



WildlifeCampus

Nature Calls

**Hospitality
jobs**

**African
Folklore**

**The cycle
of life**
By David Batzofin

**Sky Guide
2025**

A new Struik guide

**The African
bush: taste**
By Amy Holt

**Travel Buggz
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**Our updated
price list**

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About us



WildlifeCampus is a world-renowned online nature school. We are **FGASA recognised**. With over 23 years of experience in the online space, we have successfully trained more than 30,000 students from 161 countries.

Our courses are considered to be the most comprehensive in the online space.

We take pride in being **leaders in online wildlife education**, offering an authentic and unique E-learning experience, high-quality content, value for money, and exceptional service.

There are no barriers to entry, course deadlines, or set semesters. Students can register and begin any course at any time. Those who have completed our courses have reported that the knowledge gained has significantly enhanced their careers and enjoyment of the bush.

Many of our students are now employed in the wildlife, hospitality, and tourism industry.



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You Tube



TikTok



WildlifeCampus Study Options

FEATURES	PURCHASE COURSES	MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION	LIFETIME SUBSCRIPTION
COURSE ACCESS	UNLIMITED ACCESS TO THE COURSE/S YOU PURCHASE FOR LIFE.	ACCESS TO ALL OUR COURSES <u>WHILE SUBSCRIBED</u> .	UNLIMITED ACCESS TO ALL OUR COURSES FOR LIFE.
HOW DOES PAYMENT WORK?	YOU CAN PAY FOR YOUR COURSE/S IN ONE PAYMENT, OR TAKE A MONTHLY PAYMENT PLAN.	R300 PER MONTH FOR 24 MONTHS (YOU CAN CANCEL ANYTIME- NO CANCELLATION FEES).	R 18 000 ONCE-OFF PAYMENT.
ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATE COSTS	NONE. THE CERTIFICATE FEES ARE INCLUDED WITH YOUR PURCHASE.	R250 PER CERTIFICATE REDEEMED.	NONE. THE CERTIFICATE FEES ARE INCLUDED WITH YOUR PURCHASE.

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.

“Henderson pushes for control” - January 2001

In December 2000 the AfriCam shareholders had agreed to borrow R3m from Standard Bank and after some lengthy negotiations and disagreements, the money was secured. This ensured that the business could continue operating while we resolved our various capital raising initiatives.

On 2 January 2001 I e-mailed Peter Henderson where I highlighted “the ridiculous situation, where one side of the business is spending money and developing apace and the other is faced with having to close businesses down and cut back in order to survive the short term”.

Peter had not spent anywhere near the US\$5m that he was contractually obliged to spend and I suggested to him that his stake in AfriCam be solidified at 50% in return for the committed funds from his side (US\$5m every year for three years) being applied to the entire business.

Peter was clearly in love with AfriCam and by 22 January he had made a formal proposal to AfriCam which would solve our problems in perpetuity, or at least to



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profitability. TVBus proposed that its stake be solidified at 50% and in return his cash commitment would be reduced to US\$2.5m. He would advance R3m immediately.

This was a good deal for both parties. We were desperate and running out of short-term solutions and Peter had an opportunity to reduce his commitment to the business by over 80%. Peter knew that we were desperate and he took advantage of the situation. I probably would have done the same.

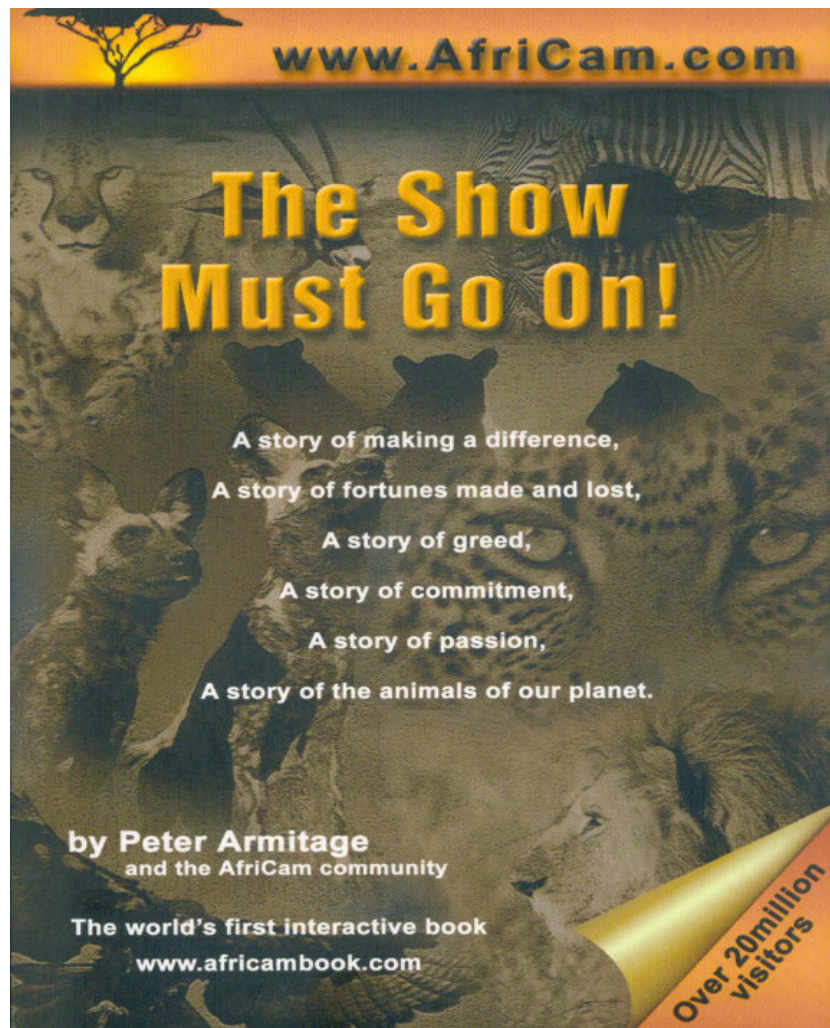
Besides solving the short-term cash crisis, the key issue for us was control. Peter insisted that with this deal came control of the business. The issue remained unresolved at this stage.

