

# African Wildlife Photography and Conservation, KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA



At African Impact, we see ourselves as the on-the-ground AFRICAN SPECIALISTS in volunteering. We were founded over 5 years ago in Zimbabwe and have our head office in Cape Town, South Africa, with supporting operations offices in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania 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**

PHYSICAL ADDRESS 6 Carlton Close, Noordhoek, 7985, Cape Town, South Africa.

TELEPHONE +27 21 785 4319 Direct Line or CALL US TOLL FREE 1-800-606-7185 or UK TOLL FREE: 0800 0988 440



### Project Highlights:

- 1) Improve your photography skills in a 3 day intensive course taught by an experienced professional photographer
- 2) Stay in the heart of a Big 5 Game Reserve
- 3) Take pictures of the extensive wildlife on regular game drives.
- 4) Learn and photograph smaller species of flora and fauna on bush walks
- 5) Help to create a photo database for awareness and educational purposes
- 6) Help raise awareness in the local community about the importance of conservation
- 7) Assist on conservation initiatives within the Park e.g. Snare Sweeps and Alien Plant control
- 8) Supporting The Thanda Foundation
- 9) Make friends for life!

***In the impressive setting of a Private Big 5 Game Reserve, this unique programme offers photography enthusiasts the opportunity to get a different perspective on Africa...***

Our Wildlife Photography and Conservation Education project offers a varied range of photography and conservation components. Volunteers will start with an in-depth orientation, followed by an intensive 3 day photography course with a professional photographer to improve on your photography skills. A further 3 weeks will be spent photographing the phenomenal wildlife in the park, which boasts all of Africa's Big 5 (Lion, Elephant, Rhino, Buffalo and Leopard) and also doing conservation partnership with the Thanda Foundation. Volunteers will also spend sometime in the nearby UNESCO World Heritage Site of iSimangaliso for superb landscape photography.

*The iSimangaliso Wetland Park (formerly known as the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park) must be the only place on the globe where the oldest land mammal (the rhinoceros) and the world's biggest terrestrial mammal (the elephant) share an ecosystem with the world's oldest fish (the coelacanth) and the world's biggest marine mammal (the whale)" - NELSON MANDELA*

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

Age Limit: Minimum 18 years, maximum decided on potential participants' health

Please note that a basic level of fitness is required for the bush walks included in this programme (You will need to be able to walk for up to 3 hours over hilly and uneven ground & some physical work may include digging etc. on the conservation work part of the project).

Required Experience: For this project, enthusiasm for photography and African wildlife is essential. Photographic knowledge and experience is helpful, but not necessary. This project has been established for all levels of ability from complete beginners to professionals. Please note that you will be taught how to edit your photos on Photoshop and spend a good deal of time during the 4 weeks editing your images – for this reason a basic level of computer literacy is required in order to participate.

Minimum Equipment Required to Participate: Volunteers will need to bring their own photographic equipment - they should bring an SLR digital camera with at least an 18-55 mm lens, battery charger and 2GB memory card. Through past feedback we now have listed a tripod and digital storage devices (in the form of at least a 4GB flash drive or external drive) as essential items to bring with you.



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### Project Achievements so far:

Originally located in the heart of St Lucia, volunteers have made a significant contribution in the last three years. Recently moving to the beautiful settings of Thanda game reserve volunteers will continue to support and assist with the development of the local surroundings.

Across 2008 and 2009 African Impact volunteers contributed over 21,784 hours to conservation through photography in the St Lucia area of South Africa. Our project structures, together with the support and advice of our charitable foundation team at The Happy Africa Foundation, are continuously assessing our work and projects to ensure the hours are meaningful and making a difference.

African Impact volunteer photos have been used to help African Impact to build a picture database of the wildlife in the surrounding area. These images are then used for educational purposes as we firmly believe that in order to preserve indigenous plant and wildlife it is essential to get local communities involved. Volunteers have also provided hundreds of fantastic images to The Green Vision Foundation to help raise awareness of iSimangaliso, a UNESCO World Heritage site on the doorstep of St Lucia. These images have been used to create a photographic database of the species and ecosystems in the area to help with conservation education.

Through the Conservation in Action Programme, volunteers have also removed hundreds of alien plants and litter, clearing the way for the stream which now provides the habitat to returning dragonflies and amphibians. 20 indigenous trees have been introduced back to the pan (natural pond) area in the local village. Through cleaning the pan and introducing perches in the water, the number and species of birds visiting has increased (including a rare kingfisher!). Information boards have been erected in both Zulu and English to inform local residents of our efforts and importance for keeping it clear.

