

# WildlifeAct

*November 18 to December 20, 2011*



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## Introduction

One month is enough for the project work only in two of the four parks in which WildlifeACT carries out a monitoring mission: we have decided for Tembe and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi (Thanda and Mkhuze have to wait). Research and animal welfare is announced. Data are collected, key species are monitored and thus secured in their stock - in South Africa there are still about 350 wild dogs in parks, they urgently need protection. The coexistence of humans and animals and groups of predators in a limited area, holds some challenges ready. Nice to make a small contribution and to experience catchy adventures!

## 1st part: Tembe

18./19./20. November

Not everything went very smoothly in the preparations for our long journey, so we had to take a detour via SWISS in Kloten to the airport, that was best done by car and that's how Angi brought us. Check in and eat as usual at the Thai before our flight went to London on schedule. Sitting neighbor Doris Sollberger from the travel agency of the same name in Bern, knew a lot about beer from her travels to Africa and soon we had to check in again. Unfortunately, we had to wait an hour for a review of the plane before we could start and we had that delay almost in Johannesburg. Fetch luggage quickly, check in again and still on the plane to Richards Bay. Yes, even with the car worked fine and soon we drove to the great shopping mall to stock up on the necessary. Also, open shoes, as I had been looking for so long, I could buy. The Ndiza Lodge in St. Lucia is good for two nights, the fine dinner with fish and prawns was lovely and we enjoyed the good night's sleep.

Today, after getting up in the morning, we sat in the iSimangaliso Park and enjoyed the waterbucks, zebras, monkeys and wild boars, amused ourselves with the huge flying and crawling dung beetles and especially enjoyed the beautiful landscape. Hills protect against the heavy waves, behind a gentle plain with lots of water - just the Wetlands. Everything is green and juicy. (Images: Cuckoo, Vervet Monkeys breastfeeding and after enjoying stolen Papayas, Hippo).

21-22. November

Zmörgelen, pack, departure for the big adventure, which began again once in the mall. There would have been plenty of shopping here, but we had to limit ourselves to the most important and then quickly return our car. Finally we met the others who came with the flight from Joburg. As a group of nine - an Englishman already stranded because of fog in London, which filled us with joy that we had already flown two days before - we started in a rented bus to Hluhluwe, then to Mkhuze, where we each delivered a part of the group and finally at the entrance of the Tembe Park were brought from Cilla. We are Linda and Marleen from Holland and we both. Without much information we were packed in the open pick-up after the receipt of our hearty little houses and taken on a round to the wild dogs - which we also found, thanks to the antenna, at first. Later we had dinner and we went to bed exhausted, but could not sleep well. It thundered and started to rain. A cold, rainy day awaited us, but already at quarter past four we met for the dog search, then we checked the lions, but the weather was probably too nasty, in contrast to elephant and rhino. After a short break, it was called Leonard to Elephant search. Partly wrapped in Güsselsäcke, because we were written, we would not need rain jackets, we sometimes enjoyed driving on deck, then we froze again. Now it's time for the evening check of the dogs ...

November 23rd

Meanwhile, we have experienced a lot and slept rather little. The wild dogs have lost their leader a few days ago. She probably died from a stomach infection, leaving five five-month-old boy. In addition to the five young dogs, the pack now consists of an older female and seven older dogs, all from one family. After the leader's death, they now need a new leader and that is clearly visible. In the evening they played extensively and fought, then suddenly the whole pack came in the hunting step, so fast that we missed that they drove a reedbuck in front of them. Their bellies were already full, so they did not take the hunting seriously.

Yesterday morning, the excitement was even bigger in the pack. In pairs we fought and then paired again - our guide Cilla says that this is not about reproduction, but about finding a new leader dog - the wild dogs never plant, in contrast to the lions, inter-familial.

After a short breakfast, we then went on a lion hunt, while our two Dutch colleagues with Leonard went looking for the elephants. The lions are difficult to find in the shallow, wooded park with extremely dense vegetation and several open areas. Although nine of them are provided with a transmitter. For hours we drove around, climbed on each tower to search with the antenna for the signals of the lions. Tembe will soon sell four lionesses, to catch them, they must be easy to find. Unsuccessfully, we returned and changed our plans at short

notice: after preparing a picnic for all, we made our way in two cars to the non-public north of the park. Finally, an inserted branch blocked our journey. Cilla got out and began to change branches in the bush beside the road. Below, a shot Nyala came to light. This we loaded on our wing and continue with it. A few kilometers further, the Nyala was unloaded again. Cilla explained the plan to us. In the next few days, the veterinarian would come to stun lionesses with an arrow and attach emitters or better match a lioness's collar. To take away the fear of the cars, they would have to get to know the situation - starting today. The Nyala was cut in both hind legs, through which a chain was pulled, then Cylla cut his stomach, so that in addition to the blood from the bullet wound now a stinking mass of undigested and Digested emerged. To lure the loot and guide it, a track was pulled on the road, one kilometer above and below the desired feeding site, the Nyala was dragged, then chained to a lying tree, so that the lions do not just sleep it off could. To attract the lions, two loudspeakers were also hung in the nearest tree, from which the squealing of pigs was played - 25 minutes each, then 15 minutes of rest to listen.