Peter had discussed with me that we should hire a COO (chief operating officer, or second-in-charge) for the TV side of the business, which I agreed was a good idea and he gave me a few suggestions. One of the individuals he asked me to interview was Alan Hird, who was now running Newsforce and had previously worked for Peter.

Graham, Paul and I interviewed Alan, but the meeting was a little confusing. He was clearly a high profile individual who was perfectly capable of running a business like ours.

After the meeting Graham echoed what I had been thinking: "Do you realise that guy is probably going to be the next CEO of AfriCam." It looked like Peter was lining up to take over AfriCam and put his "own men" in charge. We were still very passionate about the business and there was no way we were giving up control.

In spite of the agreement, a month later Peter had still not transferred any funds. We had now hired a number of people in the "TV division" which Peter was



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

funding and he had not given us the money to pay these people.

Tiffany sent a number of polite requests to Peter Handscombe, but nothing had been forthcoming. We were in the uncomfortable position of not being able to pay his staff and his creditors, which was becoming increasingly embarrassing.

I e-mailed Peter: "Please inform me today to what extent TVBus can fulfil on the commitment made by PH and by when. If we need to make another plan, then we should do so."

He immediately transferred R850 000 (US\$95 000).

"Middlemas puzzle continues" - January 2001

In a bizarre continuation of a puzzling sequence of events, Middlemas went out of his way to keep us thinking that his funds were imminent.



Ricky Douwes made much of a fax sent by Middlemas on a Turnhold letterhead, which he faxed through to us. It read:

11 January 2001

Dear Ricky,

A short note to confirm our discussion that my colleague in New York has been told by the "leader of the distribution team" that distribution will have commenced ex New York prior to the end of next week. This follows a series of meetings in New York involving all the key members of the distribution team. A good start to the new millennium!

Regards
Mike

"An awkward stage" - Early 2001

AfriCam was now at an awkward stage of its development. The traffic to the site was healthy and we were perceived as the top internet business in the country. Although revenues were disappointing, we all believed that this would improve with time. We had not been successful in selling physical products, but the initial response to WildlifeCampus was encouraging.

I was excited about selling digital (rather than physical) products, which was the category into which WildlifeCampus fitted. The margins were big and they seemed to be the future. This boded well for the planned subscription service

which we were supposed to launch six months prior and now looked about three months away. The idea was to offer a premium offering, in addition to the free product. For US\$6 per month, viewers could subscribe to watch live streaming video and listen to AfriCam radio.

I believed that our best short-term revenue potential was in television and we theoretically had the financial backer to see us through. But the finances of the business were a mess. We had pulled off the deals, but the individuals who had signed the contracts were letting us down. This was exacerbated by the collapse of the Nasdaq and value of internet businesses had fallen dramatically.

To a large extent, the short-term future of AfriCam lay in the hands of Peter Henderson. We simply had to make this relationship work. It was a year since he had signed the contract with us. Only a fraction of the agreed funding had been transferred, but what was even more disappointing was the fact that there were few signs that the television division of the business was about to generate any revenue. I was CEO of the business, but did not feel in control of the destiny of the business.

Remarkably, not one member of the team had jumped ship. The pressure on the accounting staff was immense, but Tiffany, Cathleen and Antonia stood firm as they patiently told creditors that money was on its way. The executive management of the company, which included me, were all receiving salaries well below market-related benchmarks, but we all believed we were involved in something special and we stuck to our task.

"The TV Bus" - Early 2001

Over in London Peter Henderson and Nicholas Claxton had been presenting the AfriCam broadband/television plan to anybody that would listen. Graham, Paul and I accompanied on him on a round of presentations.

Peter had not been having much success on securing a television contract and hence had developed a hybrid strategy which he called broadband. Broadband simply means being able to access the internet at a higher speed than a normal residential telephone line. Fortunes had been poured into broadband infrastructure globally and millions of individuals around the world were now paying for higher speed access to the internet.

On a normal telephone line, an internet user can access the internet at a speed of around 56k. This is adequate to watch the 30-second refreshing images on AfriCam, but insufficient to watch live streaming video. Broadband provided internet access from 100k upwards, to as much as 500k.

At 250k a viewer could watch an image which started to resemble television quality.

Peter believed that we should be creating a product for this new market and was attempting to conclude deals with broadband providers. After a meeting with NTL, we were a little confused, to say the least. NTL was providing users with broadband access, but we did not need to do a deal with them in order for NTL users to access our content. Peter believed that the likes of NTL should be paying for our content, but this was not their business. The NTL users would pay us if they liked our content.

“He just does not understand the dynamics,” Paul complained after the meeting with NTL. “NTL do not own a portion of the internet. If a NTL user wants to access our site, they do not need NTL’s permission. They can access any content on the internet.”

“Thank goodness we were at the meeting,” I added. “Otherwise they would not have known what we were talking about.”

“And this bus thing just does not work. They had no idea why we were having a meeting in a bus,” Graham said.

Peter had not called his business TVBus for no reason. He had literally built a TV Bus, which we estimated had cost him well over US\$150 000. This double-decker bus had been luxuriously fitted with all the latest digital equipment, including a satellite receiver which enabled people on the bus to watch a satellite signal from anywhere in the world. (see www.africambook.com for pictures of the bus).

Peter liked to host meetings on the bus in a lavishly decorated lounge on the top floor and presentations were shown on a large plasma screen.

I will never forget travelling on the bus from central London to Peter’s house when we stopped at a robot next to a red London commuter bus. I was sitting in the top floor lounge, sipping on a glass of chilled white wine and watching a Corrs music video on the plasma screen. I looked to my right and was literally face-to-face, less than a metre away, from a puzzled commuter in the red bus in the next lane. He was squashed into a small seat trying to read The Sun and did not know quite what to make of this adjoining vehicle. Feeling a little embarrassed, I acknowledged him with a tip of my wine glass.

