SPARSHOLT COLLEGE
PROJECT INFORMATION PACK

Waterberg Conservation Research

AFRICA

GLOBAL reach. **ADVENTURE** for all. **PROJECTS** to inspire.

TRIP OVERVIEW

Sparsholt College – Booking Reference 4801

Travel Dates:

31st May 2026 – 11th June 2026

Flights:

Flight No	Flight Date	Dept.	Dept. Time	Arr.	Arr. Time
TBC	31/05/2026	London Heathrow (LHR)	TBC	Johannesburg (JNB)	TBC + 1 Day
TBC	11/06/2026	Johannesburg (JNB)	TBC	London Heathrow (LHR)	TBC + 1 Day

*Always check the flight timings on your final documents

Baggage Allowance – TBC

Project:

Waterberg Conservation Research

Trip Cost:

£2395.00 per person est. (based on a group of 14)

£300.00 deposit

£1047.50 Instalment due 09/02/2026

£1047.50 Balance due 06/04/026

PROJECT LOCATION

The Waterberg overview

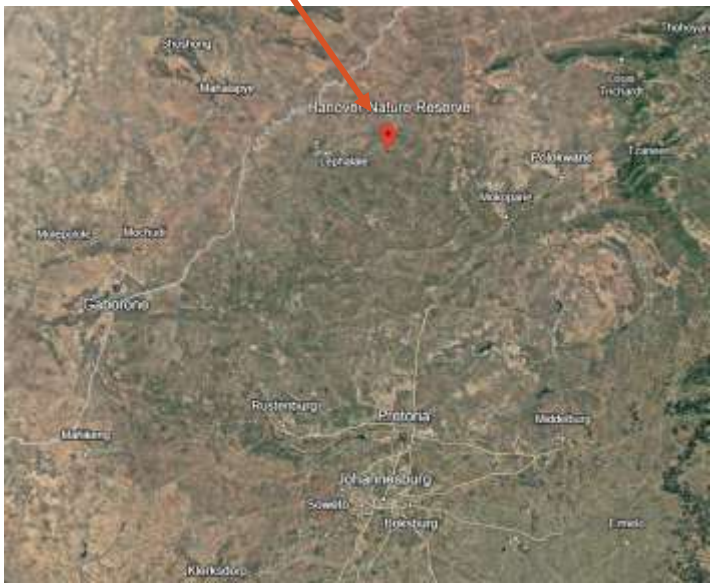
ABOUT THE WATERBERG

AFRICA

Location

The Waterberg conservation research programme is based in the Waterberg region of South Africa, which is a pleasant 4.5-hour drive from Johannesburg making this project one of the most accessible premier **malaria free** wilderness areas in the country. It borders the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve which was officially declared by UNESCO in 2001 and currently covers an area, in excess of, 4000 km².

The Waterberg region is famed for its mountainous terrain that is dissected by deep valleys and kloofs while flat plateaus characterise most hilltops.



ABOUT THE WATERBERG

Hanover & SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

A Hub for Research, Conservation and Education

Nestled in the heart of the Waterberg region, the Waterberg conservation research programme is a pioneering conservation initiative dedicated to preserving South Africa's rich biodiversity while fostering ecological research and community engagement. Covering over 2,000 acres of pristine wilderness, this collaborative project works in unison with the neighbouring SwebeSwebe Wildlife Reserve. Together, these areas form a unified conservation space of 15,000 acres, removing barriers to wildlife movement and creating an uninterrupted haven for flora and fauna.

Our mission extends beyond preservation. We believe in taking direct action to safeguard natural ecosystems, which is why we've invested in integrating cutting-edge conservation technologies, enhancing infrastructure and building strong partnerships with local and international stakeholders. The reserve is a hub for international academic research and student engagement, offering participants the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to conservation while gaining hands-on experience in a diverse ecological setting.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Our conservation work in more detail

ABOUT THE WATERBERG

Waterberg Conservation Project

Our academic team and qualified rangers at the Waterberg Conservation Project offer a bespoke course to each institution dependent on their own personal objectives and learning needs.

A full day will be planned but will vary from day to day depending on the day's task and research goals.

10 Night Project

- 10 Nights at SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve





ABOUT THE PROJECT: SWEBESWEBE NATURE RESERVE

Our conservation work
in more detail

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project Overview - SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

The Waterberg conservation research programme serves as a living laboratory for ecological research, offering students and researchers a chance to work alongside experts in the field.

Participants will play an active role in a variety of immersive conservation and research activities. Through activities like wildlife monitoring, vegetation surveys and data analysis, students gain practical experience using tools such as GPS devices and biomass sampling equipment. Each project offers a unique opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the reserve's ecological goals while developing valuable skills in fieldwork and conservation management.