At the crocodile centre we have recorded valuable data and tagged 215 baby crocodiles as part of the process to release them and have helped count wild crocodile nests in the area to track how populations are coping with low water levels. In the past, volunteers have also been involved in the release of crocodiles back into the wild.

We have also partnered with a local high school to run an after school Conservation Club - the 30 children have been learning about wildlife, the environment, agreed their local conservation issues and help with the regeneration of the pan in their village. Volunteers have also taken club students out on field trips to see local conservation efforts to help them appreciate the precious environment in which they live and to help preserve these areas for future generations.



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**Project Dates for 2011:**

The project will run for 4 weeks and the training course begins on the following dates so volunteers **must** arrive on the dates specified below, by 2h30pm for transfer to the project:

ARRIVAL DATE <i>(strictly)</i>	COURSE START DATE	DEPARTURE <i>(strictly)</i>
9th Jan	11th Jan 2011	6th Feb
6th Feb	8th Feb	6th March
6th March	8th March	3rd April
3rd April	5th April	1st May
1st May	3rd May	29th May
29th May	31st May	26th June
26th June	28th June	24th July
24th July	26th July	21st Aug
21st Aug	23rd Aug	18th Sept
18th Sept	20th Sept	16th Oct
16th Oct	18th Oct	13th Nov
13th Nov	15th Nov	11th Dec

**Please note** that if alternative transfers need to be arranged for you and you cannot make the scheduled Sunday collection time by 2:30pm at Durban Airport you will incur an additional charge of approximately R2500, one way.

*"I loved every exquisite moment of my St. Lucia experience: beach sunrises, full-day game drives... I loved that the savannah was my workplace and the rhino and zebra my colleagues. I loved Africa and Africa and Africa. I truly loved this program... all I can really remember is being inordinately happy in Africa."*  
**Janet Wu, USA, 2008**



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## More about our African Wildlife Photography and Conservation Programme:

This project is ideally situated in a private game reserve of 14,000 hectares of pristine bush and is home to the Big 5, the extremely rare African Wild Dog and Cheetah. We are also on the fringes of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. This is a beautiful area that was declared as South Africa's first Natural World Heritage Site by UNESCO, and which is called by many "Africa's premier bush-and-beach destination".. Encompassing almost half a million acres, it is a stunning and ecologically diverse area, where five different eco-systems join, and where you find savannahs, wetlands, swamps, beaches, and a great wealth of wildlife. The area is home to the Zulu tribe, a group of people with a very lively and colourful culture. It is within this impressive setting that we offer you the opportunity to improve your photography skills, to photograph the phenomenal wildlife in the area, and to help raise awareness in the local community about the importance of conservation.

This project has a number of long-term aims to raise awareness and help preserve the precious African environment:

### 1) CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND ACTIVITIES

In partnership with the Thanda foundation volunteers may be assisting in a number of exciting conservation initiatives in surrounding areas:

- a) Conservation in Action – Volunteers will be involved in a number of activities such as regeneration of the local village back to its natural state, planting of indigenous trees, clearing Alien invasive plants, carrying out snare sweeps and when possible, helping on game counts.
- b) Conservation Field Trips - In addition, you may take local school children into the bush on field trips. By experiencing the game reserve and its wildlife for themselves, the children will learn to appreciate the area they live in, and get a better understanding of why these efforts are being made. It will also provide them with a fun and relaxing day out; something they don't experience often!
- c) Conservation Education in the community – As a volunteer, you may visit the local schools and deliver a class / workshop about the reason for, and methods of conservation to the children in the after school Conservation Club.

### 2) PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MONTH/YEAR

Every month, a jury will review all the volunteers' best photographs and select the best picture. The winner of the Photograph of the Month will be framed and put on our picture wall in the volunteer house. In addition, it will be put on the African Impact website. At the end of each year the same jury will select a picture of the year with a prize given to the winning photographer.

### 3) CREATING A PHOTOGRAPHIC DATABASE

In association with the Green Vision Foundation, African Impact aims to create a complete photographic database, and use it for educational purposes. The aim is to document and preserve iSimangaliso as a key heritage site of Southern Africa. As a volunteer you will contribute to this goal by taking photos of the different species of flora and fauna, some of the 526 species of birds that exist in the Wetlands area, local conservation issues, and the unique eco-systems of the area. On this project we provide a varied programme of bush walks and game drives in order to maximise photo opportunities.

Alongside the Thanda Foundation, African Impact has also identified that in order to preserve indigenous plant life and wildlife, it is essential to get local communities involved. We will look for every opportunity to use the photographs you donate to the project to help educate local schools about nature and the precious environment that surrounds them.



