



Wildlife Campus

LEARN PROTECT SAVE

Magazine



Gone in a splash

By David Batzofin

Caracal vs serval

By Amy Holt

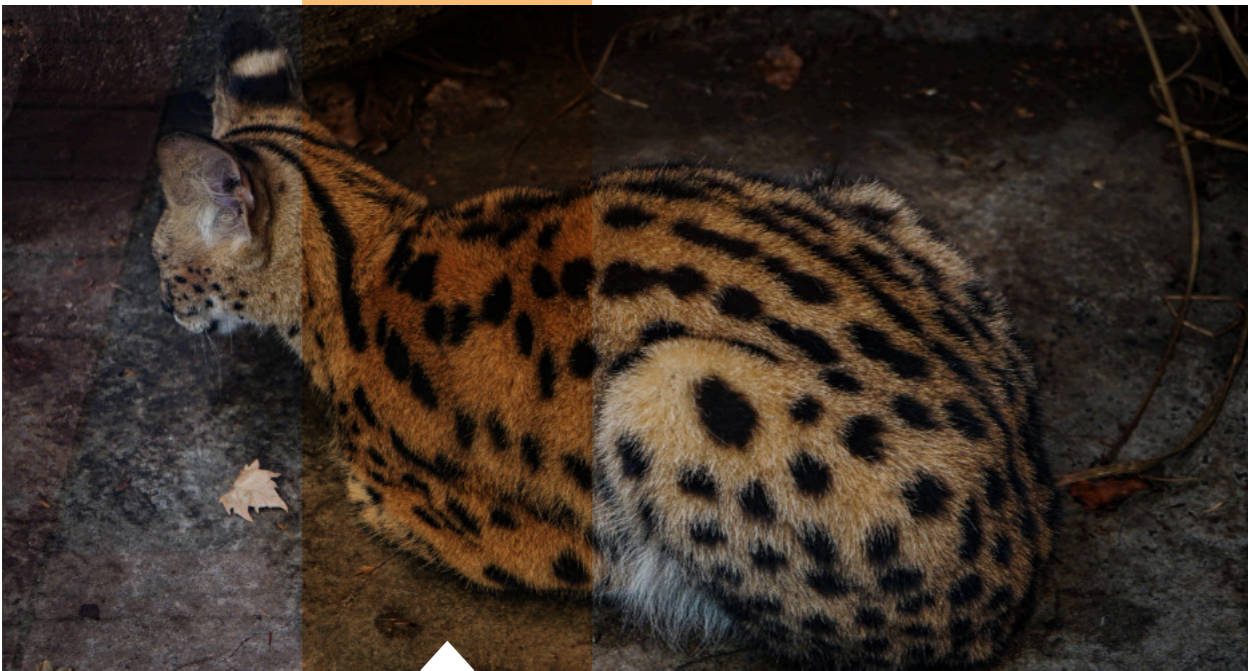
**Field guiding
course special!**

Salmon run

By Stuart on Nature

**Noon2Moon
Cycling event**

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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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Caracal vs serval

Forgotten wild cats of Africa, often nocturnal, elusive and difficult to spot.

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Thank you!

In this edition, WildlifeCampus would like to thank David Batzofin for his contribution towards our magazine and our field guiding/game ranging course.

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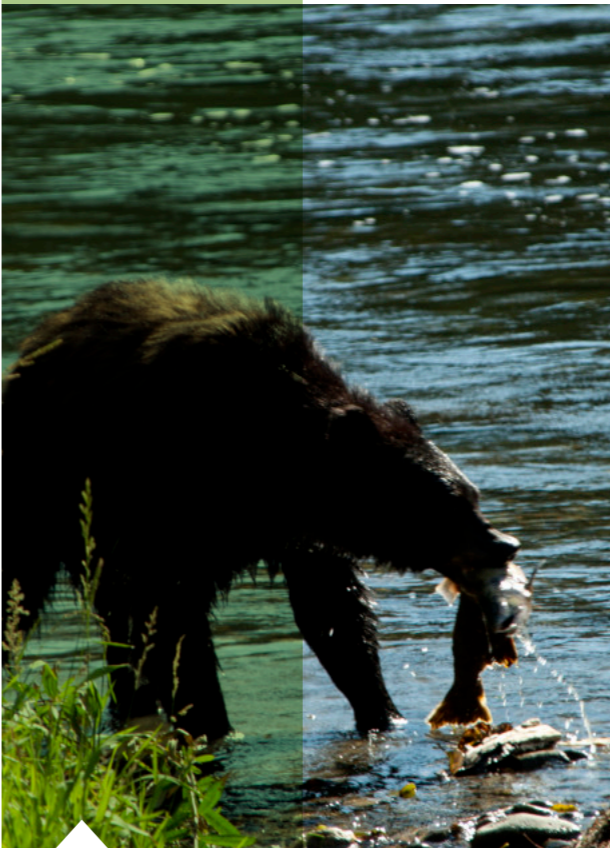
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Did you know that using a recruitment company is free for job seekers?

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Gone in a splash

David Batzofin brings us the story of a recent game drive he took. Setting off, everything pointed to a regular drive; however, a sudden turn of events proved the drive would not be an ordinary game drive.

WARNING: this story may upset sensitive readers!

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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.

