



Wildlife Research Expedition in South Africa - Enjoy first-class wildlife viewing whilst volunteering on a research project in aid of conservation of Africa's large game.

Översikt

Get up close and personal with Africa's large game such as lion, leopard, elephant and hyenas whilst volunteering on a conservation program in a South African game reserve. This incredible expedition is based in two stunning locations of the Limpopo Province, South Africa. Learn to use conservation and research equipment to help locate collared predators in the reserve, receive invaluable training in large animal identification, tracking and behavioural study skills and learn to appreciate the complex nature of predator / prey interactions in the African bush. Apply your new knowledge and enjoy the cooler air during satellite camps to some of the breathtaking mountain habitats participating in conservation and biodiversity studies. Volunteers will build upon their training, gaining knowledge and developing practical safari field skills throughout their time on the programme.

Expeditionen

Please note that exact project details are always subject to change due to weather conditions, time of year and game movements. Also, every October new research focuses are identified for the following year.

Expedition Aims

For Karongwe and Venetia:

- * To determine the impact of reintroduced mammals on game reserves and to help with their management and conservation. Research of this kind will play an important part in the management of future conservation areas.
- * To investigate the impact of predators on the prey species for more effective conservation and management of these valuable resources.
- * To establish and monitor the density of large predators within the reserve.
- * To record prey selection and kill frequencies, and the impact on prey populations.
- * To monitor movement patterns, territories and competition between predators on the reserve.
- * To investigate the reserves' prey populations, distribution and density, and how this relates to the predators' movements and territories (Karongwe).

For the mountain satellite camp:

- * To conduct a biodiversity study to compile a comprehensive species inventory of this highly important and fragile area, which is now a national park
- * To encourage community involvement and skills exchange with local guides.

1) Predator management

The team will allocate the majority of their time to detailed monitoring of predators on the reserves. Any tracks and signs of predator activity will be noted to supplement the information gained from the direct observations made on monitoring drives, and therefore give a more detailed survey of the predators inhabiting the reserve. At present all predators are monitored with equal emphasis, but focuses are subject to change.

Currently, collared focus animals on Karongwe include two lions; three cheetahs; two leopards; one spotted hyena. On Venetia the teams are following six collared lions; a pack of wild dogs; a brown hyena; three black backed jackals. It should be noted that these exact numbers change constantly and many individuals are part of a broader social unit. Also, the priorities regularly shift so that we can best help our partners with their work.

Cheetah energetics: GVI and its partners are initiating a pilot study to investigate the energetics of captive and wild cheetah using the double-labeled water technique. The program is in its initial stages, and a pilot study is underway to see if a scientific method for determining energy expenditure is a feasible study for GVI.

2) Sex/age ratios of animals

On Karongwe GVI has set up repeatable routes to record the sex and age ratios of herbivore species on the reserve more accurately. These will be carried out four times a year during each ten-week expedition to collect data on prey distribution, population dynamics and density, and how this affects the movements of the predators over time.

3) Vegetation monitoring

Volunteers will carry out extensive vegetation transects to complete the vegetation map of the conservancy, and to monitor elephant impact on sensitive areas of the reserve. This activity is seasonal and carried out annually only.

4) Ecological studies

Species lists will be built up over the expedition period on vegetation, mammals and birds observed to update the species list.

5) Mountain conservation and biodiversity project

Volunteers will spend five days out of the five weeks on a mountain satellite camp, exploring the area and helping to conduct the biodiversity survey.

6) Other activities and ecological studies

Other projects will be carried out to collect information on other important aspects of the reserve ecology. Volunteers may be called on to assist with short-term conservation projects for the reserve, such as alien vegetation eradication. There may also be opportunities for the team to be involved with the exciting work of darting and fitting of radio tracking collars to lion, cheetah and leopards.

7) Community projects

We will attempt to run open days for the local communities where children from the nearby villages can come for an educational day planned by the volunteers and staff. The day will focus on allowing children the chance to get a taste of the reserve, see the animals and go away with a message on the importance of conservation.

Mera om expeditionen

Volunteers must understand that the expedition has specific long term aims in conjunction with its partner organizations, and they will contribute to these aims by collecting and analyzing data and taking part in community projects. All volunteer must be team players and assist each other and the staff in daily tasks.