“UK Horizons on board” - Early 2001

Not surprisingly, Peter never did conclude a “broadband deal”. I am not sure if anybody in the world ever did conclude

a deal of this nature. But he had greater success on the TV front and the first manifestation of this was a great deal with the BBC’s satellite channel, UK Horizons.

The deal was for a daily live half hour show from the African bush for the month of April 2001. The show would be called AfriCam Live & Wild and live television crews would broadcast from Mashatu in Botswana, Mala Mala in the Sabi Sand and the Pilanesberg Nature Reserve (both South Africa). They would pay us over US\$200 000 for the initial 26-part series, which was to be followed by a second series, on the same terms, later in the year. This would be the largest ever live South African television export deal.

We were delighted, as even though this deal was 14 months after the initial deal with Peter was signed, it was a real foray into television with real revenues. The conclusion of the deal triggered the other plans we had concluded with Peter. The idea was to optimise the internet subscription product. The TV show would provide the live streaming video and we immediately started building a radio studio so that DJs could talk about the site and the action on AfriCam radio.

We also built a control room for the cameras. Paul Cammidge had designed a system whereby the webcams could be operated by remote control. There would now be a fulltime controller 24-hour hours a day operating the cameras from a central studio in Lonehill. The AfriCam website content offering had never been better.

Based on Peter’s go-ahead we started ordering equipment and hiring people to turn our vision into reality.

Even though Peter had now secured his first TV contract, he was not transferring the money as agreed and this put us under tremendous pressure.



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02

The African bush: Taste



By WildlifeCampus student

Amy Holt

Exploring the African bush is not just about the wildlife ... food has the power to tell the story of Africa's landscape, history, and culture.

So, savour every mouthful as you embark on a journey celebrating the diversity of the African continent.



As dawn breaks, it is time to head off for your early morning game drive. In the cool morning air, you are more likely to spot predators, such as leopards and lions. After experiencing the new day's action, your guide will find a scenic, safe place to stop to enjoy a steaming cup of coffee or tea and a selection of snacks. The rich bitterness of coffee paired with the sweet and creamy taste of Amarula liqueur awakens you. Amarula is locally sourced in South Africa and made from the fruit of the marula tree. It is one of Africa's botanical treasures, taking over two years from tree to bottle to create. Marula fruits are the size of plums, yellow when ripe, high in vitamin C, and have a tarty sweet flavour depending on their ripeness. It's not just humans who enjoy the taste of marula fruit; elephants, baboons, and vervet monkeys can also be spotted munching on them.

While you sip rooibos tea's earthy, herbal taste, you will be connected to South Africa's history and indigenous heritage. The story of Rooibos tea begins over 300 years ago in the mountains of the Cederberg, where the Khoisan people harvested the leaves from the *Aspalathus linearis* plant to use as medicine. The health benefits of Rooibos tea remained a well-kept secret until the early 20th century when it started to be promoted commercially. Enjoy some rusks with your tea or coffee to satisfy your growing hunger. These hard, dry biscuits are best dunked into your hot drink. Dutch settlers created rusks in the 17th century to preserve bread for long sea voyages. The method of double-baking gives rusks their distinctive texture. After your morning game drive, you'll return to the lodge, where a hearty breakfast spread of fresh juices, tea, coffee, yoghurts, cereals, fresh fruit, cheese, cold meats, and hot breakfast options greet you.



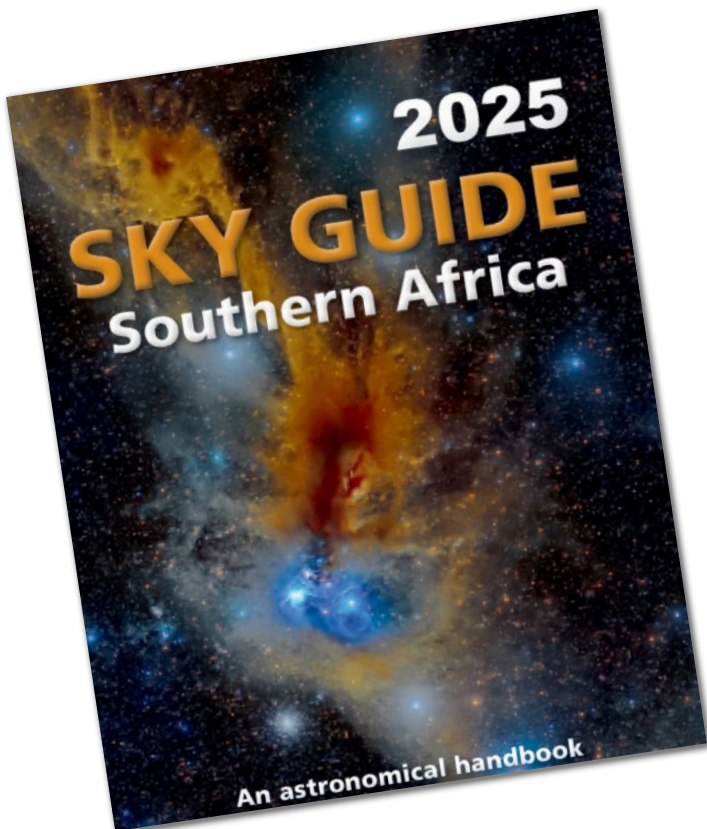
Before your late afternoon game drive, you can relax, swim, and savour a light lunch of quiches and an array of salads. The highly skilled chefs use fresh seasonal ingredients that are locally and sustainably sourced to provide an excellent quality of food. A selection of cakes and sweet treats delight you during high tea. South Africa is home to a variety of sweet treats. Malva pudding is an indulgent, spongy, and moist cake with apricot jam and a caramelised texture, usually served with custard. Melktert is a creamy and slightly sweet tart, made of a custard-like filling and topped off with a sprinkling of cinnamon. Koeksisters are fried plaited dough coated in a sweet, sticky syrup, with a crunchy texture on the outside and soft and fluffy on the inside.