Paul and Graham also understood that the Peregrine Consortium would fund the business, which was later to become a major bone of contention. The other condition was that Paul and Graham had to install the Sabi Sabi camera – no problem for that kind of money. Paul and Graham would also receive a salary of R 20 000 a month each.

Paul and Graham still had no idea exactly with whom they were doing the deal. From a negotiation perspective, it was clear that JB was the boss and the other participants all deferred to his experience and judgement. Graham insisted on the delivery of the cash by the end of February, largely so that he could feed his family. Paul and Graham had a late night and did not rise until late the next day. Shortly after awakening, Paul received a call from JB. He insisted on signing the deal before the duo departed. They met a few hours later at the Heathrow Ramada hotel. The contract had been drawn up by the Durban lawyer and faxed to London. The paperwork was all done that afternoon.



Paul and Graham were in a frivolous mood and on the return flight they convinced the Virgin Atlantic check-in clerk to tell Colin that he was flying in economy class. Well aware that Paul, Graham and Duarte were flying Upper Class, this angered Colin greatly and he protested vigorously. When he discovered that it was a joke, Colin showed that he had a sense of humour. The individuals were all getting on like a house on fire and Colin had bought Graham an Armani T-shirt as a token of his friendship.

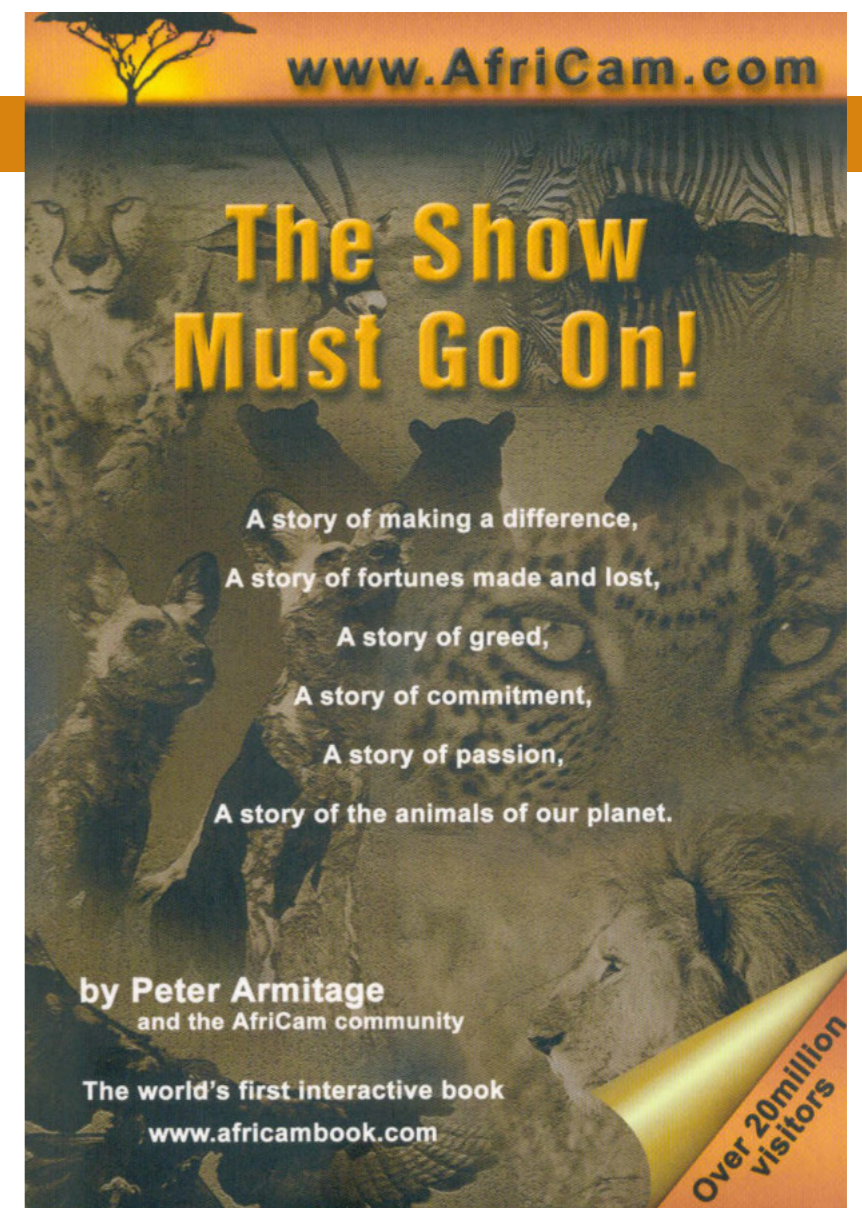
For the next three months, Paul and Graham met with JB every week and the other players even more frequently. JB continually reminded the founders that “AfriCam was his retirement plan”. Saul came into business almost full time. The business also took some big steps; it rented 80 square metres of office space and the first employees were hired – Andy Parker, Pippa Moolman (Jurie’s wife) and Pieter van der Dussen (from MWeb).

The Nasdaq rose sharply in 2000 and this put smiles on everybody’s faces. All the equity participants privately dreamed of what they were going to do with their hundreds of millions of dollars.

