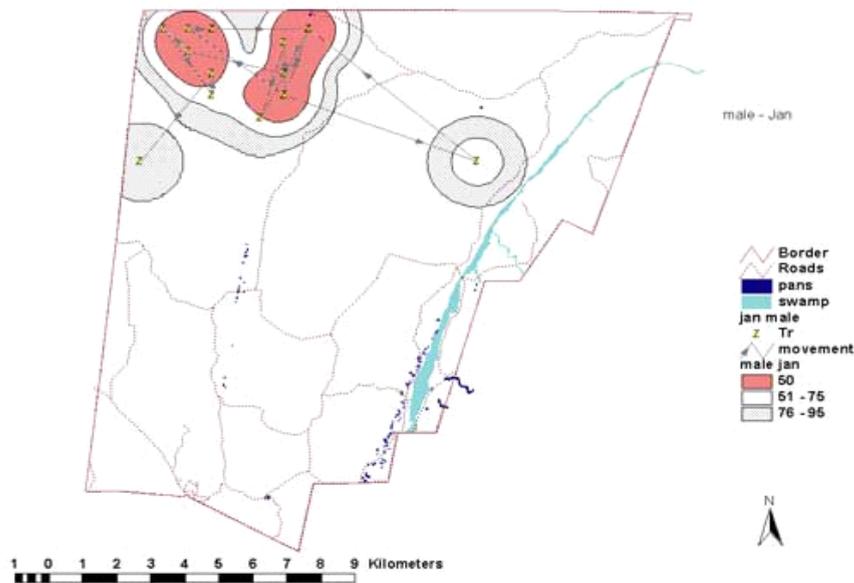


# TEMBE ELEPHANT PARK

Situated in Maputaland, the north-eastern region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and adjoining the Mozambique border, Tembe Elephant National Park is home to over 220 African elephants and a rich diversity of wildlife - including the black rhino, white rhino, buffalo, hippo, leopard, lion and various antelope species.

This untamed African Game Reserve in the Kingdom of the Zulu offers excellent birding with more than 340 bird species recorded in the park and is therefore one of the best bird areas in South Africa.



## CONTACT DETAILS:

Please have any mail sent to the address below and they will pass it on to you.

c/o Oscar Osberg  
Elephant and Lion Research  
Tembe Elephant Park  
Private Bag X 356  
KwaNgwanase  
3973

Conservation Manager in Charge: Nick de Goede  
Regional Ecologist : Dr Wayne Matthews  
Project Leader : Oscar Osberg

Contact details for Oscar are +27 (0)72 652 0337 and oscar@sasportsafari.com.

## YOUR WORK

As with all Conservation projects, your work will depend on what is required at the time your project takes place. As with any Conservation project it is also governed by uncontrollable factors, such as the weather, season habits of species, conservation priorities and logistics in operating research projects in a remote area. From time to time the focus of projects is adjusted depending on the results achieved through the research and small adaptations in program activities may take place. Visiting specialists and researchers often add value to existing programs and your project may interact with other research activities when possible.

Remember that this is a **WORKING** project, not a holiday, and volunteers assist with research work under the supervision and guidance of either the project researcher or his/her assistants. The work may at times be physically vigorous and can also be mentally challenging, due to the warm and humid climatic conditions (especially in summer). If you have any serious medical conditions that might prevent you from working in such an environment, please reconsider joining this project or contact Oscar (Project Leader) if you have further questions.

This project involves mainly research on aspects of elephant (for which the Park is famous) and lion ecology and more recently the beautiful very small but highly endangered antelope called Suni. If you want rewarding conservation work, you'll love this placement. The work can be fascinating and a large part of this work is devoted to collecting data from a vehicle.

The work involved on this project is varied and a large part of it is devoted to collecting data from a vehicle. Generally you'll be involved in some or all of the following:

- Collecting information on the number and density of various species.
- Plant growth and phenology monitoring on a seasonal basis.
- Collecting dung of various species.
- Photographing elephants and identifying elephants from an existing identification kit. Photography is used to identify specific animals, which can then be monitored.
- Monitoring and recording the types of feeding done by elephants and/or lions.
- Generally assisting with elephant and lion monitoring.
- Rhino monitoring using motion sensor cameras and daily observations.
- Leopard monitoring using telemetry,
- Game counts (3 per month),
- Entering the data collected during each week into a computer. The accurate and complete processing of data is often one of the **MOST VALUABLE** contributions you make to a placement. Remember, having gathered the information contributes nothing to the successful conservation of a species unless that data has been captured, analysed and applied to inform management practices. Often data sets need to be completed in order for your researcher to move on to the next exciting bit of field work. If you do not complete the data work allocated to you during your placement you will be delaying the fieldwork and research.

