

WILD ZULULAND

Digital Magazine

*Mother's Day
in nature*

Discover destinations from
the wild bush to the sun-
soaked shore.

*A wild love
triangle:*

*Roaring Romance: The Vumbe
Males and the Hidli Queen*

**RAISING WILD HEARTS: THE
IMPORTANCE OF NATURE
FOR CHILDREN**

*3 must-follow
Wildlife Instagram
accounts*

**TRAGEDY IN KRUGER:
VULTURES POISONED IN
SHOCKING INCIDENT**

***Walk on the wild side:
Visit GG Conservation, a
real Lion Sanctuary***

**WILD DOG
CONSERVATION**

***Winter Safari
Essentials: Must-
haves for your closet***

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Issue 4



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But first a few words...

Editors Note



After weeks of relentless rain in Zululand, we're finally catching a break from Mother Nature's downpour and truth be told, this is my favorite time of year to be out on safari.

There's something magical about setting off from Hilltop Camp with a steaming hot chocolate in hand, ready for a sunset self-drive. The air is crisp, the bush is alive, and if you're lucky, you might catch wild dogs on the hunt along the main tar road or lions stirring from their golden-hour slumber. There's a certain coziness to safaris during this season, especially when shared with the one you love - driving back just in time before the gates close, and returning to St Lucia, where hippos casually graze along in town, welcoming you back.

Lately, I've also been exploring Manyoni Private Game Reserve, a true hidden gem in Northern Zululand, while planning unforgettable safaris and curating personalized itineraries for guests visiting Zululand. I'm also on a passionate mission to uncover "true sanctuaries" across KwaZulu-Natal, with my latest discovery being the incredible GG Conservation. Read more about it here! The Wild Zululand Digital Magazine continues to create awareness and promote tourism across Zululand, and we're deeply grateful to each and every one of you who takes the time to read, support, and share it.

Shenay

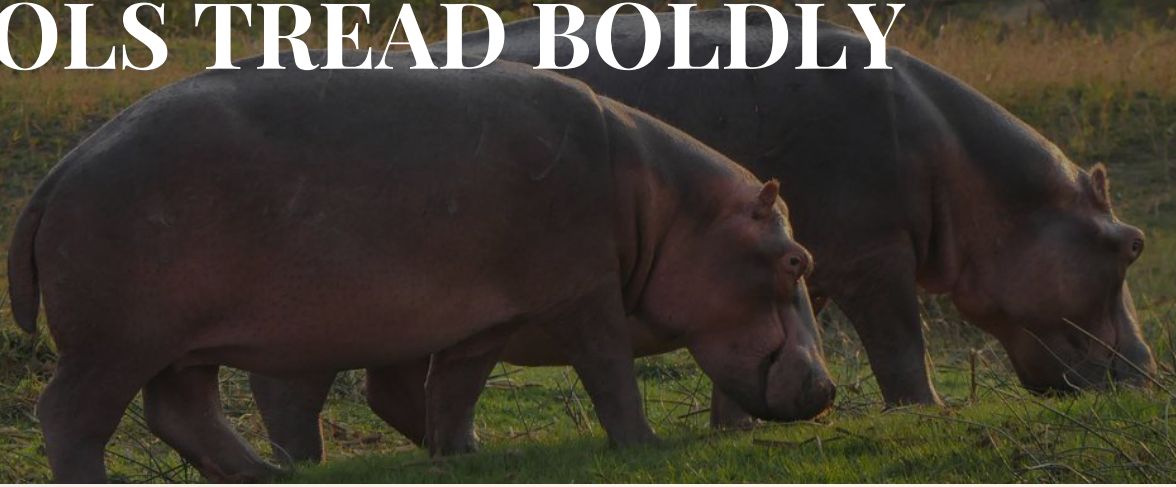
Editor-in-Chief

www.wildzululand.co.za



If we save our wild places, we will ultimately save ourselves."
- Steve Irwin

WHERE THE WILD ROAMS FREELY, AND FOOLS TREAD BOLDLY



In the quaint town of St. Lucia, South Africa, the unusual is simply everyday life. As the sun dips below the horizon, hippos leave the safety of the Estuary and wander into the streets to graze. Locals refer to them affectionately as “townies” - free-roaming lawnmowers with a dangerous side.

Alongside these massive grazers, warthogs, antelope, and even the occasional leopard make their appearance, offering a unique wildlife viewing experience, before even entering iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Here, conservation isn't just a goal, it's a way of life. But even in this place of wonder and respect for nature, not all visitors seem to understand the rules of engagement.

Just last week, a video surfaced on social media showing a group of guests recklessly approaching a hippo on foot - a dangerous and foolish move that quickly escalated. Despite numerous signboards warning of the dangers and advising a safe distance, they got far too close. The hippo, feeling cornered, did what any wild animal would do when threatened: it charged.

Fortunately, no serious injuries were sustained, just some minor bruises reported. But the outcome could have been far worse. This wasn't a case of bad luck. It was preventable, and worse - it was careless. When wild animals are approached too closely, especially in environments where they are protected and allowed to move freely, the consequences can be tragic. The hippo wasn't at fault. It responded instinctively to a perceived threat.

The guests, on the other hand, ignored clear warnings and local wisdom. Their behavior didn't just endanger themselves, it threatened the very model that makes St. Lucia a global standout in eco-tourism. Thankfully, the community and local Park Authorities responded swiftly. The visitors were evicted from their accommodation and banned from booking any further stays in the town, an important message emphasizing the area's commitment to keeping both people and wildlife safe.

“THE GREATNESS OF A NATION
AND ITS MORAL PROGRESS CAN
BE JUDGED BY THE WAY ITS
ANIMALS ARE TREATED.” –
MAHATMA GANDHI



***THIS ISN'T ABOUT BEING PUNITIVE;
IT'S ABOUT PRESERVING SOMETHING
IRREPLACEABLE. ST. LUCIA IS A RARE
GEM - A TOWN WHERE WILDLIFE STILL
ROAMS FREELY, NOT IN ENCLOSURES
OR BEHIND GLASS, BUT THROUGH
NEIGHBORHOODS AND PAST
SHOPFRONTS.***



This unique coexistence is made possible through years of conservation work, local dedication, and a shared understanding: wild animals deserve space and respect. And yet, many visitors arrive lacking awareness and respect for animals, choosing to ignore signage that informs them otherwise. Alcohol-fueled antics, reckless behavior, and a lack of basic wilderness awareness risk not only personal safety but the broader mission of conservation. The rules in St. Lucia aren't arbitrary. They are the foundation upon which this remarkable environment is built.



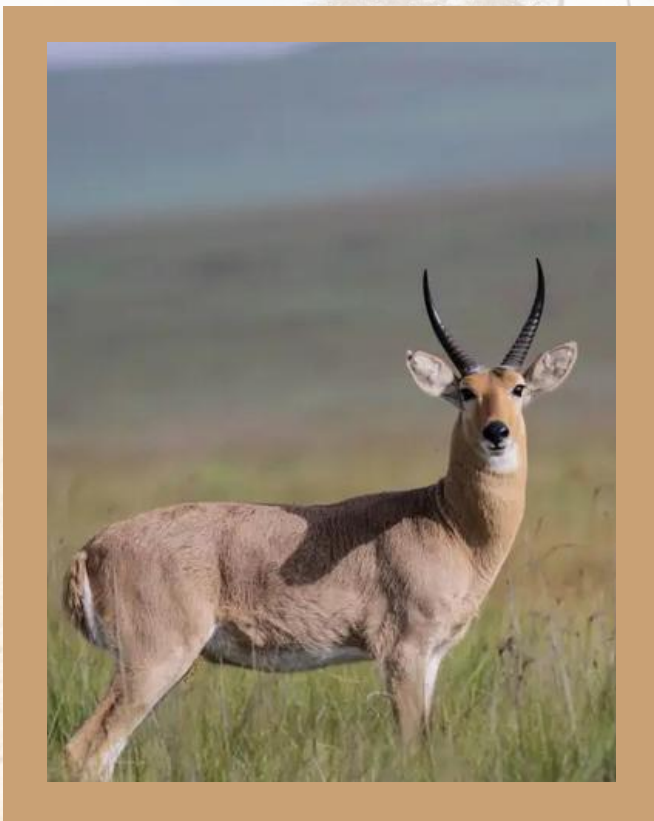
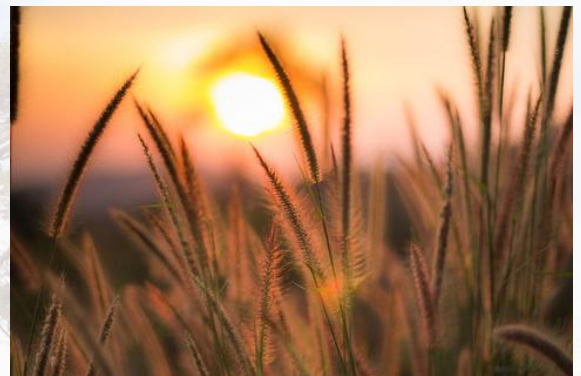
iNkonjane Nature Reserve

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife has officially declared the iNkonjane Nature Reserve, a 181.7-hectare protected area in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, named after the Blue Swallow (Hirundo atrocaerulea), a Critically Endangered species. Located beside the iMpendle Nature Reserve, it provides vital foraging habitat for four of South Africa's 30 known breeding pairs of Blue Swallows.



The reserve also protects the Critically Endangered Pennington's Protea Butterfly (*Capys penningtoni*), which relies on the Protea caffra plant to survive. iNkonjane is the third butterfly-focused reserve in the province, alongside uMvemvane and Wahroonga Farm. Additionally, it conserves threatened ecosystems like Southern KZN Moist Grassland and Eastern Mistbelt Forest, home to rare species such as the Endangered oribi antelope, Mountain Reedbuck, and Near Threatened grey rhebok.

The Reserve was created as part of a biodiversity offset deal compensating for environmental impacts from a wastewater pipeline project in Midmar Nature Reserve. This unique agreement allowed a temporary waiver of conservation policy to protect high-value land elsewhere. iNkonjane will be co-managed with the iMpendle Nature Reserve, with no fences between them, enabling wildlife movement and ecosystem resilience. This addition raises Ezemvelo's managed area to 518,628 hectares, and the province's total protected land to 10.78%, advancing progress toward global conservation goals.



Although the iNkonjane Nature Reserve is not yet open to visitors, the neighbouring iMpendle Nature Reserve remains accessible and offers an excellent opportunity to experience the region's natural beauty and biodiversity.

Click on the button below for more information.



WILDLIFE UPDATE

Nature's clean-up crew: Why we can't afford to lose Vultures



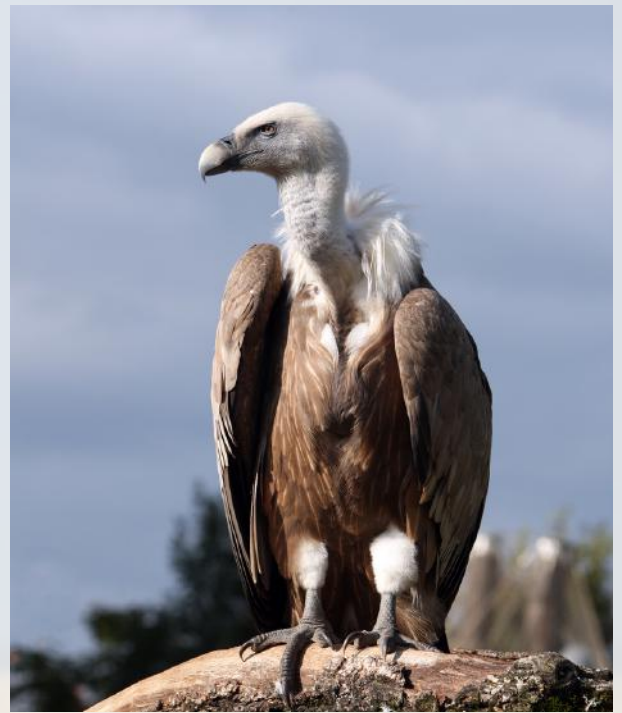
On May 6, 2025, Kruger National Park was the scene of one of the deadliest vulture poisoning incidents in its history. A total of 123 vultures many of them endangered or critically endangered were discovered dead after consuming a poisoned elephant carcass. Poachers had deliberately tainted the carcass with toxic agricultural substances, intending to kill the birds and collect their body parts for the illegal wildlife trade. Another 83 vultures were found alive but in distress, battling the effects of the poison. Thanks to rapid intervention by conservation teams, these birds were

rescued and are now receiving critical care. This heartbreaking event highlights the urgent need for stronger protective measures and greater awareness of the devastating consequences wildlife poisoning has on already vulnerable species.

Guardians of the Wild: Vultures and the balance of nature



Vultures play a crucial role in maintaining healthy ecosystems across natural, agricultural, and rural landscapes. As highly efficient scavengers, they help recycle nutrients by rapidly removing organic waste such as animal carcasses from the environment. This process is essential for both environmental balance and human health. Unique among birds, vultures are the only obligate scavengers that feed in large groups, with each species contributing in its own way to the breakdown of decaying flesh and bone.



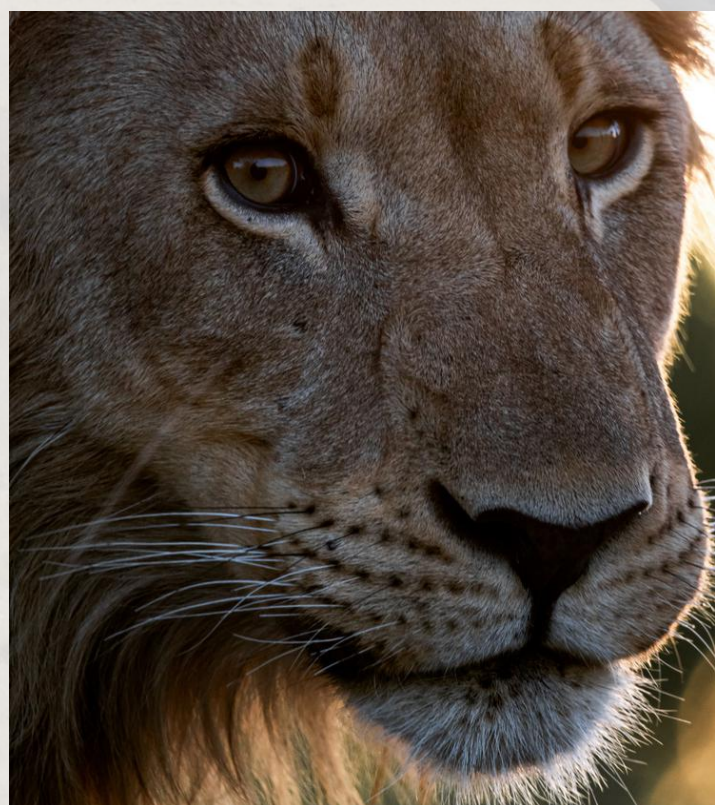
Their specialized adaptations allow them to safely consume rotting material that would otherwise pose serious health risks, helping to prevent the spread of disease among wildlife and livestock, and reducing the likelihood of dangerous pathogens reaching humans. In the absence of vultures, animal remains can linger in the environment for weeks, becoming breeding grounds for deadly diseases such as anthrax, botulism, and rabies. This not only threatens wildlife but poses a direct risk to people and domestic animals, making vultures indispensable to both ecological and public health.