The second car followed us at intervals of about half an hour, in which we prepared everything - already on the way to the feeding station they observed two lionesses, not far away from us. The cars were now well parked under the tree and the squeaking recorded and after a very short time could be "Tembe", an impressive lion man and his two companions see. To almost to the last lump it tasted the maned, the companions lying a little away, until he broke down a few meters off with a large piece that he demolished, leaving the remains still the females. The bones cracked and only our forelegs hung from the chain of our attached animal before the animals rose. Tembe clearly showed in his expression that one of the females is or would be hot, but that also means that he would soon mate with a probable daughter.

The lion pack in Tembe is huge in terms of area. This bothers the other robbers: the hyena has been eradicated, for the wild dogs they are a great danger. Reproduction within the family is of course undesirable. That's why both dogs and lions are to be exchanged with other parks. A headache for Cilla, Interesting work for us, it means that we will soon go back to stalking and probably also see the accident of the lioness with the collar.

Today, however, we enjoy a little peace. Linda and Marleen, the two Dutch girls, drove off with Cilla in the early morning. Today we were allowed to sleep in and have time to work on the photos and write before we control the elephants with Leonard.

24-25. November

Time flies so fast, so close is the program that we can barely reconstruct everything we've done. The park is beautiful, but we do not see many animals despite all the miles we drive. The weather has been cool and rainy until now, the sun was very scarce and as we spend a lot of our time on the back of the pickup truck, we are in our warmest clothes. These soon need to be washed ... The ride with Cilla or Leonard is always very educational and interesting, even if the animals hide in the bushes in front of the wind. After all, we have been lucky today: Merleen has discovered on the road at a turn a cobra, who looked up, then looked for cover. We sat at the waterholes - one of which we know well from the livecam - but there were not many animals to be found, as there was enough water in the park. On the way back this afternoon we finally saw the famous elephants. Some of the cops met at a waterhole to spray and wallow in the mud. A beautiful specimen with great tusks drove us back on the road until it decided to dodge.

Once again we watched the wild dogs this evening. In and around a row of pools they have been fooling around and having fun. They are fit and well nourished, you notice that in the park there is little competition among the robbers and a lot of game is available. But Tembe does not look as tidy as other parks: often you see bones and skeletal parts, today we have even found a rotting Nyala: there are hardly scavengers. The hyenas were all killed by the lions, vultures are rarely seen, jackals are few.

The park is kept deliberately natural, there are a maximum of ten 4x4 cars admitted daily - a number that has hardly ever been exploited.

At this point I had to interrupt writing because we were called to dinner and party at Tarik. Expectantly we went to the neighboring house, where a braai was announced. We were tired from our three exits and hoped for early food and early bed time. When we arrived Tarik started to cheer slowly ... we almost fell off the chair until finally we had dinner, then fled as fast as possible and left the boy the party - which obviously took until 2.

Today we had free in the morning, which we really enjoyed. Photography was announced. If someone sees a beetle or a lizard, Manfred is called and enjoys taking pictures with the macro and, if necessary, with lightning. Spiders, beetles, geckos, the rock monitor that lives with Leonard, everything is absorbed. In addition, we discovered today a chameleon, which was of course all photographed from all sides, although it did not work with the ant feed.

The weather has improved now. Last night, the African starry sky first appeared, today we enjoyed sun and heat - in the hammock. In the evening, we went in search of the wild dogs, who were silent in the morning, which caused excitement. Only one of the dogs is equipped with a transmitter and since the

signal could no longer be located, it was worried that the collar would not work anymore. This would make it almost impossible to find the wandering dogs, they sometimes travel long distances. They are active for a few hours every morning from sunrise, then sleep until two hours before sunset, then go hunting and play, when the sun disappears they are already rolling back to sleep together. In the passive time, they are practically invisible, they run around you can see their waving white tail tips well, but often they run in the thick bushes, making discovery difficult or impossible. As long as you are in control of where you are, you can track them every day - whether in visual contact or by the locating signals - but the signal is missing, it would be very difficult.

Tomorrow we have a great day ahead of us. The weather forecast is good, after the dog control we all drive together to the sea to Sodwana Bay. Cool!

26./27./28. November

The dogs already welcomed us when we drove to the sleeping place they had chosen. For a long time we followed them along the fence for kilometers, then again we could only hear the pipiip from the radio reception. Down here we have a dense network of streets that allows us to track down the dogs again and again. The dogs are often at the fence, they are very curious and the streets are clear, even for them.

After the dog control and breakfast, the big cooking for the dinner (Hacktätschli, Griessmündchen, spinach and red wine sauce), which was regular with us, we drove over busy streets and a lively town, where we could fill our wallet again, after Sodwana Bay. On the endless sandy beach we enjoyed the wind, swimming and jumping in the sea, a fun freesbee / tennis ball mini golf and the beautiful weather. Before the sunburn became too bad, we made our way back inland to eat a fine pizza on a terrace. After arriving at the camp we went back to the dog patrol. We did not see the dogs often, but towards the end we heard them calling each other. Since we also received the signal of a lion, the assumption was obvious that a meeting of lions and dogs had taken place. The call left a bad feeling ...

The day before, Cilla told us a little bit excited that she had received a phone from the Mozambican side. At the border young jackals were drafted, which should have been sold as pets. But the man who cares for her would not have time. While we were having fun on the beach, Cilla drove to the border and picked up the young jackals. Now they sit in a leopard trap in Cilla's garden and eat dog food before they have to learn to catch beetles, mice and birds. Cilla sits behind literature to find out how she can bring the dogs to freedom.