A typical day would be getting up fairly early in the morning (around 5.00 a.m. to start about 6.00 a.m.) to go out into the field to do Lion monitoring. You will usually return from Lion monitoring at around 10h30 and refresh, pack lunch and head out elephant monitoring. The best times to see elephants are during the hot midday times, especially at pans and hides.

You'll probably return to camp mid or late afternoon. After a siesta (or exercise) and afternoon tea/coffee, you'll input data onto the computers or generally update notes and pictures on what you've been doing and the information collected during the morning. Later, you may go out again to do additional monitoring; however, this depends on the movements of animals or other factors. Dinner is usually a social affair where ideas are shared and plans are made.

A typical day, during the month of your stay at Tembe, may not be exactly as described above. Your work will be dictated by what is required at the time and work schedules and content can change from one day to the next. You should therefore be prepared to be adaptable and patient because conservation projects do not always work to time or a date calendar and interesting opportunities often arise which are unique and will add to your lifetime experiences.

This project is a Non-Profit wildlife research partnership between SA Sport Safari and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife which is the provincial conservation agency. The life science departments of several academic institutions such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal and University of Pretoria are also involved as well as wildlife NGO, the Wildlands Conservation Trust.

## **HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF TEMBE ELEPHANT PARK**

The area now known as Tembe Elephant Park until recently was relatively wild, with very few people and no major fences around it except the northern international border fence. This fence was no obstacle for the elephants and they crossed freely into Mozambique. Very few people lived in the area mainly because of the scarcity of surface water. What water there is, is seasonal and the more permanent waters of the northern sections of the Muzi swamp are saline, and therefore not suitable for cultivation. The soils are poor for cultivation except along the Muzi swamps and the elephants destroyed any crops that did manage to grow.

The park falls within the Tembe Tribal ward and Chief Mzimba Tembe donated the land for the formation of this game reserve. The reasons for the establishment of Tembe Elephant Park and **primary objectives** are:

- Protect the lives and property of the local people from damage and injury by free roaming elephant.
- Preserve the last naturally occurring population of African elephant in KwaZulu-Natal.
- Conserve and protect the unique Sand Forest.
- Protect one of the largest populations of suni antelope in southern Africa.

Tembe Elephant Park was proclaimed in October 1983 and the south, west and eastern borders were fenced with game proof and electric fences. This still allowed free movement of elephant and game north into Mozambique. Later, in 1989, the northern border with Mozambique was fenced, stopping any elephant movement north. This was necessary due to poaching of elephant.

Tembe Elephant Park is a reserve that is managed by KZN Wildlife with strong community links, community and management working together to develop conservation based tourism in the area. Besides a conservation objective, the reserve is also intended to provide a stimulus to the local economy, through a viable ecotourism industry.

Lion are considered essential to the success of ecotourism in Tembe. Accordingly, following the Tembe Tribal Authority's backing and local Boards support, KZN Wildlife's Executive Management Committee's granted authority, for the introduction of between six and eight lions into Tembe Elephant Park (Tembe) on a test case basis, which will be for the benefit and improved feasibility of eco-tourism opportunities in Tembe as well as other eco-tourism ventures linked to land consolidation / potential expansion and links between reserves.

Tembe is surrounded by communities, and a primary concern is to ensure that the lions do not leave Tembe. In addition, there are a number of potential ecological consequences to this proposed introduction. Lions are a part of the savanna ecosystems, and have an impact on the ecosystem in Tembe. The habitat and prey composition is different to that found in other reserves with lions. The amount of prey available needs to be assessed and monitored. More importantly, we are continually assessing the impact that the lions have on key potential prey species such as suni. Conservation of the threatened suni antelope is one of the primary objectives of the Tembe Management Plan.

Accordingly, we have developed a strategy to maximize the potential of meeting the ecotourism objective, and minimize the risks to either the ecology or the surrounding communities. Thus a slow approach to the introduction of lions to Tembe has been embarked on. The four animals introduced in June 2002 (now 15 in 2008), are closely monitored and behaviour assessed. Two further males are to be introduced in 2009 to strengthen the bloodline.

## THE BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANCE OF TEMBE ELEPHANT PARK.

Southern Mozambique and the northern part of KwaZulu Natal have been recognised as an INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF PLANT DIVERSITY, namely the **Maputaland centre**. High levels of endemism and biodiversity (not only in plants) have been highlighted for this region, of which Tembe Elephant Park forms a part.