Now that your belly is full, it is time to embark on the afternoon game drive. As the sky starts to put on a colour show of oranges and reds, your guide will find you a picturesque spot to pause and watch the sun setting over the African bush. Here, you'll be offered a sundowner, such as a refreshing beer, a chilled glass of wine, or a gin and tonic. There will be a selection of savoury snacks, including crisps, biltong, and nuts, to enjoy with your sundowner. Biltong is deeply rooted in South Africa's history and culture, tracing back to the early 1600s. This beloved South African snack has a deep, rich savoury flavour. Originally, the meat was cured with salt and hung up to air dry by the local indigenous people. When the European settlers arrived, the curing process involved vinegar, pepper, and coriander. Biltong arose from a blend of these techniques, and it remains a perfect travel snack.

After a jam-packed day, it is time to return to the lodge to appreciate dinner under the stars. This is a moment to bring people together and indulge yourself in traditional African cuisine. The dishes for the evening are cooked over an open fire, known as a braai. You will dig into various marinated meats, seasonal vegetables, and salads. A staple South African dish includes pap and wors—boerewors is a traditional sausage paired with pap, a stiff porridge-like dish made from maize meal and accompanied by a spicy tomato and onion relish, known as chakalaka. The braai culture is deeply ingrained in South Africa's heritage, as indigenous communities used open wood flames and coals to cook their meat. A braai is an ideal way to end a day in the African bush because it celebrates unity and diversity. Alternatively, you may sample a hearty stew of meats, vegetables, and spices, known as potjiekos. This is another popular and traditional dish served in South Africa. Like a braai, it is cooked over an open fire and involves placing a three-legged cast iron pot directly onto the open coals to allow the stew to simmer. The result is tender, succulent meat in a fragrant blend of spices and vegetables.

Like our sense of smell, our tastebuds can transport us back to a specific memory. With each mouthful of South Africa's unique and flavoursome food and drink, allow yourself to transcend through generations of diverse cultures as you experience the African bush through taste.

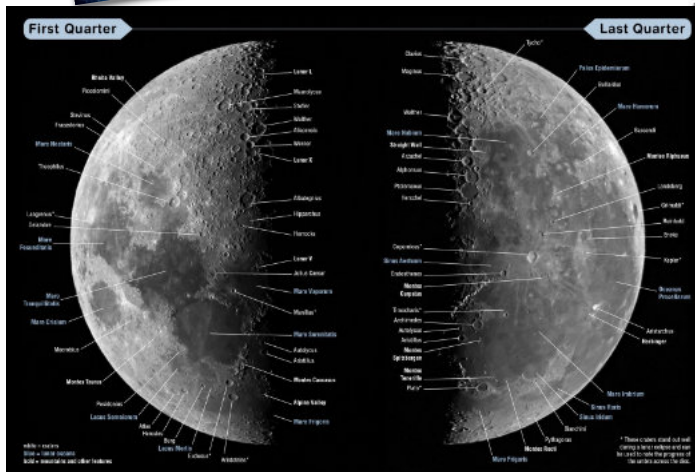




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THE PLANETS

MARS

Mars is visible in the evening sky from January (at opposition on Jan. 10) through December (at conjunction on Dec. 10) through December. It starts the year low in the east after sunset, reappearing in the east after sunset throughout the first half of the year. In the second half, Mars continues to be seen after sunset but gradually moves lower in the sky. By December, Mars is only briefly visible shortly after sunset.

Mars moves through the Beehive cluster during May. During October, Mars and Mercury pair up in the west after sunset. For most of November, Mars will be within 10° of Jupiter, allowing their colors to be compared. The pair are closest on Nov. 16.

To the naked eye, Mars has a distinct orange-red color, which is more pronounced in light pollution. With a small telescope, you should be able to see it as a small disc, which varies between 3.7" and 14.6" this year. One of the white polar caps, which vary with the Martian seasons, may also be seen (Figure 7).

A 15cm telescope is needed to see the hemispheres, several of which were formerly called "canals" by some late 19th-century astronomers. In general, the features observed here are not topographic, but are rather

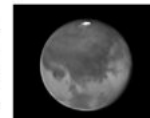


Figure 7. Mars, 2025 (Jan. 10, 2024, image by Sky & Telescope).

a general dust shading. In larger telescopes, the opposite volcanic Olympus Mons (19km high) and the deep Valles Marineris (4km deep) can be seen as a pair near the equator.

The two moons of Mars, Phobos ("Fear") and Deimos ("Dread"), are bright enough (11.3 and 12.4 mag., respectively) to be seen with a small telescope, but because they are almost hidden in the planet's glow, a telescope of at least 20cm aperture is needed.

their appearance is variable, so the illustrations should be regarded as a guide only.

Because Jupiter moves very rapidly, one Jupiter day lasting less than 10 hours, details on the planet's surface will move noticeably as it passes its position. It reaches the opposition point on Jan. 10, then moves into its upper atmosphere and toward its lower atmosphere, where it is obscured by brighter zones. The light-colored zones are moving south, showing in the direction of the planet's westward motion, while the darker belts are moving in the opposite direction. The South Equatorial Belt (SEB), when double, serves as a reference, located within 4° of the South Polar Spot (SPS), a cyclonic storm that has been raging for over 300 years.

On 2025 May 21, Clyde Fisher (USA) discovered a new natural satellite of Jupiter, named "Clyde's Spot". It was a plume of dust material emerging from the upper cloud layers of Jupiter's atmosphere.

