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# Transformation of the myth and the myth of transformation: over 100 years of guiding in South African game reserves

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# TRANSFORMATION OF THE MYTH AND THE MYTH OF TRANSFORMATION: OVER 100 YEARS OF GUIDING IN SOUTH AFRICAN GAME RESERVES

## FILE A- INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTERS



signifier

by Anthony James Paton

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Tourism

Johannesburg, 2007

# ABSTRACT

This is both a critical history of the **nature guiding** industry in South Africa from 1902-2007 and a subjective critique of the practical components of contemporary **nature-guiding.** It focuses particulary on guides operating on foot in **"Big Five" (dangerous game)** areas. The early history and the subsequent development of **"wilderness" trails** in the **Kruger National Park** and the histories of **KwaZulu-Natal Parks** and **Madikwe Game Reserve** are examined. The influences of the Field Guides' Association of Southern Africa (**FGASA**) and the Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority (**THETA**) are discussed. **Transformation** of the industry (in both the demographic and in the broader sense) faces language, cultural and ethical challenges because of prevailing anthropocentric and militaristic norms. **Nature guides** need improved communication skills and should balance traditional and progressive skills and ethics. They should become more critical and proactive in determining the style and content of their industry.



**KEYWORDS:**

Keywords or key phrases or search phrases are in bold above. They are:

- "Big Five"
- dangerous game
- Field Guides' Association of Southern Africa / FGASA
- Kruger National Park
- KwaZulu-Natal Parks / KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
- Madikwe Game Reserve
- nature guides
- nature-guiding

**KEYWORDS (continued):**

- Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority / THETA
- transformation
- "wilderness" trails

# DECLARATION

I declare that all work submitted for this Masters Thesis is original except for quotations which are clearly indicated as such and referenced to their source throughout the text.

Signed:_____ A.J.Paton (at Johannesburg, Gauteng) on 14 September, 2007.

# DEDICATION- "ALWAYS GIVE THANKS FOR A JOURNEY"

My spatial journey across the eastern half of South Africa occupied only a small portion of the three years that it took me to complete this Masters thesis, during which time regrettably my father, Jonathan Paton, died. I am sad that he could not be at the side of my mother Margaret to see me complete my Masters, but I must declare with thanks that I was brought up with the assurance of parental love and support.

I must mention my enormous debt of gratitude to my wife, Marcelle, and children, Berick and Nina, who can vouch for the number of hours they have been without their husband or father, who was away on research or hidden from view hunched over a computer keyboard, thinking of things that may be of little or no concern to them. In addition Marcelle has spent a lot of time in proof-reading this thesis, which has undoubtedly reduced the number of errors and improved the quality of this thesis. I am deeply and eternally grateful.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was constructed from a series of interviews in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, North West Province and Limpopo, and also incorporates e-mail input from people in these provinces as well as in Gauteng. In addition, further input came from as far afield as Zimbabwe and Botswana. The time and effort of all contributors is greatly appreciated and heartily acknowledged. My several expressions of views contrary to those of my subjects should never be read as ingratitude towards them for their time, effort, support and participation. They are all mentioned by name in the introduction to the interviews, and are all cited and mentioned in the course of this thesis.

It is indeed difficult to criticize informants who have shown immense charity and support by giving freely of their precious time to be interviewed, quite often in circumstances of both time and place that were less than optimal. For example, Warren Bekker met me at 07h00 at a carwash in Pietermaritzburg, whilst Graham Vercueil was still talking to me at 23h00 after a busy day at work and Ignatius Bogatsu gave up his only free time in the middle of a similarly hectic schedule.

The generous assistance of the Wits Oral History Project which is archived by Michelle Pickover is gratefully acknowledged, both for taking an interest in and archiving this research and also for the support by recruiting the services of Cané Lake, who transcribed five of the interviews. The additional assistance of work colleague Ronika Ramanand in transcribing one of the interviews is also acknowledged with sincere thanks. (The other nine interviews were transcribed by Anthony Paton). The continuous encouragement, input and support of my supervisor Professor David Bunn has been enormously motivating and is gratefully acknowledged.

# PREFACE

Prior to this thesis the book which focused most strongly on nature guides in southern Africa was probably Licensed to Guide by Susie Cazenove[i]. This book is highly recommended as a coffee table book with superb photographs by the author as well as high quality charcoal portraits of many of the guides discussed by her daughter Jessica Hoffman. In her introduction, Cazenove says

> …I realized there was one crucial ingredient to any trip I have ever sent anybody on- the guide. He made both the safari and its African backdrop unforgettable.[ii]

I think it is fair to say that Cazenove's book is superficial and largely anecdotal, and although it documents the characters and experiences of guides and their clients very entertainingly, it does not attempt to probe their attitudes, values and opinions, nor understand the history of their industry, nor who the key role players are, nor how the political and demographic dynamics operate, nor what the deeper debates behind the industry are. Cazenove has none of these intentions from the outset.

The other book that has focused on guides as subject matter is The Guide's Guide to Guiding by Garth Thompson.[iii] Although this is presented as a light-hearted book with delightful cartoons by Dov Fedler, it makes some very good serious points about how important good guiding is, although (because it is largely satirical) it does this mostly through concentrating on what good guiding isn't.

The pupose of this thesis is twofold. On the one hand it is intended to be a critical history of the nature-guiding industry, which observes correct academic formatting and conventions as far as is realistically possible. As such it will be read by academics, and I hope it will inform their understanding of the functioning of this component of the tourism industry, its challenges and some of the responses which these might elicit. I

hope this thesis inclines academics and their students towards a more practical application of academic criticism.

A thesis that is merely a critical history may reinforce the misconception that academics and historians in particular are merely required to describe and explain history, yet they don't have to make recommendations about the situation, and certainly don't have to respond to it. I am as qualified as anyone in the nature-guiding fraternity , and more experienced than many, so this thesis is also intended to serve as a critique of the practical components of guiding on the ground in present-day (2007) South Africa. It is hoped that it will stimulate a response from the industry which will elevate the general level of debate on guiding and guide training from being one notch higher than pub talk, as it is today, to a serious record of critical and functional discourse. Although academic theses undoubtedly appear to many readers to be highly abstract and disengaged from practical reality, senior guides and guide trainers also need to get beyond the point where three page letters in the FGASA newsletter are their highest form of exchange of ideas.