“You cannot afford not to be invested” - early 1999

The e-commerce wave was getting stronger and stronger. I was asked to advise clients on whether they should be invested in internet shares. Nobody knew that the valuation of these shares was to escalate another 200%, but for the moment they looked horribly overvalued.

Nobody in our department had seen anything like it. The old sages had called the market overvalued when the



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

Nasdaq hit 1000. It was now at about 2000 and they were calling for a crash. The young bulls talked about the “new economy”. Things were different this time around and companies like Yahoo, eBay and Amazon.com were going to rule the world. Down at the southern tip of Africa, we were at a loss to explain the valuations and we took refuge in the advice of our colleague, Merrill Lynch’s US internet analyst, Henry Blodget.

One of our South African institutional clients asked for a conference call with the now acknowledged guru of this new medium. Our client posed the obvious question: “But even if these companies grow at 100% per year for five years, their valuations would not be justified.”

Blodget explained that the valuations were becoming increasingly irrelevant: “The world has changed and these shares are the way to get exposure to the future. The economy has changed and new forces will become the biggest companies.”



“But Amazon.com is worth more than the biggest traditional competitor by 500%,” was the retort.

“Look, sure the valuations look high, but you have to remember that the success of these internet companies would mean the demise of the traditional players, so it could well be justified.”

You see, while the average P/E multiple over time for the US market is 25x (ie you pay for around 25 years earnings when you buy the company), a company like Yahoo was trading at around a 500x P/E multiple. This meant that you were paying for the next 500 years of earnings when you bought the share. This was justified by the high growth rate that Yahoo was likely to experience, meaning that it would be 100 years before you got your money back, rather than 500 years. 100 years! Go figure.

The debate continued on the international teleconference for 20 minutes and both parties regurgitated the same arguments that investors all over the world were putting forward. The bears pointed to irrational valuations. The bulls consistently used the word “new” as a preface. The new economy, the new world, the new way of transacting. The new way of making money.

Our South African client was a little disappointed. He expected to hear some new wisdom from the Merrill Lynch wiz kid. He wanted to believe and was almost willing Blodget to give him some rational justification for making an investment.

But in reality, Blodget was just another merchant banker riding the wave. He was a journalist-turned-analyst who only a few years back had been poached from another stockbroking firm by Merrill Lynch to explain the internet wave to the masses. In truth, it needed a journalist more than an analyst as clever words had a better chance of convincing investors than traditional spreadsheets.

Then Blodget made an astounding statement that devalued every fundamental of investment theory: “You see, you’re probably right about the valuations. But you cannot afford not to be invested. You should buy into internet shares because they are going up and if you do not own them, you will lose money.”

Blodget himself was clearly riding the internet wave. It was clear that he himself had no magical justification for the valuations. But the trend was upwards and if the trend remained upwards he could continue to earn millions of dollars on investment banking deals. But he was right about the advice from a share price direction perspective. At least for the time being.

Our investor left with his tail between his legs and immediately bought some shares in a selection of internet companies. He was defeated into investing.

I had joined the stockmarket in South Africa about six years earlier. A company called Ivor Jones, Roy & Co had hired me as a junior analyst after I had completed my articles at Deloitte & Touche. The stockmarket had treated me well and I had won many of the awards available. Five years as the top-rated media analyst culminated in the overall Finance Week Analyst of the Year Award in 1999.

About eight months back Sidney Rebe, the CEO of Merrill Lynch South Africa had contacted me. I could not have been happier at Deutsche Bank (the big German bank had bought the SA independent market leader Ivor Jones, Roy & Co) and rejected Sid’s overtures. I had a strong sense of responsibility to my boss and mentor Murray Winckler. A more honest, talented man you could not find.

Sid believed in the Merrill Lynch brand and persisted. Sid is a very personable individual who naturally earned respect. Eventually money talked and I sold out. The deal on the table increased by US\$100 000 each time I said no. Eventually I agreed to US\$ 1mn over the course of a one-year contract. The banking world was flourishing and money was no object. They were paying the kind of money you usually pay for a company for one individual. That was me and that made me more than a little nervous.

Deserting Murray Winckler was one of those moments in life that I really regret. The look on his face was one of disbelief. I had let him down, but after a while he no longer took it personally. I justified it to myself by the fact that Sid was also a good guy and working for the number 1 US bank was invaluable experience.

But eight months later I was depressed about my decision. When you get paid US\$ 1mn you are obliged to deliver. I did deliver – a number one rating in the biggest sector on the stockmarket (Industrial Holdings) was the expectation and I achieved exactly that.

The Merrill Lynch investment was justified, but I was demotivated. The business was run by fax from New York. Part of my deal was to hire and develop three young trainees into number one analysts. While I had benefited from an irrational hiring spree, I believed that the way to develop a team was to build, and not buy, a team.

Just as I had made my job offers to three talented recruits, a fax from New York put a freeze on new hirings. I objected on three fronts. First, I could no longer develop a team, second, it was done by fax and third, it was an uninformed global decision from New York. It was David Komansky (the US CEO) who ran our business and not Sid Rebe. This also pissed Sid off and he left not too long after I did.



“Small business, big value” - early 1999

Being an analyst, I could not help but sit upright and take notice of internet valuations. My peers were becoming millionaires overnight and ideas and a business plan were worth more than established traditional businesses.