Galilean moons

The four Galilean moons — Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto — are bright enough to be seen without optical aid, but are usually missed by Jupiter's glare. At greatest elongation, Callisto can be up to 10.7° from Jupiter and should be visible with the naked eye. Io is the closest to Jupiter.

The moons are often arranged in a line, with Jupiter in the center. An occultation occurs when the satellite moves through the shadow of Jupiter (see Figure 10), and an occultation occurs when the satellite moves behind the planet. Galileo's rings (proposed by occultations at the end of the 19th century) are not from the planet at the end of the 19th century.

A satellite transits when it moves in front of Jupiter, as seen from Earth. Transits occur to the west across the face of the planet. When seen as a pair, Io and Europa are usually seen as a pair, while Deimos and Callisto are near the center of the planet (Europa is then usually visible). Callisto is last during eclipses of Io to transit and is often mistaken for a satellite.



Figure 8. Jupiter's moons, 2025 (Jan. 10, 2024, image by Sky & Telescope). The diagram shows the orbits of the four Galilean moons around Jupiter. The moons are shown in their relative positions to Jupiter and each other.

A shadow transit occurs when the shadow of a satellite, cast by the Sun, moves across Jupiter's disk. The shadow may be seen through a telescope as a darkening moving from left to right across the planet's surface. These shadow transits always involve Callisto and two of the inner moons. In the period 1950-2025, 22 such events have taken place. The next multiple event visible from southern Africa is on 2025 August 10 from 00:20-01:34.

Europe will continue to be visible from southern Africa during June and October. However, Jupiter will not be visible from southern Africa during these months. The Earth will pass through the orbital plane of the Galilean moons in 2025, creating numerous opportunities to witness a variety of occultations and eclipses of these fascinating moons.

THE PLANETS 77

The most trusted guide to the southern skies

Struik Nature joins forces with the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa to publish this annual guide. Now in its 80th year of publication, the book is prepared by a team of specialist contributors.

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

Star charts plot the evening sky for each season, facilitating the identification of stars and constellations.

The guide contains a wealth of information about the Sun, Moon, planets, comets, meteors and bright stars, and includes photos, diagrams, charts and images.

Also featured is an excellent overview of the most useful online resources available to the astronomy enthusiast.

The Travel Buggz Adventures

The Travel Buggz are still on their adventure to the Seaside- I wonder what animals they will see?

“Beautifully painted huts are built on a slope, facing the rising sun. The chief’s hut is at the highest point,” Bella explains. the Xhosa huts the Buggz can see from the road.

“Let’s stop at the smallest church in South Africa,” says Bella.

“Look how teeny it is,” gasps Lucy.

“A father built the church in memory of his son Llandaff Matthews who died saving miners after an accident in 1925. The eight seats in the church are for each miner he saved,” Aiden reads.

The long winding road down Van Reenen’s Pass lay in front of them.

“What are those sand pits at the side of the road for?” questions Lucy.

“For run-away trucks,” Aiden is Mr Know-it-all.

“If their brakes fail downhill, instead of crashing, they steer the truck into the sand pit and it comes to a quick stop,” he continues.

Before long, the Buggz were sound asleep and Bella Butterfly quietly hummed to the music.



As they pass through Pietermaritzburg and head toward Marion Hill, the Buggzwake.

"The first one to see the sea will get five rand," says Bella.

"I can see the sea," squeals Lucy with excitement.

"That's not the sea," grumbles Aiden who is still sleepy.

"Yes, it is, there's the sea!" confirms Bella pointing to the horizon.

"Yay, can we stop and put our feet in before we go to our hotel?" begs Lucy.



They stop at Durban's North Beach; it's a quick hop, skip and a jump to the water's edge.

Plop. "Whaaaa". Lucy trips, landing face first in the sand.

"Look at you!", Aiden doubles-up laughing.

"You're covered in sand."

"She's now a sea urchin," giggles Bella.

Cool sea water splashes over their toes, while the sun sets on the horizon and a warm breeze whispers through their hair. The Travel Buggz enjoy the moment.



Sticky, sandy Buggz hop back into the car, arriving at their hotel ten minutes later.

Once unpacked, Bella Butterfly slides the glass doors wide open and gasps at the beautiful ocean stretching as far as the eye can see.

"Come look", she calls, "there's a large container ship heading towards the harbour".

"What's that ball thingy bobbing up and down," Lucy points.

"Oh that," Aiden smiles, "is a bouy."

"A boy!", exclaims Lucy in shock.

