African Conservation Experience -
African Field Trip
19 May - 8 June 2016

This 3 week trip has been specifically put together for students from Edinboro University to give you the opportunity to get some fantastic research and wildlife experience as well as the chance to learn about the history and culture of South Africa - an amazingly diverse and vibrant country.

19 May: Arrival at Johannesburg airport. An ACE representative will meet you and conduct a quick briefing on the trip ahead. You will then transfer to a nearby guest house where you can freshen up and recover from your jet lag. (Accommodation is dormitory style)

20 May: After breakfast you set off for a guided day trip to Soweto. This sprawling city of approximately 2 million residents was established as the South Western Townships, home to the huge number of African workers who were employed in Johannesburg, but not permitted in the city after curfew during apartheid times. It reached international notoriety in 1976 when it was the site of the Soweto uprising, where police opened fire on students protesting against the enforced use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in schools. Soweto has long since become a city in its own rights, with schools, hospitals, venues, distinct neighbourhoods and prominent residents - Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu both lived in Soweto at times.

21 May: Today you travel to your base for the next few days - the scenic Porcupine Camp, based near the Kruger National Park. This is a full day’s travelling but you will be accompanied by a knowledgeable driver and guide, who will explain the sights and history of the region you pass through. There will also be rest stops and lunch en route. On arrival you get settled into the accommodation and enjoy a communal dinner, as the next day will be activity-packed!

22 May: Today’s explorations take you along the “Panorama Route“ - a tour of all the local beauty spots, of which there are many! You’ll visit God’s Window above the Blyde River Canyon where you can take in jaw dropping views 900 metres down the Drakensberg escarpment into the lush green lowveld.

At the Khamai Reptile Centre near Hoedspruit you can encounter snakes, lizards and spiders of all sizes up close. Many a student has overcome his or her fears here and handled the scary looking baboon spiders...

And an adrenaline-fuelled highlight of the trip, there’ll also be an opportunity to get your heart rate up dangling off a zip wire today!
23 May
Kruger National Park is South Africa’s most famous national park and the wildlife viewing here is superb. You set off early in the morning for an overnight adventure in the Greater Kruger. You’ll spend the night in a rustic camp in a private concession of the Kruger. From here you’ll go on a guided walk through the bush, learning about the “small things” that are easily missed on a game drive, such as insects and the “bush pharmacy” - the remarkable diversity of plants used for medicinal purposes. But of course there will also be plenty of opportunity for viewing the big game: The park is home to the ‘Big 5’ (lion, leopard, buffalo, rhino and elephant) and with some luck you might get sightings of all of them during game drives. Don’t ignore the other wildlife species though - there is also an abundance of other predators, giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, antelopes, reptiles and birds.

24 May
Leaving Kruger behind, you will travel to Mapungubwe Private Nature Reserve in the very North of South Africa, near the border with Botswana. After a welcome meeting and safety briefing you settle into the rustic student camp that will be your home for the next two weeks. Accommodation is in brick and thatch bungalows. Each bungalow houses 4 students and has an en suite bathroom with warm water showers. The student camp is situated only about 200 metres from the “homestead” which houses a large terrace, common room, a lecture room, “braai” (BBQ) area and even a small swimming pool.

25 May - 6 June: While acclimatising and getting used to your environment you will have some introductory lectures and workshops on the wildlife indigenous to the region. This area is to be part of the proposed Limpopo-Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area, incorporating Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa - creating a large area for animals to move freely and migrate naturally across historically established national borders.

During your stay at Mapungubwe you will be actively involved in data collection and observations that facilitate a better understanding of the wildlife populations and movement patterns in the area. Every day you will head out into the field to observe wildlife and collect data on elephant, predators and general game.
The exact activities for every day will be determined by local conditions and recent sightings but your likely research activities will focus on the following:

• **Wildlife Monitoring**: You will have the opportunity to participate in an active wildlife monitoring project at Mapungubwe. You’ll get to utilise camera traps to monitor the predator movements close to the camp.

• **Game Counts and Bird Identification**: You’ll learn to identify a wide variety of antelopes and birds while out on game drives.

• **Sleep-Out**: A highlight of your stay at Mapungubwe is a sleep-out next to an old bushmen cave. During the sleep-out you will learn about safety in the field and developing a basic understanding of navigating by using the constellation of stars. You’ll take turns with keeping watch during the night to keep the camp safe from nocturnal wildlife.