At around the same time my sister Lynne Trivella, who was an experienced computer developer, had just resigned from Usko. Ironically, her boss was the same Paul Wootten who had made an offer to Graham and Paul for AfriCam.

I discussed the internet wave with Lynne and we agreed to develop a business. I paid her a salary to develop an internet website which we called Fingershopper (www.fingershopper.co.za). As a busy analyst, I always forgot birthdays and special events. A gift website intuitively made sense and we developed a business which reminded registered users of birthdays and offered a selection of gifts which we would personalise and deliver to a nominated individual.

Lynne began developing the site and I paid her a salary of around US\$5000 per month. We were joined by Clint Bissett, who became the only other shareholder in the company. Merrill Lynch just got worse and as the end of my year-long contract approached, I started looking around for other opportunities.

Like AfriCam, but on a considerably smaller scale, the value of Fingershopper rose dramatically. Even though the site was still incomplete and the business was not yet launched, I was receiving offers for over US\$400 000, more than ten times what I had spent. In my own small way I was starting to experience what the US internet entrepreneurs were experiencing on the other side of the globe.

e-Company was the first serious overture. Sheldon Cohen ran this internet development company and he made an offer of over US\$400 000. Negotiations got to an advanced stage when I was approached by Duarte da Silva, who was already employed by Peregrine at this stage.

Duarte was part of the team that had lured me to Merrill Lynch. He was the country’s top-rated IT analyst at the US investment bank and the idea of joining a winning team at the world’s number one bank was appealing.

But as I joined Merrill Lynch, Duarte left: “Peter, it is great to have you here, but I am on my way out.” He hinted that he would come back and get me, but I did not really know what he meant.



Caracal vs Serval

By WildlifeCampus student

Amy Holt

Wildlife enthusiasts are drawn to Africa to see the big cats which, includes the world's fastest animal, the cheetah, and two of Africa's renowned Big 5 animals, the lion and the leopard. But, have you heard of Africa's small wild cats? These forgotten wild cats of Africa are often nocturnal, elusive and difficult to spot.



02

The caracal is closely associated with and often mistaken for a serval cat. This is because, they have almost identical body shape and structure. However, the caracal has a solid coat colour while, the serval has black spots and dashes across its body. The easiest way to tell the two apart is by their ears. Caracals have distinctive ear tufts but, servals are lacking ear tufts. Further, caracals prefer dry savannah and semi-arid environments, whereas, servals prefer wetter environments. Yet, their territories can overlap.

Caracals are strikingly beautiful with their bold facial markings and dramatic ear tufts. These facial features play an important role in visual communication within the species. Their black ears are used as 'follow me' signs to kittens following behind in long grass. The ear tufts are highly flexible and help pinpoint the position of prey by acting as funnels. Further, the ear tufts create very little noise when the caracal brushes against branches. This notifies the cat of an obstacle while, keeping the prey oblivious.

The caracal's fur is red-tan or sand colour. Their fur colouring allows them to blend in with both dry grass and sandy soil. Stiff fur grows between the toes on each of the caracal's footpads. This allows them to walk on soft sand and make no noise as they sprint towards their prey.

Caracals are the largest members of Africa's small wild cats. They are very efficient and successful hunters.



Caracals can survive for long periods without drinking water because, most of the moisture they need comes from their prey.

Their long legs act as springs propelling them into the air. This makes them remarkable jumpers who can jump up to 3.5 metres in the air to catch birds. The caracal's impressive leaping ability once led to the species being trained to hunt game birds for the Persian and Indian royalty. Large retractable claws and their powerful legs allow them to climb trees. They are very good climbers but, usually hunt on the ground.

Endemic to Africa, servals are highly specialised and very successful rodent hunters. Indeed, they are one of the best hunters in the wild cat kingdom. They have a hunting success rate of about 50%.

Servals have the longest legs in proportion to the body size of all cat species. This is due to stretched-out metatarsal bones in the feet. The combination of long legs and an elongated neck enables the serval to see over the tall grass. Furthermore, the long legs function as springs allowing the serval to leap up to three metres in the air and up to four metres forward. This enables the serval to catch birds from the air or pounce on rodents concealed in the long grass. They use their long, loose digits to hook rodents out of burrows. Servals repeatedly hit captured prey with their front paws. Their prey is then stunned or even killed before they risk biting it.

As opportunistic hunters, caracals regularly kill prey two to three times their own size (for example adult springbok or young kudu). Generally though, their prey is small mammals such as birds and rodents. Thus, they help control bird and rodent populations in their environment. Smaller prey is killed with a swift bite to the neck. While larger prey is killed using a strangling throat bite, and the claws are used to stop any struggles.



