



TULI CONSERVATION PROJECT CLOSE UP

Work alongside experienced rangers to establish a baseline ecology study of the wildlife in this vast and unfenced region of Botswana's Tuli block.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

How does this project make a difference?

The Tuli Conservation Project is a long term, general study of the whole wilderness environment: The focus is on elephants and predators - their behaviour, numbers and movements but also on the relationship between those animals and the other animals in the area and the vegetation therein (general game counts, vegetation mapping etc.) The aim is to produce data which can be used by others doing specific research on any one of those areas and to show any variations on the various ecologies as time progresses. It is likely that this area will become a Trans Frontier Conservation Area and the data the project produces will be invaluable in providing a 'benchmark' of population densities and behaviour - and their effect on the vegetation prior to the TFCA opening boundaries and making the area accessible to populations from other areas such as Zimbabwe and South Africa.

How do I, the volunteer, make a difference?

Funding for this research project is facilitated solely by volunteer funds. There is a need for volunteers to assist in research of populations moving through this vast wilderness. A volunteer presence in the area also actively discourages poaching which has led to a fantastic increase in population size of these notorious and last truly wild elephant herds in southern Africa.

CORE ACTIVITIES

Living a rustic life, you will learn traditional tracking methodology and research skills. Through game drives, walks, night drives and sleep outs, you will be involved in the following study topics in this wildlife haven:

- **Elephant population monitoring** - being home to one of the few free roaming populations in southern Africa, these herds are of real scientific value. Approximately 1,400 elephants are found in the study area. Elephants are the key research and monitoring species due to their population density. Part of this research involves:
 - Developing identification cards for individual bulls and breeding herds
 - Recording population numbers, age and gender structure
 - Recording herd dynamics and behaviour of breeding herds and male groups
 - Monitoring range utilisation using GPS and analysing mapping data
- **Predator behavioural studies including key species leopard, lion, cheetah and hyena**
 - Establishing accurate population number and gender ratio of leopard. Determine territory sizes through tracks and sightings collection. Leopards are elusive and sightings can be rare.
 - Track the resident lioness and cubs using radio telemetry, and study pride structure and behaviour.
 - Monitor movements, numbers, gender and prey selection of cheetah in the core study area.
 - Record hyena sightings and den sites.





• General Game Study

- Systematic studies and game counts of baboons, zebra, wildebeest, impala, eland, steenbok, klipspringer, waterbuck, kudu and other game species. Counts include recording data such as sex and age ratios to analyse herd structures, growth rates and seasonal variations.
- Mapping species against vegetation maps.
- Focus on seasonal movements and interactions between prey and predators.

• Restoration and maintenance of the bushveld to maximise its suitability for animal species to flourish healthily

- Removal of old fence wire often used in snares
- Erosion control of the gulying effects of the Limpopo River
- Eradication of alien plant vegetation
- Habitat rehabilitation initiatives

SKILLS GAINED

Tracking including the use of telemetry equipment as well as spoor identification, animal identification and behaviour, bush craft, the uses of indigenous plants, grid mapping, how to approach dangerous game

WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE

Tuli's resident populations include elephant, lion, leopard, cheetah, giraffe and eland. In addition to the common plains game like wildebeest and zebra, there are troops of monkey and baboon, as well as populations of steenbok, the timid duiker, grysbok, impala, common waterbuck, bushbuck, and warthog. Also present are aardvark, aardwolf, bat-eared fox, African wild cat, spotted hyena and black-backed jackal as well as a great diversity of bird life, with over 350 species having been recorded to date.

"I got to experience some fantastic wildlife sightings during the journey from the border to the camp! I saw giraffe, zebra, baboons, warthogs, moongoose, guinea fowl, ostrich, impala, kudu, wilderbeest, and black eyed jackal in the space of half an hour. Then it was straight out for an evening game drive where we saw a herds of elephants and a brown snake eagle, an amazing introduction to the Tuli Conservation Project." **Katrina Steele**