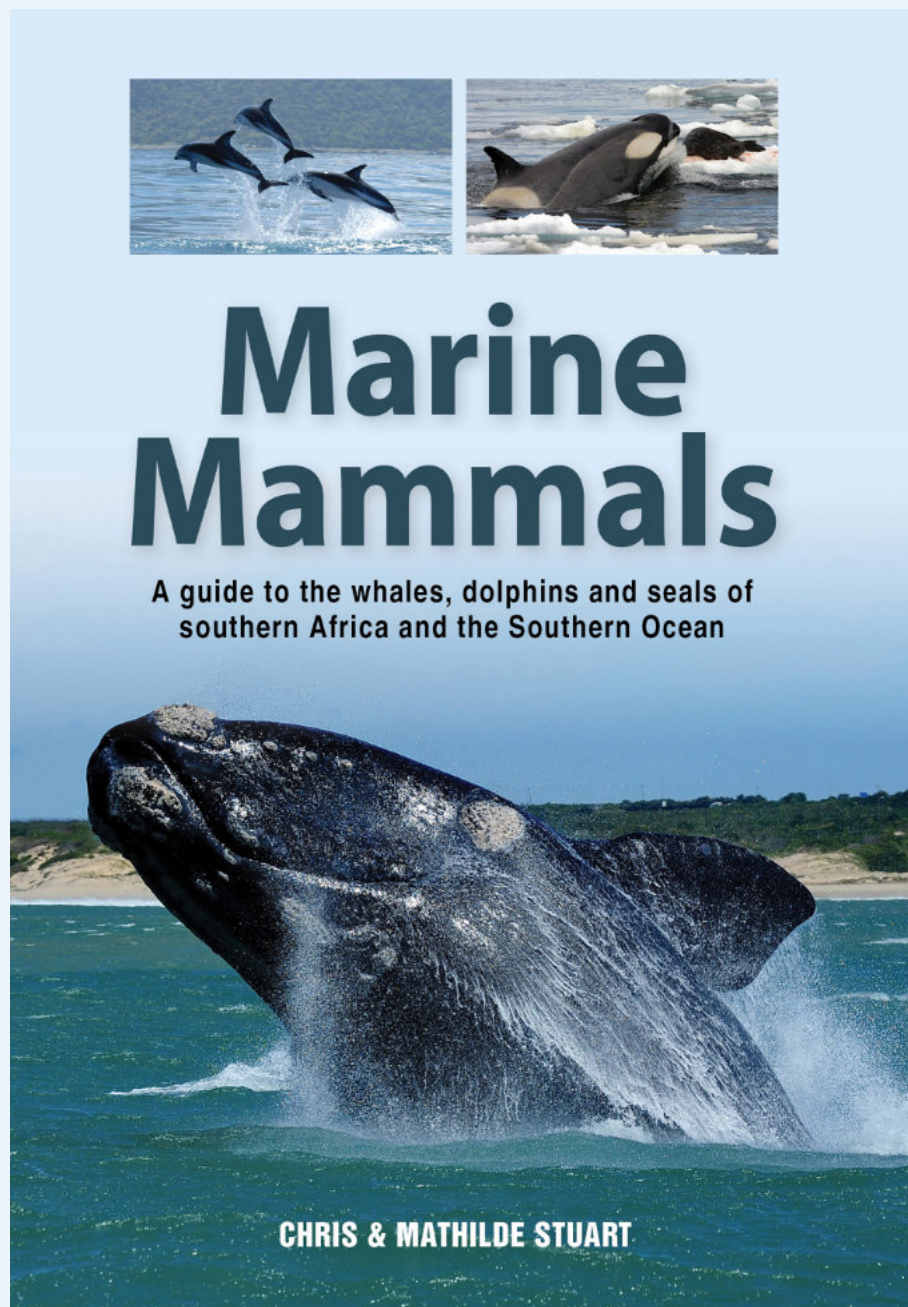


The Travel Buggz stories are a series of children's story books about the adventures of the author and her two children. If you would like copies of any of the nine titles of books, contact : sandy@travelbuggz.co.za

Highly recommended field guide by



This is an easy-to-use identification guide to the whales, dolphins and seals found in Southern African waters and the Southern Ocean. It is compact yet comprehensive. Close to 50 species occur in the region: from the demonstrative Humpback Whale and Dusky Dolphin to the striking Leopard Seal and massive Blue Whale.





African Folklore

Elephant

By Credo Mutwa

The content that follows is written from transcribed tapes recorded by the late Credo Mutwa, one of Southern Africa's most celebrated Sangomas. The content therefore is not scientific but rather represent the feelings, beliefs and experiences of this exceptional man.

These stories are written in precisely the same way that Credo Mutwa tells them, with all their original colloquialisms and styles.

One day, it was just after sunset, and I was sitting in a jeep together with a group of German tourists in the centre of an upmarket game reserve known as Shamwari, which is not far from the town of Grahamstown. We were watching a group of elephants, which had recently been brought to Shamwari from the Kruger National Park, where they had been saved from culling by the authorities there. These elephants were led by a female elephant, a large matriarch whom I named Delilah because there was a gleam in her eyes that was rather dangerous. Here was an elephant, who was a born schemer. Here was an elephant who would lead the others right into valleys of mischief and beyond. I spoke my feelings to a fellow African who was sitting next to me. I said that women elephant, she is very dangerous. Look at the way she walks, she doesn't feel at home in this place. Look how she swings her trunk this way and that. When an elephant does that it is because she is uneasy. And my friend, a young Xhosa, said, hauw Mutwa, you are an old man who talks too much. I said yebo don't you know that the oldest goat in the village is the one that bleats the most? And we were watching the elephants.

The elephants were over two hundred meters away and they were grazing, moving slowly through the stunted bushes. Then trouble started. There was an old windmill standing like an intruding skeleton above the greenery. And a rogue wind suddenly blew, starting up this windmill. The windmill was broken I had noticed. One of its blades was missing and another blade was twisted. And as the windmill started it gave out a particular, vaguely familiar and rather irritating sound. Ta-ta-ta-tat. All of a sudden, a cloud of dust erupted where the elephants had been. The elephants led by Delilah were fleeing from something.

What are they running away from I asked stupidly? I don't know answered my friend. But there is no animal that I see near them, nothing that could have scared them this way. A few moments later the penny dropped in the dull corridors of Mutwa's tired old brain. The elephants were fleeing from the sound of the old windmill. Why? And the more the windmill whirled, the faster fled Delilah and her subjects until they were lost from sight, leaving only a cloud of dust to show us where they had gone. Then I suddenly realised why the sound of the spinning windmill had sounded so familiar to me. It was like the sound of the rotors of a helicopter moving at slow speed. Then the full enormity what I was hearing and seeing struck me. These animals had gone through the agonizing experience of being persuaded driven to their doom by helicopters.

The people who used helicopters over countries game reserves do not realise that they are doing a terrible wrong; that these machines, useful as they are in war, traumatise animals especially animals such as elephants. An elephant is a huge creature, but it has got a serious disadvantage, that when it is attacked from the air it is utterly helpless. It cannot look up to see the source of evil that is pursuing them. It has to flee with its eyes staring straight ahead of it, unable to see the thing that is roaring over them.

We are cruel to animals and even those of us who claim to protect these animals, to ... and to shelter them are often unwittingly the cruellest people of all. I believe that helicopters should be banned from the game reserves and that rather hot-air balloons, whose sound can be lost in the wind, should be used when one is photographing animals such as elephants or driving them to a certain destination for a certain reason.