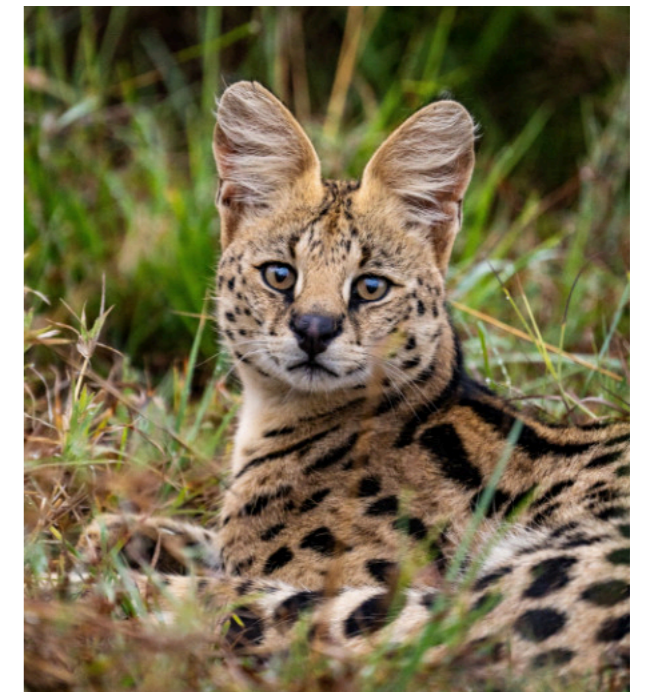
Servals have huge radar-like ears which help to detect the ultrasonic frequencies emitted by rodents, even when they are burrowing underground. Their large ears contain 22 muscles each, allowing them to rotate up to 180 degrees independently of each other. This is especially useful at night or in dense grass, where they rely on sound alone to pinpoint their prey. The serval's coat is covered with dots and dashes to break up the outline of the cat's body. This helps the serval to blend into the surroundings.

The main threat to servals is loss and degradation of wetland habitat, mostly caused by increasing urbanisation. Such wetlands show high rodent densities compared with other environments and are the core areas of serval home ranges. Servals are wetland specialists and so, serve as a useful ecosystem indicator of the effect of habitat fragmentation in

South Africa and for wetland conservation. As a predator of rodents, servals are helpful in controlling the number of these agricultural pests. On average, one serval consumes 4000 rodents per year.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, the serval was considered extinct in many areas of its historic range in South Africa. This was due to persecution as a damage-causing animal and competitive exclusion by expanding caracal populations. Thanks to the successful reintroduction of serval, they can be found in all nine provinces.

Big cats may steal the show when it comes to a safari, but it is worth keeping an eye out for some of Africa's small wild cats. They are equally magnificent and shouldn't be forgotten. So, count yourself lucky if you catch a glimpse of the graceful serval cat or the fierce caracal.





03

Thank you David!

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 (FGASA) assessor.

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



In this edition, WildlifeCampus would like to thank travel writer, blogger, photographer and broadcaster **David Batzofin** for his amazing photographic contribution towards our courses and our magazine.

As a content provider, David has worked mainly in the hospitality industry, focussed specifically within the safari industry. His award-winning travel Blog (www.travelandthings.co.za) has been read by almost 1 000 000 people worldwide. As a photographer, his images have won awards and have been sold both locally and internationally. David holds a marketing diploma and has worked in both corporate and private companies in this capacity.

Travel & Things, by David Batzofin and team, provides a world-class travel site to all African destinations, game lodges, spas and hidden gems.

For more than 2 years, David has been contributing back page articles to this magazine and has also completed online courses with us.

Thank you David! We look forward to our students seeing your incredible work throughout the Field Guiding/ Game Ranging course and many articles to come.

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

Field Guiding course special

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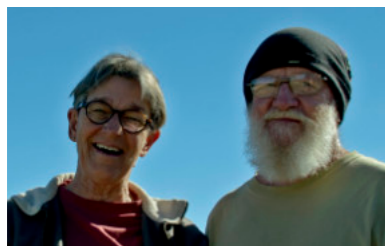
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No monthly payment options available on this special.



Salmon Run

Spawning Pink salmon (*O. gorbuscha*), Valdez, Alaska

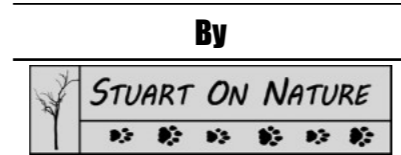


During that part of our life that we lived and travelled in North America some of our most fascinating experiences were with fish, to be precise salmon. There are seven salmon species in the Pacific, of which five occur in North American waters. They are ray-finned fish in the family *Salmonidae* and their origins date back some 15 million years BP, although current populations descend from the survivors of the last glacial period just 17,000 years BP. At that time remnant populations survived in parts of Beringia in the north and coastal areas south of what is now known as British Columbia. As the glacier cover diminished the remnants started to reoccupy their former ranges.

The five species all belong to the genus *Oncorhynchus* and each goes by several common names depending on the region, but **Sockeye**, **Chinook**, **Coho**, **Chum** and **Pink** will do! The amazing thing about salmon is that they begin life in freshwater, some in rivers as much as 1,500 km from the



Bald eagle feeding on salmon, Valdez, Alaska



ocean, and as young fish they make their way from the freshwater far into the Pacific where they grow to adulthood and return, in most cases, to the same spawning beds where they started life as eggs. In some species young salmon may spend longer in freshwater before moving into the ocean but all species have an oceanic phase.



Coho salmon (*O. kisutch*), Raft River, British Columbia

In the oceanic growing phase all five eastern Pacific species look similar with an overall silvery appearance but when they return to the rivers to spawn there are some changes, especially in the males. Some of the most dramatic changes occur in the male Coho where the upper jaw forms an elongated hooked snout and there is a broad red streak along each side. The Chum Salmon develops olive-green and purple vertical bars on the sides and both sexes have hooked

noses, then the Pink Salmon male develops a prominent hump in front of the dorsal fin prior to spawning. Then there is the “show man” and “show lady”, the Sockeye Salmon, that turn bright red on their way to the spawning grounds. As to weight the Coho, or Silver, tip the scales at up to 5.5kg, the Pink average 2kg, Chum average also 2kg, and the heaviest is the Chinook at an average of 9kg.