Photography : Nicole Mercury

MORE THAN JUST A LION SIGHTING: THE TALE BEHIND THE LOVE TRIANGLE

For many, a lion sighting is the highlight of any safari - a quick photo, a short video, and a satisfied drive onward. But for others - like us, and many of you reading this, there's something far more captivating than just the moment. It's the *story* behind the animals. The relationships, the rivalries, the shifting dynamics... That's where the magic lies. So, let's dive into one of Hluhluwe-iMfolozi's most intriguing tales: a wild love triangle starring the Vumbe males, a collared lioness from the Hidli Pride, and a constantly evolving mix of loyalty, power, and drama.



The Vumbe males and the collared lioness: A Wild tale of loyalty, lessons, and leadership

The Vumbe males continue to assert themselves in the Hluhluwe section of Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, often seen in the company of the collared lioness from the Hidli Pride. Their relationship is anything but ordinary, more of a "throuple" than a pair and like most complex relationships, it has its fair share of ups and downs.



Sometimes she wanders off for some "alone time," and other times she returns with the "bacon." Their bond is dynamic, fluid, and fascinating to witness. Last year, a dramatic shift occurred. The Hidli female split from her two sub-adult sons after a visible confrontation between them and the Vumbe males. The young males were driven out, and she remained behind, choosing to stay with the dominant newcomers. She was often seen mating with both Vumbe brothers and hunting for them.

But in early October 2024, an unexpected twist unfolded. The young Hidli males, on their own, struggled to fend for themselves. We observed them one quiet morning after a long rest, waking and moving through the bush in search of food. Around 5 p.m., a medium-sized warthog emerged. One of the brothers locked eyes with it, the warthog stared back but neither made a move.



Young Hidli male



One of the hidli brothers now

After an awkward pause, the warthog simply jogged away. It was an almost comical but telling moment: the young males were not yet skilled hunters. Then, just days later, a remarkable sighting surprised us all. On the mountain opposite the Hilltop Viewpoint, the collared Hidli female had rejoined her sons. What followed was incredible: she was actively guiding them in a hunt. With strategic positioning and patience, they worked together to bring down a large buffalo.

Even as the large buffalo tumbled down the mountain slopes, the trio remained focused and ultimately succeeded. It was an unforgettable display of maternal leadership and a powerful reminder that with a mother's guidance and persistence, anything is possible.

After some time with her sons, the lioness returned to the Vumbe males, resuming her complex bond with them. She's often seen spending time alone before reuniting with the coalition again. Following her journey offers more than just beautiful sightings; it offers life lessons in resilience, adaptability, and the enduring strength of family bonds.

Drama in the Throuple: The Vumbe Males Clash

Earlier this year, tensions flared within the Vumbe coalition. Near the H21 area, we witnessed a heated moment unfold. One of the Vumbe brothers attempted to mate with the collared Hidli lioness while his sibling was fast asleep nearby. Needless to say, things didn't go down quietly.

DID YOU KNOW?

To tell the two brothers apart, it's better to look at their mane color. One has a lighter mane and a scar on his nose, while the other has a darker mane and a scar between his eyes. Scars can heal or fade, so they might not always be visible. Mane color stays more the same over time, so it's a more reliable way to tell who is who.



Photography : Nicole Mercury



Photography : Nicole Mercury



At first, the sleeping brother appeared to take the high road - he calmly stood up and walked away, seemingly choosing to be the “bigger lion.” But that peace didn’t last.

Moments later, he came charging back at full speed, running behind our vehicle and disappearing into the bush. What followed was chaos - snarls, roars, and grunts erupted from the thickets in a whirlwind of fury. It all happened so fast, none of us even had time to press the record button. And yet, just days later, the trio reappeared, side by side, the tension gone, behaving like the loving throuple they’ve always

been but with fresh battle scars. It’s a wild reminder that even in the fascinating animal kingdom, relationships are complicated, but forgiveness, it seems, is part of the bond.

So the next time you see the Vumbe males with the Hidli lioness or her two sons, you’ll have a deeper understanding of the story behind their dynamic. Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park offers a rare window into the complex behaviors and relationships of wildlife - and we should take every opportunity to learn from it. After all, nature is the greatest teacher.

Luleka

Mother's Day in Manyoni



Photography : Brenda Haynes

www.lulekasafaris.com



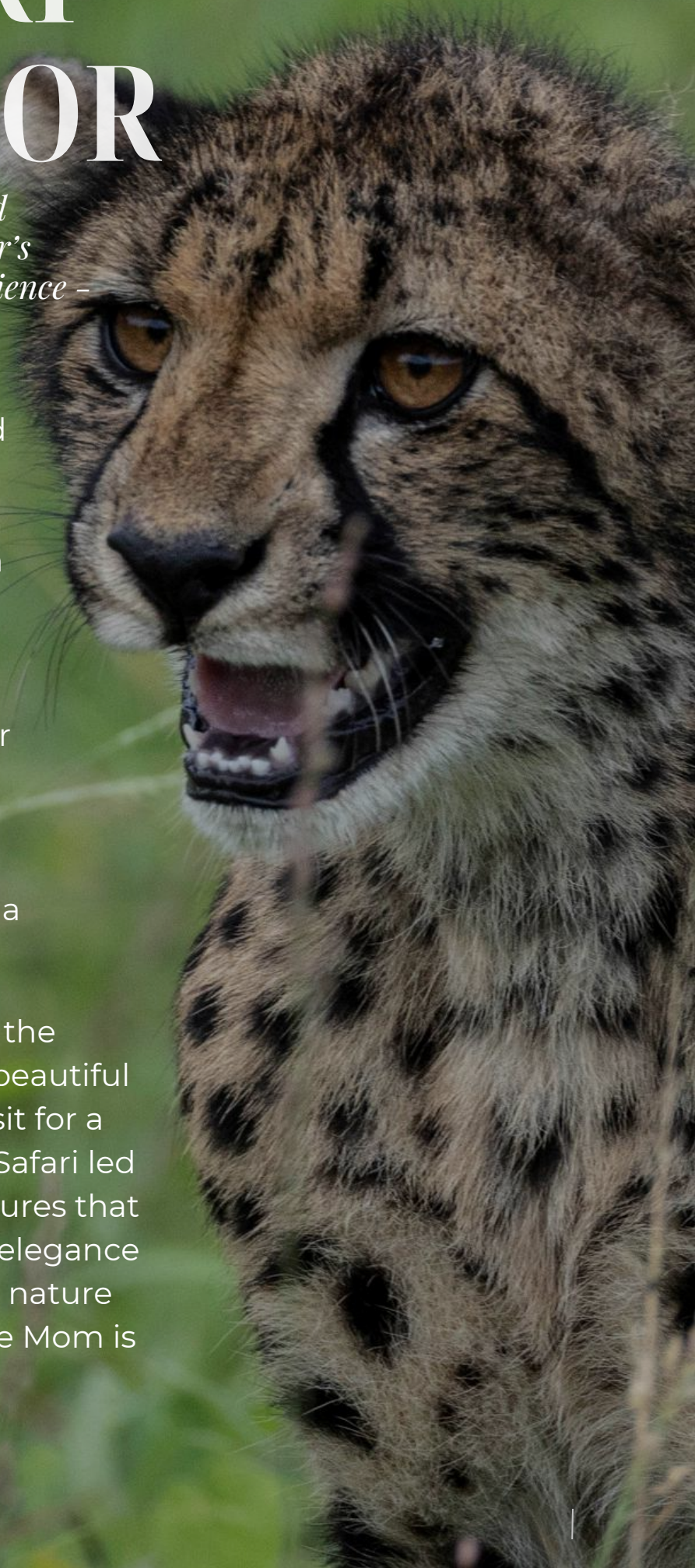
A SAFARI SPLENDOR

In the wild, time stands still and moments are made. This Mother's Day, give Mom the gift of experience - one she'll never forget.

Think unparalleled luxury, breathtaking river views, and the gentle silhouettes of giraffes grazing beneath acacia trees. Picture cheetah cubs nestled in the grass, purring softly nearby, and a dream kitchen where the whole family comes together - this time, to spoil Mom.

Think Luleka. Nestled in the heart of the Manyoni Private Game Reserve, Luleka offers a refined taste of the wild.

Whether it's a serene stay at the Homestead, surrounded by beautiful panoramic views, or a day visit for a truly unforgettable Big Five Safari led by expert Guides, Luleka ensures that every moment is steeped in elegance and adventure. This is where nature meets indulgence and where Mom is treated like royalty.



SPOIL MOM WITH A BUSH ESCAPE THIS MAY

This Mother's Day, trade city sounds for birdsong and spoil the special woman in your life with a rejuvenating getaway to the heart of Zululand. Nestled between scenic beaches and untamed wilderness, this enchanting destination offers the perfect blend of relaxation and adventure. From unforgettable wildlife encounters to tranquil moments in nature, it's a retreat that promises to create cherished memories that will last a lifetime.



A mother's love does not derive from the intellect but from the emotions, in animals just as in humans.

Must Visit Places

Whether you're seeking a quick family escape or a peaceful solo retreat, iSimangaliso Wetland Park offers the perfect balance of pristine beaches and rich, diverse bush, making it an ideal destination for all types of nature lovers.



Located within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Cape Vidal Beach is a great option for anyone looking to relax in nature this May. The beach is known for its clean, quiet shoreline and warm Indian Ocean waters, making it ideal for swimming, picnicking, or simply taking a break. The area surrounding the beach is also rich in wildlife.

As you drive through the park to get there, it's possible to spot animals like bushbuck and even leopards, which are known to sometimes strut along the main tar road on the way to Cape Vidal. The combination of beach and bush makes Cape Vidal a unique destination for a day out. It's a peaceful and scenic spot - perfect for stepping away from daily routines and spending time outdoors.

Grab your SPF, sun hats, snorkel gear, and let the adventure begin!





For those seeking a meaningful and unforgettable wildlife experience, a visit to Bayete Zulu in Manyoni Private Game Reserve offers the rare opportunity to meet Rambo and Rachel - two habituated African elephants with a powerful story of survival and second chances. Rescued after the tragic culling of their herd, Rambo and Rachel now live safely within the Reserve, where they roam freely under the care of experienced keepers. This ethical interaction allows guests to engage with the elephants in a respectful and educational setting, designed to raise awareness about the threats facing Africa's iconic giants.

During the encounter, a passionate and knowledgeable Ranger guides guests through the elephants' remarkable history, sharing fascinating facts about their behavior, biology, and conservation. When not meeting guests, the elephants spend their days wandering through the Reserve, enjoying their freedom and the companionship of their keepers. This experience is a shining example of ethical wildlife tourism - deeply respectful, educational, and unforgettable.

 Bayete Zulu





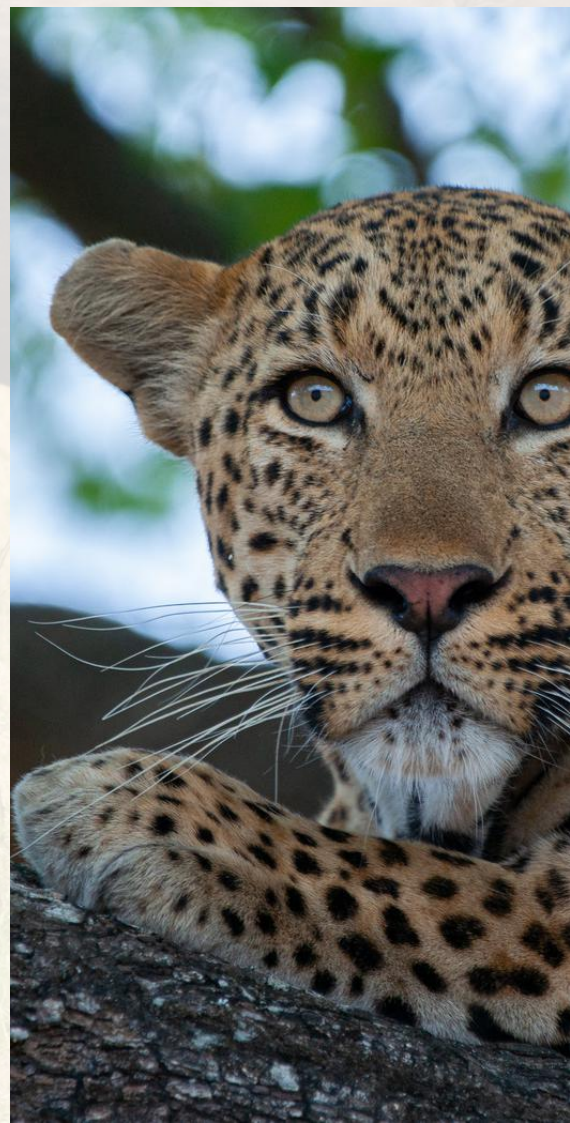
Tucked away in the heart of Northern Zululand, Mkuze Game Reserve spans over 40,000 hectares of untamed wilderness and is one of South Africa's most rewarding safari destinations. While it offers impressive big game sightings, Mkuze is best known for something truly special - birdwatching. With more than 400 recorded bird species, this reserve is a dream come true for birding enthusiasts. Mkuze offers a quieter, more intimate safari experience. Visitors can explore a network of loop roads, bird hides, and lookout points that reveal sweeping views and rich, diverse habitats from dense acacia woodland and open grasslands to wetland pans and fig forests along the Mkuze River.



Don't miss a visit to the Nhlonhlela and Nsumo Pans, where you'll find hippos, Nile crocodiles, and large flocks of pelicans, ducks, geese, and seasonal migrants. These water-rich areas are perfect for quiet observation and photography, especially from the Reserve's well-positioned hides. Accommodation inside the Reserve ranges from rustic huts to self-catering safari-style camps, making it an ideal destination for both seasoned adventurers and families looking for a more relaxed bush experience.

Whether you're scanning treetops for the rare African Broadbill or hoping to spot a leopard in the early morning light, Mkuze Game Reserve offers a deeply rewarding encounter with wild Zululand - off the beaten path and rich in natural wonder.

 *Mkuze Game Reserve*



VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



Zululand
Conservation Trust



For over a decade, the Zululand Conservation Trust (ZCT) has been a vital force for conservation in South Africa's Zululand region.

Our mission goes beyond protecting endangered species and their habitats - we are deeply committed to building a future where people and wildlife thrive together.