Our camp here is very luxurious. Some small houses form a pretty village, the center is the kitchen, the showers and toilets, all around are the wooden houses. They are simply but nicely decorated and accommodate one or two beds. While we relaxed comfortably, then enjoyed the hot showers and hair cutting, the girls were already on control with Cilla. And came home with bad news: Bart, one of the five young dogs is missing. The likelihood that he was killed by the lions is very big. Cilla is sad, a small consolation is that it was a young male, the only little girl in the pack is unaffected. Nevertheless, the dogs are now confused and run around disturbed, we have long heard them call the night before.

After the arrival of the girls, we drove with Hide by Hide to Hide and through the swamps. We met some of the impressive bull elephants and our guide proudly showed us his animals and plants. He always knows a lot to talk about and never bores us with him and the girls. After the exciting journey, the highlight of which is probably the sighting of a large herd of elephant mothers with children and babies. One of them was hardly a year old, which is rare in Tembe, because it is a major contraception. To do this, the flocks are surveyed annually by a helicopter in which the veterinarian and Leonard, the elephant monitor, sit, and the elephants are shot at with arrows containing the drug. At the same time a color mark is sprayed on them, so that you do not catch any elephant cow twice. So far, so 75% of childbearing elephant females are treated in this way, but in the future you will reduce the quotas, so that more and more offspring rejuvenates the herds.

Somewhat puzzled, we looked around as Marleen stopped Leonard and reversed because she saw a snake in the middle of the ride. We saw a tree trunk. This turned out to our astonishment as a huge, vollgefressene Python! Marleen proves herself to be a snake discoverer, as she has already discovered a Mozambican speikobra on one of the first rides.

Just before we arrived at the camp, we took two car stoppers: first a turtle, then a beautiful chameleon. Both wanted to be photographed by all - but it did not come to that, because the Chameleon made very quickly from dust, while Manfred the turtle was photographed.

November 29th

This afternoon / evening we go blue! All our people are doing "lion call up". Cilla with her boyfriend Jan-Pier, Leonard, the girls and Tarik. We logged out because we did not feel like spending hours in the car without a job and did not really believe in the success of the action.

This morning at four (!) We drove to the water holes, where yesterday we received the dogs last, but did not see. This was occupied, not by the dogs but by five white rhinos. A nice encounter. They are, like all animals here, otherwise rarely seen. After photographing and explaining Cilla's markings and

identification (V-shaped cuts in the ears indicating the animal's number), we searched the dogs far and wide. A beautiful elephant bull met us and I was a little afraid for the bananas in my Ricksack. Neither the dogs nor the lioness we were looking for sent a signal, but from a lion male known as aggressive and as a possible killer of dogs. Our assumption was that the dogs had sniffed the lion and ran away in panic. Cilla did not really know what to do anymore, she also forgot to refuel and the diesel ran out. So she decided to go home to the camp and devote herself to building a boma, a sanctuary for later release, in which the little jackals could find a temporary home. So we started digging and grabbed the two little creatures in the rear of their car. Without resistance, they let themselves be carried and carried there. A beautiful cave they received then, which was sunk into the ground and covered with soil and branches.

After hasty showers and a tortuous cheese toast, we set out to once again look for the elephants with Leonard. In fact, we encountered some bulls today, but none of the big bulls. It was lovely to sit in the Hide at the waterhole and watch the pachyderms splash, the nyalas, warthogs and the many birds. Funny is the way that in the Tembe Park with the animals everything seems a little different: everywhere Impalas are the most common antelope, here but the Nyala, our "ups", the Helmpferlhühner are rare here, but the Schopfperlhühner are everywhere, even before the car, but unfortunately they do not flee as screeching as their colleagues. Still, the animals are generally few and far between, as tourists we would probably be disappointed in this park, because the game has everywhere way to take cover and even the huge pachyderms disappear without further ado in the trees, especially the numerous lions and leopards. Sunis, little Antilöphen, form the third research and conservation focus in addition to the elephants and the sand forest, but we have hardly seen one and this more as a passing shade. Of the cats we usually only see the tracks on the street. Nevertheless, we are enthusiastic about the park and the project. It's exhausting, because there's not much time for yourself, but it's great fun to sit on the back of the pickup, or even stand upright in the wind and the sun and always expect to see an animal. Now we are looking forward to the peace and solitude here in the camp, to the search for small animals, which can be immortalized in photos, such as the spiders and caterpillars, which we have already discovered and recorded. And we are also happy that once again we have internet and can send out the diary, or even skype it.

November 30th, December 1st

Slowly we got used to the daily program here and get along well with it. We certainly get to see a lot more of the park than tourists see. Although the focus of the monitors is on their species - Cilla lions and wild dogs, Leonard Elefanten - they are always trying to show us everything. When we sit or stand on the bench at the back of the pickup and we or she see something, we stop and look



at, be amazed, enjoy and take pictures. Both are walking lexicons and enjoy sharing their knowledge. Leonard takes it a bit more comfortable, Cilla is often seen in the office late in the evening, although she is already starting to work at 4 o'clock.

The lions remain invisible and we seldom find their signals. The veterinarian had no time to come and since he also works here on a voluntary basis, he can not be called simply. After we are now hoping that he will come tomorrow and tomorrow we can adjust the transmitter collar at "Dee", it is too narrow. It still has to be found today. The girls are on their way soon.