One thing do I know is that creatures, such as elephants and rhinoceroses and others, know what the sound of a rifle means. They know. And sometimes animals in areas where there is a lot of hunting can distinguish between one firearm and another one. I have seen giraffes continue grazing peacefully after someone had fired a shotgun in the vicinity. But I have seen these giraffes gallop for long moments after someone had fired the one particular kind of rifle that hunters use most in this place.

There was no gun that filled elephants with fear more than the kind of gun known as the banduki umkubwa by Africans in Kenya. This is the special rifle known as a nitro-express. The sound of this rifle, the sound alone, was enough to freeze even the biggest elephant bull. They knew what it was, they knew what it did, and they knew what it meant.

Let me go back to the story of Delilah, the elephant. When Delilah and her friends had vanished from sight, we turned our attention to other animals, zebras, a few wildebeest and waterbuck. And then we returned home. But a few days later there occurred an incident at Shamwari, which must have cost the owners of that game reserve a lot of money in compensation. Delilah and her friends decided to escape from the Shamwari game reserve. They burst through the perimeter fence, don't ask me how; they crossed a busy highway just outside the fence, almost giving a number of motorists' heart attacks because it's not everyday that while you are speeding away in your modern Japanese car, you suddenly see a herd of elephants galloping across the road in front of you.

You put on the brakes and your heart stops for a few seconds. The motorists saw the elephants crossing the road. Two cars smashed into each other, a second car smashing into the rear of another car. There was panic all around. But Delilah was not concerned. She led her friends out of the game reserve fence, across the busy highway leading to Port Elizabeth and through the fence of a large farm and across the landscape into the distance. We later learnt that Delilah had not only traversed that great farm, she had gone on to break through the border fence far to the south into another farm and into another one and then something happened.

There was a young elephant amongst Delilah's followers, a young bull. And this young bull somehow got separated from the rest of the herd and ended up in a stretch of veld, full of grazing cows. The elephant saw these strange animals to which he was not used at all and went on the warpath. It speared one of the cows repeatedly with its tusks and killed it.

And it injured a second cow before it lost interest and went away. But you can't hurt a farmer's cows without paying dearly for what you have done, and this elephant found out exactly that. The farmers came after it with their guns blazing and that was the end of that. Delilah fled down the map of the eastern Cape. She led her fellow elephants right down to the coast and there she stopped.

And there like a fugitive convict, she was cornered, drugged and brought back home, as where the remainder of her herd. When people who knew things started looking into this whole thing, they found to their surprise that Delilah had not just travelled at random.

She had followed an ancient elephant migration route, which was used in olden days by elephants migrating from deep inside South Africa right down to the Cape coast and then back again. In spite of manmade buildings, in spite of manmade super-highways, in spite of the altered landscape, this elephant matriarch had managed to find the ancient route that her ancestors had followed in days before the first Portuguese ship sailed around the Cape of Good Hope.

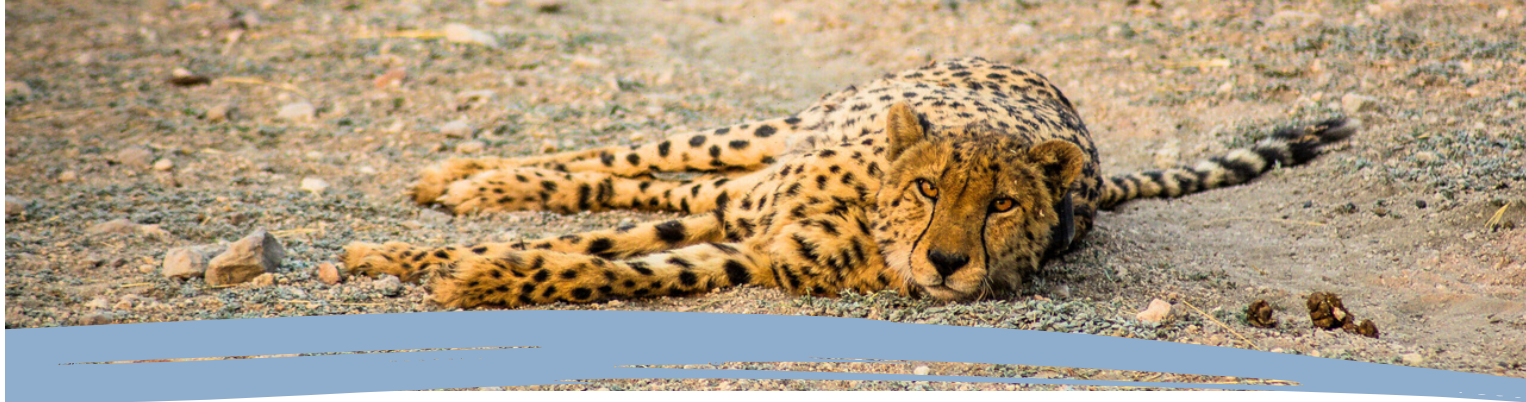
How did she find this? How did she know?

She was trying to lead her subjects to safety away from ugly memories, away from ugly sounds.

Now, my friends, if animals do not feel, do not think and remember would this have been possible?

The answer is no.





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The cycle of life

By David Batzofin



Safari days are full of surprises, and, as it was to turn out, always expect the unexpected.

The heat in the reserve had been relentless and it had taken its toll on species large and small.

Each animal, each carcass, each curious guest question brought us closer to understanding how tough it is to survive in this dramatic landscape.

On this particular drive it began when a guest yelled: "What shell is that?"



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



Our guide reversed the game viewer, and I was expecting to see a large land snail. However, I was surprised to find the remains of a leopard tortoise, the shell perfectly intact and still containing part of a leg and skeleton.

With no visible claw or bite marks, it seemed this creature had fallen victim to the heat and relentless drought, a reminder of how climate change is starting to affect all creatures.

