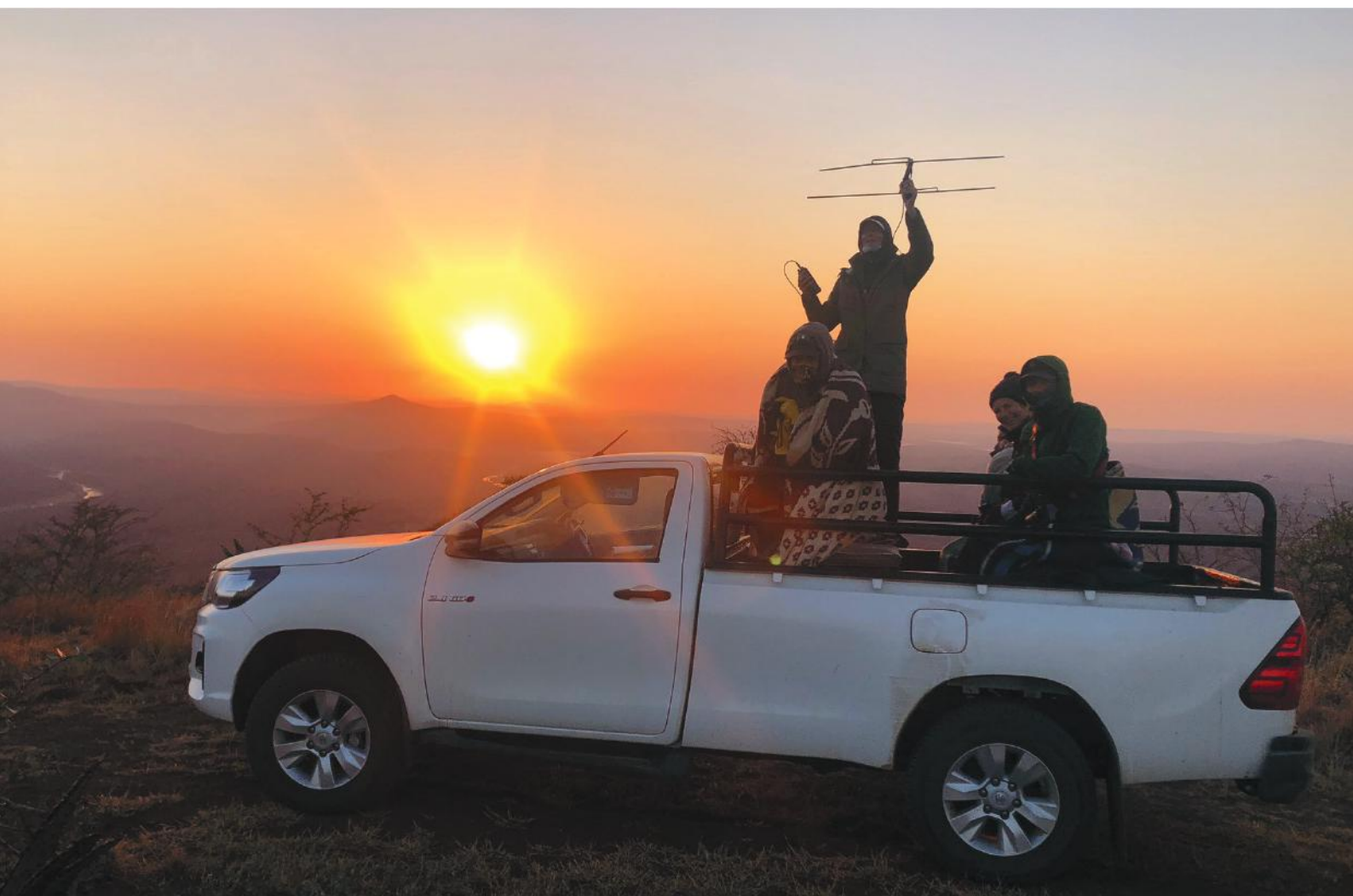




A guide to the:  
*Zululand Wildlife Conservation Project*





# The Zululand Wildlife Conservation Project

**Focus:** African Wildlife

**Location:** South Africa

**Start Date:** Every Other Monday

**Arrival & Starting Point:** Richards Bay

Hailed as one of the most biodiverse wildlands in all of Africa, Zululand is a haven of phenomenal wildlife species and is often referred to as 'the heartbeat of Africa'. With stretches of varied and stunning landscapes, it's a proud home to Africa's most loved animals, from the iconic 'Big 5' to wild dogs, big cats and everything in between. Whilst the wildlife here is in abundance, especially spread across five unique and remarkable reserves, it is also at risk from ongoing and serious threats such as habitat loss and fragmentation, illegal poaching and human-wildlife conflict.