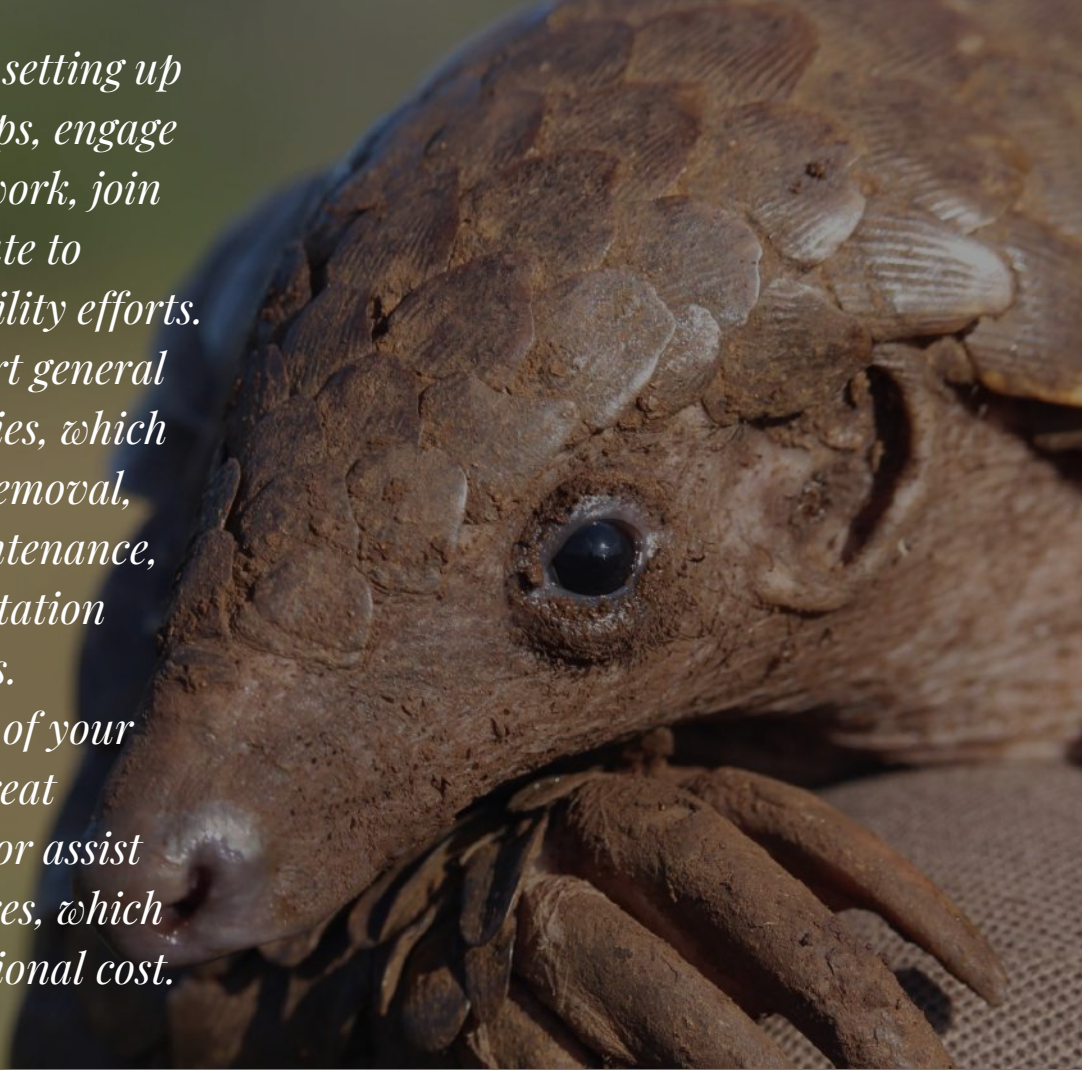
As a volunteer with the Zululand Conservation Trust (ZCT), you'll step into a truly immersive conservation experience - one that places you at the heart of meaningful change. Whether you're passionate about wildlife, reserve management, or working with local communities, your time with ZCT offers a unique opportunity to contribute directly to the protection of endangered species and the sustainable development of rural areas.

This is more than just volunteering, it's a chance to be part of something bigger, to make a lasting impact, and to gain hands-on experience in the world of conservation.



Throughout your stay, you'll work alongside our dedicated team and be involved in a variety of community and conservation projects. You'll assist with the day-to-day operations of these initiatives, while also taking part in behind-the-scenes reserve management activities. These may include boma cleaning and food preparation at the Zululand Rhino Orphanage, assisting with K9 training and anti-poaching tracking, and conducting wildlife monitoring using telemetry equipment to track species such as pangolins and other endangered animals.

You might also help with setting up and checking camera traps, engage in community outreach work, join night patrols, or contribute to gardening and sustainability efforts. In addition, you'll support general reserve management duties, which can include alien plant removal, bush clearing, fence maintenance, creating fire breaks, vegetation surveys, and game counts. Depending on the timing of your stay, there may also be great opportunities to observe or assist with veterinary procedures, which are available at an additional cost.



Have questions or ready to join us in making a difference? Reach out — we'd love to hear from you!

Contact Us

Email: conservation@zululandconservationtrust.org

Website: www.zululandconservationtrust.org

"PARTNERING WITH PROTECTED AREAS AND COMMUNITIES TO FULFIL OUR COMMITMENT TO CONSERVING ENDANGERED SPECIES AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT."

Our adorable Wild Zululand Ambassador

*Meet Toby, our beloved Wild Zululand Ambassador – an African wild dog, also known as a painted wolf (*Lycaon pictus*), African hunting dog, or painted dog. This incredible species is not only one of the most fascinating predators in Africa but also the second most endangered carnivore on the continent.*



**ENDANGERED
WILD DOG
AWARENESS**

Tales & Trails with Toby



THEIR ROLE IN ECOSYSTEMS AND CONSERVATION

Like most predators, they play an important role in eliminating sick and weak animals, thereby helping maintain the natural balance and improve prey species.

African wild dogs are known for their striking, multicolored fur, with unique patches of black, white, yellow, and brown – no two individuals are alike. Their large, rounded ears give them excellent hearing and help regulate their body temperature, essential for survival in hot climates.

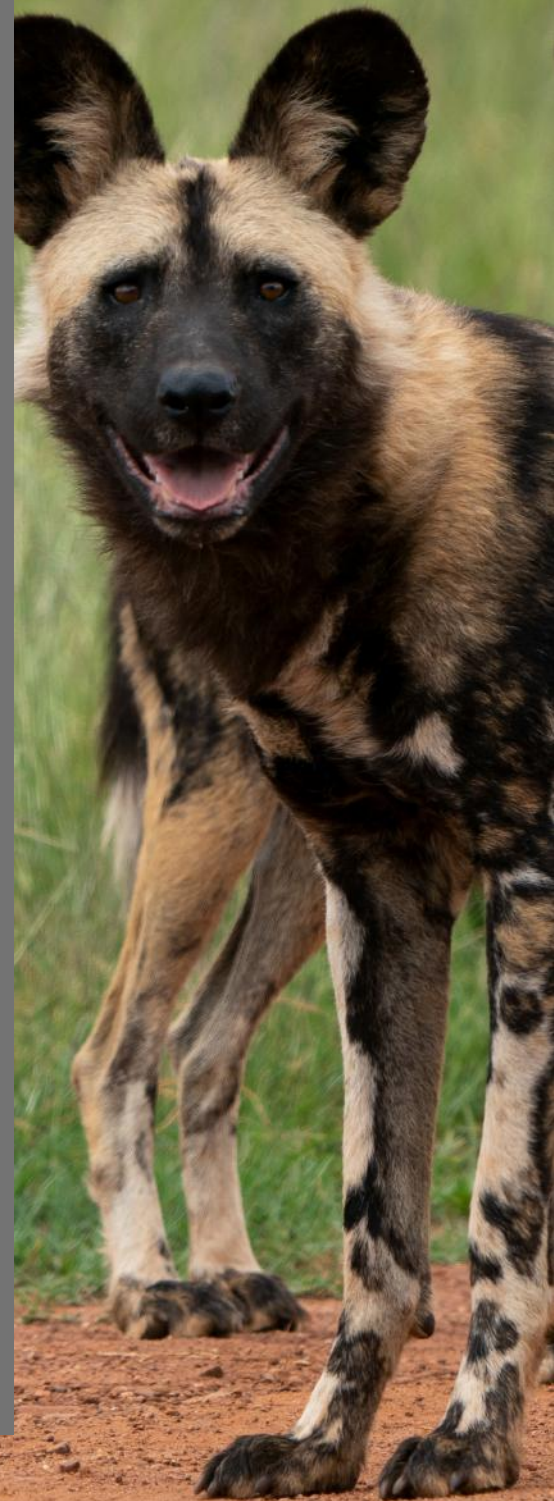
These animals are social to their core, living in tight-knit packs and displaying remarkable cooperation. They hunt with extraordinary teamwork, boasting success rates over 80%, much higher than other African predators. Wild dogs also care for injured members and raise pups communally, making them one of nature's most compassionate carnivores. Some might question the idea of compassion after witnessing their intense hunting style - but hey, that's survival instincts for you.



A GRAVE CRISIS

Their numbers are in steep decline, with the wild population estimated at just 6,600 individuals - and fewer than 650 remaining in the wild in South Africa.

African wild dogs face a combination of severe and escalating threats. One of the most significant is the destruction and fragmentation of their natural habitat, which not only reduces the space they need to roam and hunt but also makes it difficult for them to find new mates, leading to reduced genetic diversity. They are also highly susceptible to accidental (or sometimes intentional) capture in poachers' snares, and can maim or kill curious wild dogs. Human-wildlife conflict remains a major issue, as wild dogs are often persecuted by farmers and livestock owners when they stray outside protected areas in search of food. Adding to these pressures, infectious diseases such as rabies and canine distemper, transmitted by unvaccinated domestic dogs, can quickly spread through and devastate entire packs.



TOBY – A WILD AMBASSADOR WITH A VITAL MISSION



Toby, our “charismatic” wild dog Ambassador, is on a mission to raise awareness about the African wild dog, one of Africa’s most endangered and misunderstood predators. Like *Sir David Attenborough*, Toby believes that people can only protect what they understand. Many still mistake these unique animals for domestic dogs, not realizing their importance in the wild or the threats they face.

Through Toby, we aim to educate the public about the wild dog's distinct identity, remarkable intelligence, and vital role in the ecosystem. Our goal is to promote visits to the areas where they still roam free, highlight the Organizations working tirelessly to protect them, and encourage donations that directly support conservation efforts. We also want to inspire wildlife photographers and enthusiasts to use their images and platforms to spread awareness and spark a deeper connection to these animals. By understanding and appreciating African wild dogs, more people can be moved to take action - ensuring their survival for generations to come.

WILDE TRACKS: CREATING CONSERVATION IMPACT THROUGH PURPOSE-DRIVEN TRAVEL

In just fourteen months, the UAE-based conservation organization Wilde Tracks has made remarkable strides in wildlife protection across Africa. Following their successful mission with Heroes of Hope athletes, Wilde Tracks continues to demonstrate how responsible tourism can become a powerful force for conservation.

MEASURABLE IMPACT IN CONSERVATION

Since its inception, Wilde Tracks has protected 38 animals across its operational areas, including 18 white rhinos, 4 black rhinos, 3 lionesses, 2 lions, 8 cape buffalo, 1 cheetah, 1 elephant, and 1 crocodile. These interventions range from dehorning procedures to protect rhinos from poaching to vital veterinary care and collaring for monitoring and research.

"Conservation work requires consistent funding and hands-on support," explains Chloe Evans, Founder and CEO of Wilde Tracks. "By creating experiences where travelers directly participate in real conservation work, we've found a sustainable model that benefits wildlife, local communities, and visitors alike."





EXPANDING IMPACT IN 2025

Building on this foundation, Wilde Tracks has seen an impressive surge in bookings for their South African conservation experiences in 2025. This increased participation directly translates into more resources for anti-poaching units, veterinary interventions, and community educational programmes. Looking ahead Wilde Tracks is poised to significantly expand its conservation footprint.

With growing interest from corporate partners and international travelers, the organization plans to increase the frequency of their conservation missions across all four countries of operation, with the aim of expanding globally. "What we've accomplished in our first 14 months is just the beginning," notes Evans. "Each conservation mission builds on our knowledge, strengthens our local relationships, and develops our capacity to make a lasting difference for Africa's wildlife."

DONATE





SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR SOUTH AFRICAN RESIDENTS (1-7 JUNE 2025)

South Africa holds a special place in the organization's history as the launch site of Wilde Tracks' first successful wildlife interventions and the foundation of its conservation model. "South Africa gave us our start and showed us what's possible when passionate conservationists, local communities, and international visitors come together for wildlife protection," reflects Chloe Evans. "The incredible support we received from South African reserves, veterinary teams, and conservation authorities made our work possible." Therefore, as a way of saying thank you and, in recognition of the vital role local participation plays in conservation efforts, Wilde Tracks is offering a special discount to South African residents for their upcoming June 1-7 mission.

In a move to strengthen local conservation participation, this initiative recognizes that conservation success depends heavily on engaging those who call South Africa home. This seven-day experience will take place in a private reserve area, where participants will join in hands-on conservation work with the reserve's wildlife veterinary team. "South Africans have a profound connection to their natural heritage," says Evans. "We want to make it easier for local residents to join us in protecting these incredible species while experiencing conservation from a whole new perspective."

SOUTH AFRICA MISSION CONT.

The special resident pricing reflects Wilde Tracks' commitment to making meaningful conservation experiences accessible to those who can carry the message forward within their own communities long after the mission concludes.

More Than Tourism

What sets Wilde Tracks apart is its holistic approach to conservation. Beyond wildlife protection, Wilde Tracks work extends to community outreach, educational initiatives, and women's empowerment programmes across South Africa, Malawi, Namibia, and Tanzania.

For those who join a Wilde Tracks mission, the experience goes beyond typical wildlife viewing. Participants become active contributors to conservation efforts, gaining hands-on experience and deeper understanding of the challenges facing Africa's wildlife and the innovative solutions being implemented.

As one recent participant shared, "After seeing conservation work up close and participating in actual interventions, I'll never see wildlife the same way again. This wasn't just travel - it was purpose in action!"

For more information about the special South African residents' discount for the June 1-7 mission or to learn about other Wilde Tracks conservation experiences, email info@wildetracks.com or click on the website below.



