

# WildlifeAct

*November 18 to December 20, 2011*



Maya von Dach

December 2011

# Photo report

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Only flies are more beautiful .. Wind, sun, but also rain on the skin - we drive for hours on the pick-up on the sandy slopes of the 39000 Quatratmeterparks in search of wild dogs, lions, Sunis and elephants. Our eyes are open for everything.

"Our" wild dogs need protection! Our pack contains thirteen dogs, the leader and mother of the five young dogs was killed by lions a few days ago. The pack is reforming, everything is in trouble. Fortunately, they are close to the camp, which makes it easier to control, saves time and gives us sleep.



Wild dogs can go back up to 15 km in a waking phase of around 3 hours. Not always are they - even with the transmitter collar and telemetry antenna - easy to find. We seek the highest points in the park to receive the signals. Our fitness program is guaranteed.

Only one of the bitches wears a collar, the beeping helps us find them and the pack and tells us if the dogs are still sleeping or moving. The active time of the dogs is at sunrise and sunset, in between they sleep.



Tembe is flat, with few open spaces, with water pans - at least now in the rainy season - and a wetland. Dense, green bush and forest landscape makes it difficult to see the abundance of animals. For hours we turn around, we often see little animals.



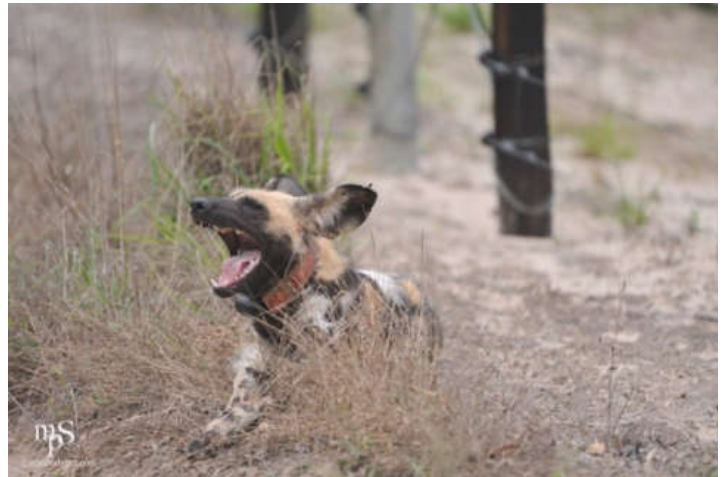
The traffic is limited, in Tembe only 10 vehicles per day are admitted, 4x4 is a condition. Only about a quarter of the park is accessible to tourists, here the road network is quite dense, the other part is only for employees and us. But as the dogs are near the camp this is unnecessary.





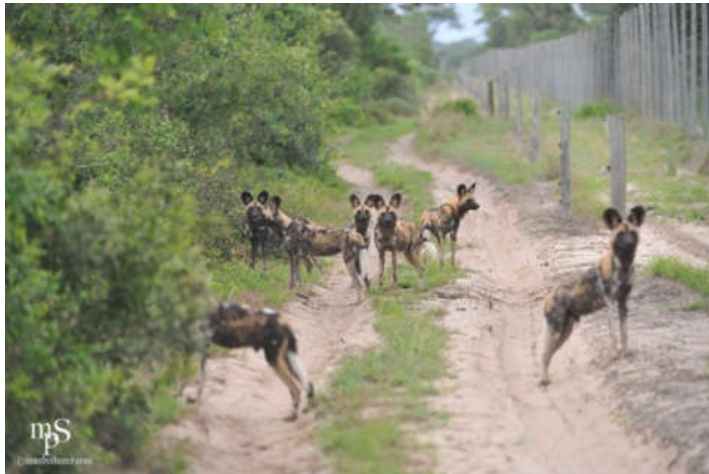
Where there is no tower, there is a tree ... Our boss, the predator monitor Cilla von WildlifeACT, climbs a tree to look for the signals of the lions or the bitch. We may also hear the beeping of the Leopard, who received a collar three years ago and has never been seen since.

Thanks to the signals once again tracked down. As so often near the fence, on which prey animals are driven to certain death, so that the pack does not have to make it so difficult.