Meanwhile, the dams in the reserve are at their lowest levels in 29 years, the expected October rains still haven't arrived, and the searing heat is pushing all the animals to their limits.

Both lodges and animals are hoping for gentle, soaking rain this season instead of the flash floods that, in years past, washed away roads and dramatically changed the landscape.

During the drive, we spotted a pride of lionesses sprawled out, too lazy to hunt.

With full bellies, they looked perfectly content to let the sun do its work and provide prey for them. Even these fierce predators seemed worn down by the relentless sun and dry heat.

Life here is a balance of endurance and timing. A large herd of elephants crossed our path, moving steadily towards a nearby depleted water source.

Elephants, like buffalo, are water-dependent, needing at least 68–98 litres per day, while a single bull elephant can drink up to 212 litres when hydration demands are high.

Yet, not all animals make it. We came across the remains of an adult elephant that had recently perished, its carcass untouched by hyenas or vultures and with only a lone jackal in attendance.

Over the coming days, the guide teams kept an eye on the carcass, curious if any scavengers would come, but none arrived. It seems that in the face of such food abundance, predators seem to tire of specific prey.

Elsewhere, a different elephant carcass, long deceased, provided nourishment for a particularly industrious jackal. It worked tirelessly, darting in and out of the rib cage, tugging away at any morsel it could find.

After several attempts, it proudly emerged with a strip of sinew. A moment of triumph!

White streaks on the carcass sparked a guest's curiosity: "What are those?" was the question.

My response was, "Vulture poop left behind as they picked over softer tissues."

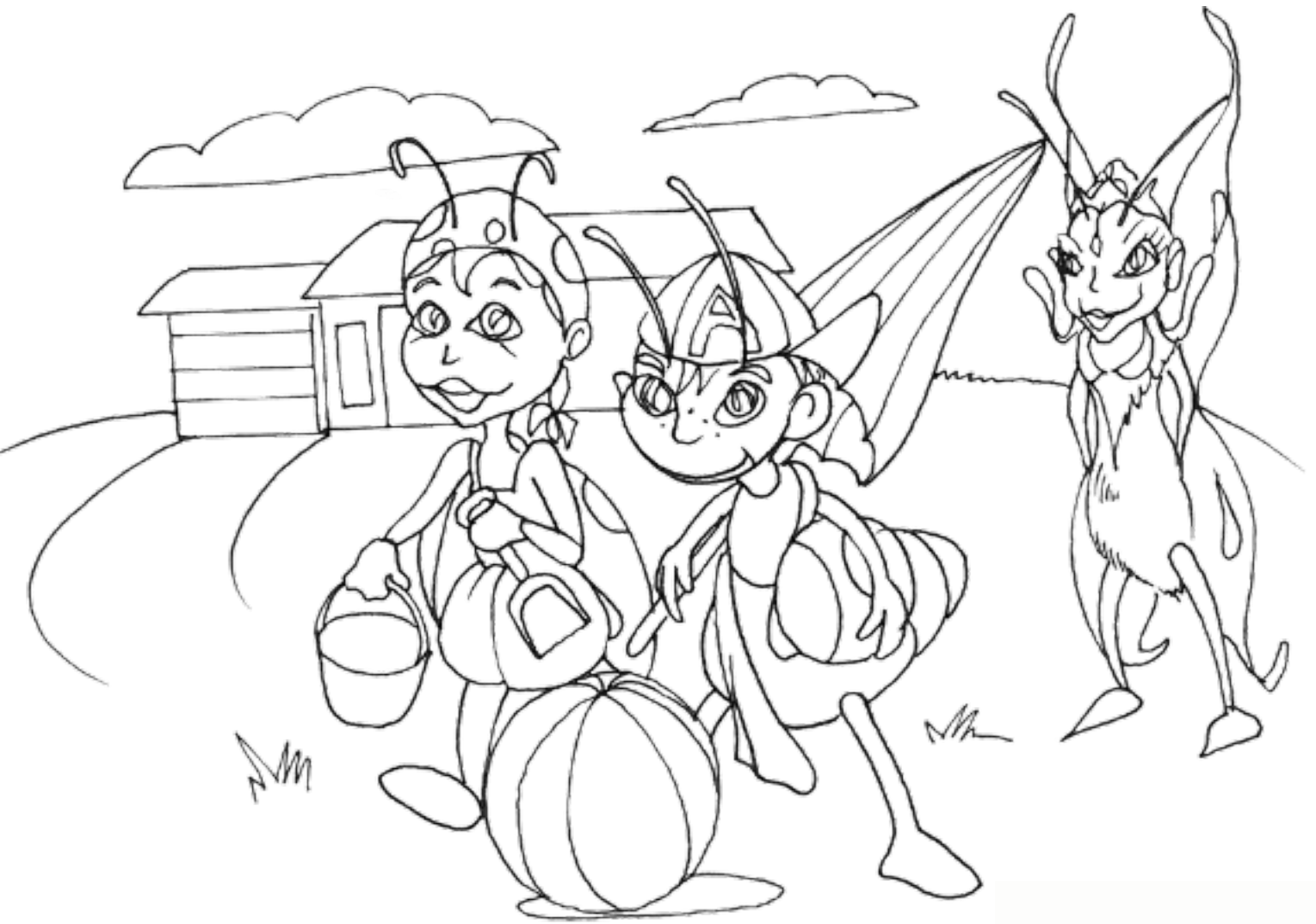
"Disrespectful to the elephant!" the guest remarked, baffled at nature's raw honesty.

In almost every Big 5 reserve in South Africa, similar scenes are played out daily, and every moment contributes to a greater story.

Some lives are lost while others begin. The circle of life is ever-present, resilient, and unwavering. Each drive and encounter brings us closer to the reality of life here, a relentless rhythm where every creature has its place, and every experience leaves a memory.



WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN



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