These contrasting objectives presented a real challenge to this thesis. At times they complement each other very successfully, but there are instances where the discussion of practical themes and the flow of historical narrative interfere with each other.

I have confined the discussion in this thesis to nature guides who work in game reserves, and particularly those who regularly guide on foot. I have only included some discussion of nature guides beyond game reserves for comparison with those who work within their boundaries.

Chapter 1 focuses largely on the Kruger National Park as it was the first extant game

reserve in the country to have been declared. Chapter 2 focuses on the Natal Parks (now KZN Wildlife) as it was here that the pioneering work in "wilderness trails" took place, but it also focuses on how religion, philosophy and literature came to influence guiding. Chapter 3 mainly concentrates on the Kruger National Park again, as it was during the period under discussion that trails began there, but it also discusses issues around dangerous animals. Chapter 4 contains a discussion of institutions which have had a meaningful impact in recent years. Its greatest specific geographic focus is on Madikwe, but the chapter also focuses on Conscor (CCAfrica) as a core body. This influential private concern defies identification with a specific location, but has practices and policies which have had growing national influence. Chapter 5 outlines the conditions that guides live under and the possibility of them unionizing. It goes on to examine the current state of transformation as variously interpreted, discussion of what factors may have restricted transformation and what could be done from the practical perspective to improve the extent and effectiveness of transformation without compromising standards. Brief suggestions are made as to how prospective lines of academic enquiry arising from this area of study might be considered by future students of this topic.

Although the primary source material is exclusively South African, I may reasonably be accused of over-representing the extent to which the United States of America has influenced our thinking. America is always the country against whose standard or achievement we may consider ourselves wonderful or wanting. America, through Aldo Leopold and the "wilderness myth", has influenced conservation and guiding in South Africa far more than any other country. So, although the quality of ideas from Australia or India may be as good as, or even exceed that of those from America, their ultimate influence is negligible by comparison. This may change in the future, and I hope it does, yet right now the United States of America is the main referent to varying degrees for all

conservation and guiding philosophy (and even strategies) pertaining to conservation, guiding and allied fields in South Africa, and to a significant extent throughout the world.

Another criticism of this thesis might easily be that it is ultimately a self-portrait of guides and not "a 360° profile". Thus, all the interviewees, and most other consultants are guides or guide trainers. There is no specific attempt to speak to their clients, who may reflect on their success and failure at providing good or appropriate service. Neither have their bosses, who may comment on their discipline or their lack thereof, been consulted. There is no input from people in advertising who are a dominant agent in determining what clients will expect as a bushveld experience. There is also no sampling of the opinions of trackers who are subordinates to guides despite often having many superior skills. This absence of others whose paths intertwine with those of "nature guides", some very intimately, some incidentally, is merely an attempt to limit the perspective presented, and is not intended to place guides above criticism. Although subsequent scholars may see value in interrogating people in these and other categories, I feel that the best experts on a career are the professionals from that career themselves. As I myself am an experienced nature guide, other readers may feel that my prejudices in this regard deserve to be challenged.

There is also an obvious and deliberate male perspective as the rate of gender "transformation" has been disappointing. The deliberate gender bias of the text is not intended to condone the male dominance of nature guiding (especially in dangerous game areas), but to remind contemporary readers of the reality of this state of affairs. Even the rate of racial transformation, although significant, may have been overstated by some informants. Perhaps it is surprising that racial "transformation" seems to have

outstripped gender "transformation" with respect to that section of nature guides interviewed.

This thesis aims to convey that "transformation" is not only about superficial differences between people, such as gender and race, but is ultimately about identifying, promoting and embracing values and attitudes that are distilled from the best of our traditions. South African nature guides should be marketing our shared humanity and respect for all sentient beings, and not celebrating our past arrogance towards (or disregard for) other species and even other people. With this type of transformation we could attain a shared future where growth will not require wanton destruction and success will not be measured in material terms or remain only as a bi-product of greed.

## NOTE ON PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs on chapter title pages are by the author.

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[i] Cazenove, Suzie, Licensed to Guide, Jacana, Johannesburg, 2005.
ii Cazenove, Suzie, Licensed to Guide, Jacana, Johannesburg, 2005, p.3.
iii Thompson, Garth, The Guide's Guide to Guiding, Russel Friedman, Halfway House, 2001.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

**ABET-** Adult Basic Education and Training

**AIDS-** Acquired Immuno- Deficiency Syndrome

**CEO-** Chief Executive Officer

**DEAT-** Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism (post-1994 ultimate authority for tourist guide qualifications)

**ETDP SETA-** Education, Training and Development Practices SETA

**EXCO-** Executive Committee

**FGASA-** Field Guides' Association of Southern Africa (an association of Field Guides founded in 1992 by Ria Milburn, Clive Walker and others)

**GTA-** Gauteng Tourism Authority (an example of a provincial tourism authority which is the local organ of DEAT)

**GRA-** Game Ranger's Association of South Africa

**HoD-** Head of Department

**INTAC-** Integrated Nature-Based Tourism and Conservation Management Project

**KZN-** KwaZulu Natal Province. Their conservation board used to be called Natal Parks Board, but has since become KZN Wildlife, and it is difficult to choose a name to call this entity when describing it over time.

**KNP-** The Kruger National Park, also called the Kruger Park, the Kruger or the Park.

**NDE-** National Department of Education

**NQF-** National Qualifications Framework

**OBE-** Outcomes Based Education

**PDI-** Previously Disadvantaged Individual- meaning not white (and to an extent not male, though whether a white female qualifies as a PDI is a moot point)

**PHASA-** Professional Hunter's Association of South Africa

**POSLEC-** Police, Security Services (?) SETA

**RPL-** Recognition of Prior Learning (a method of assessing learners who have extensive experience but no formal qualifications or qualifications which are not congruent with the SAQA system)

**SANParks-** South African National Parks, which replaced the National Parks Board

**SAQA-** South African Qualifications Authority

**SATOUR-** South African Tourism (now disbanded organization)

**SATourism-** South African Tourism (successor to SATOUR but which did not take over guide qualification function)

**SESETA-** Services SETA

**SETA-** Sector Education & Training Authority

**SGB-** Standards Generating Body (in the SETA system these are experts elected from the industry)

**TG16-** An example of (previous) THETA Unit Standard naming system (this was "Conduct a Guided Experience in a Dangerous Game Area")

