

Big Cat, Elephant & Rhino Research and Conservation Project Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa



At African Impact, we see ourselves as the on-the-ground AFRICAN SPECIALISTS in volunteering. We were founded over 6 years ago in Zimbabwe and have our head office in Cape Town, South Africa, with supporting operations offices in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia. To date we, together with our project managers out in the field, have had the privilege of sharing Africa with over 3,000 volunteers who were determined to make a difference in the amazing communities and conservation areas in which we work. And they did... and so can you...



African Impact

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Being based on the Thanda Private Game Reserve in Kwazulu-Natal near South Africa's East coast, you will have the opportunity to be involved in a variety of research initiatives on endangered and other wildlife species. You will contribute to research and conservation work during your stay and play a part in vital conservation activities. The majority of the data you gather will support the long-term objectives of the Thanda Foundation.

Part of your fee contributes to the Thanda Foundation, which acts as a conduit for the raising of funds for community development projects as well as for conservation research initiatives.

'This amazing project offers volunteers the opportunity of work with Black Rhinos, an endangered species, as well as Elephants and Big Cats.'

'Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.' - Albert Einstein

Project Location: Thanda Private Game reserve, home to the big five with 14,000 hectares of stunning African bush is situated one and half hours away from St Lucia on the North East Coast of South Africa.

Conditions of Participation

- Genuine love and concern for animals and the environment
- Minimum age 18 years
- You must be in good physical condition, as you will be expected to walk long distances and participate in physical activities
- Ability to work as part of a team, be flexible and cooperative
- To have an amazing extraordinary life changing experience that will enrich your life forever!! You are sure to have a wonderful time on this unique and inspiring placement



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Project Highlights:

- Live in the heart of a Big 5 game reserve
- Carry out research on endangered wildlife within the reserve to provide information for the Thanda Foundation and the African Lion Environmental Research Trust.
- Monitor the night time movements of the Rhinos in the park
- Monitor the movements and behaviours of a newly introduced herd of elephants
- Assist on conservation initiatives within the Park such as alien plant control and soil erosion
- Assist on game capture if and when possible.

More Information on the Big Cat, Rhino and Elephant Research & Conservation Programme:

The award winning Thanda Game Reserve in northern Zululand, South Africa, is 14,000 hectares of pristine bush and is home to Africa's infamous Big 5 including Lion, Leopard, Elephant, Buffalo, Black and White Rhino and many other key animals as well as over 400 species of birds.

In 2006 the Thanda Foundation, in partnership with Thanda Private Game Reserve, launched a conservation research programme. The programme includes the monitoring of elephant, cheetah, lion, leopard and black rhino. The research programme involves the University of Natal and the Wildlands Conservation Trust as well as other conservation and wildlife agencies in research projects on both Thanda and the neighbouring community game reserve area. Thanda's partnership with neighbouring communities has been strengthened

by the raising of funds that seek to involve such communities in education programmes centred on biodiversity and community based natural resource management.

In partnership with African Impact and the Thanda Foundation, you will help the research work by gathering information in the field and spend time in the bush on conservation initiatives. You will spend some time in the research centre entering captured data onto a computer to be shared with relevant researchers and authorities. The focus of this project is to monitor the Elephant well as the endangered Rhino populations.

The rhino population..

The rhinos population in Africa dramatically decreased after a long and devastating period of hunting and poaching.

Due to conservation efforts we have seen a huge increase in population numbers in recent years. In 1960 the total number of black Rhino's was at least 100 000, and today there are fewer than 3 500 left. Most of these survive in southern African countries where there are good protection measures and as a result we are beginning to see a gradual population increase in this magnificent species.



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Thanda Game Reserve released Black Rhino into the park in 2009 as part of the Endangered Species reintroduction programme. Their movements are tracked by the anti-poaching team. You will spend your time with a guide in the bush to capture information on the movements of the rhino, the habitats they favour and their general health. You will also be involved in the removal of snares, which are a danger to the animals. Black Rhino are mainly nocturnal animals and so some of your time will be spent monitoring the movements of the Black Rhino from the safety of a vehicle at night. This will give a fantastic experience of night time in the African bush!

The Thanda Foundation has partnered with the Space For Elephants Foundation, which is a national organisation endeavoring to create more space through a network of corridors throughout South Africa to support the natural migration of elephants.

Conflict with humans is a major issue for elephants in the region, but understanding how to mitigate the conflict first requires an understanding of the ecology of the species within the Park.

The data collected on Elephant research will be used by the Thanda Foundation and Space for Elephants to secure a future for elephants, and to help sustain the beauty and ecological integrity of the places where they live.