Yearling Brown bear with salmon, Valdez, Alaska

Once these huge numbers of salmon return as adults to the spawning grounds, and once the next generation lies as eggs in the gravel, the adults all die. However, the forests and woodlands lining the rivers benefit as the carcasses rot and provide nutrition for the trees and other plants. Of course on their way up the rivers they have in many places to run the gauntlet of Brown and Black bears, desperate to build up fat before the winter hibernation, not to mention the bald eagles and other predators. Wolves and foxes scavenge the dying adults after spawning, as do Mink.



Glaucous-winged gull feeding on salmon eggs, Valdez, Alaska

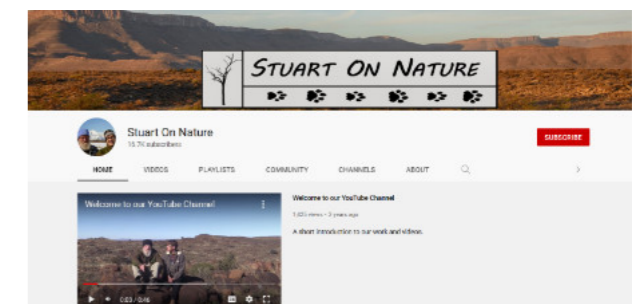
So, where do we come into the salmon mix? We lived for two years alongside the Clearwater River in British Columbia and regularly walked a trail that skirted the east bank. In summer we walked at ease not worried by the occasional Black Bear foraging but in autumn when the salmon were running we were more cautious as the Brown Bears came down from the Caribou Mountains to fish for the migrating salmon, although they would be generally more interested in the salmon than us! But we were never quite sure, maybe they would fancy a human haunch as an in between snack? We watched salmon

runs elsewhere, including in the vicinity of Valdez in southern Alaska, probably the most impressive of all.

Valdez is located at the head of Prince Edward Sound (infamous for the massive oil spill from the Exxon Valdez tanker in 1989) and although several salmon species occur here it is the Pink Salmon that arrives in the largest numbers, literally millions, partly aided by releases of young from a large hatchery run by the wildlife department. On average 100 million Pink fry are released from the hatchery each year to make their way through the Sound to the open ocean.

We were mesmerized by the millions of salmon returning to spawn at Solomon Gulch, heading into streams to begin the cycle once again. Brown Bears building up their fat reserves for the hibernation, gulls picking eggs from dying female salmon, and Sea Otters just offshore but they did not participate in the feast preferring other seafood, or were they perhaps full from the bounty?

Have a look at a short video we put on YouTube: Salmon run Alaska



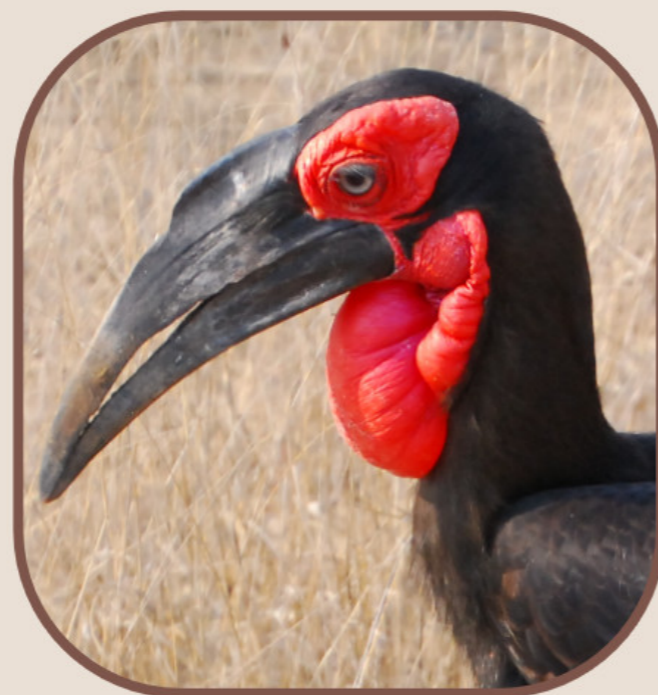
Click the image to see the Salmon run Alaska video

Whilst in North America we ate a “cascade” of fresh and smoked salmon, and yes one could even buy salmon “biltong.” Next time you eat smoked or canned salmon, remembering some comes from fish farms, think of the great spawning migrations that these amazing fish undertake.



Not all get eaten by the bears and the gulls.

The important lesson in this course lies in the words: Prepare yourself instead to become part of a working, natural system. Proceed methodically and thoughtfully, and exciting and rewarding photographic opportunities will reveal themselves to you. The more you know about your subject, the better your photographs will be.



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Why use a recruitment company?

How it all works?

We are constantly connecting, building and maintaining relationships with our clients. This means we get access to more vacancies for our job seekers, and thus we can better assist you as a job seeker.

