



CONSERVATION TRAINING COURSE

ABOUT THE COURSE

Wildlife ACT's 28 day long Endangered and Priority Species Conservation and Habitat Management Course is for those seeking practical, hands-on training, underpinned by course material carefully developed by experts.

The course provides you with a unique understanding of the most up-to-date, in-field conservation techniques and practices, while exploring and contributing to important wildlife conservation work on the famous Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, known to be the birthplace of modern wildlife conservation in Africa.

THE MODELS INCLUDED:

- Wildlife Monitoring
- Camera Trapping
- Track and Sign
- Habitat Management
- Wildlife Capture and Relocation
- Wildlife Crime and Illegal Trade
- Conservation in Communities



OVERVIEW

All Wildlife ACT staff go through a comprehensive training programme before being assigned to field positions on the various conservancies and protected areas we work on.

Following continued requests from previous volunteers, interns and research students who expressed a desire to join our staff training programme, Wildlife ACT has adapted our field-staff training programme and developed our course in Endangered and Priority Species Conservation and Habitat Management.

The conservation training course provides nature enthusiasts and those considering a career in conservation with the opportunity to train in parallel with Wildlife ACT staff in order to attain a practical skill-set as well as theoretical understanding of what it takes to become a field conservationist.

The on-the-job training also gives you the opportunity to be a part of day-to-day conservation management initiatives on the world famous Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park – the oldest proclaimed protected area in Africa and the place where the White Rhino was saved from certain extinction in the 20th century.

As part of our vision to create a centre of learning excellence, Wildlife ACT hosts small groups for those who wish to gain both practical and academic experience within the conservation field, as well as to provide educational experiences for nature enthusiasts.

Wildlife ACT has created a 28 day programme designed to expose students to the various facets of African wildlife conservation and game reserve management. You will be involved in practical Big 5 monitoring, data collection and research whilst learning about wildlife management and ecological principles.

In addition to supporting monitoring, and in some cases, research goals on the reserve, you will engage in habitat and reserve management activities that are part of Wildlife ACT's ongoing conservation programmes.



ABOUT WILDLIFE ACT



Wildlife ACT is an award-winning conservation organization that specialises in endangered and priority species conservation across Africa.

To achieve this goal, we:

- Work with conservation management authorities to develop and implement relevant monitoring and research programmes according to national standards and species conservation strategies;
- Provide expertise and support towards relocations and reintroductions of endangered and priority species;
- Develop and fund next generation tracking, anti-poaching and data management technology;
- Provide dedicated support towards focal species emergency response situations;
- Form part of relevant working and advisory groups in Africa;
- Drive the publication of relevant, management-oriented research findings.
- Connect people from communities adjacent to protected areas to nature and wildlife conservation, empowering them and removing barriers to entry into conservation and the wildlife economy.

COURSE OUTLINE

What will you do and learn?

Working in association with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, our combined expertise allows us to incorporate a unique bush-learning experience while you participate in the day-to-day tasks and operations on a Big 5 reserve and in ongoing monitoring and research projects. The conservation training course balances instructor-led learning with practical field-work.

Students will learn and be competent in the following skills before they leave:

Wildlife Monitoring

- Review of Monitoring Development: Modern monitoring techniques, technology and equipment, effective data collection and management, as well as monitoring ethics.
- Specific Species Monitoring: African Wild Dog, Cheetah, Lion, Leopard, Rhino, Elephant, Vultures, Hyena and Ground Hornbill.
- Ethology: Social systems, animal communication, protective behaviour, home ranges & territories and anticipating various animal behaviours.



Camera Trapping

- Pre-field work (survey type and design, and set-up preparation).
- In the field (considerations, security, and weekly checks).
- Post setup (identification, analysis and capture, and photo tagging).



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Track and Sign

- Observing and interpreting tracks and signs along in-field bush walks.
- Identifying different types of animal tracks and signs: arboreal, terrestrial and aerial.



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Conservation and Habitat Management

- Vegetation surveys: Understanding the theory on sampling methods (quadrat sampling, line intercept sampling, point intercept sampling), Conducting Fixed Point Photography (FPP) across reserve sites, Elephant Impact Assessments (EIA's) and tree wrapping of elephant impacted trees, and Tree and Grass identification exercises.
- Game Count Surveys: Understanding the theory of different methods (road strip counts, aerial counts and walking transects).
- Fire as a management tool.
- Soil erosion and preventative methods: practical exposure in identification of badly eroded areas and subsequent rock and brush packing of these.
- Bush encroachment and alien plant control methods and techniques.





Wildlife Capture and Relocation

- Purpose and necessity (genetic populations, injuries or carrying capacity).
- Capture methods.
- Boma management.

Wildlife Crime and Illegal Trade

- Causes & drivers of Illegal Wildlife Trade.
- Impacts of Wildlife Crime & Illegal Trade on wildlife populations.
- Potential solutions and problem solvers.

Community Conservation

- Issues and how the Community views these.
- How Wildlife ACT is working to address changes.
- Ecotourism & how this benefits local Communities.
- Community and stakeholder participation in HiP.

WHERE WILL I STAY?

Hluhluwe students are based at the Hluhluwe research camp, which is located on top of a hill in a coastal scarp forest. The research camp is shared with other scientists and researchers carrying out studies in the Park, although their rooms are separate from our Wildlife ACT participants.

On arrival at the Wildlife ACT Hilltop campus, you will get time to settle in and unpack. During the first days Wildlife ACT course instructors will go through an orientation programme to familiarise you with all aspects of the course.

The below provides some information to assist with this orientation process to make you aware of some of the camp structures, facilities and rules and regulations.