Our young jackals now have a really nice outdoor enclosure. But obviously they did not like it and they made off quietly. We estimate it to be ten to twelve weeks, and since it has a lot of insects, there is a possibility that they can make ends meet. For Bart, the missing wild dog boy it looks different. Although we believed that he had been killed by the lions, he seems to run around in the counter and to seek the others with his "huh" call. Meanwhile, these are much further north, in the part of the park that does not have many roads and is not accessible to tourists. We received their signals this morning but did not see them.

This afternoon we wanted to rest and enjoy, Leonard and the girls went on the elephant watching tour. Leonard wanted to show us all Isilo, the elephant with the largest tusks in southern Africa. So he said he wanted to pick us up, if he would find him in Hide (at the webcam). Cozy I was in the hammock when Cilla came in and announced that Leonard would pick us up in ten minutes. The picture that showed itself to us was impressive. Twelve elephant bulls met at the water holes, scratched at the trees, splashed mud, and played their strength playfully. Scattered nyalas, waterbucks, warthogs. A coming and going. This is exactly the situation that Leonard promised us for the hot summer weather. Today it is around 35 degrees, the sweat trickles and the sun burns, yet it is wonderful with the wind or here in the camp in the shade of the trees. Between the exits is washed, eaten, kitchen cleaned up, diary written or taken photos or edited. This morning, a snake and a big cricket stood model, soon we want to place the elephant dung and put on so dung beetle to be able to photograph them.

1. / 2. December

Everything was a bit uncertain today, as we never knew if the vet would come. The girls searched and found the dogs in the morning but could not count them. We enjoyed the last exit with Leonard, did not see quite as many cops as yesterday and no flock. Nevertheless, there is always something to marvel at, for example, over the many green, burned, coal-black palms that bloom beautifully

yellow or Impalababies or leopard trails. It was not boring for a moment and we regret a little bit that it's weekend again and Leonard is not driving.

After a wonderful rest in the hammock with the exciting book, we went with Cilla back to the dog search and have actually found, after which we drove back and forth. Unfortunately, we were only able to count eleven and the evaluation of the photos showed that besides Bart now a second young dog is missing. This morning and yesterday the pack was very close to us and during the night meal we could hear their calls, which brought us to hope that the pack Bart has found again. A pity, that was not confirmed today.

Now everything is cooked around me, soon we will enjoy a delicious meal and shortly thereafter we will fall into bed, so that we can go back to the piste tomorrow at four. If the vet comes then there could be a long, hard weekend ...

3rd of December

Unfortunately, this does not work with the vet, so far he has not arrived and we know nothing new. Today on the early morning we found the dogs and could count them while lying on the road. Unfortunately, there are only eleven, it is almost like the "ten little negroes", the group is getting smaller. The search for a lion was also successful. But it took us about four hours and countless miles, three towers and a few trees - ended up amusingly, very close to our camp, in the southwest corner of the park. Unfortunately, the lionesses, who are pregnant or already have babies, did not show up, but we were able to locate their signals very accurately.

On a short visit to the small and modest craft shop, we even found what we were looking for and Manfred bought a pretty braided tin with the wood carving of a dung beetle perched on top of it. It was exactly these little animals that we dedicated our afternoon after a restful nap. Several bullets of fresh elephant dung were dumped in the garden and we watched the guys squeezing balls and fighting each other. Now we are cooking and still hope that tomorrow our last chance for the "Lioncallup" can use, because on Monday is already at 6.00 clock departure to Mkuzi and in the HiP (Hluhluwe Impfoloji Park).

Sunday, December 4th

We (Leonard, Tarik, Manfred and I) are sitting in the kitchen, emptying our last bottle of wine, eating sandwiches that came home from today's exit. The day was quiet and we enjoyed this peace. At three o'clock we started looking for the lions, because Dee still has her too tight collar. In the morning the girls found their signal and everything seemed easy. This afternoon we then searched for an hour, received only a faint signal and then found a place where the prey should be tied up. The park manager and Tarik then came with a Nyalabock and found

that the wind came from the wrong side and we had to look again for a better place. Like a gangster in a chase Cilla raced through the park, we dived under the branches, had to cross x times the elephant fences and closed his eyes with a shock prayer that neither an elephant stretch his butt in the street, yet another car to meet would. The wind turned again and we drove back to our place where we installed ourselves. The rifle was loaded with the arrow, everything was prepared and we waited in the tight backs of Chris Auto under the constant squealing of the pigs, until the lioness' vet could set the stun shot. SMS back and forth showed that Dee was in close proximity - but really did not want to show. Chris felt very ill and so we went home after two hours, because the two have to drive two hours to Mkuze. Bad luck...

## **Part 2: Hluhluwe-iMfolozi**

Monday, December 5th

Now we are sitting in another world - we arrived at Hluhluwe Imfolzi Park, HIP for short. After the sandy, flat, wooded area of Tembi, in which the animals hid, quite a contrast. The dog leash in Tembe comprises twelve animals, here in the park there are about two hundred animals. But the elephants here in the park are obviously rather unfriendly to their admirers.