Play, fight, find a new ranking. The wild dogs are extremely active and return long distances in no time. We follow them back and forth, observe and count them. A young dog, beard, is missing. He may have become the victim of the lions whose signal we have received nearby.

The next day another dog is missing, again a male. The lesser evil, because the only female in the litter is the bearer of hope for the multiplication of the endangered animals. In the evening we hear the dogs calling, the hair bobbing us, the howling goes through the marrow and leg. "Huuuh" ... Fortunately, the pack is back.



The dogs are curious, the fence seems to magically attract them. He is the security line for her. On the other side lurks the death: the brutal robbers would easily consume the goats and cattle of the population who lives in the village right on the fence. Logically, that they would be killed as soon as possible.

Every observation is closely followed: which species, the type of sighting, the activity, the composition of the group, the location and the coordinates of the sighting. With the GPS, these are determined by Cilla.





What exactly should I write down?  
Definitely one of the lost dogs is back in the pack and was counted during the sighting.  
Bart is still missing, for him the hope disappears.

The kitchen is our center. The fresh air brings hunger! During the day we eat depending on your individual mood from the fridge and storage cupboard, in the evening we cook alternately for all and eat together. The experiences of the day are recapitulated and exchanged.



Three activities structure our day: sunrise drive (about 4.30, depending on the distance of the pack) to dogs and lions, the elephant monitoring with Leonard in the "hot midday" (about 10 - 15 clock) and the sunset control in the dogs (approx 16 - 19.30 hours). Unfortunately, it is rarely hot!

Small one- or two-cottage, a toilet pavilion, the main house with kitchen and showers and the office form a cozy little village. The camp is fenced and has a large gate, which according to the attached board "must always be closed" - we have never seen it, but we still felt safe.



Comfortable beds, closet, mosquito protection, electric light and even air conditioning not only comfortable but even luxurious: our home for two weeks.



Now we are looking for the lionesses: one of them, the collar must be extended, the other four are to be caught and sold in a new park. The lion population in Tembe is too large, hyenas have already been eradicated and jackals decimated, the dogs are badly harassed. Also blood refreshing is necessary.





First, we seek the lionesses to be captured. Simon and Cilla plan, calculate and limit the search area. The lionesses should first be accustomed to the procedure of "lion calling", so we need no veterinarian today.

Planning and Information: On the way to the northern part, where the pack of lions lives, a prey shot by the ranger will wait to help us lure the lions. We find it, covered with some branches and load it onto the back of the truck.



Let's go to the place where we expect the lions.





On the way we also make acquaintance with a Mozambique spitting cobra. It disappears after a short time and lets us continue.



The dead female Nyala exudes a - for the lions - wonderful fragrance. This is now one kilometer up and down the road.

Now the animal is tied to a tree so that it can not simply be pulled away by the lions - they should get to know the place, recognize the cars and feel no fear.





The lions also receive an acoustic invitation: squeaky piggies are supposed to arouse their curiosity and draw them in that direction, where they are supposed to associate the scent of the prepared supper with it.

In fact, they appear right next to the cars where we squeezed and watched while holding our breath. The proud lion man enjoys the time extensively - and leaves his two ladies kindly a last bite.



Tired and a little bit excited by this spectacle, we drive back to the camp in a partly almost criminal way.



A sunny day must be used and the hand wash (the washing machine is broken) dries in the wind.



Gorgeous hours: bringing the hammocks was worth it, resting with the exciting book is usually short-lived - then overcomes one's sleep ..



In Cilla's garden, we build a boma (a release enclosure) in which charges can find a temporary home ...





The sweet little jackals enjoy the newly built Boma after their stay in the safety of the car. However, they quickly find a way through and make themselves free. I hope they have found enough food and have not met the lion.

Open terrain is rather rare, but the park still has a protected sand forest area. Here are also the small Suni, which are also observed as research species. Amazingly, you can see more nyalas than impala in Tembe.



With Leonard we are looking for the elephants: the Tembepark has long practiced contraception with the elephants. Elephant cows are shot from the air with injections that prevent frosting. The program should now be relaxed and the herds rejuvenate.