This expedition takes you to:

- * Live on a game reserve in the heart of the African bush, where you can be woken by a dawn chorus and sent to sleep by the roar of lions.
- * Both bases have a satellite camp located in the mountains, in which the fresh mountain scenery, varied flora and fauna, and panoramic views provide a refreshing break from the heat of the bush. The diverse range of habitats in the reserves also supports a wide range of plant and animal life, including elephant, giraffe, rhino and various antelope species.
- * Increase your personal knowledge of the South African environment, its importance and the threats to it, and help to increase both local and global knowledge and awareness.
- * Develop a baseline and holistic understanding of all aspects of the bush.
- * Undergo training to carry out extensive radio tracking and monitoring of all the collared predators on the reserve.
- * Learn a variety of new skills, including mammal and bird identification, tracking, ecology and bush first aid.
- * Participate in educational days with the local communities, teaching schoolchildren the importance of conservation.
- * Have a chance to enjoy the surrounding areas and activities, including visits to local reptile parks and animal sanctuaries, as well as mountain trails.
- * Get to know animals on the reserve individually and follow their progress / monitor their behavior.
- * Witness nature in its simplest form, having the opportunities to watch a lion kill, a newborn cheetah cub play or a stand-off between two elephants. In the African bush you can never tell what you will find just around the corner!
- * Help with a biodiversity research program in montane environments. This may include daily small mammal surveys using Sherman traps, invertebrate or reptile trapping along pit fall lines, or assisting with hands-on habitat management on the Venetia mountain satellite camp, such as anti-erosion work and bush encroachment control. Use the afternoons for a relaxing walk while on the lookout for mountain mammals such as bushbuck, red duiker and bushpig.
- * Enjoy regular contact with our partners, the reserve managers and other members of the broader conservation and research community.

Tidigare volontärer berättar

"We left for afternoon drive with a few ominous looking clouds rolling in from the west. It had been ridiculously hot for the last few days and we were definitely due for a big storm. Our first port of call was to check on brand new cheetah mum, Savannah and her 4-day-old cub Sav Jnr. Every trip to see them is slightly nail-biting as chances of survival for a single cub are virtually zero and we knew Savannah hadn't eaten since before the birth and would therefore have to leave the cub soon in order to feed.

With such good hunting conditions provided by the weather it perhaps wasn't a surprise to find the cub alone, and although it was hard to do so, as the first enormous rain drops began to fall, we abandoned the cub to it's fate and set off to look after our own. Within 5 minutes we were soaked to the skin and about to make a run for it to the nearest shelter when our driver Sandra asked if we didn't mind getting a little wetter for a very cool surprise... If you can't get any wetter and love surprises then there was only ever one answer. We sat for a few minutes until Sandra took a call on the radio, organising her secret mission, eventually creeping around the corner... when suddenly we see in the middle of the road and right in front of us... Savannah just finishing a successful impala hunt. Go mum! More than worth getting soaked for, and the news was even better when we went back the following morning to find mum back with cub, both looking dry, warm and more importantly, nice and fat."

Alison Mollon

"Coming to South Africa on the animal conservation study has been a life changing experience for me. Before I arrived I was a little unsure of the true meaning of animal conservation; but with the guidance of the GVI team I have gained a good understanding of a complex situation. This 5 week period has given me many fantastic memories to treasure, not only the stunning wildlife but also the time spent with my fellow volunteers and the fantastic staff. To be thrown together with an incredible bunch of like minded people has been a real privilege.

I've been lucky to have some amazing sightings of the lions and seeing Zero, the pride male, feeding on a zebra foal certainly brought home the reality of the natural world that I am so detached from back home. Also seeing Lisa, one of the females visit her son Lionel at the boma was incredibly moving. My other choice animal moments include mothers with their young, particularly one of the cheetahs Nyeleti and her cubs. We had a great visual of the cubs playing whilst she watched over them attentively. Stunning. Returning from an afternoon drive and nearing camp, we stumbled upon a female hippo with her very young calf out the water at dusk. Seeing the animals at sunset was the 'icing on the cake'. I'm certainly going to find it difficult to return to a desk job when I get home but have already made plans to return within a year. Thank you to all of the incredible staff and wonderful friends for making this all happen."

Martin

Vilken skillnad gör denna expedition?

Volunteers collect vital behavioral data on reintroduced predators and larger herbivore on reserves where they do not have the manpower, time or resources to carry out intensive monitoring. GVI spends up to 12 hours a day following large predators such as lions, leopards, cheetah and wild dog to determine their feeding ecology spatial use, competition and behavior. The information gathered is used to give an accurate picture of the predators impact on prey populations, determine social structure, genetics, and spatial movement. This vital information helps maintain a healthy balance of these natural resources and ultimately conserve some of Africa's natural heritage bioregions.