**THETA-** Tourism, Hospitality & Sport Sector Education & Training Authority

# SOURCES AND CONVENTIONS USED

The primary sources of this thesis are interviews conducted with nature guides of a variety of ages and backgrounds, and with those who have worked closely or have a good understanding of the guiding industry. These interviews (which are 267 pages long in single line spacing) and other unpublished sources are included as an appendix to this thesis in a separate file labeled File B. Other appendices include additional informants via e-mail or personal comment (Appendix I, p.608), non-English words (Appendix II- p.609) and a list of species names referred to in the thesis (Appendix III- p.612) which are included with the thesis in File B. The names of organizations that are designated by an acronym are rendered in full at their first mention and thereafter designated by an acronym, but to aid the reader's memory an appendix of acronyms is also supplied for ease of reading. The normal academic convention of desisting from the use of acronyms for purposes of clarity has been deliberately flouted to avoid the extremely cumbersome expression that would result due to the high density of such acronyms in portions of this thesis, particularly in chapter 4. Conventions of animal names are awkward as English common names of birds are currently standardized as capitalized, whilst mammal (and other) species names do not appear to adhere to this convention. For consistency all species names in the English language are written as lower case except where certain species are named in honour of a person, where capitalization is inevitable. Scientific names are italicized and follow the normal convention of capitalized genus name, lower case species name. South African English words that derive from other languages or other language words are also italicized. The other convention that may be disturbing to a hardened academic is the capitalization of the L (to indicate line on page) in references of primary source material. This is totally my own convention and is used to avoid confusion of lower case l with the numeral 1, with apologies to purists.

The most distinctive problem of using oral interviews as primary source material is that spoken word typically contains a variety of unconventional or certainly "unacademic" expression. Slang, jargon and acronyms are the stock in trade of most speakers. Incorrect grammar is abundant, particularly considering that eight of the fifteen primary source interviews are with people whose first language is not English. Sentence fragments are frequently encountered in the transcripts. They result either from the speaker being interrupted or changing their minds in mid-sentence (as we do in spoken interactions far more often than we realize) or from the tendency to infer the rest of the sentence in conversation. Notably, only Dr. Ian Player and Dr. Alex Coutts made significant changes to their transcripts, but there were also logistical difficulties in getting scripts back to some of the other informants for checking. Where any of the above forms of expression exist in quotations, they are most likely errors that derive from the original speaker, although at times for various reasons, portions of tapes are unclear, and the recording or transcription may sometimes be at fault. Every attempt has been made to capture the original intention of the speaker, and even their original tone, or mode of expression. At times this results in the inclusion of such phrases in the quotations. I have thus given precedence to authentic expression over academic correctness. Any writers who produce academic work from oral transcripts will be faced with this conflict.

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[i] Cazenove, Suzie, Licensed to Guide, Jacana, Johannesburg, 2005.

[ii] Cazenove, Suzie, Licensed to Guide, Jacana, Johannesburg, 2005, p.3.

[iii] Thompson, Garth, The Guide's Guide to Guiding, Russel Friedman, Halfway House, 2001.

# TRANSFORMATION OF THE MYTH AND THE MYTH OF TRANSFORMATION: OVER 100 YEARS OF GUIDING IN SOUTH AFRICAN GAME RESERVES



memory

## Chapter 1- Parasites And Pioneers In Paradise (1902-1954)

## CHAPTER 1- PIONEERS AND PARASITES IN PARADISE (1902-1954)

This chapter focuses on the origins and establishment of game reserves in South Africa, and particularly the development of the Sabi Game Reserve into the Kruger National Park. It revolves largely around the life and ideas of James Stevenson-Hamilton, who he was influenced by and what influence he in turn had.

Section one examines how the parallel myths of origin in the innocence of Eden in Genesis of the Holy Bible and the writings of James Stevenson-Hamilton have both functioned to shape values that are still partially or strongly held by nature guides. This is followed by a discussion of the distorted remnants of First People's thinking, with particular reference to the Khoi-San and also native Americans, particularly the iconic speech of Chief Seattle. The third section of this chapter examines how the malaria mosquito and the tsetse fly, often portrayed as menacing pests, were effective in reducing human influence on portions of the country that were to become conservation areas. The fourth section describes how explorers and hunters shaped and disfigured the landscape, often brutally pillaging it and in the process ironically giving it the veneer of innocence. The fifth section examines the writing of Aldo Leopold, the legendary American conservationist and philosopher, who was of significant influence on James Stevenson-Hamilton (and subsequently others, most notable Dr. Ian Player and the Wilderness Leadership School). The sixth section is a discussion of key works by South African writers, or writers on South Africa who were concerned with, or commented on natural areas. It is suggested that these works reflected and altered the values of the day, and by extension of the present era. The seventh section focuses particularly on Laurens van der Post and his romantic re-invention of the Kalahari as a "new wilderness."

The eighth section is a discussion on the integrity of guides in the light their literary exemplars. The ninth section presents the first hand perspectives of Stevenson-Hamilton, and of Harry Wolhuter, his most loyal early game ranger. The tenth section is a short historical summary of the early days of the Kruger National Park. The eleventh section comprises a brief description of developments in KwaZulu-Natal during the same period. The twelth section returns to the Kruger National Park to present an account of the life of J.A.B. Sandenberg and his awkward place in history as the successor to Stevenson-Hamilton and predecessor to a notably different style of management in the Kruger National Park which was related to the rise in Afrikaner Nationalism. The conclusion summarizes the influence and effect which James Stevenson- Hamilton has had on the values of South African nature guides today.

**The Myth of Origins and Origins of the Myth**

Given the described spatial and temporal limits set for this thesis, it may seem reasonable to propose that the a history of nature guiding in South Africa should open with the self-portrait of James Stevenson-Hamilton settling down to dinner

> amid the slowly swelling sounds of the night; the call of the little Scops owl, the throbbing of the crickets, the yelp of the jackal, perhaps the distant rumble of a lion bestirring himself from his daily slumber…[1]

But this is too simple. Certainly, the installation into the office of the first Game Warden of the Sabi Game Reserve is a key moment, but just as Stevenson-Hamilton could produce "from the recesses of the wagon…camp-table, chair, bottle, glasses, all the things tending to mitigate the asperities of life[2]" he also had a mind filled with ideas, some marvelous, some mundane, but all deeply immersed in the currents of colonial imperialism and

Christian dogma that were typical of similar men of his time. However, Stevenson-Hamilton was by no means merely typical- he was focused, resourceful, determined in his work and was also a disciplined, eloquent and manipulative writer.