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#### 4.) CONSERVATION RESEARCH

Photographers may be involved with helping researchers collect animal identification information and other interesting data research.

This project is a unique opportunity to encounter some of Africa's most beautiful animals on a daily basis, to improve your photography skills, as well as to contribute to conservation efforts.

*Please note that these projects are always evolving so are likely to be at different stages upon your arrival. Volunteers should be prepared to be involved in a wide spectrum of project work as things progress.*

#### Project Cost:



#### WHAT DOES THE COST INCLUDE?

- A contribution 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.
- Funding educational materials for the schools and tools for conservation work.
- Return transport between Durban Airport and Thanda Game Reserve.
- Orientation program, including a photography course administered by an experienced photographer.
- 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 (expected to include cover for repatriation)
- All transport by air or bus to Durban
- All items of a personal nature, such as curios, gifts, clothing (work and other)
- E-mail / Internet and telephone calls
- Soft drinks, wines and spirits
- All visas for border crossings
- Any excursions over-and-above your planned itinerary in St. Lucia
- Airport pickups and drop offs outside of allocated times.
- Transport costs into town over the weekends.



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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, 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 “Day in the life”:

Here is an example of the activities you may do on a typical day. Please note that your itineraries may differ from this, depending on your own experience and the number of other volunteers on the placement at the same time; this is simply to give an example:

05:30 - Get up and get ready for your morning drive

06:00 – Depending on the schedule you will head off to the photography area for that day either on a game drive or bush walk to capture photographs of the wildlife, landscapes or people around the area

09:30 – Return for breakfast and to edit your photographs

12:30 – Lunchbreak.

14.00 - Start of your afternoon projects. You may be working on adding your new pictures to the database, or you may work on a conservation activity or education in the local community

16.30 - End of the working day. You will be picked up from your project and taken home, where you will evaluate the day with fellow volunteers and project coordinators, and discuss the schedule for the next day

18.30 - Dinner at your volunteer house. After dinner, you may be presenting your top 5 images to the other volunteers

*\*Morning times and end of day times do vary depending on where you are visiting and best conditions for taking photographs, for instance if you are going on a day Game drive you will start much earlier e.g. 05:00 am*

## Project Orientation:

Upon arrival you will have a comprehensive orientation and a 3-day course, which is included in your fee. This is facilitated by your project volunteer coordinator and includes:

- A 3-day wildlife photography course taught by an award winning photographer
- Overview of the aims of the project and your role as a volunteer
- An introduction to where you are staying
- A brief introduction to all our other projects that we are involved in KwaZulu Natal.
- Optional basic language lessons - You will learn some basic words & sentences in Zulu, the local language.
- An introduction to the Green Vision Foundation and the Photographic database.



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### 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 chefs 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](http://www.flightsite.com); [www.kulula.co.za](http://www.kulula.co.za); [www.1time.co.za](http://www.1time.co.za); [www.flysaa.com](http://www.flysaa.com); [www.flymango.co.za](http://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 photography training course 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.

*“The project has been amazing, I have enjoyed it so much, the staff have been accommodating, friendly and very approachable. The facilities are fantastic and the project was more than I expected.”*

*Katy Woolley, UK*

### Thanda Travel Highlights:

It would be unforgivable 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)



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## 10 Reasons to volunteer at Thanda on our Photography Project:

1. Elevate your photographic experiences in one of South Africa's top Game Reserves – capturing the spectacular landscapes, the magnificence of the big 5 and the wonder of the smaller species like insects and reptiles.
2. Include your photos as part of the conservation photographic library to help raise awareness.
3. Share your knowledge of conservation - teach children in the local village with the help of structured lessons and informative photographs.
4. Enhance your skills with the teaching of a professional photographer – 3 days of intense instruction to inspire and teach you how to get the most from your camera.
5. Become an agent for conservation – help regenerate areas to encourage wildlife and plants to flourish.
6. Enlighten yourself - about the local flora and fauna, and learn about what you are photographing from our experienced and knowledgeable guide.
7. Diversify your portfolio – capture images of marine life within the Indian Ocean, the Big 5 within the savannas of KwaZulu-Natal, and the local people of Zululand.
8. Develop friendships that will last a lifetime – be part of the highly international and diverse group of volunteers who share this amazing experience with you.
9. Walk in the natural bush - snap unique shots of Africa's wildlife and plants from up-close while on foot.
10. Leave Africa with the Zulu accent and thousands of photos!



## Thanda Wildlife Photography and Conservation Project notes:

We have found in the past that the more you put in as a volunteer, 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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