Beyond research, the programme fosters community empowerment and sustainable conservation practices, inspiring future generations to protect this remarkable landscape while equipping participants with valuable skills for careers in conservation.

ABOUT SWEBESWEBE

SwebeSwebe – Hanover Nature Reserve – only include if vet nursing students

- Introduction to Hanover Nature, its Research and Ecological Biomonitoring
- Lectures from Dr Zoë Glyphis – Wildlife Veterinarian –Dart shooting practice
- Explore the kit and clinic of a mobile wildlife vet
- Wildlife conservation, research and veterinary work (Dr Zoë Glyphis)

It's important to remember that wildlife does not work to an agenda, therefore activities may change at short notice!





ABOUT THE PROJECT

Flora: Vegetation Surveys and Ecological Studies - SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

Objective:

To assess, monitor and enhance the ecological health of flora in the Northern Waterberg region, ensuring sustainable biodiversity conservation and habitat management.

Activity Descriptions:

1. Grasses Survey and Full Collection (Annual):

- Collect and identify grass species using field guides and sample collection techniques
- Establish baseline data on grass species composition and distribution
- Use findings to assess food availability for grazers and inform firebreak planning

2. Plant Plots (Baseline Study):

- Set up and monitor vegetation plots in various ecosystems and floral zones
- Record species diversity and analyse habitat differences and similarities

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Flora: Vegetation Surveys and Ecological Studies - SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

3. Woody Plant Density Report:

- Conduct surveys to determine tree species density and diversity
- Identify ecological nodes and assess recruitment, growth and impacts of fire and herbivores on woody plants

4. Identification of Ecological Nodes:

- Map and analyse differences and similarities across floral zones, focusing on critical ecological nodes that influence biodiversity

5. Photo ID of Waterberg Trees:

- Create a photographic database of tree species for educational and research purposes

6. Herbology of the Northern Waterberg:

- Collect and sample indigenous plants to study their ecological and medicinal properties
- Investigate herbivory patterns and their role in shaping ecosystems

Flora: Vegetation Surveys and Ecological Studies SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

7. Alien Plant Control – Queen-of-the-Night (Ongoing):

- Identify, monitor and remove invasive Queen-of-the-Night plants to protect native vegetation
- Implement sustainable methods of controlling alien plant species

8. Seed Dispersal Study:

- Investigate how baboons, birds and cattle disperse seeds within the reserve
- Assess their role in maintaining ecosystem balance and aiding reforestation efforts

Learning Outcomes:

- Gain expertise in plant identification and ecological survey methods
- Understand the role of vegetation in supporting diverse ecosystems
- Learn sustainable practices for alien plant control and seed dispersal monitoring

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Fauna: Wildlife and Ecological Projects SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

Objective:

To monitor and protect animal populations and their habitats, contributing to a deeper understanding of species behaviour, ecological roles and conservation needs.

Activity Descriptions:

1. Known Animal Group Counts (Monthly):

- Conduct surveys to monitor population dynamics of key wildlife species
- Use GPS devices and observation techniques to collect data on herd sizes, locations and behaviours

2. Leopard Project (Collaboration with Ingwe Foundation):

- Develop ID kits to monitor individual leopards
- Cast and identify leopard spoor to map territorial boundaries
- Collect and analyse prey base data and faecal samples to study diet and ecological impacts

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Fauna: Wildlife and Ecological Projects SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

3. Small Mammal Project (Collaboration with Prof. Mark Keith):

- Humanely capture, photograph and identify small mammals
- Assess ecological niches and predator-prey relationships

4. Fish Project (Collaboration with Prof. Darragh Woodford):

- Capture and photograph fish species to establish a database
- Study ecological roles and predator-prey dynamics of aquatic systems

5. Fence Immigration and Emigration Project:

- Monitor animal movement across fences to evaluate the impact of barriers on wildlife connectivity
- Use this data to inform decisions about fence removal or modifications

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Fauna: Wildlife and Ecological Projects SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

6. Reptile Pitfall Trap Study

- Install and monitor pitfall traps in predefined locations to safely capture small reptiles
- Identify species using field guides and photographic records
- Record environmental conditions to assess habitat preferences and seasonal activity

7. Bird Ringing and Ornithology:

- Set up mist nets in various habitats to capture birds for ringing and data collection
- Record physical measurements, health indicators and unique identification details before safely releasing birds

8. Camera Trap Study and Surveys:

- Deploy camera traps in strategic locations to capture images and videos of wildlife
- Analyse data to identify species, document behaviours, and estimate population densities