By calling one of his published works South African Eden- From Sabi Game Reserve to Kruger National Park[3], Stevenson-Hamilton reminds us how much his interpretation of the establishment of the Sabi Game Reserve, which was to become the Kruger National Park, was shaped by the cultural and religious upbringing which he shares with his intended reader. Most particularly he stresses the notion of Eden, the innocent paradise in which the human species is brought into consciousness. So it is that Stevenson-Hamilton, the master narrator, weaves the myth of human origins into the myth of the origins of the great South African Game Reserve. For this reason alone the interrogation of the former myth is justified, but the myth of Eden is far more pervasive and ultimately forms a critical underpinning of the attitudes and values of modern South African nature guides.

According to Carruthers:

> Although one of Stevenson-Hamilton's books is dedicated to 'the guardian spirit of the Low-veld', he was not a mystic or a pantheist, but essentially a practical conservationist.[4]

Like Eden, the Sabi Game Reserve represents a time and place of innocence, a paradise which preceded the dominance of humanity. Many white South African and international readers of Stevenson-Hamilton's time were beguiled by the romantic idyll of paradise, and perhaps some readers today still buy into his vision. Perhaps the "nature myth" is a seductive idiom which attracts privileged people throughout, the world, but particularly middle class and upper-middle class white

South Africans. The “nature myth” accommodates their desire to evade contemporary social responsibility and angst over the unequal human relationships which were obviously evident in the vicinity of game reserves, as well as in the entire society, at the time. The notion that the landscape which Stevenson-Hamilton was to come to manage was previously pristine and free of human influence was not something which he could have believed unquestioningly, but like all good romantic writers he inferd this, and skillfully deflected the reader’s attention from some of the brutal and barbarous processes in preceding (and contemporaneous) history. These included battles such as the South African War and a variety of less obviously violent events which had the effect of clearing former occupants from their ancestral lands or even from recently conquered lands, as the case may be.

It would also be wrong to imply that Stevenson-Hamilton was to any remarkable extent a fundamentalist or particularly narrow-minded by comparison with other writers and politically influential figures of the period. One would never quite call his perspective secular, but his strategies were often shaped by immense pragmatism, diplomacy and a “holistic” view of his environment, both human and natural. In this respect he was indebted to, and perhaps rather similar to Jan Christiaan Smuts, the influential inventor of “holism”.

The death of Prime Minister Louis Botha in 1919 was fortuitous for Stevenson Hamilton, and for the subsequent fruition of the Kruger National Park, for it portended the rise to power of Smuts at a critical period in the establishment of the

Kruger Park. Although three years younger than Stevenson-Hamilton, Smuts was a born leader, and clearly gained the immediate respect and recognition of the Warden. Smuts had a unique character, part botanist, part statesman and part soldier, and so he had the appreciation of nature, diplomatic flair and determined fighting spirit that were huge assets to the eventual establishment of the Kruger National Park. From 1914 onwards as Minister of Finance and Defence, Smuts had specially requested to be "kept informed on game conservation matters in the Transvaal"[5]. Smuts's political career was something of a roller-coaster ride, because he was seen by many Afrikaners as too concerned with the affairs of the British Empire and the League of Nations, and not adequately concerned with affairs at home. Whilst Smuts was an Afrikaner with British sympathies, Stevenson-Hamilton was a Brit who became increasingly inclined to follow the lead of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick and see himself as "a South African"[6], which tendency increasingly helped his ability to negotiate with Afrikaners, particularly the more conservative amongst them.

Before engaging further in deeper discussion of this period, it is important to understand the precedents and context which shaped Stevenson-Hamilton's time. In order to do this this some of the background themes to the period are discussed below.

**The First People of the Land: the Last People of the Wilderness**

From our contemporary perspective it is hard to objectively recreate the world view

of first people and hunter-gatherer groups who were exterminated culturally, if not genetically, in the wake of colonialism. The notion of first people is in itself a debatable concept. For example, are Bantu people who undoubtedly originated in Africa (but not in South Africa) "First People" when they were clearly preceded in the region by the Khoi-San[7]?

"First People" are relevant to this discussion, because not only do they have the longest standing claim to "ownership" of the country but they were inextricably inter-dependent with the land. The myths and values emanating from the record of earlier Khoi-San people suggested that they did not subordinate animals to humans as is the contemporary Western "Christian" norm. In Khoi-San rock art and in the oral record, animals are variously represented as being equal to humans, having once been humans or even being superior to humans[8].

The tendency to romanticize "First People" is very significant in contemporary descriptions of them, most particularly because they lived a life in harmony with (or certainly close proximity to) nature. The food items described by //Kabo to Bleek include springbok, gemsbok, hartebeest, ostrich, hares and "Bushman's rice" (termites)[9] and he describes how he formerly lived by hunting. Ethnographic descriptions of Bushmen in Botswana and Namibia in the 1950s and 1960s by John Marshall, Megan Biesele, George Silberbauer and others, not only reinforced this interpretation, but also emphasized the unity of "Bushman" culture- what David Lewis-Williams calls "pan-San" culture. Lumping all Khoi-San cultures together may be in some respect helpful for the political battle for the rights of people from

these fragmented splinter cultures, yet it also runs the risk of reinforcing stereotypes of these people.

Educated urban South Africans- and particularly whites- seem to have the strongest tendency to romanticize the hunter-gatherer, probably because they are most remote from the natural environment and interaction with it. Water comes from a tap, food comes from a supermarket and money comes from an ATM. A car is used for transportation and a computer and other electricity-sapping devices are used at work. They do not bend down at a stream, kill a goat, sweat at work, walk long distances or light fires. They are draining rivers, killing animals, expending energy, and burning fires, but technology and urbanization have removed them from their contact with the source and their (almost always negative) impact on it as a resource. These are all very efficient mechanisms which are effective in obscuring the interaction with nature from the resource user. So these people crave the romantic idea of returning to this source and one manifestation of this craving is the tendency to imagine that they would enjoy life as a hunter-gatherer. Ironically, the very people whose cultural predecessors had the most impact on the collapse of the hunter-gatherer society, are the most likely to romanticize the image of this group whose right of reply is limited temporally (because a number of groups are already extinct), spatially (because surviving groups tend to live in remote portions of the interior of the sub-continent) and strategically (because surviving groups are poor, thinly spread, have a limited grasp of English and limited access to media). One cannot help thinking that much of the message of first people (who are invariably hunter-gatherers or early agro-pastoralists) was frequently simply lost in translation.