Accommodation & Facilities

Our Wildlife ACT students are accommodated in twin rooms, each with a desk and shelving/cupboard space for your belongings. Accommodation is shared with other researchers so students will share toilet and shower facilities. There is also a communal kitchen and barbecue area.

The camp is situated within walking distance from the main tourist camp – “Hilltop Camp”, which is open to the general public and has a restaurant and a small shop.



MEALS & FOOD

Meal preparation and food is all on a help-yourself basis. There is basic food supplied, however, if you require any “luxury” items, these will be at your own expense. There is a designated trip into town one day per week, thus food needs to last the full week.

Vegetarian Meals

Wildlife ACT endeavors to supply healthy, balanced ingredients to our vegetarian students, however, please note that due to the area in which the camp is located, as well as local cultures and customs and food budgets, it is not always possible to supply many vegetarian substitutes.

Expensive items, such as tofu and soya milk, will be up to the student to purchase. Please make sure you inform us of any dietary requirements BEFORE joining the course. The Wildlife ACT kitchen may not be prepared for ‘surprise vegetarians’ upon arrival.



Wildlife ACT endeavors to conform with any previously-disclosed dietary requirements, however, please note only dietary requirements for medical reasons will be catered for. We unfortunately cannot cater for specific weight loss or fitness diets unless medically important.

WHAT DO I NEED?

Essential Equipment and Clothing

- **Walking boots** essential for everyday use on the vehicle and in the field.
- **Water Bottle** (essential). Ideally 1.5 – 2 litre capacity.
- **Long trousers** and **long-sleeve shirts** as in all subtropical areas, insects can be a nuisance, especially in the evening.
- **Fleece** and/or warm **jumpers, hat** and **gloves** (African winter months, May to August).
- **Waterproof/windproof** Poncho or waterproof top and trousers recommended in summer months (September to April expeditions). A wind-proof jacket is also essential throughout the year particularly in the July to September windy.
- **Sun Hat.** A wide-brimmed hat is essential.
- **Sun Cream.** You will be spending a fair amount of time in the sun so please bring adequate sun protection. It is recommended that you apply a higher block than usual (30-45 SPF). The African sun is very strong and you could burn easily if you are not used to it.
- **Sun Glasses.** A good quality pair of sunglasses is recommended. Make sure they offer 100% UV protection. If you do not wear sunglasses it may advisable to bring a pair of plastic safety glasses as these help to keep dust/insects/branches out of eyes.



Continued



- **Medical Kit.** It is always useful to carry a small personal medical kit. This should include: Plasters, wound dressings and bandages, personal medication to last the duration of your stay, anti-histamine cream/ tablets, fungicidal foot power/cream, antiseptic cream/solution, Imodium tablets (x30) and rehydration (e.g.dioralyte) sachets (x 20), mild pain killers (eg. Paracetamol), tweezers, scissors, anti-nausea and anti-diarrheal tablets etc. Emergency travel kits can be purchased at most pharmacies.
- A good pair of **binoculars** will really add to your experience. A magnification of 8x, 10x or 12x is recommended.
- **Torch/Flashlight.** A head torch is required for night research and is recommended over a normal hand-held torch (LED lamps will make your batteries last far longer).
- Please bring **pens, pencils**, pocket-sized **notepads** and A4 **notebook**, which are essential for taking notes during class and on practicals. All other learning materials will be supplied.
- If you have a **laptop**, please bring it with you to make notes after class sessions or for study sessions.

WHAT DO I NEED?

Recommended Equipment List

Please note that the following equipment list is only as a guide.

- A **day-pack/rucksack** is recommended for everyday use.
- **Malaria Tablets.** Please consult your doctor, pharmacy or travel clinic for recommended prophylactics.
- **Insect Repellent.** If you are allergic to repellents, seek advice from your GP. You may also benefit from bringing tick repellent (Bayticol or Mylol) with you.
- **Camera** (would be an advantage for taking pictures for animal bird identification, as well as for track and sign identification).
- Southern African Reference or field-guide **books**.

Other Personal Items (not essential)

- **Batteries** for any electrical appliances (head torch etc).
- Any **snacks** etc. as there are no shops in the immediate area!
- It's advisable to bring sufficient **toiletries** as the surrounding shops do not offer much diversity of products.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Please note that Wildlife ACT staff are not qualified to give medical advice.*

MALARIA

The surrounding areas are malarial so we recommend you take prophylactics. Consult your GP for guidance. The camp is in a low risk malaria area.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

The weather can be extremely humid and you will be working outside for a large portion of the time. Most days involve at least 5 hours on the back of a vehicle monitoring animals, sometimes more when necessary.

Additionally, the teams assist in certain manual labour tasks such as sourcing and moving rocks to sites for rock packing eroded areas, cutting and removing overhanging brush from roads and wrapping trees with fencing wire to deter elephants, bush walks to put up camera traps and identify animal tracks and signs.

FIELD BASE SAFETY

All members will be informed of the risks, health and safety procedures for the field base on arrival. It is imperative that everyone both understands and respects them.

PERSONAL SAFETY

Look after your important documents and take a separate photocopy with you. Do not wear excessive jewelry or walk around areas outside camp with valuable items on display e.g. cameras. Do not carry large amounts of cash.

INTERNET & COMMUNICATION

Please be aware that mobile reception in and around campus is very limited due to the isolation of the campus, and signal and connectivity problems are sometimes experienced. We recommend the use of Vodacom SIM cards for the best network coverage for the area.

ELECTRICITY

Please be aware that due to Loadshedding and summer storms, there may be electricity outages experienced during your stay. We appreciate your patience should any outages occur during your time with us. Please consider bringing a power bank to be used in these instances.

WILDLIFE ACT LOOKS FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU!



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