Our drive took us back over the pass, past the large reservoir on the main road to Mkuzi, shortly after this city left us the girls in the direction of Thanda and we took new passengers. In Hluhluwe we were allowed to change ourselves and were welcomed by Cathy. We were the only passengers on the pick-up, were first drove briefly for shopping and after we have stocked up with wine, beer and nibbles, we drove through the green, hilly heart of Kwazulu Natal to get into the park , The grass is about knee-high, short enough to open the warthog's family with cute babies shortly after the gate and announcement of the game's rules. Beside her in the puddles was a flock of well over eighty buffaloes, among them three rhinos speckled with the black and white of some zebras. On the approximately half-hour drive here we have probably seen nearly as many animals as in the two weeks Tembe - a reverse order would probably almost a culture shock. Our camp consists of barracks with double rooms and a communal kitchen, not only Wildlife ACT, but also other researchers. So it will be more lively and more international than in Tembe. Cathy will go on vacation tomorrow, she will be represented by her assistant Maruma. She is currently on the road to pick up our new colleagues, boys from Australia and England. Cathy has announced that in the near future we would have eight dogs with half countries, also a Nyala would have to be "rolled up". It should not be boring. Hopefully we will also see one of the remarkable features of this park: rather than leopards, the lions are said to be in the Marula trees here.

Our hammocks are already stretched under gloriously shady trees and we have had a rest and read a little, then we have blown the Halali Macropirsch, with some interesting observations, including a giant beetle and a casual triangular spider. We will be fed with information here today and look forward to exploring the park tomorrow with the eyes of our employees.

Tuesday, December 6, 2011

An exciting yet relaxing day comes to an end after a fine curry. 21.15 and we are in our room, lying or sitting in bed and have almost luxuriously many hours of sleep before us - our next trip starts at 5:00 clock. Our daily goal to provide a dog from the Südpack with a collar, we have not reached. After starting difficulties with the telemetry device, we could not locate the dogs in the morning. After a restful nap in the hammock and enjoyment of washing in a machine and hanging on the sunlit rope, we did the second attempt successfully in the afternoon and together with the wild dog monitor of the Umfolozi side and the regional chief we tried a dog to the south Anesthetize arrow to adjust the collar. With the collection / paging of the dogs was trying to attract them, they are conditioned to this sound and know that then a prey is present. An impala shot shortly before was pulled by car as soon as the pack was seen. At a frantic pace, the dogs "chased" the impala and tore bites. Since the shooter was neither really ready nor had an undisturbed view, but he never came to the shot and it also succeeded in several attempts not to shoot a male. With well-filled, thick bellies, the dogs made themselves off the dust and we drove impressed and on the morning excited back to the camp.

Friday, December 9, 2011

The days are varied as the weather here. The day before yesterday was hot and really African, it started to rain yesterday, during the night, it poured often like from bucket and this morning, the "backbenchers" were drenched.

Cathy is gone. After every 30 working days, the staff members have 10 days off and can go to their home, some of which are a few hours' drive away. We are now being looked after by Marumo, who prefers to be silent or write text messages, to give explanations or to take care of us or the dogs. Nevertheless, we have already experienced a lot. So far we have not experienced any successful actions with the dogs, although we tried for the second time today. They responded to the call and the sound of the eating dogs from the loudspeaker - but not only them but also the hyenas. Each time the dogs had caught some mouthfuls of the prey chained to the tree, they were driven away by a group of hyenas , Since the pack has just reformed, it is still very uncertain and has not defended itself successfully. So the vet did not come to the arrow shot and we could not get to the dogs, also because it would have been too dangerous. A

stunned dog would easily become the prey of the ten hyenas. Tomorrow we'll try again, maybe in drier weather.

Yesterday was tough but also great. We drove all the way to the top corner of the Imfolozipark looking for cats. We met rhinos, elephants, warthogs, then lions, a pack of Imfolziwildhunde - they are supervised by Sama the monitor of Imfolozuseite and are in nine packs on the way - and finally a waiting car flashed us, so we realized that there something special was going on. Suddenly a group of impalas shot through the cars, behind them a cheetah whose three babies were waiting in the grass. In the semicircle around the cars the animals shot, then a blast and whistle of the Impala was the only remaining noise, except the plucking of the peacefully grazing three rhinos with boys. The Junggeparde remained lying, then one of them began to muzzle and was obviously a sign of the successful mother. The little goats told us where the prey was and joined their mother to eat.

On the way, thanks to clues, we spotted another, lonely cheetah warming up in the sun - nice that the probably only dry parts of the day were when the cheetahs showed up.

The day before we were a long way, but did not spy much, but we enjoyed the beautiful landscape. Hills and valleys, streams and rivers, palm trees and tall Marula trees, degrees and bushes alternate. This is particularly visible in the Hilltop Restaurant on the terrace, where you can enjoy a beautiful view and fine toasts. We enjoyed that very much the day before yesterday after the short walk from the camp to the lodge.

Even the evening Braai was casual, but we have also chosen the perfect evening. Matthew and Carl, our two new gspändli have brought the fire to life, we prepared the grilled food, including a fine fillet. Mmh, that tasted good. Our team works much worse than with the Dutch girls. While Matthew struggles, the Aussie is just selfish and rather disgusting - too bad.