As suggested above, contemporary depictions of Khoi-San people tend to be idealized- they are described as having been democratic, egalitarian, peace loving and living in harmony with nature. This description is a relatively recent romantic construct produced by members of a culture whose immediate forebears had effectively annihilated hunter-gatherers from all desirable tracts of land in the region. An ongoing commando war against them by white settlers saw to their effective destruction as a culture. The eighteenth-century leader Koerikei was quoted as saying:

> What are you [settlers] doing on my land? You have taken all the places where the eland and other game live. Why did you not stay where the sun goes down, where you first came from?[10]

Although Khoi-San people have survived as a genetic lineage mainly through "coloured" people, the entire /Xam language was extinguished and other Khoi-San languages and cultures marginalized to the point of numerical and political irrelevance. If not for Wilhelm Bleek, Dorothea Bleek and Lucy Lloyd and their informants, very little would be known about the opinions of the /Xam people and culturally, linguistically or "ethnically" related South African "bushmen". Despite these unique records on which much of today's ethnography, archaeology and history of art are based, real detailed and empathetic knowledge of their relationship to their environment and the creatures which inhabited it remains scant. Their opinions on their colonization, first by assimilation to Bantu people, and then by eradication by European settlers, is not recorded in detail that would do it justice. Therefore it may be useful to assess the attitudes of First People elsewhere in the world, and the United States of America makes a useful comparison, not only

because this country was very influential in our subsequent interpretations of the relationship of humans with their environment, but also because the statements following below give an indication of the disappointment that some first people felt with the cultures that overwhelmed them, and particularly of the lack of environmental consciousness of these cultures.

The quintessential romantic American notion of the wilderness is captured in the legendary speech of Chief Seattle. This speech is one of the better-known statements by a leader of late First People and it has attained an iconic feel, because he lived at the critical interval between the period in which First People were demonized as savages in colonial discourse and that in which they were completely annihilated, or effectively rendered voiceless.[11] The genocide of First People, or at least the related annihilation of their cultures, was the single most significant process in creating spaces in the last two centuries that could still be described as "wilderness". With this historical consideration, we should be prepared to read "wilderness" as land tarnished with genocide and then varnished with innocence, although this is neither the only nor the entire explanation of how places baring this lable came into existence.

In this context the very prophetic nature of Chief Seattle's speech is evident:

> You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. The earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.[12]

The late capitalist culture is contaminating its own bed so badly, that it is becoming difficult not to notice that the world faces an environmental crises of gargantuan

proportions.

The First People throughout the planet no longer control their own place in history, for they are either now dead or else swallowed up by far more powerful cultures. Those pockets of land that were the last outposts of the first people were very often declared to be “wilderness”, meaning a place devoid of people. Now even those portions of land are threatened- for there is no space on the entire planet that does not have to justify its continued existence in utilitarian terms. Land no longer exists for its own sake.

**Parasites and Proclamation (Vectors as Protectors)**

Before continuing the discussion of how humans encountered the wild areas that remained at the end of the nineteenth century, it is worth discussing why natural areas of this kind remained at all. We can do this by examining the effect of disease on demarcation. *Anopheles* mosquitoes and *tsetse* flies were not yet recognized as the vectors of significant diseases. In retrospect it is easy to appreciate that these vectors were effective protectors of relatively pristine natural areas. Ultimately, they were more influential in the ultimate demarcation of game reserves than any other single agent.

Before its proclamation the region that was to become the Kruger Park was undesirable for extended occupation because of the prevalence of malaria. At the time people were yet to deduce that the *Anopheles* mosquito was the vector of this debilitating disease.

Harry Wolhuter reminds us that (even as recently as) well into the twentieth century

> …all dwellers of the *Low-Veld* suffered greatly from malaria. We were unaware of the true cause of it and consequently we suffered from recurrences as well as new doses.[13]

This led to the Kruger Park having the "wrong" shape (long north south axis, short east west axis), and so the natural migration of animals between the lowveld in winter and the highveld in summer would come to be curtailed with the demarcation (and ultimately, significantly the fencing) of the Kruger Park. Both Stevenson-Hamilton and Wolhuter report that in the early days of the Park game was surprisingly sparse. Stevenson-Hamilton blamed this largely on the *rinderpest* of 1896[14] whereas Wolhuter attributes it to the hunting zealousness of Boer commandos (in the war of 1899-1902)[15]. Stevenson-Hamilton also noted the significance of the Boer impact when he stated "the damage they [Africans] do in a year is not equal to that done by a few Boers in a week."[16] No doubt both agents did their share of the destruction. It is very easy to underestimate the impact of insects; as Braack[17] points out, the Kruger National Park supports a far larger biomass of insects than of mammals.

Just as the *Anopheles* mosquito was the effective agent of shaping the ultimate boundaries of the Kruger National Park, so the spread of *nagana* (sleeping sickness) by the tsetse fly effectively limited human encroachment at Hluhluwe-Umfolozi. From at least the time of King Mpande in 1859, and probably long before, Zulu herders had a traditional practice of lighting fires to "smoke" their cattle whenever they came into contact with game, particularly buffalo[18]. It is hard to know how this practice was arrived at, and whether the originators of the practice intended it to

be learnt as for preventative custom against the transmission of *nagana* from game to cattle, or whether it was merely fortuitous, and if this was the case, how very fortuitous it was. It is possible that the practice had limited adherents at the outset, but caught on when it was noticed that the herds of those who did observe the practice prospered relative to those who did not. However, there is little evidence to support the above speculation and it appears from available writing that this practice was observed as a "correct custom" possibly which may have appeased the *amadlozi* (ancestoral spirits) and did not officially attract additional support based on its rationally perceived merits of disease prevention.