Established in 2008, the Zululand Wildlife Conservation Project was founded to provide long-term, sustainable monitoring and conservation projects to game reserves that did not have the funds nor capacity to implement them themselves. Africa has over 400 known species of endangered animals and the tracking and monitoring of these species is critical in ensuring their survival. The project also specialises in the relocation and reintroduction of threatened species. From its inception, they have helped to reintroduce over 200 critically endangered black rhinos into the wild, as well as relocating over 800 animals across a variety of endangered species. The team have fitted 815 tracking devices on priority species, and a total of 145 animals have been rescued and treated as a result of snare traps and serious wounds. All of this would not have been possible without the help of dedicated volunteers.



As a volunteer, you will live and work on one of the project's five game reserves (each of them home to the renowned 'Big 5'). You'll experience true conservation work in the real African bush, all supported by preservation giants such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, the Wildlands Conservation Trust, and other world-famous conservation authorities. This is your opportunity to contribute to ongoing research of endangered and priority species in the birthplace of conservation in Africa.

As part of a small and passionate group of volunteers, you'll help to track, monitor and collect vital data on incredible wildlife species including wild dogs, lions, cheetahs, leopards, rhinos, elephants, and vultures. Where necessary, volunteers have even been called upon to help with the darting, tagging and collaring of various species which is an extraordinary opportunity to be part of!

The African bush is a dynamic and ever-changing environment so your activities on the project will be dictated by the animals you are monitoring! So, for a wild African adventure, where you'll experience the perfect blend of unparalleled scenery, spectacular wildlife and traditional Zulu culture, enquire today!



# Reserves

The project works across five stunning reserves, all with a slightly different conservation focus. Whilst volunteering you will be placed on one of the reserves, though if you are staying for longer than two weeks, you may have the opportunity to transfer to another. Each volunteer group has a maximum size of 5 people for each reserve, as small teams allow for efficiency and also afford you the opportunity to learn from the conservationists through more one-on-one time. Due to this, specific placement requests will depend on the availability at the time you plan to travel. All the reserves are home to the 'Big 5' and a variety of spectacular African wildlife that you'll help to monitor daily.

Key:  Monitoring focus  Monitored if sighted

## Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park

The Hluhluwe and iMfolozi Park was established in 1895 and is one of the oldest game reserves in Africa. This huge 96,000-hectare reserve is managed in two sections due to its size, and as such, offers different dramatic landscapes but the same incredible wildlife.



### Hluhluwe Section

In the Hluhluwe section of the park, the monitoring focus surrounds African wild dogs, lions, elephants and rhinos, though any incidental sightings of cheetahs, leopards and vultures are also recorded. This section is primarily hilly, though whilst rugged and mountainous, there are stunning sections of grasslands and forests. The volunteer accommodation here is located on top of a hill in a coastal scarp forest and is situated within walking distance to the main tourist camp which has a small shop, restaurant and swimming pool.



Wild dogs, lions, elephants and rhinos



Cheetahs, leopards and vultures

### iMfolozi Section

The iMfolozi section of the park is larger in size and holds a fascinating history as it was the birthplace of the now famous 'Operation Rhino' in the 1950's and 60's, resulting in saving the Southern white rhino from extinction. The volunteer accommodation is isolated and relies on a generator and solar power for electricity, whilst the accommodation is basic, it has a spectacular view of the Black iMfolozi River from a lookout post at the camp.



Wild dogs, lions, elephants and cheetahs



Leopards, vultures and rhinos





# Reserves



## uMkhuze Game Reserve

The uMkhuze game reserve was established in 1912. As 75% of this reserve is surrounded by local rural communities, poaching for bushmeat is a huge issue. The setting of snare traps has seen rhinos, elephants and many wild dogs falling victim to these accidental trappings. For this reason, the monitoring of wild dogs on this reserve is vital and may include volunteers reporting snares or snare wounds to the veterinary team. The volunteer accommodation is within walking distance to the main touristsit camp which has a takeaway diner, small shop and swimming pool.



Wild dogs, cheetahs, lions and elephants



Vultures and leopards

## Tembe Elephant Park

Proclaimed in 1983, Tembe park is home to over 200 of the world's largest elephants! They are the last remaining indigenous herd in KwaZulu-Natal and include the legendary 'Tuskers' (those with tusks that weigh more than 45kg)! The 30,000-hectare land was donated by the Chief of the Tembe tribe and whilst the focus here is mainly on lions and suni (small, rare antelopes), there will be 2 sessions per fortnight focusing on elephant monitoring.



Lions, wild dogs, suni and elephants



Rhinos and leopards



## Manyoni Game Reserve

Established in 2004, the Manyoni Game Reserve was chosen for the WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion Project, and in 2005 a founder population of black rhinos were released onto the reserve. In 2009, it was proclaimed a nature reserve acknowledging it as a site of biodiversity importance with over 70 mammal species and exceptional birdlife. From time to time, the volunteering team here will assist with game counts and vegetation assessments.