Big Cats..

In the last thirty years we have seen an alarming decrease in the population numbers of the cat family in southern Africa. Thanda foundation has teamed up with The African Lion & Environmental Research Trust (<http://www.lionalert.org>) to put together a tracking and monitoring program essential to the conservation of these magnificent animals.

As recently as 1975, over 200,000 **lions** may have roamed the African continent. In 2002 estimates put the population between 23,000 and 39,000, representing an 80 – 90% decline in less than 30 years.

We have also seen a decrease in numbers for the one of the most specialized members of the cat family, the **Cheetah**. It has now become the most endangered cat in South Africa with its current population comprising of approximately 550 individuals. Over the last 30 years the population of cheetah has declined by a massive 30% which was largely driven by: habitat loss and fragmentation due to burgeoning human populations.

Thanda game reserve is also home to the **Leopard**. In the past, leopards have also been victims to habitat loss, farmers often considered Leopards a nuisance to cattle and as a result frequently shot or hunted them. Numbers decreased due to immigration and lack of food as well as extensive numbers being illegally poached for their valuable skin and body parts.

During your volunteering time you will be specifically focusing on the hunting, social, territorial and reproductive behaviours of the lion population. Other data will also be collected to improve our understanding of the behaviours and you may be involved with observations such as; health assessments through body condition scoring, identification of core pride range and activity budgets.

Wildlife monitoring is essential for keeping track of animal movement patterns, habitat utilization, population demographics, snaring and poaching incidents and breakouts. This valuable information, which you will collect, has numerous applications needed for the conservation and protection of these animals.

This project will give you the opportunity to learn about these beautiful animals as well as give you a hands-on experience of the African bush. You will be working in a changing, dynamic environment which is determined by the movement and activities of the animals. Each individual contribution is significant in helping us to achieve our long term goals.



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More information about what you will be doing on the projects:

- Monitor the behaviour, feeding patterns and movement of a herd of elephant who will be released into the park in early 2011
- Collate and record research data for the African Lion & Environmental Research Trust on a pride of lions. This will be in the bush to observe hunting, social, breeding and territorial behaviour at five different times of the day and night
- Monitor the rhino population at night to support the data recorded by the anti-poaching team during the day. This will help the reserve managers to understand the health of the animals, which are part of an endangered species reintroduction programme.
- Capturing data as required by the reserve management team on their ongoing endangered species work
- Spend time walking in the bush with an armed ranger to carry out snare sweeps. This is a vital part of the anti-poaching effort within a park
- Carry out physical work to help regenerate natural bush from reclaimed farmland including the prevention of further soil erosion and the removal of old structures to avoid injuries for animals
- Contribute to the long term strategy of removal of Alien Plants from the park

To give you an idea of how your time will be split between the different aspects of the program, the following should be taken as an approximation:

Big Cat, Elephant and Rhino Research & Monitoring 40-50%

Conservation work within the Park 30-40%

Data Recording 10-20%

You may also have the opportunity to share your passion for conservation with people from the communities living next to the Thanda Game Reserve. You will spend time with people encouraging their learning and understanding of conservation initiatives, the environment and knowledge of African wildlife.

Project Dates:

The project will start on the 6th March 2011 and volunteers may join us for a minimum of 2 weeks and maximum of 8 weeks. Please note the arrival dates below, volunteers joining this project must arrive on the dates specified:

<i>Arrival date 1 (Sunday)</i>	<i>Arrival Date 2 (Sunday)</i>
<i>9th January</i>	<i>23rd January</i>
<i>6th February</i>	<i>20th February</i>
<i>6th March</i>	<i>20th March</i>
<i>3rd April</i>	<i>17th April</i>
<i>1st May</i>	<i>15th May</i>
<i>29th May</i>	<i>12th June</i>
<i>26th June</i>	<i>10th July</i>
<i>24th July</i>	<i>7th August</i>
<i>21st August</i>	<i>4th September</i>
<i>18th September</i>	<i>2nd October</i>
<i>16th October</i>	<i>30th October</i>
<i>13th November</i>	<i>27th November</i>

Please keep in mind when booking flights that volunteers will be collected at Durban airport on the start dates indicated above by 2.30 pm. If you are unable to arrive before this time on Sunday we ask that you arrive the day before where we can recommend a suitable alternative accommodation and will assist with your pick-up. Should you require further assistance with this please don't hesitate to contact us.

Departure date will also be every second Sunday and volunteers will be dropped at the airport by 10.30a.m.



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Do I need experience, is there orientation?