At least **2 500** species of vascular plants occur in the Maputaland centre; of these at least **225** species are endemic (an **endemic** is a plant or animal predominately confined to a particular area). Other endemic groups are **14** mammals (mainly of subspecies rank), **23** reptiles, **3** frogs and **8** fresh water fishes. The area also abounds in insect life, on which there is a shortage of information.

The Maputaland centre also corresponds with the southern part of the South-eastern African coast Endemic bird Area (EBA). Of the more than **472** species of birds in the Maputaland Centre (almost **60%** of South Africa's total), **5** species and about **43** subspecies are endemic / near endemic to the centre.

Not only does Tembe Elephant Park lie in the centre of this Maputaland centre and contain many of these interesting and important species, it also contains a unique and very rare habitat n.l. dry forest (referred to as **Licuati forest** in Mozambique and locally as **Sand forest**). A significant number of endemics (plants and animals) are associated with Licuati (Sand Forest), perhaps the most remarkable plant community in the Maputaland centre.

## LOCATION

This project is very remote and far away from shopping centres and entertainment venues. You will have a shopping trip approximately once a week to the nearest town, depending on other chores that need to be done such as banking, buying fresh food, filling vehicles with fuel, maintenance trips, etc. Due to the distance between the reserve and the larger shopping centres and the high cost of time and fuel involved, co-ordinators will try to combine chores for town as best as possible in order to maximise a trip. The closest town is Manguzi. Here you will mostly have access to basic shopping and ATM facilities. You are advised to bring an ATM or Visa/Mastercard credit card with you as well as a small amount of cash for personal expenses. (Approximately R500 in cash for emergency spending is advised). Should you need to exchange travellers cheques of foreign currency **YOU MUST** do this prior to coming to the placement as there are **NO** foreign exchange facilities available close to your placement. It is advisable to change your money at either Johannesburg or Durban airport when you arrive.

**There are no internet facilities on the reserve.** Mangusi does have an internet café (slow and unreliable connections). If you want to get away from it all, this is the place for you. If you therefore want to travel in South Africa after your stay at Tembe we suggest you make your travel arrangements and bookings BEFORE you come to Tembe. Your gsm mobile phone will work at the reserve and in the camp but reception may be erratic. Most volunteers bring their mobile phones and buy a local sim card with a pay as you go option in order for family and friends to keep in touch.

Volunteers work a 5 day week with 2 days off over the weekends with their work concentrated on conservation research. Unfortunately there are no public transport facilities from the Reserve. Your project leader may take you on one of the Saturdays to Kosi Bay or Sodwana Bay for the day but please note that he/she is under no obligation to provide sightseeing and leisure activities so when the opportunities are offered to you be appreciative and make the most of what is available.

All photographs on this web page have been taken on site by the project staff and volunteers in the Reserve during the course of the projects. A special mention goes to Dr Wayne Matthews who is an award winning photographer.

## THE ELEPHANTS

The Tembe elephants are the last natural population in Kwa-Zulu Natal. In other words they were not translocated to and reintroduced into the park as they roamed this area before the proclamation of the park in 1983. One of the main objectives in establishing the park was to fence off the elephants from the local communities to protect them and their property against elephants. Another main objective was to conserve one of the last remaining natural elephant populations in South Africa. The eastern, southern and western boundaries of the park were therefore fenced before 1986 but the northern boundary which borders to Mozambique was not fenced and the elephants therefore moved in and out of the park across the SA/Mozambique border. Due to a civil war in Mozambique and the resultant increase in poaching, the northern boundary of Tembe was fenced in 1989. The elephant population was therefore split into the Tembe and the Mozambique elephants. Some of the elephants in Tembe have old snare wounds from the time before the northern boundary was fenced. It is possible that this population is genetically different from other populations which would make them even more significant as an elephant population.

A contraception program commenced in 2006 (part of the Elephant Management Plan) where all the female elephant are contraceptive darted from helicopters once a year (around November). Due to the 22 month gestation period, we are expecting the first "non-results" to begin manifesting themselves from September '08. Elephant monitoring focus has shifted to the breeding herds to observe any behavior changes resulting from the reduction in new born calves.

## THE LIONS

The return of lion to Tembe is to make the park a genuine "Big Five" destination, thus helping to stimulate ecotourism to the reserve and region.

The two males were both captured at Madikwe Game Reserve and then placed into the Pilanesberg Boma in May 2002. The males were unrelated, from different prides. The idea behind this is to maximize the genetic diversity being introduced to Tembe. Although the males were not related, they remained together as a pair. This reduced conflict between lions at Tembe and the total population is currently 15. Future genetic introduction is likely to take place in 2009 according to the Lion Management Plan

The two female lions are both from Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province. They are half-sisters from the same pride (different mother). They were also captured in May.