I do not know if I have ever described the tasks we have here. Strict work is not, we often feel like tourists in a cheap backpackers. Nevertheless, I think, this project story is absolutely a profit for all sides. On the one hand, researchers actually have more eyes, ears and hands when they need them. So scanning or checking the signals is only helpful (even if we at Sama see that he does it quickly and easily - we also have a completely different perspective in the back seat than the driver.) The passenger, who can enjoy the dryness, Sightings are written down with species, type of observation (sighting, far away, signal), time, place and coordinates - the scientific part - entering this data can also be part of the free will work In addition, we are above all escort - the job can certainly be very lonely, especially in Tembe. Cooking together in a team also brings

something to the researchers, but above all, we bring money to pay wages, to buy equipment and gasoline. In return, we get to places and in situations that would never be accessible as a tourist and experience the difficulties and highlights of the research work directly with Eduld. It is in demand, from time to time uncomfortable and boring waiting, wind and weather as well as other animals can spoil the bill. You can also lend a hand when it comes to calling animals, be it preparing the prey or securing the spot, for example by creating a barrier for the animals, so that they stay where you can shoot an arrow. So in Tembe we cut branches out of the dense hedge (first with the Macheta, then with the Swiss army knife, which did the better service) and assembled them into a barrier. The greatest benefit we can but probably provide with Manfred's photos: identification of animals is really fundamental and often you can not get very close to the black rhinos or other animals, the markings - for example, in the ear - have. Of course, everyone else is enthusiastic about the fantastic photos ...

The accommodation here is not very cozy, especially considering the miserable weather at the moment, it is raining and raining, and the corresponding amount of time we spend in our room, which can be compared to a cell. Two beds, a bedside table, a table, a cupboard. Showers and toilets grown, shared, without locks and very simple. The kitchen is cozy with a large table, there are a surprising number of electrical appliances such as toaster and kettle, but the gas grill is a very shaky because unreliable disaster and cooking on it not easy. We still enjoy it, even if the rösti this morning unfortunately only in the pan a crust ..

Sunday, December 11, 2011

Varied and always surprisingly run our program and the weather .. On Friday it rained so much in the afternoon that we have canceled the exit. For hours we played "Marumo": card game with double card and Jokern, goal of the eleven cards you get as fast as possible to get rid of all. You can put down three or more sheets as well as the same of the different colors, always in the minimum of three. These can always be rearranged and played with the cards lying down. Who can not, takes a card and may not play.

Yesterday morning we wanted to equip a dog with the collar - everything was ready, the vet from Durban started, three cars in search. Only we did not find a signal. Finally, the fence patrol reported that they had seen the dogs outside the park. Without blue light but in an emergency, we drove through the park, then two armed Rangers went up and we left the park at a nearby gate. Now we could take a look inside Zululand. Hamlets, consisting of individual household communities, each with goats, cattle and Hünern, children in Badezubern, colorful linen on linen flapping, waving people and women on the riverbed or at

the waterhole, washing their clothes or filling large containers. Several times we made our way through the inhabited areas until we found our way to the fence and took a short walk through the fields. Within the park a short time later added several cars. The plan was to call the dogs with the speakers - but a fuse of the device was broken and so did not work. The dogs had searched their way under the fence by the riverbed and were on a nearby hill. Below, the cows and goats grazed peacefully. This is exactly where the whole problem of the wild dog project came to mind: to monitor fleas worse than a sack, know no limits, are dangerous and fast and feared and shot in a hurry by the people outside the park.

Despite long efforts and discussions, it was not possible to connect the devices and so we mimicked the reputation of the dogs. In addition, the many rangers set out to drive the dogs back to the park. In fact, we were happy at noon that the dogs were back inside the park.

In the area where we left them, we looked for the dogs again - but again without success, even though we were even a few feet on foot. With a ranger. Still, it is always a special feeling to be aware that there is a kitten lurking behind every bush.

Once more we cooked a fine dinner: chopsticks, potato wedges and vegetables from the oven. Then there was a marumo before we relieved ourselves in the horizontal. During the night it rained like a bucket, in the meantime thunder was heard. After a quick glance out of the door, Manfred decided to enjoy the bed longer and refrain from the exit. Luckily the weather was better in the morning and soon we were able to take off our long underpants and different layers of jackets.

Shortly after the first signal check above the camp we drove towards the river. A car blocked the road and it quickly became clear why. Lions enjoyed the refreshing drink from the puddles in the asphalt. A whole family of lions, six females and two males moved on and off the road for a long time. It was impressive, especially when you sit on the pick-up and the lion would have to make a single small set to get an easy prey. The bellies of the cats were thick and round, they probably had no appetite for us after the buffalo.

We did not find the signal, but at least giraffes, buffalos, elephants, but often our paths were interrupted by flooded bridges, or the roads were impassable. So after many laps we returned to the camp where, thanks to the nice weather, it was time to wash again and Manfred even lay down in the hammock during my nap. But only after intensive searching and scanning of beetles and similar small animals.

The afternoon drive, which starts at three o'clock, brought us some rhinos, a stay on a beautiful picnic spot by the river, a golden finish, then a look at the lions in the evening light and, fortunately, even a dog signal that indicates the direction for tomorrow! Now we sit with beer, garlic bread and talks here in the kitchen, in the oven sizzle the chicken pieces that we can not grill on the braai, since the wood is wet and despite Carl's efforts refuses to catch fire ...

The first surprise we had already at four in the morning. At this time we were prepared as agreed - but then learned from Mat and Carl that the departure time was moved to 04:30. As it turned out later, maybe a liked short nuisance. Equipped as usual with our cool box - containing two thermoses with hot coffee and some fruits - our garbage bag with all our warm clothes, photo and hand backpack, it went off exactly at five-thirty. Already at the first check we heard the pleasing, pip-pip 'of the dogs on our receiver. Continue in the specified direction. Suddenly - right after a turn - we are standing in front of a pack of lions. Some still hidden or hidden - the others under a tree - and we hardly believe it, a lioness on a rather small Marula tree. What a sight. The click of our cameras 'bothered' the next breathtaking minutes. Although hardly any space on the tree, even a lion male squeezed with a massive set on one of the branches. A constant back and forth slide or Geschmuse the two animals.