DUNG - TASTIC DELIGHTS



Photography : Shenay B

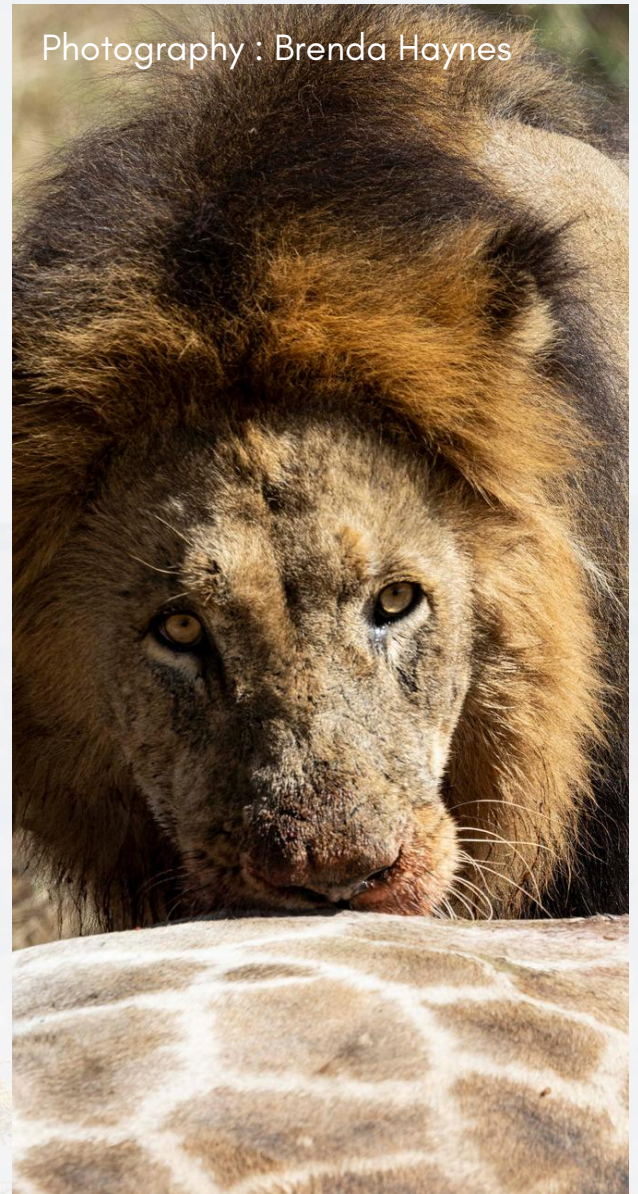
Why lions lick and roll in dung: A wild twist on self-care »

*While on a Big 5 Day Safari with **Luleka Safaris** in Manyoni Private Game Reserve, we witnessed a lion licking dung - let's dive into the fascinating reasons behind this behavior!*

The Surprising Secrets Behind Lions' Dung Rolling & Licking:

Lions, the majestic kings of the wild, are known for their powerful roars, impressive hunting skills, and striking appearance. But there's one behavior that always catches people off guard: the curious habit of rolling in or even licking the dung of herbivores like buffalo, elephants, and rhinos.

To some, it may seem like a bizarre or even gross act, but there's actually more to it than meets the nose. Let's explore the fascinating theories behind this strange behavior, and why it might be a lot more purposeful than you think!



1. Territorial scent marking: A pungent message

Lions are highly territorial creatures, and like any ruler, they need to mark their kingdom. One of the most popular theories behind dung rolling is that it's a form of territorial scent marking. By rolling in dung, lions leave behind a distinct scent that acts as a "Keep Out" sign to other lions and predators. It's their way of declaring, "This is my turf."

Often seen while patrolling their range, this behavior acts as a subtle but powerful message. The dung of herbivores carries its own strong scent, and when lions rub themselves in it, they essentially create a "scent signature" that other animals can't ignore. It's a peaceful yet effective method of maintaining control over their space without having to engage in loud confrontations.

2. A natural health boost: Who knew dung could be good for you?

But wait, there's more to this smelly habit than just marking territory. Believe it or not, animal dung (especially from herbivores) contains hormones like glucocorticoids and progesterone, which can actually have health benefits.

These hormones can help reduce stress, improve brain function, and boost the immune system. So, it's possible that lions are rolling in dung not just for a scent mark, but also to reap some health benefits.



When lions lick or roll in the dung, they might be absorbing these hormones, giving them a natural, stress-relieving boost. The benefits of these hormones such as reducing inflammation and supporting overall brain and immune health could help lions stay strong, healthy, and better prepared for the challenges of life on the wild. Who knew a little dung could serve as a wellness tonic for these big cats?

3. Scent masking: Blending in with the herd

Another theory about this behavior is that lions might be using dung to mask their scent, making it easier for them to get closer to potential prey. Lions are stealthy hunters, and scent plays a huge role in how they stalk their prey. By rolling in dung, they might be camouflaging their natural scent, blending in with the smells of herbivores like buffalo or giraffes. This could help them get closer to their prey without alerting the herd.

However, this theory isn't without its doubts. Lions tend to hunt downwind from their prey, relying on the wind to carry their scent away from their target. While scent masking might not be the primary purpose of dung rolling, it's still a fascinating idea that adds another layer to this mysterious behavior.

4. Curiosity: A big cat's exploration of the world

Lions are curious creatures by nature, and rolling in dung could simply be an act of exploration. For lions, the world is full of interesting smells, and the act of rolling in dung could be a way of investigating their surroundings and learning more about the animals and territories nearby. Just as we might stop to smell the flowers, lions may be stopping to sniff or roll in the dung left behind by herbivores.

It's a way to gather information about the area, track the movements of other animals, and understand the ecosystem they inhabit. Curiosity is an instinctual part of life for many animals, and for lions, exploring their environment is crucial for their survival. So, rolling in dung might just be their way of "checking things out" and satisfying their natural need to investigate the world around them.



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SAFARI WITH LULEKA**

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Photography : Brenda Haynes

5. The quirky habit: A lion being a lion

Sometimes, the simplest explanation is the best. Maybe lions roll in dung just because they enjoy it. Not all lions engage in this behavior, and it may simply be a quirky habit that some lions have developed. After all, animals have their own personalities, and some may just find the act of rolling in dung entertaining, relaxing, or even comforting.

Lions, like us, have their strange habits, whether it's playing with sticks, lounging in the sun, or yes, rolling in dung. It's possible that this behavior is simply a harmless part of their personality, and not every lion is going to engage in it. Sometimes nature just throws us a little surprise, and dung rolling might be one of those things that doesn't need a deep survival explanation.

The Conclusion: More than meets the nose

So, why do lions roll in dung? The truth is, it's likely a combination of reasons, each adding its own layer of mystery to this curious behavior. It could be a method of territorial marking, a way to enjoy the health benefits of hormones in dung, a sneaky scent masking tactic, or simply a way for lions to satisfy their natural curiosity. It might even just be a quirky habit, like a lion's own little ritual.

What we know for sure is that dung rolling is more than just a bizarre behavior—it's a multifaceted action that reflects the complexity of life in the wild. Next time you see a lion rolling in dung, remember: there's far more going on than meets the eye (or nose!). It's a fascinating behavior that offers us a glimpse into the intricate world of one of nature's most iconic creatures.

Fun Fact

LONGER, THICKER AND DARKER MANES USUALLY INDICATE HIGHER TESTOSTERONE LEVELS AND OVERALL BETTER HEALTH. THESE LIONS ARE OFTEN MORE DOMINANT AND ATTRACTIVE TO FEMALES.

Suzanne, GG Conservation's Director & Social Media Manager (and all-around lion enthusiast), shared a little gem with us about the Sanctuary's lions: just like humans, lions have bad hair days and sometimes, it means more than just a messy mane. A lion's coat can actually reveal a lot about their health. If a lion is unwell, it often shows in the quality of their hair. Dull, patchy fur can be a sign that something's off.

On the flip side, a lion that looks great usually feels great too. And at GG Conservation? The lions are looking fabulous. Thick manes, healthy coats, and a definite air of confidence - proof of just how well they're being cared for. So next time you see one of their majestic residents strutting their stuff on social media, know this: that mane is more than just a style statement. It's a sign of real health, comfort, and a life finally lived with dignity.

 @ggconservation [Click here](#)



Full Day Big 5 Safari



Bush brekkie

Savor a wholesome bush breakfast as the sun rises, accompanied by the sounds of the wild awakening around you.

Bush braai

Indulge in an authentic South African braai, featuring juicy steak and boerewors grilled to perfection right before your eyes.



Experience the Wild Heart of Zululand



Step into the untamed beauty of KwaZulu-Natal with a full-day guided Big 5 safari at Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, hosted by the expert team at Heritage Tours & Safaris. With over two decades of experience crafting unforgettable wildlife encounters, this is more than just a safari - it's a journey through one of South Africa's most iconic landscapes.

A Dawn Departure into the Wilderness

The adventure begins at first light, as your Guide welcomes you aboard an open safari vehicle and you head into the heart of the African bush. The crisp morning air carries the sounds of the wild distant calls of birds, rustling leaves, and perhaps even a lion's roar echoing across the hills. As the sun rises over the rolling terrain, wildlife begins to stir. Elephants lumber across open plains, herds of antelope graze quietly, and with luck, you may spot a rhino or a stealthy predator on the move.



Bush brekkie

Mid-morning, you'll pause at a scenic spot in the heart of the Park for a well-earned bush breakfast. Relax under the shade of acacia trees as you enjoy a wholesome spread of crunchy muesli topped with creamy yogurt, fresh seasonal fruit salad, and warm muffins. Sip on freshly brewed coffee or a comforting cup of tea while taking in the sounds of birdsong and distant wildlife. It's a peaceful moment to recharge and reflect on the incredible sightings of the morning.



Tracking the Big 5 and More

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, the oldest proclaimed Game Reserve in Africa, is renowned not only for its historical significance in wildlife conservation but also for its incredible biodiversity. The park is famously home to the Big 5 - lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo, and both black and white rhino - but its wildlife offering goes far beyond these iconic species.



As you explore the Park's rolling hills, riverine forests, and open savannahs, you'll encounter a diverse range of wildlife. Spotted hyenas may be seen trotting through the bush, while the elusive cheetah scans the plains in search of prey. One of the most exciting and rare sightings is the African wild dog - a critically endangered predator known for its teamwork and speed. You're also likely to spot giraffe, warthog, kudu, nyala, and large herds of zebra and impala, all thriving in the Park's varied ecosystems. With your Guide's sharp tracking skills and deep knowledge of the bush, each sighting becomes more meaningful - from the stealth of a leopard to the quiet power of an elephant in its natural habitat.

What Sets This Safari Apart?

With over 22 years of experience, Heritage Tours & Safaris has built a reputation for exceptional service, passionate Guiding, and a deep commitment to conservation. It's this legacy of creating memorable, meaningful encounters that makes every safari feel personal and unforgettable. Their Guides don't just take you on a drive - they immerse you in the stories of the land, the rhythms of the wild, and the magic of one of South Africa's most treasured Parks.

A True Taste of South Africa: The Bush Braai Experience



After an exciting morning of game viewing, enjoy a traditional South African braai in a scenic bush setting. Watch as steak and boerewors are grilled over open flames, filling the air with smoky, mouthwatering aromas. Served alongside a creamy pasta salad and refreshing carrot salad, this meal is the perfect way to relax, refuel, and take in the wild beauty around you. It's a true South African experience - simple, hearty, and unforgettable.

Journey into the wilderness



Heritage Tours & Safaris

☎ +27 35 590 1555 / +27 64 0337 6415

✉ info@stlucia.co.za

🌐 www.heritagetoursandsafaris.com

The Journey to Zululand

As you journey toward Zululand, stray from the beaten path and let the wild lead the way - uncover the heart of lion conservation like never before.



RECLAIMING THE ROAR

Amid the sweeping grasslands of South Africa's Free State province lies a rare haven - a place where lions once caged, neglected, or bred for profit can finally breathe freely. GG Conservation is neither a zoo nor a safari park. It's something far more profound: a true sanctuary, created not for human entertainment, but entirely for the well-being of the lions who call it home.



Founded by the Shannon family, Glen Garriff Conservation was born from a deep love for animals and a lasting respect for nature. In 2015, it was officially registered as a non-profit Lion Sanctuary, providing a safe haven for big cats rescued from captivity, abuse, and exploitation.

The Sanctuary is also home to an array of remarkable wildlife such as free roaming black wildebeest, bontebok, ostriches, red hartebeest, waterbuck, and springbok.



At GG Conservation, ethical practices are at the heart of everything they do.

This is not a place for breeding, petting, or walking with lions - the focus is solely on providing a true & safe sanctuary. The lions are given a safe haven, fresh food, and the chance to live within a social structure, all without having to do anything in return. They are free to simply exist, in peace.

STAY, VISIT OR DONATE

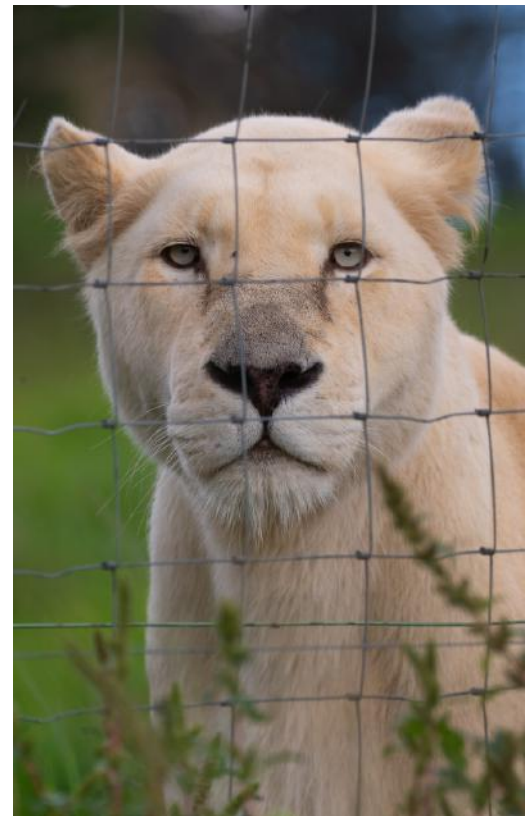


HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Because these lions can't be rewilded as they were raised in captivity and unable to survive in the wild - GG Conservation's mission is clear and vital: to offer them the best and safe life possible, filled with the dignity and tranquility they've always deserved. Each day, the team at GG Conservation dedicates themselves to caring for over 60 magnificent lions - feeding them, providing medical treatment, and maintaining vast, natural enclosures.

The sanctuary operates on one guiding principle: every cent goes directly to the animals, ensuring they receive the highest standard of care. However, funding remains an ongoing challenge. Unlike commercial wildlife operations, GG Conservation doesn't sell animals or offer paid interactions.

By visiting or staying at GG Conservation, guests can truly make a difference. Stay in an African farmhouse-style Lodge or a rustic guesthouse, both nestled within the large sanctuary grounds, with every booking directly supporting the lions' care. The Tours are designed to deepen the understanding of these incredible animals. You won't be petting a cub - but you might find yourself quietly watching a rescued lion sunbathe, finally free from the weight of human demands, *which is even better, and ethical.*



@ggconservation



ggconservation



LIFE AS IT SHOULD BE: PRIDE, PERSONALITY & PURPOSE AT GG CONSERVATION



What makes GG Conservation special?

What sets GG Conservation apart isn't just that they rescue lions, it's how they care for them. Recognizing that these animals can't be returned to the wild, the team at GG puts deep thought into what will make a lion's life in sanctuary not just survivable, but worth living. One of the most powerful things they do? Let lions be lions.

At GG Conservation, the majestic lions live in prides - just as they would in the wild. Lions are social animals, and this kind of family dynamic is often essential to their emotional wellbeing. It's not simply about throwing lions together, it's about carefully observing, learning their personalities, and thoughtfully integrating individuals when the timing and compatibility is right. The pride that lives behind the Lion Lodge is a perfect example. Each of them was rescued separately and now live in a happy family dynamic as they would in the wild.

www.ggconservation.org



Our mission is to love, protect and preserve the magnificent lions in our care.

What GG Conservation refuses to do is exploit the animals in their care. There's no cub petting, no walks with lions, no "hands-on" experiences. "In fact, if a lion doesn't want to be filmed or approached, even from a distance - it's left alone", says Suzanne. This is a perfect example of respecting wildlife, even in sanctuaries. These lions are not entertainers. They're not pets. They're wild animals who were born into human-controlled spaces, and GG is doing everything they can to make sure their second chance is as close to freedom as possible. A lion who's caught global attention is Moya, the striking white lion once dubbed "the world's most hottest lion" by the World Press. His stunning looks may draw the clicks, but behind the mane is a powerful story of rescue and recovery.