This is not always so simple! We pride ourselves in knowing exactly what our clients' needs are, and have access to all of these positions because we are incredibly accurate in our matchmaking abilities.

What is often misunderstood, is that we have a say in the hiring process. So although we still get back to all of you as job seekers, we can not always help you in landing that dream job.

Our operations.

To any new readers, Hayley is the founder of Wild Dreams Hospitality. Some might see her as a workaholic/energy bunny as she is managing a lodge while running a successful business. The truth is there is just a hell of a lot of passion in her. Hayley never runs out of ideas and is constantly giving back to staff, the community as well as constantly running training programmes and creating courses – she trained me.

I am Amore, and I run the recruitment operations of Wild Dreams. I liaise with our clients, manage our recruiters, and recruit for openings myself. It sounds pretty simple.

However, it is not. In our recruitment team, we have Anna, the first to join Wild Dreams after I joined. Many of you would have worked with her or have been placed by her over the past year. Recruitment grew as the pandemic stretched further away in our rearview mirrors – we now have three other colleagues. Angie, Matt and Mel – are all integral additions to the success of Wild Dreams.

Each has a different background, with the common ground being hospitality. Angie worked herself up to assistant recruitment manager, and most will see more of her.

Why use a recruitment company as a job seeker?

As a job seeker, you might often feel quite unsure. Whether it is about a position, possible employers, market-related salaries, or requirements, we are here to bounce questions off. We are the buffer between knowing where you are suited, knowing likely employers are true and sound, and knowing what you are worth and where you should not settle. This might not be common knowledge, but Wild Dreams has a blacklist of clients we do not support, nor would we put our candidates in unfavourable environments.

In our services to job seekers, we do not ignore you - all questions are responded to. We gear your applications towards what strengths are needed for certain positions, and we add motivations, otherwise known as recommendations or references conducted by previous employers. You do the rest to land the job!

It is important to note that candidates do not pay for the services of a recruiter. Just be respectful and kind.

Why use a recruitment company as an employer?

It all really boils down to time saving and convenience. However, not every agency will provide that. We have a constantly growing database of incredible and passionate people, in all departments of hospitality and tourism throughout South Africa and in the rest of Africa.

A lot of time is spent sourcing potential through constant conversations; whereas most employers do not have the time to do so.

However, there is no point in time saving convenience if candidates are never suited, and that is where our personal experience and time spent in the industry allows for accurate matchmaking.

By the time applications are sent through, candidates have gone through the initial interviews and conversations as well

as being vetted by previous employers. All are laid out in a straightforward manner, assisting in faster decision-making.

If you would like assistance in finding staff, please email me at jobs@wilddreams.co.za

Blog by Amore van Wyk

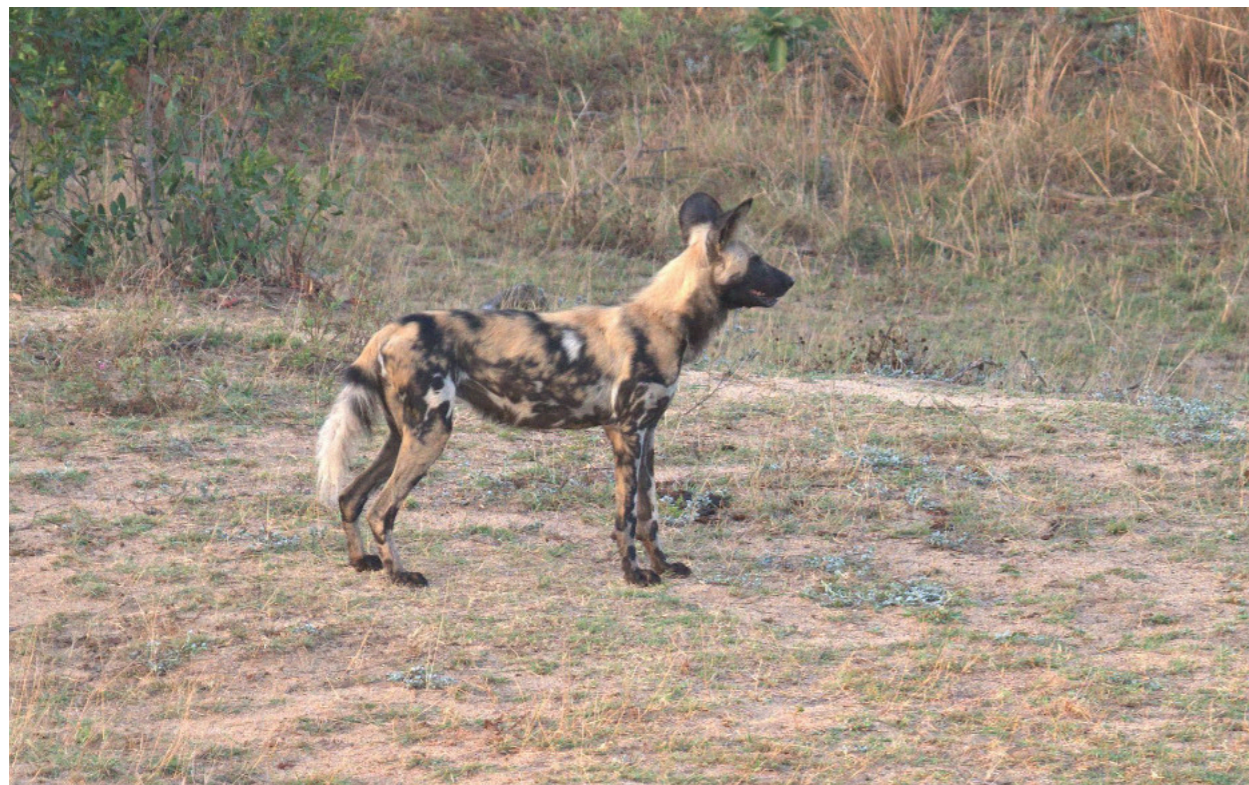
[Click here to have a look at the latest Wild Dreams' vacancies](#)