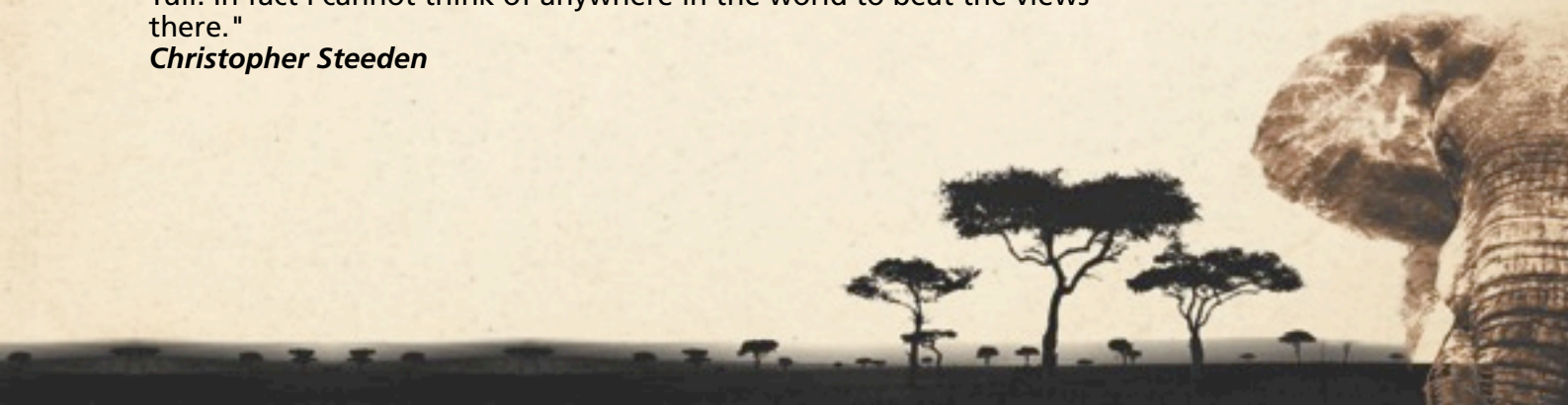
"Suddenly elephants emerged from the bush and crossed our path. Just a few at first, and then more and more. I inadvertently held my breath - a herd of 93 elephants migrated past us!" **Silvia Russenberger**

LOCATION

The project is named after the Tuli Block, an area which forms part of the Limpopo-Shashe trans frontier conservation area, which also straddles the borders of South Africa and Zimbabwe allowing for natural migration of elephant herds and other animal species across historically established national borders.

"I have travelled to various parts of Africa on Safari a dozen times and don't think I have ever seen as impressive a landscape as what I saw at Tuli. In fact I cannot think of anywhere in the world to beat the views there."

Christopher Steeden





FACILITIES

Accommodation: The volunteer camp has a combination of traditional huts and tents. The accommodation is mixed with three volunteers per hut. There are communal outdoor showers and flushing toilets, a kitchen, dining area and a volleyball court. Lighting is provided by gas and paraffin as there is no electricity. An inverter is available to charge cameras, phones and any other 230 V electrical equipment.

Meal arrangements: Food is provided and cooking is done communally. Additional refreshments are available to buy at the camp, only cash is accepted.

Laundry: Washing is done once a week by a domestic helper.

Nearest towns: Selebi-Phikwe in Botswana; Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg) in South Africa.

Time off: One day per week, usually Sundays. Town trips are variable and usually occur once every two weeks.

Contact with home: Dependent on cellphone signal. Botswana time = GMT+2hrs. There is no internet access.

Transfers: Transfers to the Tuli Conservation Project are done by road. The drive from Johannesburg airport takes approximately 8 hours, broken up with a lunch stop. Once at the border, volunteers will usually spend the night in a camp right on the Limpopo river on the South African side (the camp is within the reserve area so elephants pass by and there are always antelope in front of the camp.) Each person has a walk in tent with double bed, full electricity and a full bathroom built on-suite.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Airport: We meet all our volunteers personally at Johannesburg airport directly off the plane.

Road Safety: All drivers have Public Driving Permits and only new, air conditioned vehicles are used for transfers.

First Aid & Emergency: First aid Level 5 qualified personnel on site.

Medical: Doctors and hospital in Polokwane.

Reserve Insurance: Students will be required to sign an Indemnity form.





IS THIS PROJECT RIGHT FOR ME?

The Tuli project is located in an area of stunning natural beauty, and the remoteness is part of the magic of this project. This project is a fantastic choice for anyone who loves wildlife and nature and has a keen interest in ecology. The facilities are very basic, and the camp is not fenced. If you are comfortable with the thought of wildlife wandering around the camp you will have an amazing experience, being completely immersed in the environment - not much beats falling asleep to the sound of the African bush around you. You need to be happy to do without some creature comforts such as regular hot showers and ready internet access. If you are joining the Tuli project during the rainy season (November to March) you need to bring a sense of adventure as roads are often washed away and river crossings can be exhilarating. During the dry season (June-September) dust is omnipresent, so if being a bit dirty and sweaty makes you uncomfortable you should avoid this time of year.

BOOKING INFORMATION

What's Included? Return international flights from London Heathrow (optional), transfers, food and accommodation, 24 hour support from our ground manager, ACE T-Shirt, financial contributions to the project

What's not included? Travel insurance, spending money.

When can I join? This project runs year round with a break over Christmas and New Year.

How can I join? You can apply online at www.conservationafrica.net/apply or simply fill out an application form in one of our brochures and post it back to us.