No Gimmicks. Just Lions.

At the heart of GG's online presence is Suzanne, the Sanctuary's Director and social media lead. Her posts don't just share adorable moments or eye-catching photos - they introduce followers to the lions as individuals. She gives them pride names, shares updates on their relationships, moods, quirks, and even their grumpiest days. That personal connection is intentional. Suzanne perfectly understands that education starts with empathy, and when people feel connected to the animals, they care more deeply about their protection.





GOING WILD ON THE FEED

GG Conservation's social media has become a global community of lion lovers, many of whom can recognize lions by name, just from a short video. But this isn't about entertainment rather education. As much as social media often leans into spectacle, GG uses its platform to inform the public about why these lions are in captivity in the first place and what people can do to stop it. They show the consequences of exploitation while offering a hopeful alternative: a sanctuary where dignity, not display, is the priority.

Every decision made at GG Conservation is driven by one simple question: What's best for the lions?

Whether it's creating pride dynamics, monitoring health and behavior, or providing hands-off enrichment by allowing social interaction within prides, the goal remains the same - to restore a sense of peace, purpose, and quiet joy to these animals' lives. Traci, the CEO, was inspired by her father's love for wildlife and grew up with a deep passion for conservation. She is committed to making the best decisions alongside her team to ensure that the well-being of the lions remains the highest priority.

THE LION HOUSE

For those seeking a truly immersive wildlife experience, The Lion House at Glen Garriff Conservation offers something unforgettable. This charming, self-catering three-bedroom cottage sits right inside the GG Conservation Lion Sanctuary - home to over 60 rescued lions. From the moment you arrive, you're surrounded by the deep primal sounds of lions communicating with one another. At night, their roars echo across the plains, a sound that stays with you long after you leave. What makes The Lion House so special is how close you are to the lions, never more than five meters away.



These aren't fleeting glimpses from a distance; they're real, raw moments with animals who have found safety here. You'll wake up to lions lounging outside your window, and you'll fall asleep to the rhythm of their calls under a blanket of stars. Inside, the cottage is warm and inviting, with a full kitchen for self-catering and a beautiful log fireplace that's perfect for cozy winter nights. Outside, there's a private patio with braai (BBQ) facilities - an ideal spot to sip a sundowner while watching lions roam just beyond the fence.





For those who need to stay connected, WiFi is available, though many guests find themselves happily offline, lost in the beauty of nature. Beyond the lions, the land itself is alive with wildlife. Zebra, ostrich, springbok, gemsbok, bontebok, waterbuck, black wildebeest and impala all roam freely, creating incredible, unique opportunities for photography and wildlife viewing.

If guests prefer to explore on foot, the surrounding nature reserve offers peaceful walks, including the chance to hike up Bakerskop, the beautiful sanctuary's very own mountain. The views from the top are worth the climb, offering a sweeping perspective of this unique piece of the Free State. And perhaps the most meaningful part of your stay? GG Lions NPC is a registered non-profit charity, which means that 100% of your booking fee goes directly to benefit the lions.

Echoes of the Roar

Every night you spend here helps feed the lions, care for them, and ensure their sanctuary continues to thrive. This isn't just a place to stay. It's a place to connect with nature, with conservation, and with the powerful stories of the lions who now live in peace.



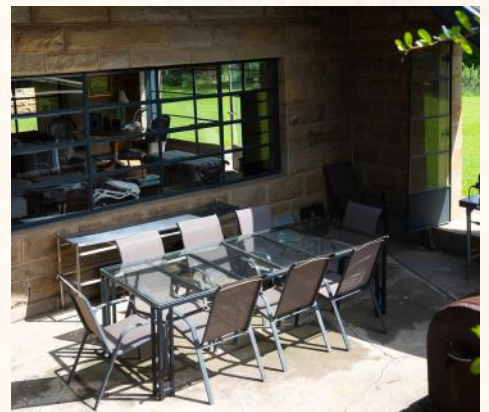
BOOK NOW



THE LION LODGE

For those traveling in a group, The Lion Lodge offers an ideal retreat. This is a grand, four-bedroom, four-bathroom African-style lodge offering incredible lion views.

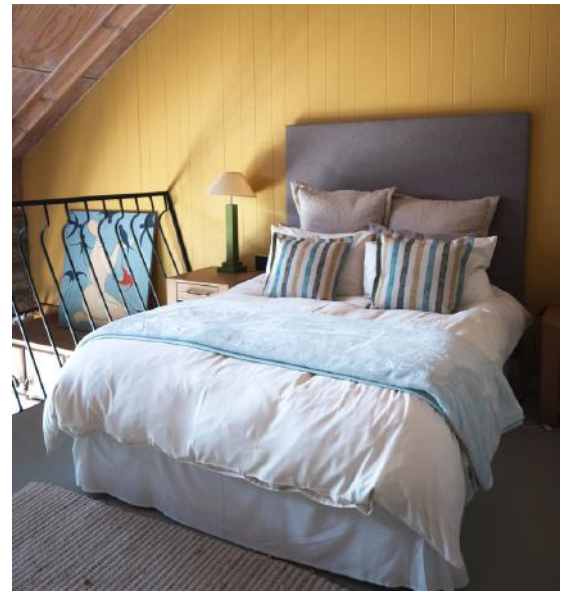
Designed with both comfort and character in mind, the lodge blends rustic charm with modern convenience. The fully equipped kitchen makes self-catering a breeze, while the spacious indoor dining area is perfect for shared meals and good conversation. Outside, a traditional braai and open-air dining space allow you to take in the sights and sounds of the bush while enjoying your meals under the African sky.





The lounge offers a calm, communal space to unwind, with large windows that frame the natural surroundings and bring the outdoors in. Each room is styled with unique, handpicked decor that reflects the spirit of Africa - earthy, elegant, and rooted in place. Best of all, you are near the lions as their enclosures surround the lodge.

AFRICAN GRANDEUR MEETS THE WILDERNESS



Their presence is constant, from roars echoing at sunset to the occasional close-up view of a lion relaxing just beyond the fence. Whether you're traveling with family, friends, or fellow wildlife lovers, The Lion Lodge is the kind of place that stays with you, a place where unforgettable memories are made, and where every moment directly supports the lions who live just outside your door.

At GG Conservation, each & every contribution counts - whether it's a corporate sponsorship, a lion adoption, or a personal donation. As a registered non-profit, 100% of all support goes directly towards the care, feeding, and protection of the sanctuary's 60+ lions.

Thanks to their unique familiarity with each individual lion, the GG Conservation team is able to capture extraordinary, behind-the-scenes footage that offers rare insight into the lives of these rescued animals.



From daily routines to quirky personalities, these intimate moments are shared with a growing global community of lion lovers, giving people around the world a chance to form a personal connection with animals they would otherwise never get to see so closely. As mentioned before, GG Conservation believes that the more people connect with individual lions, their names, stories, and personalities - the more empathy and awareness grows for the species as a whole. And with awareness comes action, which is essential for ensuring the long-term survival of lions in true sanctuaries and in the wild.



To help support their mission, GG Conservation has launched a Patreon campaign - a platform where supporters can become members of the extended "Pride" and gain access to exclusive content. In return for their patronage, members receive one-of-a-kind videos, insider updates, and a deeper look into what it takes to care for rescued lions and run a sanctuary of this scale. Each reward tier offers a closer connection to the animals, the staff who care for them, and the ongoing efforts to improve lion welfare. GG Conservation continues to grow and adapt as the conservation world learns more about the physical and emotional needs of lions in captivity.



With the help of its supporters, the sanctuary is able to implement these improvements and lead by example in ethical, responsible lion care. Supporting GG Conservation means directly impacting the lives of real lions, providing safety, dignity, and a future they would otherwise never have. It's not just a donation, it's an act of conservation.

What If We Told You That Just \$1 (±R19) Per Month Could Change a Lion's Life?

It might sound impossible - but it's true. For the cost of a coffee, supporters from around the world can help GG Conservation continue to care for over 60 rescued lions, many of whom have come from traumatic, exploitative conditions. When thousands of people unite with just \$1 (approximately R19) per month, it becomes a powerful force for good.





What can *you* do with a dollar?

We can do a whole lot more.



At GG Conservation, one dollar means food, fuel,
and life-saving care for our lions.

When thousands give just \$1, we can keep these
incredible animals safe and thriving.

Your \$1 matters—especially
when it's joined by many.

Let's turn small change
into real change.

WHY JUST \$1 PER MONTH MATTERS

A single dollar may seem small, but its impact is far from it. Through GG Conservation's Patreon campaign, even the most modest monthly pledge helps keep the sanctuary running and the lions healthy, happy, and safe.

Here's how each \$1 helps:

Medical Care – Lions, just like any other living beings, fall ill or get injured. Monthly donations help cover vet visits, medication, and other emergency care ensuring no lion is ever left to suffer.

Fuel for Food Collection – GG Conservation relies on generous donations of surplus meat from local farmers. Getting that food to the sanctuary requires fuel and vehicle upkeep - costs that quickly add up.

Habitat Maintenance – Every dollar supports the upkeep of large, naturalistic enclosures, providing each lion with a clean, safe, and enriching space that mimics their wild habitat as closely as possible.

Beyond the numbers, \$1 is also a symbol - it shows you care. It says you believe in ethical conservation. It joins you with a global "Pride" of people making a real difference, one lion at a time. For just \$1 (±R19) a month, you can help protect these incredible animals, support real sanctuary work, and be part of a movement that values respect, compassion, and long-term change.



DONATE






ST. LUCIA FLAMINGO LODGE



Experience the charm of St. Lucia with a stay at Flamingo Self Catering Lodge — conveniently located within walking distance of the main road and local restaurants, and just a short drive from the beach. As night falls, witness the unique sight of hippos wandering the streets, right outside your doorstep.

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 27 Mckenzie St, St Lucia, 3936



REEF & DUNE

Whether you're wandering through St. Lucia for the first time or returning for another taste of its charm, Reef & Dune is a stop worth making. Perfectly positioned in the heart of town, this local favorite strikes a balance between casual comfort and quality dining, with both indoor and outdoor seating to suit any mood. Cozy up inside for a quieter meal or soak in the lively, coastal atmosphere on the open patio.

Families will find it especially convenient with plenty of space for kids to move around and options to suit every appetite. Plus, if you find yourself needing snacks or last-minute essentials, the Engen Garage is just next door, only a short stroll away. Parking is easy too, with spots available on-site and along McKenzie Street.



GOOD FOOD

LAID-BACK CHARM WITH A TOUCH OF ELEGANCE

The food here speaks for itself. Start with the calamari tubes - crisp on the outside, tender within, and bursting with flavor. It's a lighter dish that doesn't hold back. If you're after something more filling, their pizzas are a highlight, crafted with fresh ingredients, generous toppings, and that just-right crust that keeps you coming back. Whether you're sharing plates or savoring something solo, the menu has something for everyone.

Do keep in mind, Reef & Dune is no hidden secret. During the high season, tables fill up fast, so it's best to call ahead and reserve. A quick phone call is all it takes, and the friendly staff will gladly secure your spot. Prices sit slightly above average, but what you get in return is worth every cent: fresh, well-prepared dishes, a welcoming atmosphere, and a relaxed pace that lets you truly enjoy the moment.

Overall, Reef & Dune delivers exactly what a great dining experience in St. Lucia should - delicious food, a welcoming vibe, and the kind of setting that makes you want to linger just a little longer.





Trailside Traditions: *Father's Day in the Great Outdoors*



EXPLORER TENT

For the Dad Who Lives for the Outdoors

This Father's Day, upgrade Dad's camp game with the Explorer Tent- a robust, all-season shelter built for comfort, protection, and adventure. Crafted with a durable canvas flysheet and a built-in verandah, it's the perfect home base whether he's setting up camp deep in the bush or along a quiet riverside. The front roll-up door with a mesh window and protective outer flap offers perfect ventilation without sacrificing privacy or weather protection. On either side, additional windows with inner roll-up flaps let in fresh air and natural light while keeping bugs at bay.


Designed with real-world camping in mind, the Explorer Tent includes a 550mm water column built-in groundsheet for exceptional waterproofing, and UV-treated fabric that stands up to sun exposure without fading or weakening. The anti-bug shade net keeps pesky insects out, while the electrical inlet makes it easy to run lighting or charge devices off-grid. Heavy-duty zippers ensure durability through years of zipping and unzipping, and when it's time to move on, everything packs neatly into a tough, weather-resistant PVC carry bag. From cross-country road trips to spontaneous weekend getaways, this tent is a rugged, ready-to-go gift for dads who'd rather wake up to birdsong than an alarm clock.

ROLL IN STYLE: THE MEERKAT TROLLEY

The Ultimate All-Terrain Companion

The MEERKAT Trolley is more than just a gear hauler - it's your go-to solution for effortless transport, whether you're heading to the campsite, beach, or fishing spot. Designed with adventure in mind, it features large, all-terrain wheels that handle sand, grass, gravel, and more with ease.

From camping chairs and cooler boxes to fishing gear or even the kids, this trolley carries it all. The smart new design includes a well-crafted tailgate that opens for easy, flexible loading, a built-in drink holder for added convenience, and a spacious storage bag to keep everything in place. With its extendable handle and smooth maneuverability, the MEERKAT Trolley is built to go wherever the day takes Dad.



MEERKAT OUTDOOR builds rugged, reliable gear for those who live to explore. With durable materials, smart design, and a bold spirit, every product is made to handle real adventure. From the beach to the bush, MEERKAT OUTDOOR helps explorers go further, stay longer, and experience more.

ADVENTURE STARTS HERE

SHOP NOW



MEERKAT NYLON ROLL UP MATTRESS

Comfort meets convenience with the MEERKAT OUTDOOR Roll-Up Mattress - your go-anywhere, sleep-anywhere solution. Lightweight and multi-purpose, it's perfect for camping, road trips, or unexpected guests.

The sewn-in fastening strap makes for quick roll-up and compact storage, so you can pack up and move out in seconds. Rugged, reliable, and ready when you are.



MEERKAT TRAVEL BAG 90 Lt

Built for movement, made for adventure. The MEERKAT OUTDOOR Travel Bag features a large U-shaped zipper opening for effortless loading and access, whether you're packing for a weekend escape or an off-grid expedition.

Inside, detachable backpack shoulder straps are neatly tucked into a side zipper pocket, giving you the option to carry it your way - by hand, over the shoulder, or as a backpack. With durable carry straps and dual side handles, this bag is as versatile and tough as the journeys it's built for.

