

AFRICAN INSIGHT

EXPERIENCES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE



ACADEMIC MODULE: 4

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION IN ZULULAND



MODULE 4: TRIBAL COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION IN ZULULAND

Background

The first day (or most of it) of this 3 night module is taken in driving to our base on Somkhanda Game Reserve. This allows 2 full days to cover the content. African Insight has an exclusive concession to operate on Somkhanda and has developed a comprehensive academic "Science on Safari" eco-tourism model offering a wide variety of practical ecological research and conservation management modules and projects.

Depending on the size of the group, or the amount of practical input that is required, additional days can be added to the module. Big groups are split into smaller groups of 10 for practical sessions (projects). Each project takes a full day, therefore in 2 days only two can be covered – this is thus ideal for up to 20 students. For groups larger than 20 students an additional day is recommended.

Also see Module 7 which is a comprehensive programme covering three distinct ecosystems.

Introduction

Zululand is home to the oldest conservation areas in Africa with the proclamation of Hluhluwe, Umfolozi and St. Lucia Game Reserves in 1895. However the conservation road has not been an easy one. In the first 50 years wildlife (and cattle) populations were ravaged by rinderpest and numerous attempts of orchestrated mass annihilation. Due to the ever present threat of Nagana that wildlife posed to domestic stock, reserves were constantly under threat from agriculture and veterinary authorities. The wide spread use of DDT was indiscriminately applied by aerial spraying. Authorities also sought the de-proclamation of reserves based on the opinion that was espoused by the likes of the Magistrate of the Ubombo District, who in 1914 wrote in his annual report:

"There are thousands and thousands of wildebeest roaming about in this area, and a large number of game, vermin, carnivora and other beasts. It is a shocking waste of excellent country..."

Even the leading veterinarian Dr. David Bruce, under whose jurisdiction game reserves fell, and who pioneered the work on Nagana and the Tsetse fly lifecycle, had this to say:

"Wild animals should not be allowed to live in 'fly-country'. Not only should all game laws restricting their destruction in fly country be removed, but active measures should be taken for their early and complete blotting out."

These fateful words had profound influence on Colonial Administration and sounded the death knell for game populations of Zululand fuelling the blood lust of the hunters and farmers.

After the Second World War many returning soldiers were allocated land in what is today known as Zululand. These farmers moved on to land that had been surveyed and cut up into privately owned farms, many of which were too small to be viable agricultural units. At the time this had a very negative impact on the wildlife of the area. Many, too, had been surveyed in areas of traditional tribal land, disregarding traditional culture and customs regarding ancestral burial sites - even those of former Zulu Kings.

Today many of the farms on traditional tribal land have been legally reclaimed by the historical rightful owners with large tracts of it already handed back, and the colonial landowners paid out at market prices. Most of the land that had been turned into private game reserves by their previous owners, has been retained as game reserves by the 'new' tribal owners, thus having a very positive impact on wildlife and general biodiversity in these areas.



MODULE 4: TRIBAL COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION IN ZULULAND



MODULE 4: TRIBAL COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION IN ZULULAND

Aims and Objectives:

Given the backdrop of this history, it is a fact that today the wildlife areas of Zululand are amongst the most pristine in South Africa. Sought after for employment by professionals in conservation, they include highly successful wildlife tourist destinations for local and international wildlife enthusiasts.

In this module there is a lot to learn in terms of wildlife management in the context of:

- How appropriate land use management wins against all odds.
- The challenges and stresses between wildlife conservation and communities where illiteracy and unemployment can be described and as pandemic.
- Wildlife as a driver of economic development and social upliftment for local tribal communities.
- The future of wildlife conservation when in the current South African context of land redistribution and political priorities that favours the health, welfare and education of the people rather than conservation of wildlife.

During this module we stay on community owned Somkhanda Game Reserve. This 12 000 hectare reserve was once a collection of private game farms that had been managed and developed by their previous colonial owners. The farms were successfully reclaimed by the original traditional owners who now manage it with expert assistance in the form of professional management, funding and training. We will:

- Experience the 'product' which is based on a unique academic science on safari business model.
- Discuss and evaluate this co-management model, with both the commercial and tribal partners.
- Visit a successful well established private commercial eco-tourism game reserve that has been established on formerly private commercial cattle ranching land.

RECOMMENDED MODULES

This module works very well with the following:

Module 5: Tembe Elephant Park (140km - 3 hours)

Module 6: Maputaland Marine (180km - 3.5 hours)

Module 3: Swaziland (230km – 3.75 hours) (Swaziland to KNP 250km – 3.5 hours)

Module 2: Kruger Park (475km – 6.5 hours)



Standard Includes and Excludes Apply

