



SRUC Barony – VNs PROJECT INFORMATION PACK



Waterberg Wildlife & Veterinary Nursing Course

AFRICA

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Our conservation work
in more detail

ABOUT WELGEVONDEN

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Location

The Waterberg Wildlife & Veterinary Nursing Course is based at the Welgevonden Wildlife Reserve, (Dutch for "well found"), is a 36,000ha Wildlife reserve in the Waterberg District of the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

A pleasant 3.5-hour drive from Johannesburg makes Welgevonden one of the most accessible premier **malaria free** wilderness reserves in the country. It forms part of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve which was officially declared by UNESCO in 2001 and currently covers an area in excess of 4000 km².

The reserve comprises of mountainous terrain that is dissected by deep valleys and kloofs while flat plateaus characterise most hilltops. Altitude varies from 1080 m in the north to ±1800 m in the southern section of the reserve.



Welgevonden Wildlife Reserve

Welgevonden is home to over 50 different mammals, including the Big Five. There are rare and unusual species too, such as brown hyena, pangolin, aardwolf and aardvark – all best seen at night.

The grassy plains abound with antelope from the largest eland to the diminutive duiker; cheetah, lion and leopard are always close by. It is the diversity of habitat on the reserve that encourages such a wide range of wildlife as well as over 300 bird species, including rare blue cranes.

At 36,000ha in size, Welgevonden Wildlife Reserve lies in the Waterberg plateau, about 250km north of Johannesburg. Here guests enjoy unlimited traversing through the reserve and experience an environment where biodiversity conservation and wildlife viewing are managed in harmony. Welgevonden protects a unique and special environment and the reserve's management is deeply committed to ongoing conservation research and development.



Waterberg Wildlife & Veterinary Nursing Course

This course provides the opportunity for hands on practical wildlife experience for pre-Vet/vet nurses/technicians or those studying in the veterinary field. Based at the reserve's research camp working directly with the conservation and research team; this department runs and manages the day to day decisions and monitoring of the wildlife and eco system of the reserve. The team and their work is crucial to the management and welfare of all wildlife on the reserve; selecting which animals need to be removed from the reserve and which need to be added to maintain a balanced ecosystem.

Time will be spent working with local wildlife vets and specialists with whom the research team work.

One of the main objectives for our groups is white rhino monitoring including identification of individuals and body condition scoring. On occasion, groups will assist in the darting, DNA sampling and ear tagging rhinos on the reserve. This work is carried out by Dr Pierre Bester a rhino expert specialist & Dr Peter Caldwell, a world famous carnivore vet; both have a wealth of knowledge in the wildlife industry and it is an amazing opportunity for the students to learn from them.

With specialists in conservation and wildlife as well as veterinary surgeons, the project provides a wealth of informative lectures and practical experiences.



Your Conservation Programme – Conservation Research Team

As part of your project, you will be heavily involved with the day to day field work conducted by the research team.

Activities include, but are not limited to:

- Wildlife transects – estimates of numbers, body condition and herd structure
- Use of telemetry tracking
- White Rhino monitoring research
- Elephant behaviour study
- Camera Trap Surveys (Black Rhino and other cryptic animals)
- Nocturnal species ID and night wildlife drive
- Wildlife breeding management (buffalo, rhino & big cats)
- Visit to temporary holding bomas for rhino and predators
- Animal tracking
- Waterberg Wild Dog Project
- Collecting faecal samples for research
- Local wildlife auction (Only on certain weekends)
- Alien plant species eradication
- Land capacity exercise – number of animals vs land support

Your Conservation Programme – Veterinary Activities

Welgevonden Game Reserve utilises the services of several wildlife veterinarians, depending on the nature of the work. Veterinary interactions are never guaranteed and the below are given as examples only.

- Darting simulation and shooting practice exercise
- Wildlife immobilisation – darting buffalo/sable/zebra/impala
- Immobilisation of white rhino for DNA tagging, ear notching and samples
- Elephant contraception study
- Supplementary feeding of Buffalo and Rhino
- Wildlife capture and relocation as part of Meta Population Management
- Replacing/fitting of tracking collars on various antelope species
- Observe helicopter darting of large wildlife species i.e. white rhino
- Postmortem of a wildlife species (not guaranteed)

Some but not all of these veterinary opportunities will be carried out on the project. Working with wildlife is unpredictable and all the activities are only undertaken when required

Lectures

- Managing wildlife reserves and land capacity model
- Species control – predator pits
- State veterinary disease control in practice
- Documentation – what is required, Red Cross permits etc.
- Drugs used in wildlife medicine
- Dosage calculation for wildlife
- Logistics of wildlife transportation – vehicles, crates and equipment
- Wildlife trade auction and value of livestock
- Wildlife capture systems
- Darting wildlife
- Boma management and rehabilitation



Conservation Activities

Anti-poaching protocols are of vital importance; students will contribute to this by actively searching for rhino and updating identification guides. This activity takes place all year round is an incredible experience and an opportunity to make a difference in conserving the white rhino. Welgevonden takes pride in its large investment in the security of the reserve, you will have the opportunity to attend a talk on the latest methods of anti-poaching, co-ordinating ambushes, gaining intelligence and receive an update on the latest statistics.

Elephant identification and behavioural monitoring is an important task on the reserve; with elephants living in close proximity and regularly coming into contact with humans there is the potential for conflict. Research will determine the best way to reduce and avoid this potential conflict through individual and herd identification which ensures the correct implementation of management intervention.