Embrace the Wild, Traverse the Terrain

MEERKAT OUTDOOR isn't just about gear - it's about igniting the spirit of adventure. Every product is a promise: of trust earned under starlit skies, of quality that weathers the wild, and of stories waiting to unfold wherever the trail takes you.

 info@meerkatoutdoor.com

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A RAINBOW OF HOPE



A JOURNEY INTO TRUE CONSERVATION

Before embarking on a thrilling journey to Zululand, we decided to take a detour - something different from our usual adventures. While we are always blessed with lion sightings in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, this time, we had the rare opportunity to learn about lion conservation in the most personal way imaginable: with a stay at the Lion House at GG Conservation. We were warmly welcomed by Wade, the General Manager, who guided us to our home, nestled in the middle of large lion enclosures



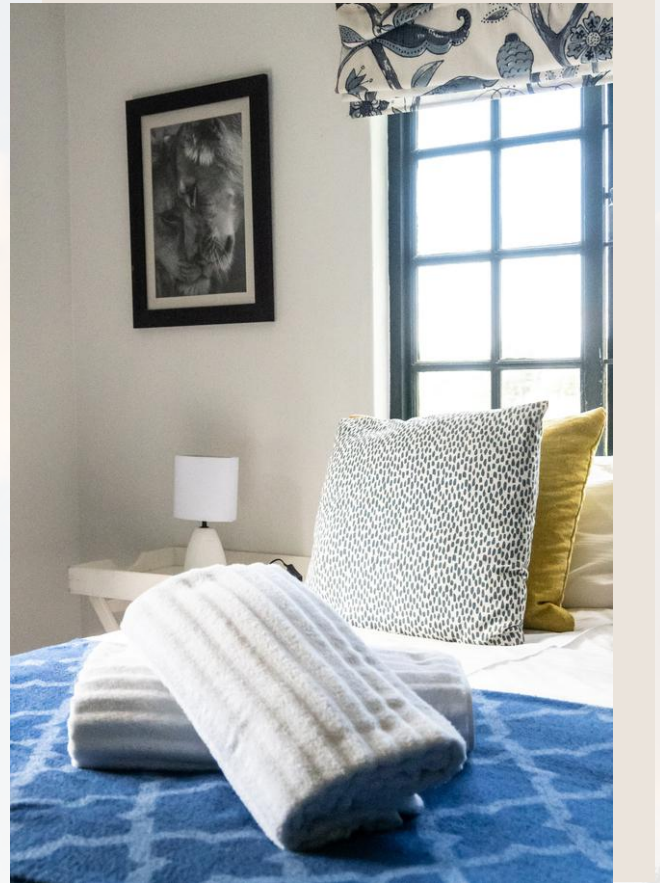
and something that I have never seen before - apple trees. Before even settling in we heard “it” - the insane thunderous roar of lions, just meters from the house. It was surreal, an unforgettable sound that echoed deep into our souls. You don’t just hear it, you feel it. And trust me, you never forget it (in fact, I crave it while writing this). The Lion House itself is rustic, very spacious and beautifully adorned with incredible photographs of the iconic resident lions, taken by professional wildlife photographers from around the world.

LIVING AMONG LEGENDS

The house features a fully equipped kitchen, perfect for self-catering, and a handcrafted wooden dining table with intricately carved with animals. The cozy lounge area was centered around the best kind of bush TV - a crackling fireplace that became our evening go-to on chilly nights, as the near roars of lions echoed through the air.

INSIDE THE LION HOUSE

The house includes three bedrooms: one downstairs with a view of Shalom and Ariel, two magnificent lions, and two more rooms upstairs overlooking the lion camps. The house contains all essentials and sometimes you have to pinch yourself to check if you are really staying in here because it feels too good to be true. Ceiling fans offer comfort on warm nights, while heated blankets - an absolute must during the chilly evenings make the space feel cozy and welcoming. Being able to chill in a warm bed while hearing the lions outside is surreal. Traditional African décor pieces add a rich sense of culture and connection to the wild, showing great authenticity. But the highlight was the porch, where conservation meets serenity. Just a few meters away, lions roamed. We sipped morning coffee and enjoyed afternoon braais while lions paraded past, staring straight into our eyes. It was nothing short of magical.



At night, their roars rolled across the landscape with such force, the glass windows seemed to tremble. Jolted awake by their primal echoes, we'd rush to the window, hearts pounding, eyes squinting, hoping to catch a glimpse in the moonlight. It felt like stepping into a dream - one where the wild was just outside, alive and present. Each morning, their voices greeted the day before we did, and from the comfort of our room, we carefully watched them stir, stretch, and begin their day, just beyond the glass - an experience that is thrilling because of it being conservation based instead of exploitation to animals.

WHAT MADE IT ALL SO SPECIAL WAS KNOWING WE WERE STAYING IN A SPACE ROOTED IN TRUE, ETHICAL CONSERVATION. GG CONSERVATION IS NOT ABOUT PROFIT OR PERFORMANCE- IT'S ABOUT THE ANIMALS. ”

There is no breeding, no petting, and no exploitation. We couldn't imagine staying anywhere that commodifies wildlife, and here, we didn't have to. On some mornings, I'd sit near Ariel. Just a few meters from the fence, we'd lock eyes. There was a connection, something raw and unspoken. You don't just see the lions, you feel them. And they feel you. It's something you can't quite explain unless you've experienced it.

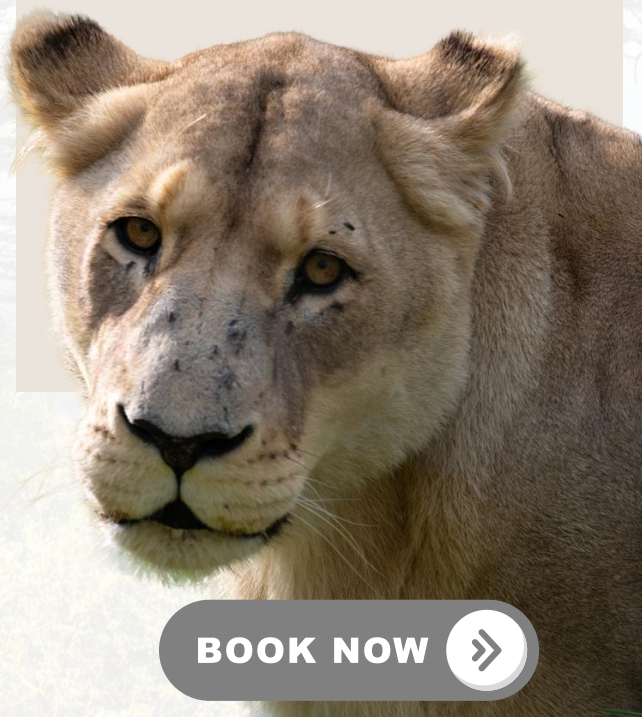


GG Conservation is the kind of place you crave even after you've left. Because what you leave behind isn't just a stay, it's a piece of your heart, tied to a quiet, unwavering sympathy for these lions who finally have the life they deserve.



Book your stay at the Lion House or experience the Lion Lodge, where the wilderness meets the spirit of Africa. To book your stay, simply send an email to info@ggconservation.co.za or contact 083 627 5691.

Step into the heart of true conservation - where every night comes with a roar, and every stay makes a difference.



BOOK NOW



They say nature heals all, and I have been on a healing journey - working through grief. While Zululand has been the place where I find solace - visiting GG Conservation touched my heart in ways I didn't know were possible. On the last night there, I spotted a rainbow after the rains, as it appeared in front of the misty mountain. Now what's special about that, you may wonder?

I have a great appreciation for rainbows now, because I associate them with my late grandmother's way of telling me that everything will be okay. During the week of her death anniversary, a rainbow always appears - its our little sign.

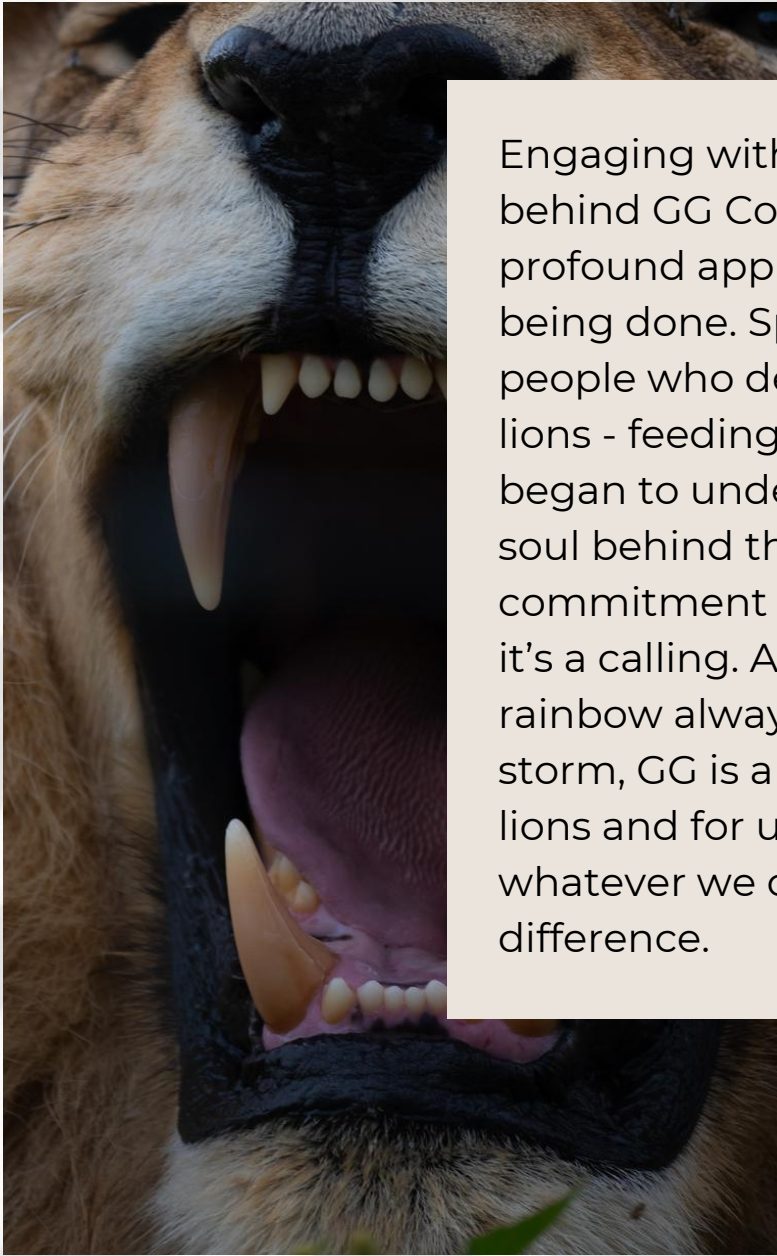
We often underestimate how animals can understand, feel, and respond to emotion. But try sitting opposite a lion, stare into its eyes, feel the pain of its past while it feels yours. You both look at each other with something powerful: hope. Hope in knowing it's okay, that it's safe, and that it's being given the best life now. And in return, it looks at you almost as if it's giving you courage to face anything. GG Conservation is a place of safeness. The lions feel safe. They aren't agitated - they're at peace.



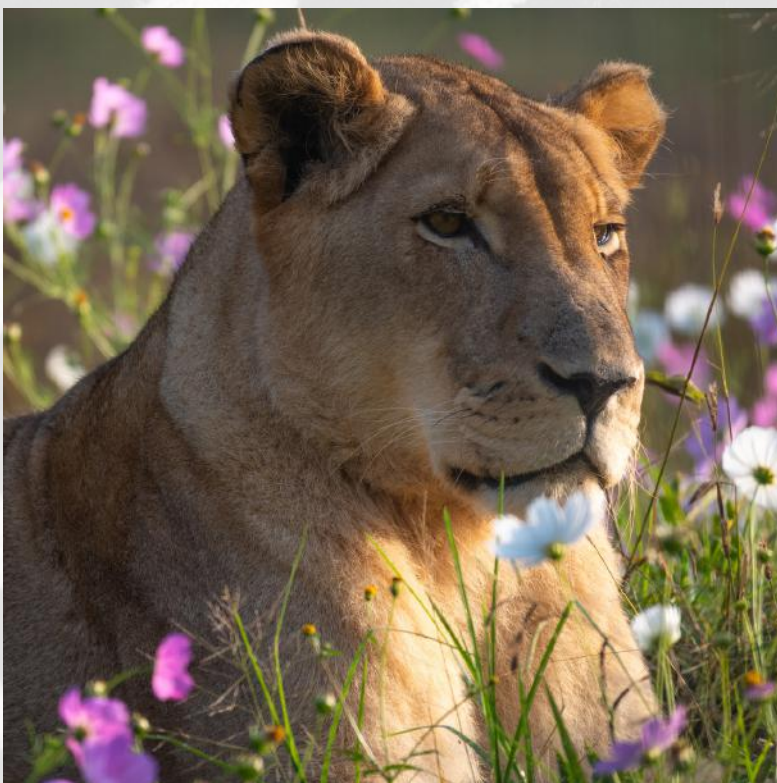
In Traci, the CEO's voice, you can hear unwavering hope and a deep-rooted passion to lead GG Conservation in the most ethical and responsible way possible. In Wade, the General Manager, there's a spark of enthusiasm - an energy driven by his incredible commitment to ensuring every lion receives the care, protection, and support they need.

And in Suzanne, the Director, you hear pure love - love for lions that radiates so brightly, it's impossible to miss. These qualities, woven together with the dedication of the entire GG team, are what make this place truly extraordinary. Being part of such a life-changing visit leaves you inspired, humbled, and grateful to have witnessed a sanctuary where compassion is at the heart of everything.

OUR WILD STAY AT GG CONSERVATION



Engaging with the passionate team behind GG Conservation gave us a profound appreciation for the work being done. Speaking with the kind people who dedicate their lives to the lions - feeding, caring, protecting, we began to understand the heart and soul behind this lion sanctuary. Their commitment goes far beyond duty; it's a calling. And just like how the rainbow always comes out after the storm, GG is a sense of hope. For the lions and for us - to inspire us to do whatever we can to make a difference.