Critically, though, the understanding of the mechanism of *nagana* may have been aided by observations of local practice, and once colonial scientists had a grasp of this problem, they used it to their own political advantage, rather than acknowledging the significance of the observation of local practices in reaching their conclusion. According to O'Donaghue and Neluvhalani:

> It is also somewhat ironic that, just before the turn of the century [1900], a scientist explicitly established the relationship between cattle, wildlife and the tsetse fly to describe the transmission of the *nagana*. However, the "new" knowledge was sequestrated from daily life and appropriated into the colonial administration to be set up against earlier indigenous myths. Now, confident of knowing more and better than "the Other" (the local populace), it successfully took up the role of educating the indigenous people. The administration seldom seems to have had much respect for, and certainly overlooked much of, the knowledge that indigenous peoples had in common-sense ways of doing things in the contexts of their everyday lives. These are similar to processes during the state formation in Europe and elsewhere.[19]
>
> With the advent of the modern state, much of an earlier and local capital of knowing was assigned to the margins of myth and superstition[20].

Obviously the power relationships of the day sought to conceal the complex history of this discovery. This serves as a good example of inflated faith in western science. Yet, it is also probable that the Zulus had no method of defending the validity of their original wisdom. Their chances of detecting and proving the appropriation of indigenous knowledge was, if anything, even more remote. To this extent both groups were at least partially ignorant, which was problematic for understanding and co-operation, but was very fortuitous for maintaining the integrity of the greater Hluhluwe-Umfolozi wilderness area and (eventually combined) game reserves. As Bauman (quoted from O'Donaghue and Neluvhalani) said: "It was only after the intensive campaign of spraying with DDT and BHC, that the tsetse fly was brought under control[21]" and the park became more tourist friendly. So the boundaries of the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi reserve were shaped more by the tsetse fly, than by any other single creature, even including the human being. The subsequent campaign against the tsetse flies, would in turn come to have a profound effect on the style of nature guiding in Hluhluwe and Umfolozi. (These latter points were elaborated further by Shirley Brooks, see pp.58-61 below)

**Hunting for the Origins of the Guide**

Early "explorers", such as Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1824), William Burchell (1782-1863) and Andrew Smith (1797-1872) employed guides who assisted them primarily in becoming familiar with animal and plant species and their habitats and as such could arguably be said to constitute the first specialist nature guides in South Africa.

The period of "discovery" was followed by a period of hunting and other forms of over-exploitation of the animals and environments of the region. Subsequent generations of hunters such as Frederick Courtney Selous (1851-1917) and Stephanus "BveKenya" Barnard (1886-1962) became legendary, both amongst other colonists, and amongst the indigenous people with whom they came into contact. Whilst they made a significant contribution to the rapid decline in animal numbers and natural habitats, they also helped to galvanize the myth of the safari-hero whilst playing down the contribution of their own guides, who were indigenous people in the broader (if not necessarily the local) context.

The exploits of Selous influenced the writings of Henry Rider Haggard (and later Wilbur Smith) and created the model which inspired the hunting safari of Theodore Roosevelt and the now immortal notion of "the Big Five". Initially, it may appear bizarre to dedicate excessive space to the legacy of hunters in a thesis which purports to focus on nature guides. Yet it is possible (and necessary) to demonstrate that the South African nature tourism industry clearly displays a subliminal nostalgia for the colonial period, and hangs much of its imagery on macho stereotypes and a vicarious glorification of hunting imagery. This is most blatantly demonstrated in the ubiquitous marketing of the "Big Five" as the *raison d'être* for visiting a given destination, reserve or region. The marketing of this icon creates expectations with tourists and obliges management on the ground, and ultimately guides, to create an experience which includes a mandatory range of species which are not particularly numerous or abundant (elephant and buffalo) to relatively rare (rhino species, lion and leopard). Leopard are solitary, nocturnal and often frequent

dense or inaccessible habitat and therefore relatively difficult to locate. Black rhino are usually diurnal, but their dietary predilection for certain food sources, and natural tendency to frequent thick bush, plus their normally solitary habits, and overall scarcity, makes them perhaps the most difficult species of all to locate and view. It is possibly due to this rarity and inaccessibility that it has conveniently become forgotten that black rhino were the species of choice in the "Big Five" as originally conceived, and it has become a norm to include the white rhino in the "Big Five". South African bank notes have been partially themed on the "Big Five", and it is clearly a white rhino that appears on the ten rand note.

Besides Roosevelt, another famous American visitor to East Africa was Carl Akeley, who set out to capture the vanishing wilderness of Africa through hunting and skillfully mounting specimens, but also through the less intrusive strategy of photography. Paradoxically, by presenting stuffed and mounted Africa's animals in American museums, Akeley was able to arouse public interest in the United States of America in the living animals of Africa. (This calls to mind the Private Eye cartoon depicting two English colonials enjoying their drinks in front of a fireplace above which is the mounted head of a rhinoceros. The one old chap explains to his friend "I had to bag one before the damn things became extinct!")[22] Through the efforts of public figures such as Roosevelt and Akeley, the American public became aware of the possibility of touring to Africa- "going on safari"- as a romantic and appealing aspiration. Rather in keeping with the ironic cartoon described above, the macho adventures of writers like Ernest Hemingway and Bartle Bull, which included frequent descriptions of big game hunting in Africa, fueled, rather than

dampened the "safari" aspiration amongst wealthy non-hunters. No doubt this had a profound effect on the economies affected by wildlife in southern and east Africa, and led to the realization by African countries that tourism was a realistic and viable competitor to hunting in making natural areas economically viable.
Retrospectively, it is possible perhaps to over-estimate the contribution of Roosevelt, Akeley, Hemingway and Bull and underestimate the *zeitgeist* of the growing consciousness of wilderness and conservation awareness, even as, and largely because, vast tracts of land throughout the world were being tamed, conquered and contested by humans, and "wilderness areas", and the animal herds (or flocks, or swarms) they once supported, were disappearing at an alarming rate.

At the start of the twentieth century, one man embodied this spirit better that anyone else, and that was Aldo Leopold. Leopold had a successful career as state forester and conservation officer in the service of the United States of America. He was a keen hunter, fisherman and outdoorsman who retired to the outback of Wisconsin, where he wrote a number of very influential books, particularly The Sand Country Almanac[23] and Round River[24]. They were beautifully and poetically written, but they were also very influential in shaping thinking in the burgeoning science of ecology.

