

GREATER KRUGER PROJECTS

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2019



African Impact

54 VOLUNTEERS

5,968 HOURS

16 NATIONALITIES



AVG TEMP:

27 °C

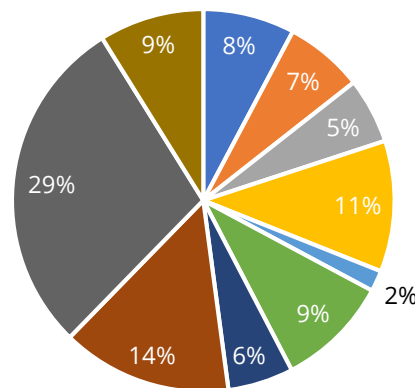


LANGUAGE LESSON:

"Kungikufisela unyaka omusha."

"Happy New Year" in ZULU

PROJECT BREAK DOWN



- Data Crunching
- Community Projects
- Presentations and Discussions
- Habitat Conservation
- Bushwalks
- Photography Tuition

What's New on the Ground?

In December we welcomed new Lodge Managers, Tracy and Rhys, to Dumela. They both joined our ever growing family, bringing lots of laughter and smiles.

Christmas came early for us this year with Santa bringing us two brand new vehicles for our research and photography drives. Nelson and Suzie make a great addition to our car fleet.

Big congratulations to our Robyn, who was offered and accepted the promotion from Research Assistant to Research Coordinator.

RESEARCH INTERNSHIP PROJECTS

This quarter we saw a group of 3 interns from very different backgrounds successfully complete their internship. Focal species for their internships were varied and somewhat unusual, to the great delight of their supervisor. Our longest staying intern, Eva, carried out an intense study on giraffe networks in Buffaloland, a small fenced reserve, and unveiled several groups that seem to particularly enjoy each other's company. Our second intern, Teah, was of crucial help making sure our fruit bat data made sense for the work of a future intern. And Dan, our third intern, isolated African Fish Eagle information out of our extensive raptor data. Analyzing sighting rates from the past 3 years, Dan discovered that Buffaloland is sustaining a much higher population density than the Kruger National Park!

This quarter also saw a considerable number of new interns booking for 2020 already. Exciting new studies await us. Could we ask for more?



RESEARCH CONSERVATION PROJECTS

We have been lucky enough to see elephants almost every time we go to our Big 5 overnight camp. It allowed us to collect data on a variety of herd structures, such as lone bulls, bachelor herds, and breeding herds – with very cute elephant calves. This data helps us look into behavior, social dynamics, and feeding preferences, which can link to human-wildlife conflict mitigation with elephants.

The rhinos we monitor have been very successful, with all calves that were born this year continuing to thrive. The white rhino female reintroduced last quarter has managed to join ranks with the male that is present in the reserve, providing much needed company for both.

Leopard sightings have remained special this quarter, with an increase in vegetation making it harder to spot these elusive cats. However, we were fortunate to have an amazing sighting of a new female leopard, FBL8, who appears to have moved into the area. She was very relaxed, allowing us to collect important data on her behavior. On top of this, we have spotted multiple leopards on our camera traps, which appear to be new leopards – it appears the dynamic in the area is shifting and this will be exciting to follow into the New Year.

We were granted over an hour and a half with wild dogs this quarter – an incredible number, seeing as this species is South Africa's most endangered large predator! We have also been able to capture them on camera traps using hyena latrines (communal defecation areas), which is very interesting and links to up-and-coming research on predator interactions.



PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT

[VIEW PROJECT](#)

The summer rains brought huge changes to our photography project at the end of 2019. While some game drives and activities have had to be re-scheduled, it also means the African bush is rife with colour, vibrancy, and life. Water is everywhere, foliage is thick, and animals are looking healthier than ever. The hugely diverse world under our feet has also sprung to life, with insects and bugs galore; allowing our Macro photography skills to truly thrive and develop once again after the stillness of winter.

In November we saw another cycle of our hugely successful 'two-week photographic experience' project. For the photography manager, it was one of the most diverse and exciting two-weeks he's had in Africa, with countless sightings of extraordinary animals such as leopards, wild dogs, cheetahs, lions, and aardvarks. On top of that, the level of development those photographers showcased and achieved was remarkable.

Frances 'Toodie' May interned with us earlier in the year. Her project was to develop a children's book, utilising her own photography, that spoke about animals and conservation in a fun and endearing way. By the end of her placement she beat all expectations by not doing one single book, but a series of five, all focused around the adventures of a baby elephant called Nzinga. The books were tried out in our community reading club sessions where the kids' feedback helped shape the narrative, and fundraising brought about the means to get them printed. Once Toodie left, she didn't stop. She printed the books, hundreds in total, and just recently visited Dumela with boxes in tow. The books are now being sold in Dumela's shop, with all the proceeds going toward supporting our projects. A few book stores in Hoedspruit have also snatched them up. Considering the initial idea of this project was to create a book simply for her grandchildren, it's incredible to see what this venture has turned into – and she's now developing her website and tackling the logistics of international shipping to meet the high demand of her beautiful creations. We look forward to seeing her continuing on this new venture, especially as she plans to visit us in 2020 - she's looking to develop a second series of books!

As a year wrap up, we've had 73 volunteers and interns come and join us in the last 12 months, all of whom made not only their definitive impact but also progressed and developed as photographers in astronomical ways. One of the purest pleasures of living and working at Dumela is seeing that progression each individual makes and watching them leave as a completely different person compared to when they first arrived.

COMMUNITY PROJECT

Our Farmers of the Future program has seen the most development in the past 3 months. We have opened our new training facility at Nourish Eco Village and have taken on 12 new participants in our program. With this new development, we are very quickly expanding our reach and impact through the program. At this new location, the volunteers have been hard at work preparing the site for the training to start. We have dug two swales as rainwater catchment areas and planted 20 Spekboom trees along the contour to aid erosion and provide appropriate carbon sequestration as we push for a far more environmentally conscious farming strategy.

Back home we have finished writing, editing, and reviewing our business training manual for our phase 1 participants in Farmers of the Future. We are very excited to get these manuals printed and into the classrooms. From here, we move on to the phase 2 training manual and building a Trainer Guide to go along with both. We look forward to a busy year in 2020 with a lot of exciting work ahead of us.



VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

"If you can visit two continents, visit Africa twice." That is exactly what I did. 8 years ago, I set foot on South African soil for the first time. I immediately fell under the spell of this beautiful country. At the beginning of 2019, I finally made the decision to travel to South Africa again. I immediately got immersed into the easy-going lifestyle South Africa is known for.

During my time as a research volunteer, I had many great animal encounters. There were 2 encounters which left me speechless. The first one took place during our overnight stay at Balule. After one of our night drives we got back to camp only to find that three elephants had entered the camp site. I will never forget sitting on a deck, watching the elephants feeding right in front of us with a full moon in the background

The second encounter took place at a game reserve we visit regularly. During a quiet night drive, we suddenly heard that there had been a predator sighting. We headed to the location of the sighting. When got there, we found a leopard resting next to a water hole. Usually leopard sightings are rather brief, but this time we were lucky enough to observe the mighty animal for over 45 minutes. On top of that, a pack of mongooses and two rhinos came to drink at the water hole and entered the sighting. Volunteering with African Impact has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. For me it was a great way to catch my breath and at the same time it feels as if you really are contributing to wildlife conservation.

- Charlotte, Research Volunteer from Belgium



Until next time, The Kruger Team