TRAVEL DIARY

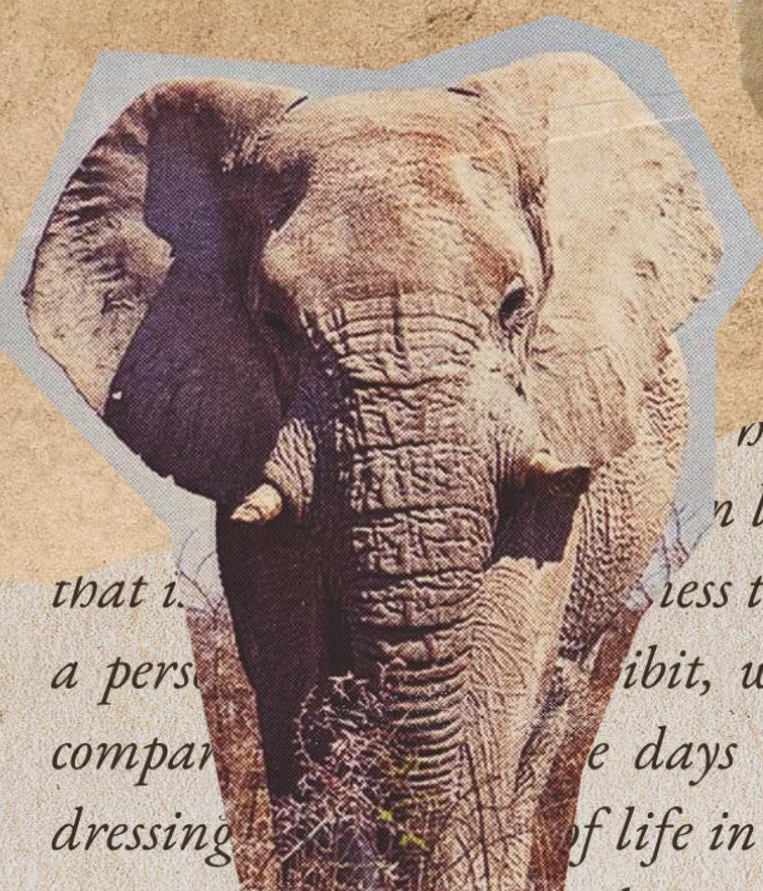


Let's
Go On
an adventure

in the African bush



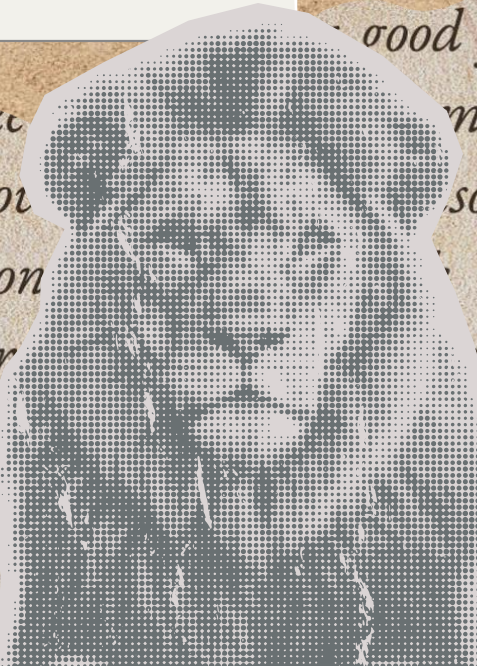
by Natalie Naidoo



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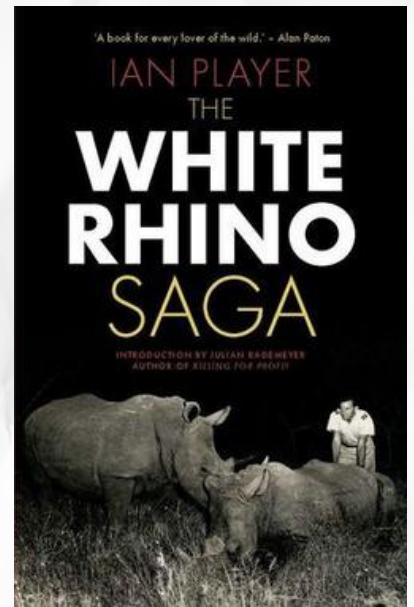
LAND OF KINGS AND CONSERVATION:

The Spirit of Zululand

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi is far more than a wildlife destination - it's a spiritual journey into the past, a living conservation success story, and a place of deep peace and reflection that words can never fully capture.

Before heading to any destination, I love to dive into research to get a feel for the region - its history, its people, and its wildlife. In preparation for my trip to Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, I explored three fascinating books: *White Rhino Saga* and *Zululand Wilderness* by Ian Player, and *Natal and the Zulu Country* by T.V. Bulpin. These reads offered valuable insights that made my visit to one of South Africa's most renowned national parks both meaningful and memorable. Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park is no ordinary park, it's the birthplace of white rhino conservation.

A MUST READ - ENJOY AND LEARN FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF HOW THE WHITE RHINO WAS SAVED FROM EXTINCTION.



Remarkably, every single southern white rhino in existence today can trace its genetic origins back to this very park. From the historic Operation Rhino in the 1950s to the ongoing efforts of Project Rhino, HiP has been at the forefront of protecting these majestic animals. The park boasts a rich and varied landscape, from misty hills to lush, verdant valleys, offering breathtaking scenery at every turn. Steeped in Zulu history, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi holds deep cultural and spiritual significance.



cultural IMPORTANCE

It was once the hunting grounds of the legendary Zulu King Shaka and remains a place woven with traditions, memories, and heritage.

The Park is divided into two main regions: Hluhluwe, characterized by its hilly terrain, indigenous forests, and grasslands; and iMfolozi, with its open savannahs and the Black and White iMfolozi Rivers winding through the landscape. There are three main entrances - Nyalazi, Memorial, and Cengeneni where the staff were warm, welcoming, and happy to share tips on the best spots for game viewing.

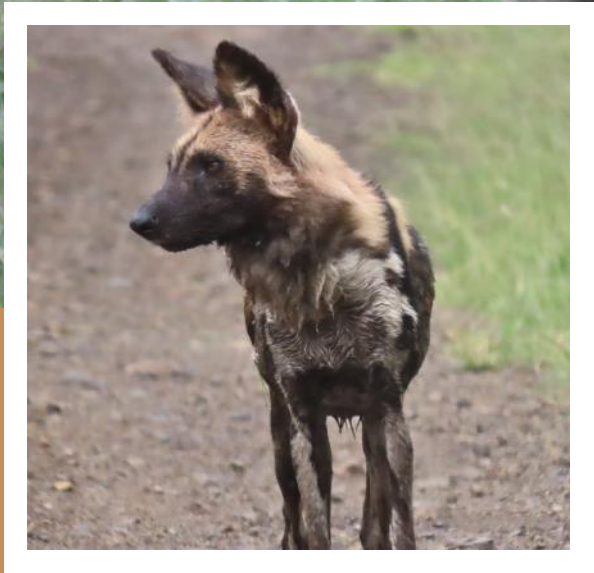


From the moment you enter, you're greeted by vast, rolling landscapes with numerous scenic viewpoints perfect for photography, picnics, or simply taking in the view. One of my favorites was Siwasamakhosikazi, which offers stunning vistas of weathered cliffs, ancient rock formations, and a lush valley along the water's edge. It's a magical place for a picnic or sundowners, with regular sightings of elephant, buffalo, nyala, and an incredible array of birdlife. A well-maintained tar road and a network of dirt roads make exploring the park easy and rewarding. I was fortunate to witness white rhinos enjoying a mud bath, elephant families crossing the road, giraffes browsing treetops, buffalo herds, plains game, and even lions, all in a single day. These sightings were all the more powerful given the park's crucial role in conservation.



The Centenary Centre is a must-visit, showcasing early wildlife capture methods alongside a takeaway, souvenir shops, and clean restrooms. Hilltop Camp's restaurant offers stunning breakfast views, and while the camp shop could use more variety, the peaceful, welcoming atmosphere makes the experience memorable.

TALES FROM THE WILD



WILD DOGS OF UMKHUZE

by Debbie & Clive Thompson

When venturing into the wilds of South Africa, most travelers hope to catch a glimpse of the famed Big Five. For us, however, there's always one animal that tops our wish list: the African Wild Dog. Along with leopards, they're our absolute favorite - enigmatic, endangered, and incredibly elusive. We're very fortunate to visit the Ezemvelo Reserves in KwaZulu-Natal Regularly, and on a recent four-night stay in uMkhuze Game Reserve, we were blessed beyond belief.

We encountered the Reserve's only pack of Wild Dogs not just once, but four times. Given their rarity and the fact that this is the only known pack in the Reserve, seeing them even once is an extraordinary stroke of luck. The pack consists of four adults and seven pups- although now, they're closer to sub-adults. Energetic, curious, and full of personality, they're absolutely mesmerizing to watch. On our third morning, we decided to take a drive past the beautiful KuMasinga Hide, hoping, perhaps a little optimistically to spot a leopard. If we were really lucky, maybe even a hyena.



DID YOU KNOW ?

African Wild Dogs have one of the highest hunting success rates of any predator - up to 80%, compared to lions (around 30%) or leopards (closer to 25%). Their success comes from incredible teamwork, coordination, and endurance during hunts.

We were en route to Nsumo Pan when we rounded a corner and were stunned to find a single Wild Dog sitting calmly at the roadside. The thrill was instant. Within moments, more dogs appeared until the entire pack of 11 was running straight up the road toward us. I scrambled to take photos while trying to soak in the moment with my own eyes. Most of my pictures ended up either out of focus or missing part of a dog entirely typical of Wild Dog encounters, where the action is fast and fleeting. Within six minutes, they had vanished into the dense bush, as if they'd never been there at all.

We returned later that afternoon, hoping for another glimpse, but the bush had reclaimed its secrets. Determined, we set out again the following morning - this time from Nsumo Pan back toward KuMasinga, methodically searching for signs of the pack. It seemed we were out of luck. So, as we often do, we decided to stop, switch off the engine, and simply listen. The bush has a way of speaking, if you're quiet enough to hear it. And then - it happened again ! From the bush behind our vehicle, the dogs emerged, bounding with energy and purpose. They made their way to a nearby muddy patch of water to cool off, dashing in and out in mere seconds. They quickly paused briefly to assess a herd of impala up ahead but, judging by their full bellies, seemed content to let them be.



We were treated to an unforgettable 20 minutes in their company before they disappeared once again into the undergrowth. That afternoon, we returned to the same area and to our delight, found the pack once more. This time they were lying in tall grass beside the road, difficult to see clearly, but undeniably present. For about 15 minutes they rested quietly, watching us with curious eyes. Then, without warning, the entire pack sprang to life, dashing into the bush in a frenzy of energy.

With daylight fading, we left them in peace and made our way back to camp. On our final morning, we took one last drive toward KuMasinga Hide. To our amazement, we spotted them again, this time resting in the shade, deep in the bush. It was a quiet, brief sighting, but the perfect way to end a trip filled with rare and unforgettable moments. These sightings were, without question, the highlight of our journey.



On a previous visit in February, we were lucky to spot the seven pups alone near KuMasinga Hide - a brief six-minute encounter before they vanished into the undergrowth. We guessed the adults were nearby, just out of sight. This trip felt even more special. Along with several Wild Dog sightings, we also saw leopard, elephant, buffalo, and rhino. It was as if the bush had truly welcomed us. We're already eager to return, hoping that with patience and a bit of luck, we'll cross paths with those elusive Wild Dogs once more.



UNIQUE DECOR

LITTLE \$HIT AARDVARK #3 CANDLE HOLDER

These Aardvark Candle Holders add a playful and distinctive touch to any home. Inspired by the iconic South African animal, they're sure to spark conversation at your next dinner party or gathering. Available in a variety of sizes and shapes, they're perfect for mixing and matching to create a whimsical and eye-catching display.



WWW.RIALHEIM.CO.ZA

EARTHY TONES

When selecting furniture and decor, choose frames in warm neutrals, soft greys, and earthy greens paired with subtle wildlife-themed designs to bring natural warmth and a touch of the wild into your home. Add a pop of personality with scatter cushions featuring wildlife imagery, paired with nature-inspired frames and soft beige decor accents to create a harmonious, earthy retreat.





Walk on the wild side
Hush Puppies Boots -
Kingsmead Shoes

Local is lekker indeed!
Stay Wild Cap - Local is
Lekker ZA online store



WINTER SAFARI

Stay dry but fly!

Waterproof raincoat -
Duck Apparel



Warm & Stylish

Utility parka jacket -
Edgars



Support Rhino Conservation
Project Rhino Hat - Mr Price

Luleka

WILD KIDS



MORE INFORMATION



Luleka offers a family-friendly adventure where children can truly connect with nature, explore the outdoors, and learn through hands-on experiences in a safe, inspiring environment.

WHY TEACHING KIDS ABOUT NATURE AND WILDLIFE IS SO IMPORTANT

Nature is the best teacher. When children are introduced to wildlife and the natural world from a young age, they gain far more than just knowledge - they develop a deep sense of self, a broader perspective on life, and a powerful sense of responsibility to protect the world around them. Exploring nature helps kids grow confident and curious. It teaches them patience, empathy, and resilience in a way that no classroom ever could.

Kids who connect with nature learn to appreciate the beauty and complexity of life outside of human-made spaces. They start to understand that everything in nature has a role, and that we are just one part of a much larger, living system. This helps children see the world not just as a place to live in, but as something worth caring for. They become more thoughtful, more observant, and more compassionate.

NATURE IS A TOOL TO GET CHILDREN TO EXPERIENCE NOT JUST THE WIDER WORLD, BUT THEMSELVES.

—STEPHEN MOSS.

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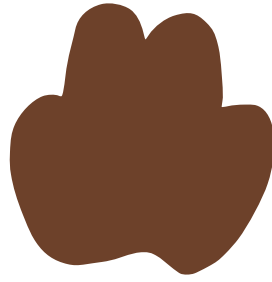


Animal Tracks



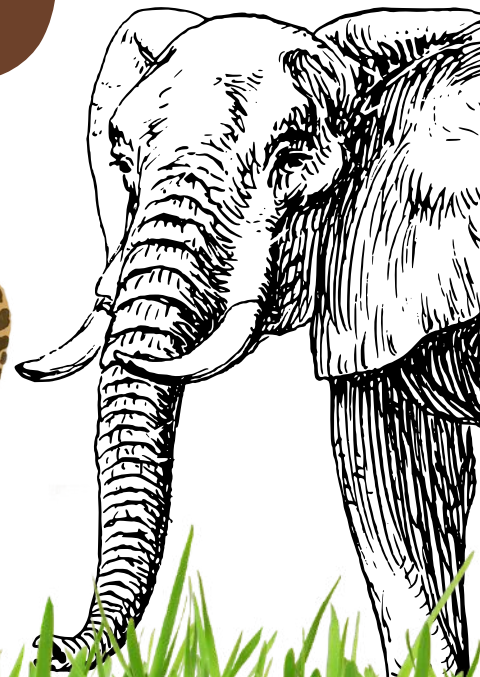
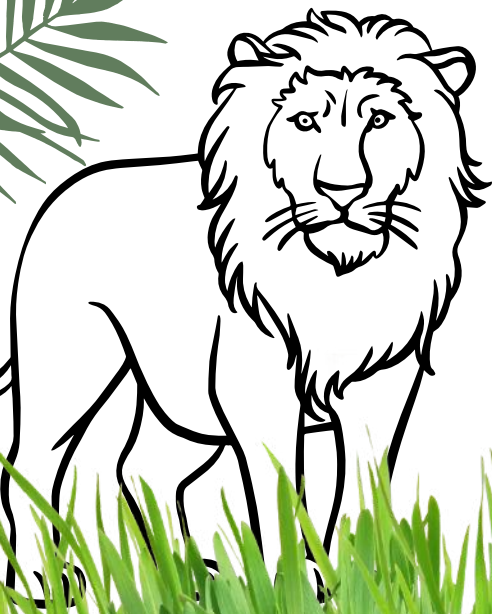
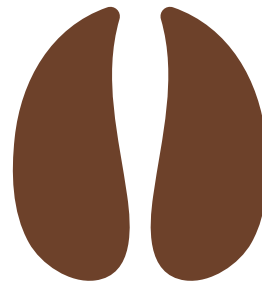
lion

hippo



elephant

buffalo



A movie poster for 'The Wolf and the Lion'. It features a woman with long, wavy brown hair smiling and holding two young animals: a lion cub on the left and a wolf pup on the right. They are in a wilderness setting with a turquoise lake, evergreen trees, and snow-capped mountains in the background. The sky is a clear blue. In the top left corner, there is a white circular logo with the text 'MOVIE INSPO'. The title 'THE WOLF AND THE LION' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle. Below the title, the text '2021 · Family/Adventure · 1h 39m' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