Leonard, the elephant monitor knows his Pappenheimer. Based on the tusks and / or cracks, cracks, holes in the ears or other trademarks, he can recognize his elephant. Some have names, other numbers. Everything is logged accurately.



In this dense forest even the elephants can make themselves invisible - especially rhinos or Sunis. Every encounter is a surprise and a joy!

We set out to catch the lion - tonight "Dee", whose collar is too tight, should be stunned with the arrow to adjust it. Only - where the lioness just hides? The smallest elevation makes signal search difficult ...





Despite precise explanations and a lot of background knowledge from Cilla we are looking for the lions here and there ..

The electric fence protects - where it was not torn down by the trunks - the rare sand forest of elephants and giraffes. On our wild drive to Dee's quest, we need to open it several times for the passage.



The course seems suitable for the "Lion call-up". Behind the prey animal, a barricade is built from branches, the loudspeakers are placed in the trees and all the important persons arrive.

The park manager, the park ecologist Tarik, Chris von WildlifeACT and Cilla discuss the situation and the procedure. Marian, the only vet to use as an anesthetic, prepares her rifle and stun dart.



The wait with pig squeal begins .... and ends for us without Dee. It shows up later, when our group is already on the way home with the doctor. We later learn that despite several attempts, the stunning and adjusting the collar has not yet succeeded. Time is running, babies are coming soon ...



Now we would slowly know what to do here in Tembe, we got used to each other and to the accommodation and learned to appreciate everything - the typical time for something new. We curb, the girls to Thanda, we to Hluhluwe-iMfolozi.





Now we are already old hands and know that if you like a beer or a glass of wine in the evening, you have to use the weekly supermarket. We do that extensively and look forward to a piece of beef filet from the grill.

The predator monitor Cathy draws her 10 days freely between the 30-day shifts. Marumo, the Zulu monitor, who comes from a village near the park, takes the lead for our first ten days. She shows us a lot and teaches us Zulu.



Our accommodation has less charm but a nice barbecue area and a huge park. Our hammocks get a beautiful place and we feel good. Although the camera trap proves that leopards, lions, elephants and buffaloes are also moving here, we feel safe.



Our kitchen: we usually cook here. In addition, in the evening we often play "Marumo", an exciting card game. From time to time the monkeys look in through the window or peer through the door in the hope that they will be able to help themselves.



Marumo us Sama, the wild dog monitor of the Imfolozi area, in which there are about ten dog packs - compared to only one in Hluhluwe, for which WildlifeACT is responsible - explain the collars and share their knowledge generously with us. There are also adventure stories from the bush. Exciting!

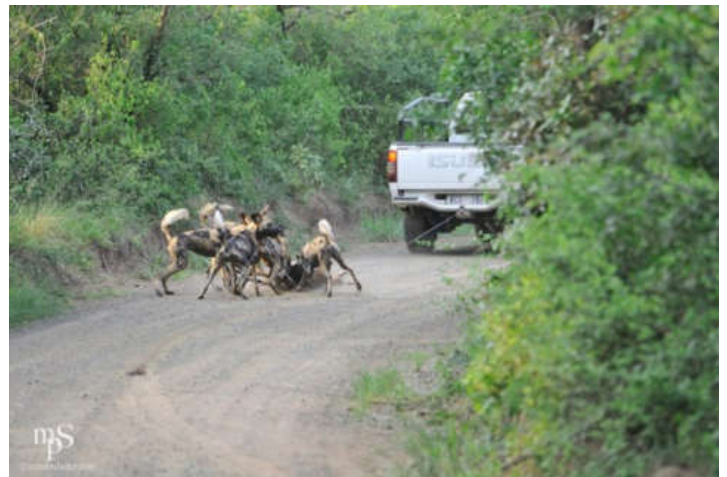
Another call-up for the wild dogs. They are nearby, the tension is increasing.





Next to the road, the pack is racing. Surely they have the smell of nyala in the nose.

And already the dogs jump on the street from all sides and grab the prey, which, pulled by the car, moves on the street. Wild dogs are not scavengers, they usually only take live prey. They do not kill their prey animals before they eat, but simply rip their flesh off with their jagged teeth.