• **Lion Monitoring**: Mapungubwe and the surrounding reserves are home to one of the last populations of free roaming lions in southern Africa. You’ll take part in an exciting conservation research project that uses advanced tracking equipment. You’ll be able to determine the current movements of the collared lions and, heading out into the field, you’ll endeavour to obtain close sightings. Back at camp you’ll learn to process the tracking data in order to contribute to a study of the lions’ movement patterns.

7 June: Leaving Mapungubwe behind, you travel to your final overnight stop: A comfortable tented camp in Mookgopong. Putting most of the travelling towards Johannesburg behind you today leaves you with enough time for the last excursions before your flight the next day.

8 June: It might be the last day, but you are not simply heading off to the airport. Instead, you have two fantastic wildlife experiences to look forward to, as you set off for guided tours of the De Wildt Cheetah Centre and the Bush Babies Sanctuary. They are both somewhat misnamed, actually, as they are definitely not limited to cheetahs and bush babies. The De Wildt Centre is home to a large variety of predators and the Bush Babies Sanctuary shelters a huge number of primates, living in huge natural, open enclosures rather than cages. You will get a tour of the premises and learn about wildlife rehabilitation and conservation work, before finally departing for Johannesburg airport and the journey home.

**How to join**: Please speak to Professor Rebar if you would like to join the trip.
ACE Kit and Equipment List

This list has been drawn up to help you to select and prepare personal equipment for your trip. It is intended as a guide, and there may be other personal items you wish to take which are not on the list. It is advisable to pack your kit in a rucksack/canvas bag rather than a hard suitcase as this is easier to transport once you are in Africa.

1st Aid Kit. Basic kit for personal use; plasters, antiseptic cream, antihistamine tablets, paracetamol, imodium.

Small rucksack. Essential for carrying day to day equipment.

Sleeping Bag. Basic bedding is provided but you will need a sleeping bag for the sleep-out and for extra warmth - the nights are very cold in June.

Inner sheet (for sleeping bag). There is no need to buy an expensive one – cotton is fine, or take a single duvet cover!

Sleeping Mat. For added comfort if sleeping out.

Mosquito Repellent. Essential.

Torch. A good powerful but not too heavy torch. A head torch is particularly useful.

Adaptor Plug (3 round pins). Necessary for all electrical equipment in southern Africa.

Penknife with can opener, bottle opener and scissors is useful but not essential.

Watch. Best to take a cheap water-resistant watch on non-leather strap. Alarm-clock function useful.

Sunglasses with effective UV filter on a neck leash, a cleaning cloth and a hard case to keep them in.

Camera to your personal requirements. Large memory card advisable as downloading onto a computer can be very slow or unavailable.

Toiletries. Talc useful for the summer months especially.

Towels. 2 large towels.
Sun cream, after sun and lip block. Can be purchased cheaper locally.

Binoculars. Best to take some that are reasonably powerful but not too heavy or big.

Water Bottle.

Sundry Option Items like playing cards, books, sketch pads, personal stereo. Duct/electrical tape useful for many things like repairing kit and stopping toiletries from leaking. Small sewing kit also useful.

General Clothing for normal everyday use all clothing must be plain neutral colours – khaki, brown, dark green are ideal. For social occasions smart casual clothing will be sufficient.

Walking Boots. Good quality leather or acrylic. Please ensure your boots are well worn in.

Sandals/Flip Flops/Trainers.

Socks. 3 or 4 pairs thick socks to wear with walking boots and 1or 2 pairs lightweight for shoes.

Underwear and sleep wear.

Fleece, Woollen Hat and Gloves. Essential for winter months only (June to August).

Shirts. 2 hard-wearing long sleeved shirts and 5 T-shirts. Lightweight for summer months (to protect from the sun).

Jumper. For cool evenings and mornings an additional sweater in winter

Shorts. 2 pairs of medium length shorts. Preferably heavy-duty cotton.

Trousers. 2 pairs in winter, one in summer. They should be medium weight cotton or polycotton, loose fitting and durable. Zip-off trouser/shorts are ideal.

Belt. Leather or webbing can be useful for carrying water bottle, camera, etc, but not essential.

Swimming Costume.

Lightweight Waterproof. Useful in the summer months

Hat. Wide brimmed, lightweight. A cap is also useful, but does not provide as much sun protection.

Please ensure that all items of clothing, kit and equipment is marked with your name as far as possible. Please note luggage allowance for your transfer is 20kg.