After arriving at the camp, it was time to pack cool bags and the delegates for shopping - Marumo, Manfred, Maya in the pickup and to Hluhluwe. Get money at the ATM worked fine, at least for Manfred, Marumo then went out empty. Second stop was the Superspar, where we bought everything for the next week. The shopping cart with goods for the team gng at the checkout with 100 rand less by than our private with wine, shrimp and birthday cake for Cathy. It was exciting to look for the right goods in the unknown shelves, black, white, thick, thin to meet - we now hope that we have shopped well and have enough provisions ...

In the afternoon we drove to the border fence again to search for the dogs. They had been driven back to the park by Sama and Rangers, but we did not know if the three outrageous boys were back together with the five girls. After a long wait, which let loose with the search for macro objects, we saw the dogs briefly on the hilltop. But unfortunately only five, which does not answer the question of the grouping together.

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

After the Kurzfühstück we started to drive in the Imfolziseite. We drove briskly without seeing much. At the camp we drove to the antenna mound, which offered a unique view - and reminded us of our terrible thunderstorm in the



tent, during which I spent a moment of shock in Manfred's bed - the night was lit by lightning and echoed with constant thunder. Today we enjoyed the view and tried to find all the dogs until Sama showed us that most of these collars are no longer in operation. In addition, we learned everything about our control unit, which we had known for ten days now.

The ride took us along the trail. From a tourist car, we learned that seven cheetahs were seen, searched and found them soon. A mother with four cubs, one with her daughter. Too bad that Marumo had no patience and we left the place soon, despite our intervention. When we came back after twenty minutes, all the animals had disappeared. So we returned home and enjoyed a free afternoon in the hammock to digest the trouble, then a delicious curry, real Indian, prepared by Nerissa. A Marumo game rounded off the evening and we lie down to bed tired. In my lies between the mattress and sheet a plastic rain protection, as the suspicion to feed fleas, not let go ...

Thursday, December 15, 2011

Yesterday was an eventless and animalless day. Our dog pack was untraceable, we were driving through the Hluhluwe part, but were unsuccessful in the morning and the evening ride. In between, we enjoyed a few hours in the hammock. This morning we found the signal again, but the dogs could neither see nor count - at the moment a collar is not an issue again. Maybe it was like so often: tomorrow, maybe ..

After all, we discovered and photographed black rhinos this morning. From far away, but you can still see the markings in the ears well, so the photos are valuable for the scientists.

Marumo has left us, she has now gone to Thanda as a deputy, she also works in Mkuze, in each park in each of the ten days in which the actual monitors are free. Cathy has returned, with her escort she gives us hope to get now the information we miss so far. Today is her birthday and after the afternoon departure party is announced. We still have fine filet and delicious prawns, also bought a big cake, so we look forward to tonight. Also Nerissa leaves us this afternoon, like most of them here she goes home, in the Christmas holidays. Christmas - for us so far away ...

We are now looking forward to the last section, with Cathy. Soon we leave and hope for collars and leopards, explanations and suspense ..

Friday, December 16, 2011

The ride has kept as much as she has promised: new roads, the dogs, a group of seven rhinos - and lots of rain ..

We have not found the dogs for a long time, but have taken a long, extremely wild way, washed out and full of furrows. An elephant met us and showed us in wild movements that we should make our way out of the dust. When we were already back on the asphalt road, we met a car and we learned that the dogs had just been seen. In fact, we found them soon, obviously on the hunt, because we soon ran into a hare. He reached the safe grass after several hooks. The next exciting encounter followed shortly thereafter. A giraffe blocked the street on which the dogs ran in one-liners. She did not let herself be disturbed, but left the street. Again a frightened rabbit came towards us, but also escaped. The eyes then hardly liked to follow, as a Nyalaweibchen, pursued by the dogs, crossed the street. Unfortunately, they quickly disappeared in the high bushes. Still, a great birthday present for Cathy - and she was really happy.

In the evening, a braai took place in pouring rain, to which some friends of Cathy came. We took over the kitchen and fire service, offered prawns and fine filet, enjoyed a few glasses of wine and then said goodbye soon, the others sang and feasted on - and Cathy enjoyed her "Röhrli glasses", with which they cool the wine flaschelleren and their head could..

Accordingly, no morning ride took place today. After a late breakfast, we made the photo trap piles ready. Tomorrow, we will set up five of them in the Umfolozi section of the park so that the cheetahs and leopards and all other casting guests can be accommodated. On Sunday we plan a very early exit and take a sunrise morgue.

Saturday, December 17, 2011

Well, our plans are thrown over and over again - be it human or animal. Yesterday evening the bush pig was the highlight of our trip, yet we enjoyed every minute, especially as we got away dry, if cold. On a fine night, Cathy told us that her superiors had planned the annual meeting for tomorrow and that we could not go to Imfolozi until Sunday.

This morning we started already at 4 o'clock, with the intention to find the leopard. The free ride did not take long before we arrived in the leopard area, two rhinos were on the road. A beaten half-hour they blocked our onward journey. The sun was already shining from the sky when we were able to drive on, the leopards did not show up and the dogs gave us a signal from a river bed. Leopard - maybe tomorrow ...

After fine scrambled eggs, we have prepared quantities of rice salad for tomorrow, because today we go to Hilltop right after the dog inspection to eat and tomorrow it is planned that we start early to Umfolozi.