The cheetah population at Welgevonden is the largest most successful wild cheetah population in the Waterberg cluster. Students will be actively involved in the conservation of this species by updating their identikits.



Conservation Activities

Herbivore body condition will be another activity that students will be involved in; collecting samples which will be analysed to determine levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in their diet, this takes place year round on the reserve. Herbivore herd structures are monitored with the data collected used in a model to predict future herbivore population densities, the data is collected by means of road transect game counts. Species include greater kudu, white rhino, elephant, blue wildebeest to name a few.

The San people were existing in the Waterberg region more than 2500 years ago and Welgevonden has 2 known sites where there is evidence of this! A guided walk and talk can be arranged for students to interpret the meanings of the paintings and to understand the spiritual life of the San people.

There is the opportunity to learn more about the art of tracking, a traditional skill that you can experience.



Sample itinerary

- ❖ Day 1 – Arrive into Johannesburg Airport and transfer to the reserve, lunch and orientation followed by lecture, wildlife drive and species ID
- ❖ Day 2 – Lecture on wildlife reserves and conservation followed by wildlife count transects – species ID, body condition scoring, male/female ID, cyber tracker
- ❖ Day 3 – Lecture with the wildlife vet followed by practical work with the vet – collaring/moving animals on reserve
- ❖ Day 4 – Telemetry practical, lunchtime debate on hunting then dart gun and theory practice – range finding, filling darts and target practice!
- ❖ Day 5 – Anti poaching lecture and debate followed by faecal sampling and laboratory work. Evening lecture on wildlife trade and value of stock
- ❖ Day 6 – Wildlife auction, nocturnal species lecture followed by an early dinner before night wildlife drive
- ❖ Day 7 – Day Off – Leisure time
- ❖ Day 8 – Lecture and visit to breeding bomas followed by Post-mortem of wildlife species (if required)
- ❖ Day 9 – Exercise – Land Capacity Model. Rhino ID during afternoon locate rhino for notching
- ❖ Day 10 – Dr Peter Caldwell, Rhino DNA Tagging. Lectures and/or practical work with Dr Caldwell
- ❖ Day 11 – Insectavara day – little things matter! – spider collection and identification
- ❖ Day 12 – Elephant behaviour study followed by drug calculation exercise. Evening brings the Potjie Competition Night!
- ❖ Day 13 – Chosen wildlife drive and activity
- ❖ Day 14 – Transfer to Johannesburg airport for flight home to the UK.



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ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

Life in the African Bush

Welgevonden

The student centre and camp is based on the reserve and boasts twelve tents that sleep up to four people per tent in single beds, each tent also has lighting and electricity supply. There are communal hot and cold showers and regular flushing toilets. There are communal facilities including a lecture room, canteen, lounge, entertainment area and storage fridge. The centre also has access to Wi-Fi. The camp is fenced off inside the boundaries of the reserve, check out the aerial shot of camp! You can wake up and find an elephant 10 meters from your door!



Welgevonden

All meals are provided in the communal dining room, there is an outside area for dining as well.

Three meals are provided daily on a self cook basis, prepared communally by the group. Students will take part in communal cooking and keeping the kitchen tidy.

Meals will either be served at the facility or as a pre-packed serving, this depends on activities either planned or unscheduled.

The research team often work 6 days a week so time off is often limited to Sundays only.

Most evenings are spent at leisure around the camp.





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USEFUL INFORMATION

Inclusions/Exclusions &
Recommended Kit List



BOOKING YOUR ADVENTURE

AFRICA



Proposed trip dates:

Depart UK: 9th July | Arrive SA: 10th July 2023

Depart SA: 22nd July | Arrive UK: 23rd July 2023

Trip Cost (based on group size of 20)

£2,195.00 per person (est)

Key Deadlines

- Return online application using the QR code or link below
- Deposit of £300 to confirm placement within two weeks of provisional booking to confirm place
- Instalment payment of 50% due 16 weeks before departure
- Balance payment due 8 weeks before departure
- E tickets will be issued 2 weeks prior to departure and emailed to students



[Click Here](#) to access booking information

What is Included?

- Flights
- Transfers to/from project
- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- All activities as part of the project
- ATOL protection
- Airport meet/greet
- 24/7 In country support

Not Included

- Personal Travel Insurance *
- Meals on travel days – before arriving & after departing from project
- Any activities not specified as part of the project
- Visa's/travel documents

* We recommend that you take out personal travel insurance as soon as your booking is confirmed.

Suggested kit list

- Short sleeve shirts
- Long work trousers and shorts
(Or work trousers with zip-off long)
- T shirts
- Hiking Boots/comfortable walking shoes to work in every day
- Rain jacket (especially during summer months)
- Sweatshirt/Fleece (Winter months pack plenty)
- Buff/neck warmer useful all year round
- Padded parka jacket/windbreaker - warm
(it can get very cold on an open vehicle - even on a summer evening)
- Daypack rucksack
- Sleeping Bag – for extra warmth in winter
- Socks
- Warm Hat (winter only) /Hat for sun protection (all year round)
- Gloves for warmth (winter only)

- Changes of casual clothes for evenings
- Underwear
- Sunglasses
- Sandals / comfy shoes to wear after work hours
- Toiletries
- Tick / insect repellent

Other useful items:

- Binoculars
- Good torch/headlamp
- Water bottle
- Camera
- Spare batteries
- Personal medical items
- Cards/Music
- Sunscreen
- Mammal/bird book
- Notebook/diary and pen



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