**Aldo Leopold and the Re-invention of Wilderness**

Aldo Leopold must have realized that in order to appreciate and enjoy "the wilderness" you have to participate in its destruction. Yet, he felt it was his duty to

capture a variety of cameos that reflected the pristine environment that must have preceded the destruction and dominance of "nature" by humans, and so gained a veneer of "timelessness", or at least of the idyllic:

> One of the most insidious invasions of the wilderness is via predator control. It works thus: wolves and lions are cleaned out of a wilderness area in the interests of big game management. The big game herds (usually deer or elk) then increase to the point of overbrowsing the range. Hunters must then be encouraged to harvest the surplus, but modern hunters refuse to operate far from a car; hence a road must be built to provide access to the surplus game. Again and again, wilderness areas have been split by this process, but it still continues. [25]

Destruction of pristine habitat through pastoralism or to pave the way for agriculture continues unabated and with it species destruction, most specifically of predators that are a threat to farmers. Leopold argued that

> Permanent grizzly ranges and permanent wilderness areas are of course two names for one problem[26] [and so ultimately species preservation would only be possible if there was wilderness preservation.] Wilderness is a resource which can shrink, but not grow.[27]

Ultimately for Leopold though there were deep ethical, cultural and intellectual reasons to preserve wilderness:

> Ability to see the cultural value of wilderness boils down, in the last analysis, to a question of intellectual humility. The shallow-minded modern who has lost his rootage in the land assumes that he has already discovered what is important; it is such who prate of empires, political or economic, that will last a thousand years. It is only the scholar who appreciates that all history consists of successive excursions from a single starting point, to which man returns again and again to organize yet another search for a durable scale of values. It is only the scholar who understands why the raw wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise.[28]

Leopold argues that the people of his day had not developed good land ethics. He used a shocking but powerful example to illustrate this point

> When god-like Odysseus returned from the wars of Troy, he hanged all on one rope a dozen slave-girls of his household whom he suspected of misbehaviour during his absence.
>
> The hanging involved no question of propriety. The girls were property.

> The disposal of property was then, as now, a matter of expediency, not of right or wrong.
>
> Concepts of right or wrong were not lacking from Odysseus' Greece: witness the fidelity of his wife through long years before at last his black-prowed galleys clove the wine-dark seas for home. The ethical structure of that day covered wives, but had not yet been extended to human chattels. During the three thousand years which have since elapsed, ethical criteria have been extended to many fields of conduct, with correspondent shrinkages in those judged by expediency only.[29]

Leopold's point was that although there had been steady change in ethics, there was in his day still

> …as yet no ethical dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants that grow upon it. Land, like Odysseus' slave girls is still property. The land relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges, but no obligations.
>
> The extension of ethics to this third element in the human environment is, if I read the evidence correctly, an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity. It is the third step in the sequence. The first two have already been taken. Individual thinkers since the days of Ezekiel and Isaiah have asserted the despoilation of the land is not only inexpedient but wrong. Society, however has not yet affirmed their belief. I regard the present conservation movement as the embryo of such an affirmation.[30]

Leopold's words are remarkably prophetic of the rise in conservation awareness. Game reserves and National Parks were soon to become the order of the day throughout the world, and the ideas of Leopold must have added impetus to this movement, even although he objected at times to its methods and strategies.

As mentioned above, the significance of Aldo Leopold for the South African context cannot be overemphasized, as he deeply touched at least two of the key founding figures of nature guiding in South Africa, namely Col. James Stevenson-Hamilton, the first warden of the Kruger National Park, and Dr. Ian Player, a distinguished conservationist and the founder of wilderness trails in uMfolozi and

of the Wilderness Leadership School. It is clear from the following quote from Dr. Ian Player, that both men were independently attracted to Leopold:

> I only really became interested in Leopold in about 1955- Sand County Almanac then Round River. I would say that Hamilton got interested because Hamilton was a very unusual man, one of the really great men of this country.[31]

His exposure to Leopold re-inforced Stevenson-Hamilton's belief that the purpose of a game reserve could be not merely to stock the area for hunters, but that it had to be for the conservation of the broader environment. Leopold made Stevenson-Hamilton more aware of how the abiotic and biotic elements of the ecosystem interact and this encouraged him in the belief that he should take the study of ecology very seriously. It was to some extent through Leopold's comments about the necessity of wolves and grizzlies to the environment that Stevenson-Hamilton reconsidered management attitudes to predators, although Carruthers makes light of this connection[32]. In the 1920s Stevenson Hamilton certainly made a decision to desist from routinely killing lions and other predators and scavengers and instructed Harry Wolhuter and his other staff to do likewise. Stevenson Hamilton also specifically mentioned the influence of Mr. Piet Grobler, the Minister of Lands, who in turn had read Pienaar's History of a Lion Family[33]. Whilst the initial function of the Game Warden was to create a surplus of herbivores whose sole purpose was to be shot by hunters, he later strove to manage a balanced ecosystem. Carruthers indicates that by 1910 Stevenson Hamilton was already clear about the difference between a "sanctuary" (an area which enjoys absolute inviolability) and a "preserve" (an area wherein animals are preserved for the use of the privileged few)[34], but at this stage he appeared uncertain which of these his brief really entailed.

Stevenson-Hamilton believed in his entitled dominion over animals, yet at least he was open to seeing that it is possible to exploit animals in a way which took greater cognizance of their welfare, and his regime of control thus became more akin to stewardship than it was to subjugation. Thus, for Stevenson-Hamilton, Aldo Leopold was, amongst other things, a pioneer of ecology, and an authority who confirmed his awareness that predators play an important part in the grander scheme of nature, as important participants in the trophic pyramid, which may seem obvious to us today. According to Carruthers, Stevenson-Hamilton was already describing the 'balance of nature' as early as 1907.

Like James Stevenson-Hamilton, Ian Player recognized that not only did Aldo Leopold reveal the balance of nature, but he represented an unusual intellectual balance between distinction in the sciences and in the arts, as suggested in the following comparison of Laurens van der Post with Aldo Leopold.

