The vulnerability of leopard cubs was particularly pronounced in a landscape teeming with potential threats. Lions and hyenas, natural competitors for resources, loomed as constant dangers, and even male leopards, driven by territorial instincts, might have seen the cubs as rivals and potential threats. Against this backdrop of perpetual risk, the female leopard had to ensure the survival of her progeny.

This particular narrative unfolded during a recent game drive, during which the pulse of the wild quickened with each sighting. An adrenaline surge accompanied the discovery of a mother leopard and her two cubs out in the open—a rare and precious sight was almost palpable on this occasion. The trio moved with an inherent grace along a winding road, a testament to the adaptability that defined their existence.

What made this encounter special was the apparent ease with which the leopard family went about its routine. As our vehicle followed their progress, the female exuded a sense of calmness, a stoic guardian in the face of an unpredictable world. The cubs, playful and exuberant, revelled in the freedom of the grassy terrain, oblivious to the potential threats lurking in the shadows.

However, as with all things in the wild, moments of tranquillity were transient. In a sudden, decisive move, the female leopard decided that the time for open exploration had come to an end. With a fluidity born of instinct, she swiftly ascended a nearby tree, leaving the cubs below in the shelter of the grass. It was a calculated decision, a testament to the finely tuned survival instincts that governed the life of a leopard mother.



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