This population is stable and has to be managed on a day to day basis to ensure that the Local Community is safeguarded. Actions taken are:

- Daily monitoring of the swamp area to allow reed cutters safe access to the reserve;
- Daily fence patrols to ensure the lions do not escape;
- Positive confirmation of each lion on a weekly basis.

## ACCOMMODATION

You'll live in the Research Camp in the Game Reserve, in a comfortable wood cabin (maybe sharing with one other volunteer). There are communal shower facilities, an equipped kitchen/dining area and a large outside barbecue area. Each wooden cabin has a small balcony as well as airconditioning. The volunteer research camp forms part of the larger KZN Wildlife staff complex and although you may sometimes be on your own, the Park ecologist's house is just behind your camp. The camp is electric fenced and has a gate that is closed at night to keep elephants and lions out. The setting is beautiful, as you can imagine in a Game Reserve, and you'll feel very much in tune with the African bush ... elephant and lion sometimes roam around outside the camp and at night you can often hear them eating and breaking branches off trees nearby or the Lions roaring in the morning mist. The project leader, Oscar Osberg, stays near the research camp but is not expected to be on 24 hour duty. But in case of emergency either the Conservation Manager - Nick de Goede or Oscar will be close by. The project monitors stay in general staff barracks approximately 500 m away from the research camp but in the same staff complex. Please note that there are times when either the researcher or assistants may be on time off and you will be in the research camp on your own in the evenings, but still in contact with someone with whom it has been pre-arranged to be on "standby" if you have an emergency.

Food will be provided for you and you will be expected to self cater on a rotation basis. You will prepare your own meals in the equipped kitchen and if you need any advice from your project leader on how to cook, please feel free to ask him. Sweets, alcohol and fizzy drinks are not included. Due to the remoteness of the nearest town, occasional shortages may occur which are outside the control of the project staff. Should this happen, alternative arrangements will be made but these may take a day or two to affect, so your patience and support in such instances are appreciated. Also note that it is not always possible for all the volunteers to go to town together and sometimes you will have to take turns and offer to buy goods for each other.

Although a cleaner will come in on alternate days to give the accommodation a good clean, it is your responsibility to clean up after every meal, whether by an agreed roster amongst yourselves or each one individually. Note that a dirty kitchen and unwashed dishes will not be tolerated and no field work will be done unless the kitchen is cleaned before you go out. Food and dirty containers attract animals and insects to the accommodation which can become problematic and even dangerous. Laundry (washing and ironing of personal clothes) can be done by the camp cleaner for approx R50 per week.

## TEMPERATURES:

Temps Average 36 - 8°C (Absolute max 45 - absolute min 4°C)

Average Humidity 60% and average annual rainfall 700mm

## What to take

Please refer to the **Frequently asked questions** page for further information. Temperatures require light clothes in the summer and a few warm sweaters and jacket over the winter. You'll need good walking shoes, mosquito net, water bottle, torch, battery operated radio or CD player, paperback books, anti-malaria medication and loads of insect repellent, especially in the summer. Binoculars would be very useful and there are lots of good photo opportunities, so bring your camera! A good book or two are a must for the odd lazy afternoon!

Please remember not to wear anything that is brightly coloured, and particularly not red - animals react aggressively to bright colours ... and they hate red!

## **RULES AND REGULATIONS ABOUT YOUR PROJECT AND PLACEMENT**

These are serious placements so please don't think that because you're a volunteer, you can treat them casually.

When we arrange your placement, the projects schedule their work to include your input. You will be expected to **turn up for work every day**. Naturally this does not apply if you're ill. However, if you persistently don't turn up to work because you're ill, you will be asked to produce a doctor's certificate.

If you want to take a day, or a few days, off work, please ask permission **from your Project Leader**. When applying for permission, you should give **plenty of advance notice** - this is so that the project can reschedule their timetable or arrange someone to stand in for you. **YOU CAN ONLY TAKE DAYS OFF WORK ONCE YOU HAVE RECEIVED PERMISSION FROM YOUR PROJECT LEADER**. Please accept it gracefully if permission is refused because it is not convenient for you to have time off. **If this rule is broken, you will be liable to having your placement terminated immediately and without recompense.**

Like any other worker on your project, you will be expected to behave with decorum and adhere to any rules and regulations laid down. If you have any problems or if you need any help or guidance, please don't hesitate to speak to Oscar the Project Leader - he is a very nice bloke and will do his very best to help you. We have had many volunteers on projects in Tembe Elephant Park and they have done so very successfully and with a lot of enjoyment - we have no doubt that you will also thoroughly enjoy your time in the country.