For this project, enthusiasm for African wildlife is essential, research, knowledge and experience is helpful, but not necessary. On arrival you will have a comprehensive orientation facilitated by your volunteer coordinator including:

- Overview of the aims of the project and your role as a volunteer
- An introduction to where you are staying and description of the game reserve.
- A brief introduction to all our other projects that we are involved in KwaZulu-Natal

‘A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.’
- Greek Proverb

Project Cost:

2 Weeks:	995 GBP	1295 EUR	1795 USD
4 Weeks:	1495 GBP	1945 EUR	2695 USD
8 Weeks:	2375 GBP	3085 EUR	4275 USD

What Does the Cost Include?

- The project fee entails financing that goes directly back into the project that you are involved with via the Thanda Foundation;
- Transport between Durban airport and Thanda on Sundays only. We will arrive at the airport for 1030 and leave at 1430;
- Orientation program, including a security briefing on living within a Big 5 game reserve;
- All daily transfers to and from your projects during your stay;
- Full board and lodging, which includes 3 meals a day at our volunteer house;
- Laundry service during your stay;
- Assistance at your projects by African Impact staff and volunteer coordinators.

What Does the Cost Exclude?

- Personal Travel Insurance for the duration of your placement;
- All transport to Durban airport All items of a personal nature, such as curios, gifts, clothing (work and other);
- E-mail / Internet and telephone calls;
- Soft drinks, beers, wines and spirits;
- All visas for border crossings;
- Any excursions over-and-above your planned itinerary.



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Where will I sleep?

During your placement you will stay in comfortable twin cabins set in the Game Reserve overlooking a water hole commonly visited by the animals in the park. There is a large communal thatched building with areas to dine, relax, to watch the animals or to take a dip in the swimming pool. The accommodation is staffed with cooks and cleaners and all bed linen is provided.

You can spend the evenings sat around a fire under the stunning African sky or chatting on the viewing deck to see what animals visit the area as night falls.



Project Support:

Throughout your stay at your placement you will have the support and guidance of experienced field-workers and coordinators. They are part of our greater African Impact support team, and will provide you with competent 24-hour field support and assistance.

Project Meals:

You will be provided with three meals a day. Breakfast is on a help-yourself basis and usually consists of cereals, toast, tea and coffee. Lunch and dinner are full meals, and will be cooked for you by one of our cooks at the reserve.

Note: *If you leave early in the morning for your photography project, which is often the best time for good pictures, you will be given a packed breakfast/lunch.*

How do I get there and travel around?

The nearest airport to the Game Reserve is Durban. There are daily flights from Johannesburg or Cape Town to Durban and these can be booked on:

www.flightsite.com; www.kulula.co.za; www.1time.co.za; www.flysaa.com; www.flymango.co.za;

You will be met as you enter the terminal building and driven the 210 minutes to the reserve. Whilst on your project you will be transported by our team and park rangers and guides.

Note: **You will be picked up from the airport at 2.30p.m on the Sunday before the project orientation starts, if you are unable to arrive before this time please organize your flight to arrive on the Saturday. We will be happy to recommend overnight accommodation if required.**

Thanda wildlife Conservation Project notes:

We have found in the past that the more you as a volunteer put in to your involvement, the more you will get out. You are welcome to contact a member of staff to find out how you can best prepare for your stay to assist the local community.

Please also understand that our projects are continuously evolving, being improved, and adapting to the needs of the local communities that we are involved with, so involvement areas do change from time to time. Rest assured your work will be necessary, rewarding and exciting. We invite you to be more than a tourist...



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Thanda Travel Highlights:

It would be unforgiveable to be living in such stunning scenery without exploring your surroundings! Here are some of the highlights for you to do in your spare time at weekends. These are not included in your volunteering fee, but our coordinators are able to assist you with making the necessary booking arrangements:

- 4 day photographic workshop in the Drakensberg Mountains (R4600)
- Weekend trips to swim with Dolphins in Mozambique (R2 200)
- Visit the rugged scenery of Swaziland and experience the cultural heritage (R3 000)
- Game drives to the Tembe Elephant park, home to the largest Tuskers in Southern Africa
- Boat trips on the Kosi Bay lake systems to see ancient Fish traps and snorkel in the Estuary mouth
- Weekend trips to the seaside town of St Lucia to do Whale Watching (seasonal), to spend time on the beach or take a boat trip to see Hippos and Crocodiles up close.

(N.B Prices are a rough guideline and are likely to fluctuate)

"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." - Maya Angelou

We look forward to welcoming you for a unique, rewarding and unforgettable experience!



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