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Fauna: Wildlife and Ecological Projects SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

9. Wild Dog Project (Collaboration with WWDI):

- Track wild dogs using GPS and VHS technology
- Collect faecal samples to study diet and ecological roles
- Develop strategies for predator-human conflict mitigation

10. Dung Beetle and Butterfly Collections:

- Collect, identify and catalogue dung beetles and butterflies to assess their roles in nutrient cycling and pollination
- Focus on species unique to the Northern Waterberg region

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop skills in animal identification, data collection and ecological analysis
- Understand the complexities of predator-prey relationships and species-specific conservation needs
- Participate in community-focused conflict mitigation strategies for wildlife conservation

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Eco System: Practical Management - SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

Objective:

To develop essential skills for reserve management, focusing on infrastructure maintenance and sustainable living practices.

Activity Descriptions:

1. Road Building:

- Construct and maintain roads to improve accessibility within the reserve
- Use environmentally friendly materials and methods to minimize habitat disruption

2. Fence Maintenance:

- Repair and maintain fences to ensure effective wildlife management
- Identify and address issues related to animal immigration and emigration

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Eco System: Practical Management - SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

3. Water System Maintenance:

- Inspect and repair water systems, ensuring a reliable supply for wildlife and reserve operations
- Develop strategies to reduce water waste and optimize usage

4. Gardening (Vegetable Garden and Orchard):

- Cultivate and maintain vegetable gardens and orchards to support sustainable food production
- Learn organic farming techniques and composting practices

Learning Outcomes:

- Acquire practical skills in infrastructure and resource management
- Learn sustainable agricultural practices and their ecological benefits
- Contribute to maintaining essential reserve operations

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Community: Rural Development and Support - SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

Objective:

To explore the intersection of conservation, culture and community, fostering social awareness and empowering local populations.

Activity Descriptions:

1. Herbology in Local Communities:

- Study the use of local plants for medicinal and cultural purposes
- Assess community preferences and practices related to herbology

2. Rural Youth and Education:

- Investigate the social status and aspirations of rural youth in local villages
- Examine the impact of social media on perceptions of manual labor and rural lifestyles

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Community: Rural Development and Support SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

3. Education and "Back to Nature" Initiatives:

- Design and implement programmes to reconnect local communities with nature
- Provide experiential learning opportunities that emphasise sustainable living

4. Natural Resource Exploitation Studies:

- Assess the social and environmental implications of natural resource exploitation
- Develop strategies to promote responsible resource use within communities

Learning Outcomes:

- Gain insights into the cultural dimensions of conservation
- Develop strategies for community engagement and education
- Understand the social challenges and opportunities in rural development

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Other Possible Activities: Non-Research

Beyond research, students will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in unique and enriching experiences:

San Rock Art Talk and Trail:

Learn about the fascinating history and cultural significance of ancient San rock art, followed by a guided trail to a rock painting site for an up-close exploration.

Stargazing:

Experience the breathtaking clarity of the southern hemisphere's night sky, free from light pollution and discover the stories and science behind its constellations.

Fresh Water Swimming:

Enjoy the serenity of our 20 km stretch of pristine riverine habitat, with scenic swimming spots perfect for relaxation and connection with nature.

Potjie Cooking Competition:

Embrace South African tradition with a lively potjie (cast-iron pot stew) cooking competition. Students will team up to prepare their own creations over open fires.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

AFRICA

Possible Lectures - SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

Conservation Ecology and Ecosystem Dynamics
- Overview of ecosystem structures and functions
- How species interactions (predator-prey dynamics, competition) shape ecosystems
- The role of keystone species in maintaining biodiversity

Vegetation Ecology and Fire Management
- Grass and tree identification techniques
- The impact of fire on savanna ecosystems and its role in vegetation dynamics
- Strategies for firebreak design and implementation

Sustainable Grazing and Herd Management
- Rotational grazing practices and their ecological benefits
- Water usage efficiency in grazing systems
- The socio-economic implications of sustainable livestock management

Wildlife Population Monitoring Techniques
- Methods for conducting game transects, spoor tracking, and population surveys
- Use of GPS and remote sensing tools in wildlife studies.
- Data collection, entry and visualisation for informed decision-making

Biodiversity and Invasive Species Management
- Understanding the ecological impact of invasive species (e.g., *Queen-of-the-Night*)
- Strategies for control and eradication
- Importance of maintaining native biodiversity

Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation
- Understanding the causes and consequences of human-wildlife conflicts
- Techniques for conflict resolution (e.g., predator tracking and prey management)
- Conservation tools like fencing and compensation schemes

Animal Behaviour and Ecological Niches
- Study of animal behaviour to determine ecological roles
- Special focus on species like leopards, wild dogs and small mammals
- Understanding territoriality, prey selection, and habitat use

Water Systems and Aquatic Ecology
- The role of freshwater ecosystems in biodiversity conservation
- Methods for fish identification and sampling

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Dr Zoë Glyphis – Wildlife Veterinarian – only include if vet nursing students

Dr Zoë Glyphis is a Gauteng based wildlife veterinarian and travels all over South Africa to treat mainly priority, endangered species.