The section manager is ready to shoot. A male is to be shot, so that in a splintering of the pack the Einzelgruppen can be kept better in the eye.

The wild dogs are like a bag of fleas - everywhere and nowhere.

In no time at all, only the skeleton remains behind. Everything that can be used is torn away, and the bones are still being processed.

It has gone much too fast and the dogs are gone again. A shot has been fired, but has not hit.



The next morning the news reaches us that the dogs are outside the park. We have to look for them and bring them back to the park together with the staff of the park - anything else would be perilous for the people living at the park's borders and their animals, but above all for the dogs.

The helplessness is palpable. The loudspeaker does not work, so dogs and smacking can not be sent to the dogs via the loudspeakers, so they can be recalled. I wonder if my calling was of any use or if the human chain was the right one? The dogs are back in the evening.





Again and again we have to or want to wait and use this time for excursions along the wayside. Not only lions and wild dogs, giraffes and elephants are fascinating, even small animals and plants, whose colors and shapes draw us under their spell, want to be photographed.

Before we stop - change wheels in one of the game ranger camps. Marumo in action.



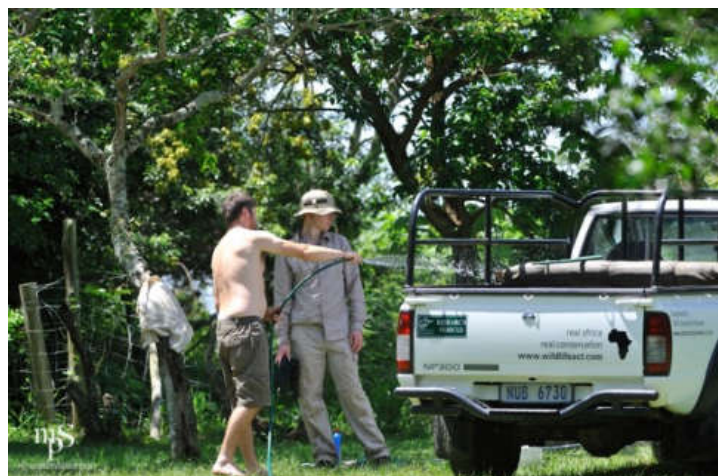
The whole team is having fun! Maya, Matt, Marumo, Manfred and Kel.

Serious work is waiting for Cathy: The camera traps were all collected by the last volunteers and now have to be overtaken. Twenty posts must be controlled, straightened, and the wire frames renewed or tightened to enable them to return to service.



The curvature in the post of the Camera Trap is no coincidence: the smell of man seems to annoy rhinos and elephants. Thus, the photo traps are targets for the pachyderms and are occasionally harassed.

While we took over the kitchen service, Kel from Australia and Matt from Guernsey UK bring the car to a shine.





Buffet and Zulutanz of the kitchen staff: we enjoy the exit in the "Hilltop" very. This tourist camp is only ten minutes walk from the Research Camp, where we are accommodated, so that you can also buy something in your free time, have a drink on the wonderful viewing terrace or even use the swimming pool!

"The cheetah would stand here", so the camera trap has to catch him here - everything will be prepared accordingly.



The trap is screwed to the opposite branch.

All settings must be correct and the batteries and the data card are inserted. Then everything belongs watertight screwed and packed in the metal container. In about a week, it will be seen if the camera is in a perfect position.



Mowing the lawn: No greens are allowed to cause the motion detector to only scan grass instead of cheetahs or other nightwalkers.



A second trap on another "cheetah tree" is anchored to the post in the ground. Sweaty work, because today is - exceptionally - really "African" weather, hot and cloudless. Unfortunately, our cat search is by no means successful today - the cats seem to have crawled under the bushes today due to the heat.





The project work did everything it promised. Our hopes and expectations were more than fulfilled.

To work as a volunteer in a research / animal wildlife project: A recommendation for all!  
And unforgettable, beautiful and impressive memories for us.

Interested? [www.wildlifeact.com](http://www.wildlifeact.com)