Wild dogs, cheetahs, elephants and lions



Rhinos



# Activities

No matter which reserve you visit, you'll be faced with a lot of amazing experiences and incredible wildlife. You will take part in each of the crucial conservation activities listed below, though the focus animal or species may be different depending on where you are based.

## Tracking & Monitoring

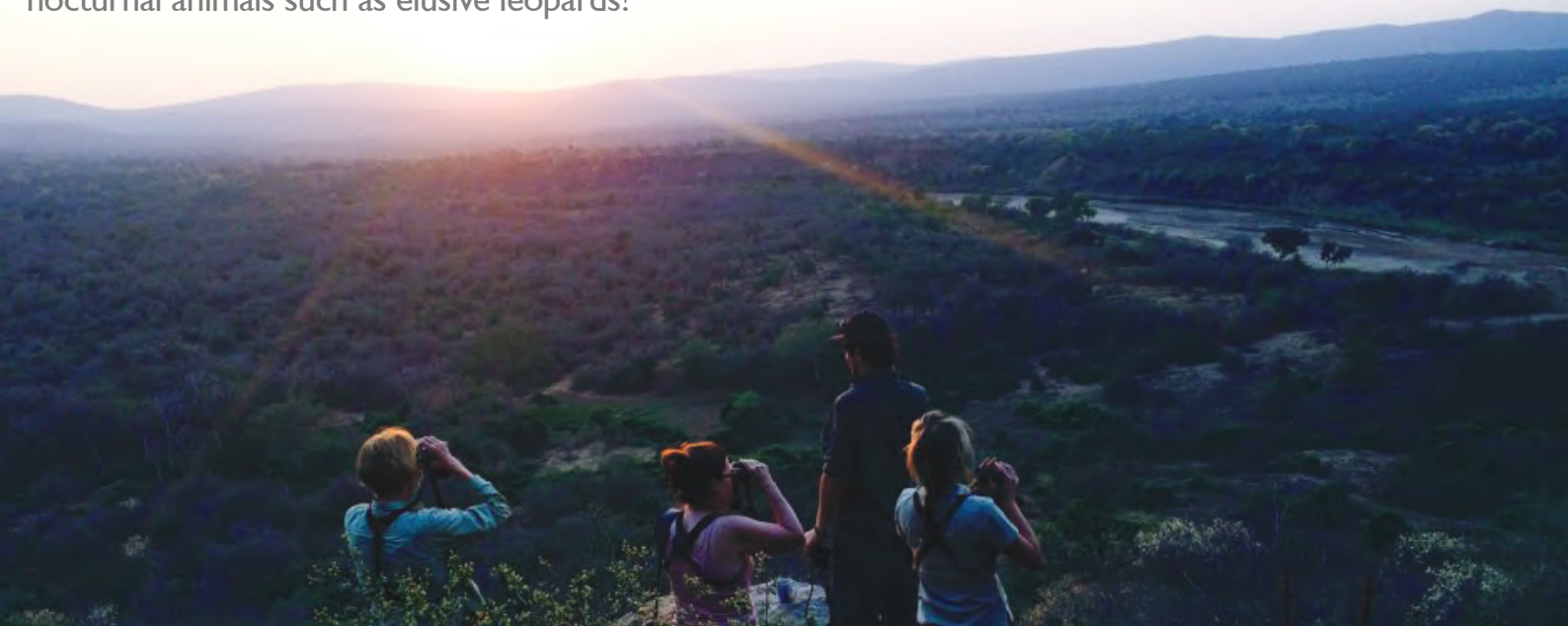
Monitoring is the backbone of wildlife conservation as it allows us to identify what makes different species thrive or falter in the wild. By monitoring animal populations, movement patterns, habitat utilisation and threats such as snare or poaching incidents, the project is able to ensure all the wildlife is healthy and safe on the reserves, as well as aiding conservational management decisions such as the relocation, removal or reintroduction of animals to other areas. The monitoring of endangered species is crucial as it determines what necessary actions need to be implemented to avoid extinction.

As a volunteer, you'll head out into the field daily in search of priority species to monitor and collect vital data that aids their conservation. Along the way you'll spot a variety of incredible species that call Zululand home, so you can think of this activity as a classic African safari with a conservation twist, that is really making a difference!



## Data Collection & Analysis

Whilst monitoring the animals on the reserve, you will be taught how to map their locations using GPS and telemetry equipment. You'll also collect data on the priority species including their group composition, behaviour, feeding patterns, territorial ranges and potentially any births or deaths of certain animals. Once a week, a day will be allocated to analyse the data for research purposes and to allow the project to provide the reserves with monthly reports which aid conservation management decisions. The project also uses camera traps to capture moments that otherwise may have been missed, they are also particularly useful in helping to monitor nocturnal animals such as elusive leopards!