She has extensive experience in helping and assisting several NGO groups and organisations with their efforts to increase predator ranges and to establish safe and genetically viable populations in new conservation areas as well as treating surviving poached rhino.

She enjoys sharing her knowledge with students and is a patient teacher in this regard.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

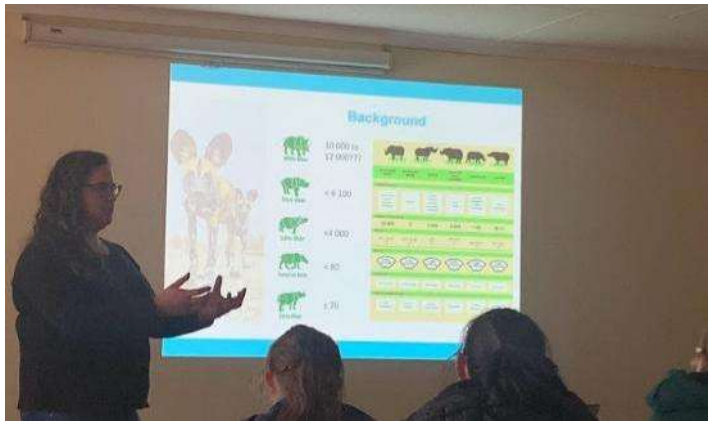
Practical Sessions – only include if vet nursing students

- Dart shooting practice
- The kit and clinic of a mobile wildlife vet
- Q & A

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Lectures - Dr Zoe Glyphis – only include if vet nursing students

- Conservation in Africa
- Wildlife poaching
- Wildlife diseases
- Rhino wounds and case studies
- Wildlife capture systems - Darting wildlife
- Drugs used in wildlife medicine
- Dosage calculation for wildlife
- Logistics of wildlife transportation – vehicles, crates & equipment
- Boma management and rehabilitation
- State veterinary disease control in practice
- Wildlife trade auction & value of livestock



ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

Life in the African Bush

ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

SwebeSwebe - Hanover Nature Reserve Accommodation

Students and academic groups will be accommodated at our purpose-built camp on Hanover Nature Reserve, designed to provide comfort and foster community living.

The camp features shared twin and triple rooms with communal ablution facilities. At the heart of the camp is a spacious communal area, equipped with a shared kitchen and dining space, which also serves as a hub for relaxation, lectures, and group activities.

For evening gatherings, there is a cozy firepit/boma area where students can unwind and cook meals over the fire under the stars. On weekends, groups are welcome to enjoy the main farmhouse and pool area.

ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

Meals

At SwebeSwebe ingredients for three meals a day are provided, on a self cook basis. Students will take part in communal cooking and keeping the kitchen tidy. This creates a vibrant and social camp atmosphere.

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

Meals will either be served at the facility or in the field 'picnic' style, 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.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Inclusions/Exclusions & Recommended Kit List

WHAT'S INCLUDED

What is Included?

- Flights
- Transfers to/from project
- Accommodation
- Three meals per day (self prepared)
- 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
- Visas/travel documents
- Tips

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

USEFUL INFORMATION

Suggested kit list

To allow for ease of transfer to the project a soft holdall/ soft suitcase is preferred.

- Short and long sleeve t-shirts
- Long work trousers and shorts (or work/zip-off trousers)
- Hiking boots/comfortable walking shoes to work in every day
- Waterproof jacket
- Sweatshirt/Fleece (Winter months pack plenty)
- Padded jacket/windbreaker (Winter months) although it can get very cold on an open vehicle even in summer
- Socks
- Underwear
- Change of casual clothes for evenings
- Sandals / comfy shoes to wear after work hours
- Warm hat (Winter only) / Hat for sun protection (all year)
- Gloves for warmth (Winter only)
- Working gloves
- Daypack rucksack
- Swimwear
- Sunscreen and Sunglasses
- Personal medical items
- First aid kit
- Toiletries
- Tick / Insect repellent
- Water bottle

Other useful items:

- Binoculars
- Camera
- Power bank
- Good torch

* All work clothes should be neutral or earth tones for working in the bush. No skimpy or bright-coloured clothing to be worn

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