The time gained during which Cathy's conversations took place we enjoyed in our hammock, but missed a cobra of about two meters in length, which snaked through our camp. We learned from Simon and Chris that three lionesses - a mother and two sixteen-month-old daughters - could be trapped in Tembe and taken along in the back of the pickup truck, along with the Vounteers, and later transferred to a private reserve ,

Time really melts us between the fingers. We look forward to a bit more luxury, but life else could have pleased us here and the park, especially the Imfolozi side is beautiful and animal kingdom.

Sunday, December 18, 2011

Yesterday evening was wonderful. We all met the dogs and delivered real chases. The pace at which they travel distances is always impressive, so to follow them you have to know the park like your pocket. This is quite different with Cathy than with Marumo. On the way home, unfortunately, we met no cat, but we watched for a few minutes the huge Giant Eagle Owls and listened to their tender calls.

In the hilltop restaurant we enjoyed four volunteers then together with Cathy the wonderful buffet. When all the staff came singing from the kitchen and sang three songs, it touched a lot, then, when a dance of mutual challenge began by lifting one leg and clapping the floor as loud as possible, accompanied by singing, the mood became really dramatic.

Cathy too, like all our leaders, we donated a Swiss Army knife and she was really happy.

So, after a short walk in bed at sunrise, watching a pair of gorgeous Trumpeterhornbills and our pack of monkeys take off, I have to get up and prepare some toast so we can take them on our almost last ride, the Cheetah's Day.

Monday, December 19, 2011

We are the last ones in the camp, the others are already on the way to the airport. A heartfelt goodbye to Matt, a "finally" opposite Kel. We're glad to finally get rid of him, he really was, as Marumo said "a pain in the ass".

Cathy surprised us with a present. When we were shopping yesterday in the souvenir market at the Centenary Center on Kel, I told her about my dislike of carved masks etc. and that I would most likely take a Neztli for milk etc. home. She pointed out that it had such, but I was tired and referred with the winged host of our team from "maybe next time". It would never have occurred to me

that this next time could be today. What a lovely gesture - especially because Cathy confessed that she has no more money ...

Our Gepardentag weather was as I had wished him. Hot and cloudless, really African. Unfortunately, but not according to the wishes of the animals, we probably drove all the loops in Imfolozi part, no cat could be seen. Maybe they will be caught by the photo traps we put. Of the five pieces we carried, two found a place, one on a tree, the other on one of the posts we prepared. They should help to identify especially cheetahs and leopards and generally provide information on who moves where. Cathy showed us during lunch (rice salad - without cutlery, but with self-carved chopsticks and carton tray spoons) the photos that were taken here in Hilltopcamp, on the road between camp and football field. To our astonishment, they showed lions, leopards, hyenas, elephants and buffaloes - in addition to a multitude of different antelopes - impressive, actually on your doorstep!

Shortly before reaching the camp, seven giraffes awaited us, eyed us, walked leisurely before us, then decided on the path into the bush, where after a short time and a tumult six of them returned. They stood in the street, craning their necks towards the bush to the seventh giraffe, who joined them only a few minutes later. We suspected that a leopard ducked into the bush and startled all the animals.

We got up early this morning. At 3.30 already we started in pitch dark night with the intention to find the leopard after all. It was so cold that we protected ourselves with a double layer of blankets, our hands scrabbling the edges of the road with the flashlight were ice cold - but Manfred's beautiful new winter cap was already in the suitcase. Shortly before sunrise, we then poured ourselves on a hill with a wonderful view coffee, the Cathy still with a dash of Amarula sweetened. What a romantic beginning to the end!

Also on the return the leopard kept his cover - so we have to come back!

Now we enjoy the conclusion here. Feedback form, last photos, a little rest. Cathy's friend takes us to Richards Bay at 1:00 pm because our flight does not start until 6:30 pm, so we would have waited way too long. A good solution. We take home many exciting and new impressions. Even if we look forward to the home, the animals and a little luxury, the farewell to this paradise is not easy!

Tuesday, December 20, 2011

I am sitting at the table in my office - at home! And that is not self-evident, but our journey also contained a few adventures ...

Mark, Cathy's friend started with us on the ride before one. Up to the gate last buffalo, rhinos and antelopes, then the famous route with cows and goats to Hluhluwe, where we refueled, finally on the highway to Richards Bay and without detour to the airport. We saved ourselves a stay in the city, which seems to have nothing to offer anyway, would rather be early enough and keep our luggage under supervision.

We decided to ask if we could check in, although it was only 15.15 and our flight was scheduled to start at 18.35. To our surprise, the baggage was unquestionably accepted and the boarding cards issued. With the check-in time 15.15 and departure time 15.45! When the friendly gentleman noticed our astonishment, he asked if we had not been informed that the flight had been postponed. Had we had a beer somewhere, which we had considered, we would not be back today!

The flights went well so far, in London we made a time jumble, so we almost missed the connection while reading and drinking coffees. That would have been the summit!

While many are happy that the Christ Child is coming in the snow, we were rather amazed and were glad that the plane was able to land in the snowdrift and white area.

Now we are back, enjoy our home, were greeted by our four-legged friends happy. We do not regret a moment of our intense and varied time in the parks! And soon planning for the next adventure begins! And of course there is still a lot of work to do for Manfred to put the most beautiful of the 3000+ photos on the homepage.