Gone in a splash

What started as just a regular game drive as our vehicle rolled through the gate of the camp, where I had stayed recently, did not remain that way for long.

“Good morning all stations, any updates”? In response the radio crackled but remained silent.



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

By David Batzofin



“Seems like we are the first ones out this morning, and the early bird catches the worm” said our guide with a laugh.

“We will head to the nearby dam to see what might be there and then we will bumble on” was the plan of action for the beginning of the drive.



Arriving at the dam I noticed that it was inhabited by a small pod of hippo and what appeared to be an enormous crocodile.

Morning game drives invariably begin quietly as guests are still surfacing from being woken at a time that many are not used to. But the calm and peaceful nature of all on this vehicle was about to be shattered in the most spectacular and unexpected manner.

Just as we were about to move off, the radio burst into life... “There are wild dogs on the way to the dam”! It was that single line that was to unleash a series of events that seemed to take forever, but in reality took less than 5 seconds and cost the lives of not one but two impalas.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that there was a female impala headed for the dam with an eight-strong pack of wild dogs hot on her heels. To the fleeing impala, the water seemed to be her best option, little did she know that her destiny with death lay within the murky waters of the dam and not being caught on the shore by the pack of wild dogs.

She hit the water without breaking her stride and her splashing, as she tried to reach the safety of the far bank, attracted the attention of the crocodile languishing near the middle of the dam. Launching itself at the struggling antelope, it covered the distance to the intended prey in a heartbeat and the impala's fate was sealed in the snapping of jaws as predator and prey vanished beneath the surface.

Given that this had taken but a few seconds, all of us on the vehicle were in a state of shock, including my wife who turned to me, ashen faced, and said in a hushed tone “What the hell just happened”!

The large male hippo had tried, unsuccessfully, to reach the impala before the crocodile, but his efforts were in vain. He and the pod reverted to what they had been doing mere

minutes ago, except there was now a renewed level of grunting emanating from them.

Once we had calmed down and perceiving that the immediate excitement was over, or so we thought, our guide decided to follow the pack and see how they were responding to losing out on an early morning meal.

The dogs had regrouped, as dogs do after an unsuccessful hunt, to ‘discuss’ what had occurred and what their plan B might be.

A young hyena seemed to have attached itself to the pack, and they appeared to be comfortable having it around, given that often dogs will turn on hyena and chase them away, which was not the case in this instance.

Should there have been a successful outcome to the hunt, the hyena might have either tried to snatch the entire carcass or may have been satisfied to just follow and accept scraps.

Given the fact that impala was no longer on the menu, the dogs were agitated but relaxed as we sat in our game viewer in the middle of the pack watching them interact with each other and occasionally looking in our direction.

The radio was now alive with other vehicles wanting to approach the sighting, so we decided to move back to the dam to see if we could spot the croc and its prey.

We found both in a smaller pool adjacent to the main dam, well away from the vocal pod of hippo, but now under the watchful eyes of a group of water thick knees.



These birds were patrolling the shoreline just in front of the croc, seemingly interested in what was unfolding in the water just a short distance from them.

An aside on croc behaviour... they cannot chew prey as their jaws only work to open and close and not sideways, so they have to take hold of the prey, roll and shake it violently and in this way tear off pieces that can then be swallowed whole.

This is what 'our' croc was doing and it was at this point that all on board the vehicle realised that the impala had been pregnant and the croc was now busy ingesting the unborn foetus, right before our very eyes. The vehicle went quiet as we all took in what was happening. Life and death in the early morning light. The croc raised itself out of the water to finish off the meal, knowing that this was just an appetizer and that it still had the adult impala for the main meal.



As the meal vanished down the throat of this almost prehistoric beast, we sat in shocked silence at what had unfolded in mere minutes.

And although a leopard sighting was a highlight of the drive, it was this interaction that caused the most discussion on the vehicle.



The next morning we returned to the dam to find the croc in almost the same spot that we had left it. This time, when it raised its head above the water, we could all see the remnants of the impala hanging from its jaws.

Whether it is death on land or in the water, as in this case, this is what occurs in the African bush on a regular basis. It does not matter to the predators if there are humans to witness these events, all that matters is that they can find a meal to sustain themselves. We, as intruders into their territory, cannot be judgemental of their need to kill, but can silently bear witness to these events as they unfold.

If I was to be anthropomorphic, I suppose I could say that being taken by the croc was the easier death for the impala and for that, we watching humans, were grateful.

Just another day in Africa? Perhaps for the wildlife, but certainly NOT for those watching from the safety of the vehicle.

A sighting that left an indelible mark on those who were witnesses to it.

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