Höjdpunkter

Experiencing a unique African bush adventure at the heart of a spectacular game reserve; mastering radio telemetry techniques and learning to track animals through the bush; getting acquainted with big game and all the main predators, including lion, cheetah, leopard, elephant and rhino; exploring nearby regions to experience such breathtaking views as from the Blyde River Canyon in the Drakensberg Mountains; living and working alongside FGASA qualified South African Guides getting constant learning and inspiration; having the chance to sleep out in the bush under the spectacular African stars and wake up to a beautiful sunrise.

Plats

The Karongwe Game Reserve (KGR) and Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve (VLNR) are situated in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, approximately 500km northeast of Johannesburg. These areas are true 'Big Five' (lions, elephants, rhinos, leopards and buffalos) territories and reveal the African bush at its best, being the home to such majestic predators. Volunteers will be allocated their base upon arrival in country, and those on ten-week expeditions will get the opportunity to experience two of South Africa's finest reserves: Karongwe and Venetia, spending five weeks in each location.

Ute i fält

Volunteers live in an old farm house on Karongwe, and in a stunning permanent tented camp at Venetia, both situated deep within the reserves, which contain dormitory-style sleeping arrangements, bathrooms, a kitchen and an outside area. While on the mountain phase, volunteers live in a cozy cottage in the mountains, on the edge of plantations. It too includes dormitory-style sleeping arrangements, including a bathroom, kitchen and sitting room, and has occasional hot water and limited solar electricity.

Kvalifikationer du får

Mammal Introduction and Herbivore Identification, Survey Skills – Radio Telemetry; GPS use, Field Guide's Reptile Course, First Aid & CPR training (certification optional), Individual Predator Ecology and behavior, Wildlife Management, Basic wildlife diseases, Large herbivore ecology and behavior, Basic animal tracks and sign skills, Basic Field Guide skills, Biodiversity survey techniques (Small mammal trapping, Invertebrate surveys), Field Safety – Radio use, Emergency Action Plan implementation and drills.

Utbildning och upplägg

The first week will incorporate the bulk of the training, although it will continue throughout the expedition. Training is continuous and includes a rigorous and comprehensive training program, encompassing both lectures and field practicals. The idea is to provide a baseline and holistic understanding of all aspects of the bush to build upon throughout your stay. Subjects included in the training are conservation, reserve management, bird / mammal / reptile identification, tracking, tree identification, geology, ecology and basic first aid. You will also be asked to participate in the training by preparing presentations to the rest of the team on various topics, and a personal or team project that is worked upon throughout the expedition.

After the training, the group will then be divided into three teams and rotate through the various activities to give more variety and training in different fields and locations. During your five-week stay, your team will get the opportunity of heading up into the mountains for five days to take part in a new conservation and biodiversity project in the indigenous rainforest. This will give you the opportunity to experience and learn what the area has to offer in its diversity of habitats, fauna and flora. Back at the base, the two remaining teams will be carrying out the predator research, while two team members will stay in camp per day to carry out camp duties, which again will rotate. Camp duties include cleaning and camp chores as well as data input and personal projects. This approach gives individuals time to themselves and a chance to rest.

Although the program is variable, the basic plan for a ten-week expedition is as follows:

Week 1 Training

Week 2 Predator monitoring

Week 3 Mountain phase

Week 4 Predator monitoring

Week 5 Predator monitoring

Week 6 Training week two / research for ten-weekers

Week 7 Mountain phase

Week 8 Predator monitoring

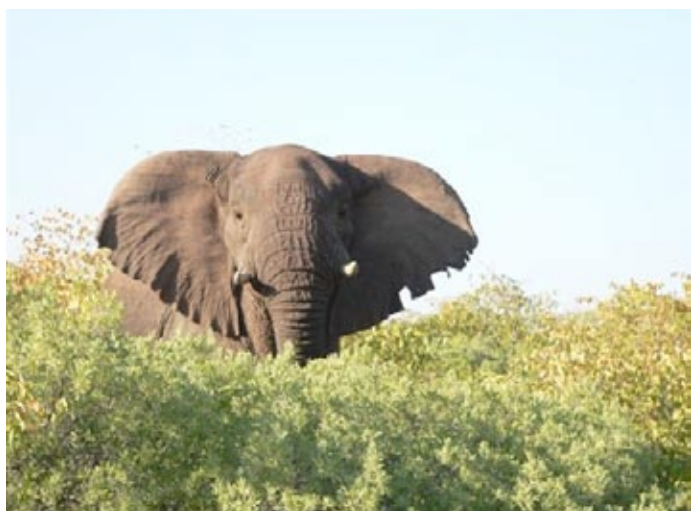
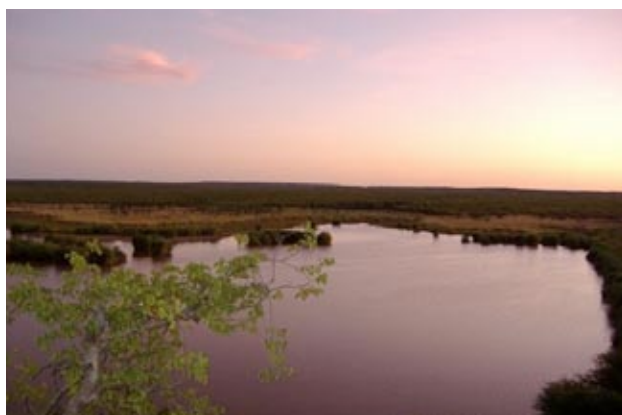
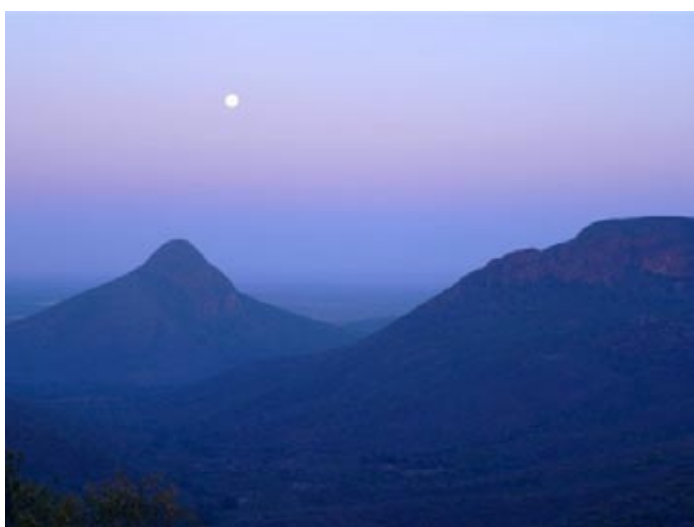
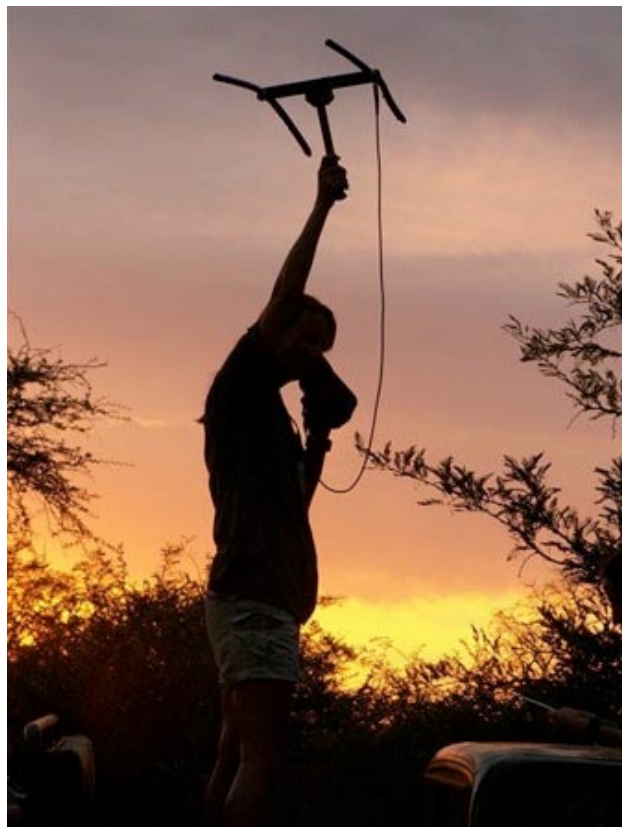
Week 9 Predator monitoring / prey transects

Week 10 Predator monitoring

Förkunskaper

No previous experience or foreign language skills are required but volunteers must be able to work as part of a team, have a strong interest in wildlife and conservation and be prepared to enjoy Africa in more traditional way. Days are hot and dusty and volunteers can expect to experience all the adventures and rigours of Africa on a continual basis. Participants must be enthusiastic, adventurous and respectful of their host country's culture and environment.

Foton från expeditionen



För startdatum, priser och bokning, se www.blueberry.nu