**MOVIE
INSPO**

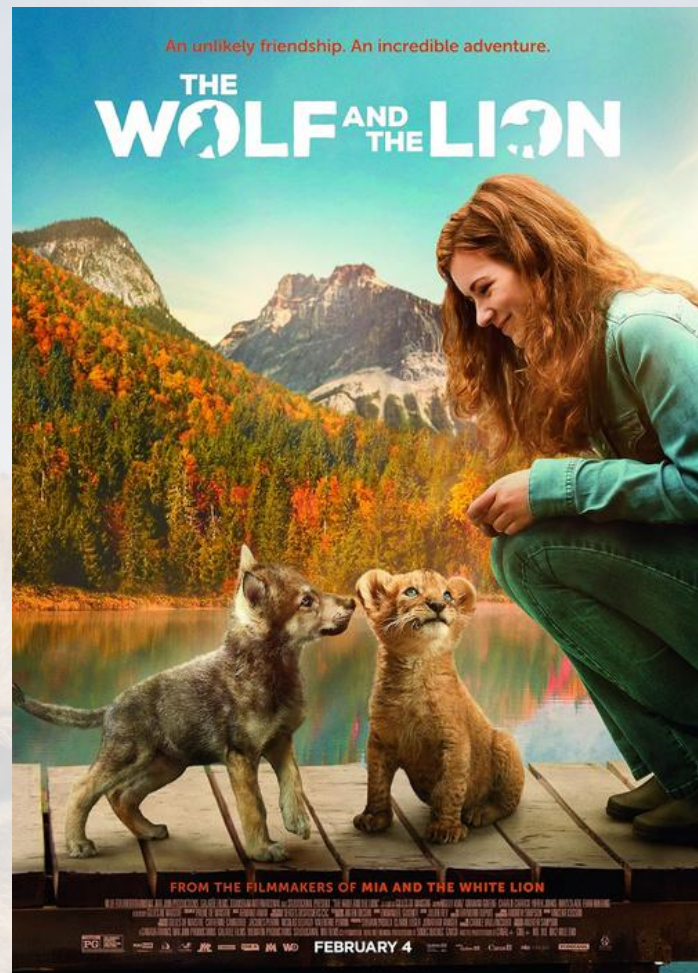
THE WOLF AND THE LION

2021 · Family/Adventure · 1h 39m

In this heartfelt wilderness drama, Alma Deranquel (played by Molly Kunz) returns to her childhood home in the Canadian wilderness after the passing of her beloved grandfather. While exploring the forest, she stumbles upon the wreckage of a plane carrying a lion cub destined for a circus. When a bald eagle knocks the cub into her arms, Alma, greatly motivated by her grandfather's advocacy against animal cruelty, decides to keep the cub rather than turn it over to authorities. She also finds refuge in a female wolf and her pup, who seek shelter in Alma's home, creating an unlikely but beautiful family

dynamic. The wolf pup, named Mozart, and the lion cub, named Dreamer, grow up as brothers, cared for by Alma and the wolf mother. However, when Alma is called away for a music audition, the wolf mother is captured by two male scientists who plan to relocate her to a breeding facility for a rare, fictional wolf species. Left alone, Alma's bond with the animals becomes even more crucial, especially as Dreamer is sold to a cruel circus trainer who uses brutal methods to control the lions. In a thrilling turn of events, Mozart and Dreamer escape captivity and embark on a dangerous journey to reunite

with Alma. As the two cubs are pursued by authorities and the circus, Alma, with the help of Joe, her godfather, works to rescue her beloved animals. As the two cubs are pursued by authorities and the circus, Alma, with the help of Joe, her godfather, works to rescue her beloved animals. The emotional climax sees Alma staging an outdoor concert to raise awareness for the cruel mistreatment of wild animals, while Mozart and Dreamer find their own way back to the forest, where their bond remains unbroken. *The Wolf and the Lion* is a powerful tale of survival, love, and the fight for freedom. Set against the stunning backdrop of the Canadian wilderness, this film touches on themes of animal rights, family, and the healing power of nature, offering a moving and unforgettable cinematic experience.



IMDb

6,2/10



Prime Video

6,2/10



Rotten Tomatoes

30%



5 COMMON MISTAKES You are making as a Guide

Working in a Private Game Reserve gives you a unique opportunity to offer guests an unforgettable safari. But even experienced Guides sometimes fall into habits that can dull the magic.

Here are five mistakes to avoid if you want to turn a good game drive into a world-class experience :



1. Failing to research your guests in advance

In Private Reserves, you often receive guest details ahead of time – their country of origin, whether they’ve been on safari before, or even if they’re celebrating something special. Not using this information is a missed opportunity.

A simple gesture like greeting international guests in their native language or learning how to say “lion” or “elephant” in their mother tongue instantly builds rapport. It shows effort, cultural respect, and makes guests feel seen and appreciated.

Pro Tip: Ask what animals they’re most excited to see and tailor your commentary to their interests. A personalized experience leaves a lasting impression.

“We do not see nature with our eyes, but with our understandings and our hearts.”

–William Hazlett

2. Lacking enthusiasm during sightings

Imagine this: you casually announce, “There are lions up ahead,” with the same tone you’d use to comment on the weather. Now imagine the excitement in a guest’s heart, especially a first-timer. Half the safari thrill is in the anticipation and emotional build-up. Your energy sets the tone. If you sound jaded, your guests may feel underwhelmed – even at an incredible sighting.

Pro Tip: Let your enthusiasm shine, even if it’s the tenth lion sighting that week. Your excitement validates theirs.

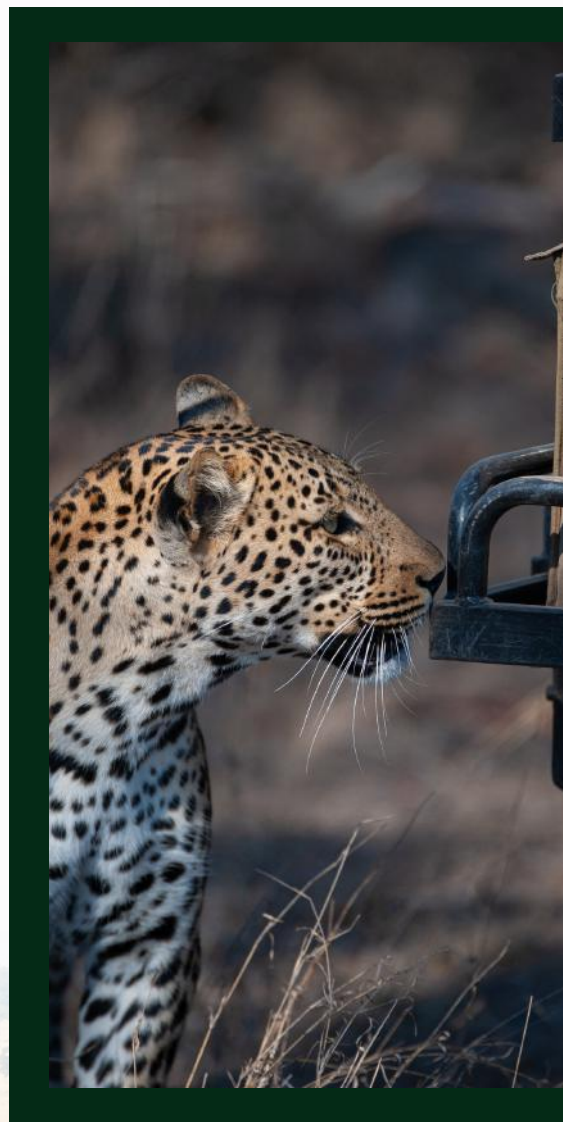
3. Overlooking “plain” game species

It’s easy to fall into the trap of chasing only the Big Five. But to many guests – especially first-timers, spotting their very first impala or zebra is just as thrilling.

Skipping over general game like wildebeest, kudu, or warthogs without offering context or stories can rob your guests of rich learning moments.

Pro Tip: Treat every species as if it’s important, because to someone in your vehicle, it probably is. A passionate explanation of why impala are ecological keystones can be just as captivating as a lion kill.

“There is a way that nature speaks, that land speaks. Most of the time we are simply not patient enough, quiet enough, to pay attention to the story.”
– Linda Hogan



4. Not managing guest expectations

Some guests arrive expecting to see a leopard on every corner and a kill before sundown. If you don't set realistic expectations early, disappointment can color the entire experience. Being upfront without deflating their excitement about how sightings work and the unpredictability of nature is key to a satisfying drive.

Pro Tip: Use this as an opportunity to educate about the beauty of nature's spontaneity and the thrill of the chase. Teach them to enjoy the full story of the bush, not just its dramatic chapters.

5. Getting in a routine and letting it show

It's natural to feel tired or fall into a routine, we all experience it. But remember, each safari is a unique and unforgettable adventure for your guests. They're not just only looking for wildlife; they're hoping for moments of wonder that only you can help create.

Pro Tip: Keep your enthusiasm fresh by learning a new wildlife fact each week or exploring a different route. Your curiosity and passion set the tone – when you're inspired, your guests will be too.



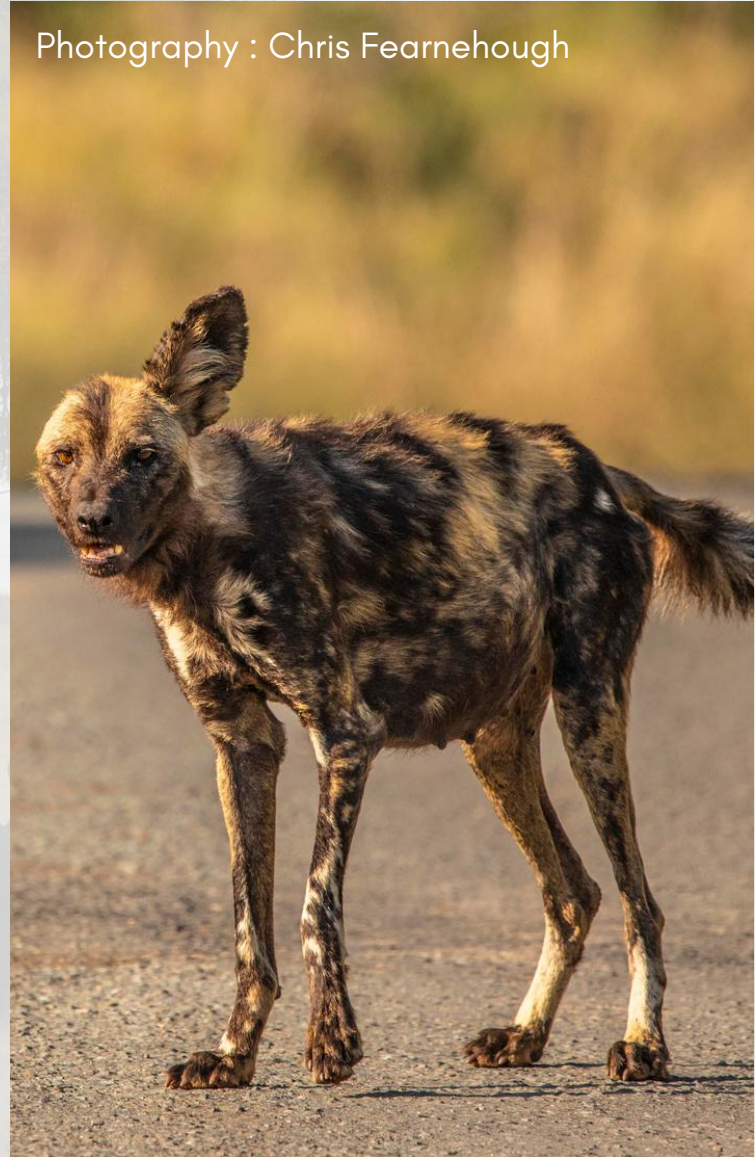
Wild dog Wonder

In her unforgettable past article, Nicole Mercury recounted a powerful encounter with the Munywaneni pack in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. During her observation, she witnessed a heartbreaking scene: the beta female, pictured here, crying out in pain as her ear was torn off in a violent fight with other wild dogs.

Despite her injuries, she remained standing. Moved by the moment, Nicole alerted Park organizations - an act that helped ensure the injured female received the attention she needed to survive. Some time after that, Photographer Chris Fearnough spotted her once again - this time heavily pregnant. Her ear, though still torn from the brutal fight, had healed well. Her belly was round with new life, and her presence radiated a strength deeper than ever before. Scarred but unbroken, she stood as a living testament to resilience, courage, and the fierce will to protect the next generation. African wild dogs are truly extraordinary - highly intelligent, socially complex, and critically endangered.

As a Priority Species, their survival is so vital that human intervention is sometimes necessary to protect them. That's what makes encounters like this so meaningful. Photographing this particular female, with her scarred ear and swelling belly, wasn't just a wildlife moment, it was a deeply human one. Her story of pain and perseverance, of loss and new life, mirrors the challenges we all face.

Photography : Chris Fearnough



Stay connected

3 MUST-FOLLOW WILDLIFE INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS

Simply click on the follow button ↓



If you're a nature and wildlife enthusiast, you won't want to miss the incredible work of Zander and Stefni Rautenbach, the husband-and-wife duo behind [@zr4_photography](#). Their breathtaking wildlife videos and photos from the iconic Kruger National Park to the wilds of Zululand, will inspire you to start planning your own dream self-drive safari.

Looking for a wild escape? Follow [@luleka_manyoni](#), based in the heart of Manyoni Private Game Reserve. Their feed features stunning wildlife photography, breathtaking views of the Luleka Homestead, and educational content that brings the African bush to life. Whether you're a safari lover or a first-time explorer, this is a must-follow destination.

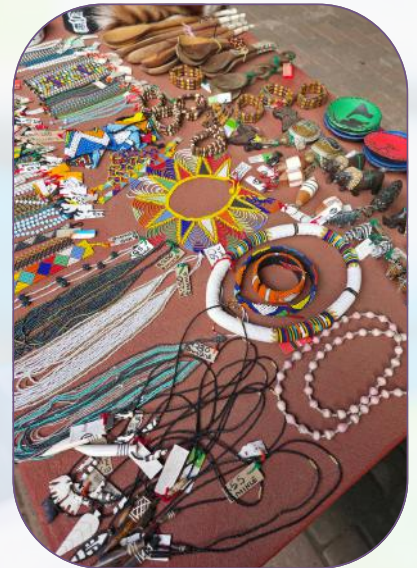
And don't miss the extraordinary photography of Natalie Naidoo ([@nataliee_naidoo](#)). From adorable lion cubs to majestic leopards lounging in trees, her lens captures the wild beauty of Botswana, Zimbabwe, KNP Zululand, and beyond. Her page is a visual feast for any wildlife lover.

Shop fresh fruit & handmade souvenirs



Visit the Newly Renovated Zamimpilo Market on the N2 in Mtubatuba!

Support local women entrepreneurs by exploring a vibrant market filled with fresh fruit, handcrafted curios, natural wooden décor, and authentic souvenirs. Whether you're a local seeking unique items to enhance your home or a tourist looking for the perfect memento, Zamimpilo Market has something for everyone. The best part? Every purchase helps empower and uplift the local community.



Stop by, shop local, and make a difference!