## Identikits & Wildlife Photography

Identikits are hugely beneficial to wildlife reserves as they help to identify individual animals and allow the team to monitor how the individual is doing over time. This is especially important if the animal has been reintroduced or relocated to a new area. Volunteers help to create or update identikits by taking photos of specific animals, trying to get as many varied angles as possible and capturing any notable markings or identifiable features, so this is really the time to put your photography skills to the test!

## Additional Activities

Occasionally, you may be invited to help with some incredible activities such as darting, tagging, radio collaring, relocating or reintroducing endangered species to new areas, identity marking (i.e. notching) or vulture counts and nest surveys. These activities are only performed when necessary so we cannot guarantee you will take part in these activities but if you are fortunate enough, you'll be able to experience hands-on conservation management up close and personal. Every day is different out in the African bush, so who knows what extraordinary experiences await you!



# Itinerary

Below is an example of a two-week itinerary, though durations of up to 12 weeks are available which may give you the opportunity to work on each of the reserves. Project days on every reserve follow a similar format of early starts and long lunch breaks, though itineraries are subject to change, especially if a reserve needs an animal collared or relocated!

## Day 1

After arriving into Richards Bay Airport, you'll be met by a project representative before transferring to one of the five reserves. Please note, you will need to arrive before 12:50pm to make the transfer, flights arriving after this time will be too late for the project team to collect you. After your transfer, you'll have time to settle in, get to know your fellow volunteers and enjoy an afternoon of exploring the sites - you may even spot some of the 'Big 5' whilst familiarising yourself with the area!

## Days 2 - 14

Each morning you'll head out early as the sun is rising, being treated to stunning views of Zululand waking up. You'll track and locate the priority species you'll be monitoring that morning and will return to the accommodation for a long lunch around midday. Between 2-3pm, you'll head back out into the field to monitor the next species, whether you're following a pride of lions for the day or trying to understand the dynamics of a wild dog pack you are sure to learn a lot about successful wildlife conservation! You'll be back in time to watch a spectacular sunset and start preparing dinner. At least one day a week will be reserved for inputting and analysing the data you've collected.

## Day 15

If today is your last day on the project, you'll be transferred back to Richards Bay Airport to catch your return flight home or to commence your onwards travel plans. If you are staying longer than two weeks, you may have the opportunity to experience life on a new reserve with a new priority species to focus on!





# Accommodation

On this project, you will be accommodated within the reserves themselves, with rooms provided on a twin-share basis, or three people to a room maximum. You'll have all the comforts you need with pillows and linens provided but please bring your own towels. All accommodation is simple yet comfortable and all have a communal kitchen, toilet and shower facilities with hot water (though this may run cold from time to time) and beautiful outside, barbecue areas. The iMfolozi accommodation is reliant on a generator and solar power for electricity, so if located here you may wish you bring extra battery packs to charge electronics. The below photos are examples from two reserves, but all accommodation is similar, and each are surrounded by stunning scenery and roaming wildlife!



# Food & Drink

Whilst food is provided for you on this project, volunteers are in charge of preparing their own meals. Volunteers usually prepare meals together, so this could be your opportunity to show off your culinary skills or learn a new recipe from your fellow volunteers. In each reserve accommodation there is a kitchen complete with an oven, stove, microwave and solar cooker. Every week, the project staff will take you into town to stock up on supplies. There is an outside barbeque area for nights where you'd like to dine al fresco! Vegetarian and other dietary requirements can be catered for though we politely ask that you inform us of any well in advance.





## What's Included

- Accommodation at one of five reserves
- Food for three meals per day
- Airport transfers
- Conservation donation

## Not Included

- All flights
- Visas
- Travel insurance

## Volunteer Reviews

### Sonal

"This was genuinely an experience of a lifetime - amazing and inspiring! I'll never forget watching a lion hunt from beginning to end."



### Jan

"I'm really pleased I chose this trip - it was an amazing experience, seeing these beautiful creatures in natural surroundings. If you think this is the project for you, you won't be disappointed."



### Deborah

"Every moment was meaningful, but getting to know the African wild dogs and seeing them engage close up was magical. I wish I could have stayed longer!"







## What Next?

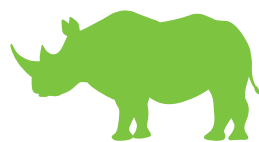
Becoming a volunteer on the Zululand Wildlife Conservation Project is simple, and you can help make a difference to wildlife conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



Visit the website to select your start date and how long you would like to volunteer for.



Secure your place online by paying a deposit of £195. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.



Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to South Africa!



Finally, have an incredible time and don't forget to send in or tag us in your photos!

**#thegreatprojects**



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