> Laurens [van der Post] is not a scientist- [Aldo] Leopold is a scientist. No, I think Laurens [van der Post] would have been irritated with [Aldo] Leopold and vice versa. They would have got on well in some respect, but they were very different people. Leopold was very much ahead of his time…

Later (and unprompted) Player articulated this more explicitly in his description of Alan Paton (also as a comparison to Aldo Leopold):

> Your grandfather, [Alan Paton] I am proud to say, was a very good friend of mine, a man I admired very much, he was a great man. I had a lot of time for him. He used to come here stay with us quite often. I liked Alan Paton. He was a poet- he was a rare combination of poet and scientist…. he would certainly [be another candidate for the local equivalent of Aldo Leopold][35]

Player described the qualities of Aldo Leopold, and of Stevenson-Hamilton (and incidentally Alan Paton) as being individuals who had an unusually lucid balance between science and poetry (or more broadly the arts). Perhaps, by extension, it is

legitimate to say that Stevenson-Hamilton displayed a remarkable balance between being a pragmatist (in his disciplined daily life and insightful observations) and being a romantic in his selective description of himself and the world around him. He sold to the people of South Africa, and the world, a vision of an Eden, of an idyllic paradise, where the realities of pitiful peasants, perilous poachers and pestilential parasites were skillfully glossed over.

So, both in the landscape which was to become the Kruger National Park, and in his literary depictions of it, Stevenson-Hamilton could make people, problems and pain seem insignificant. That is at least how his readers and the white people of his time saw his role. The reality for the people who had caused him problems by having homes where he wanted a game reserve was quite different. Their memories of him re-assigning them to land which was unfamiliar to them were not easily forgotten and "swept away." (See further discussion of the significance of this phrase on p. 40 below).

Peasants and poachers were quite often one and the same people, and whilst Stevenson-Hamilton had turned the wilderness into the Promised Land for wildlife and lovers of wildlife, many former occupants of the Kruger Park had been driven out of the Promised Land. Contented subsistence farmers and hunters were moved onto land which was not of their own choosing and which was to become over-crowded, over-stocked and over-grazed and for them remained a barren and bitter wilderness. In one of the more extreme cases, the expulsion of the Makuleke, even the National Parks Board secretary H.J. van Graan wrote (in 1933):

> Is it wise to take this step in view of the reputation of the alleged suppression of native races? It is obvious that Pafuri is better agriculturally than the dry places of grazing land we offer in exchange…frankly, I foreseee in this gain of today, if we acquire the Pafuri, the future germ of the destruction of the whole Park.[36]

It is small wonder then that Stevenson-Hamilton was given the name *siKhukuza*- "the one who sweeps everything away". Furthermore, it is fitting that the Kruger National Park's headquarters is called Skukuza, and that people should be reminded of its derivation from a man who was remarkable and uncompromising, but who was motivated by a romantic vision and faith that the paradise called Eden could still exist (for some) on earth.

**The Rights and Wrongs of Writers and their Writing**

Let us consider some significant influences in South African writing and literature, during the period of James Stevenson-Hamilton's wardenship and immediately following it.

Sir Henry Rider Haggard was born in Bradenham Norfolk, but lived in South Africa and worked as a civil servant from 1875 to 1884 when he returned to England and became a lawyer and a very successful writer. King Solomon's Mines (1885)[37] contains romantic descriptions of the South African interior in a quest to locate a legendary city. This fascination with mythical destinations in the Kalahari was to be taken up by two very influential writers, as described below. She (1887)[38] reads very bizarrely from a modern perspective, because although it was inspired by the myth of Modjadji the "immortal" rain queen of the baLobedu, and although the landscape is superficially like the Drakensberg escarpment of present-day

Mpumalanga, there is something curiously English about the mysterious queen and most of the other characters. The protagonist Allan Quartermain is the quintessential colonial explorer or "white hunter" and arguably the root of modern explorer-hero figure such as "Indiana Jones".

Madiringana and Stapleton[39] showed that Rider Haggard derived much of the character and experiences from the writings of Frederick Courtney Selous, yet he was at pains to hide his plagiarism. Bizarrely, and perhaps confusingly, they maintained that while art imitated life, life also to some extent began to imitate art, with Selous somewhat returning the compliment, by clearly deriving some of his self-description from Rider Haggard.

After fighting against the Ndebele in 1893 and 1896, Selous eventually based himself in England and became a recognized environmental expert, safari guide and collector/seller of zoological specimens.[40] Rider Haggard always protested his own honesty, produced very carefully orchestrated exaggerations or lies, plagiarized ideas and information and played down, or totally denied his indebtedness to sources. In all of these respects he is remarkably similar in predisposition to Laurens van der Post. They both appear to be characters who created such marvelous and convincing fictions that they began to confuse their own mythology with reality.

In many respects, Percy Fitzpatrick was a far more credible writer. In Jock of the Bushveld (1907)[41] he describes the area that was to be transformed into the Kruger

National Park from his perspective as a transport rider from 1885 and through the 1890s. The route H2-2 from Pretoriuskop to Afsaal is referred to as the Voortrekker Road, or sometimes the Jock of the Bushveld Road, and the birth place of the legendary dog is along this road to the east of Pretoriuskop. There are two reasons why Fitzpatrick remains a credible and palatable writer. The first is that he used the very clever device of making his dog Jock the central figure of his book, thus avoiding the sort of egotism that is inherent in similar autobiographical descriptions. The second is that his accounts, though colourful in places, can always be verified with a high degree of precision at specific places. Brian Patrick Simmons has produced two excellent booklets [42], which often tie the descriptions in the book with exactly identifiable positions in the landscape, and confirm Fitzpatrick as a very exacting, honest and reliable author. Despite all of this, or possibly to some extent because of it, Jock of the Bushveld remains readable and interesting. Clearly, Fitzpatick had the rare gift of describing the environment clearly and accurately without compromising on colour and flavour, which made him extraordinary, if not entirely unique.

Shirley Brooks cites The Zulu Journey a 1937 publication by a travel writer by the name of Carel Birkby, which is an autobiographical adventure set in Hluhluwe and Umfolozi. According to Brookes:

> In the book, Birkby himself is the intrepid hero and adventurer. Together with his servant-companion Joshua Titus, the two men explore a romantic and distant region inhabited by untamed people and wild animals. In Birkby's tale, representations of the game reserves are inseparable from the mystique of the powerful Zulu nation. For example, one of Birkby's encounters is with Induna Mali, whom he presents as a kind of Prestor John figure: 'Of all the game guards, the most famous is Mali…He is a silent, skilful tracker, a deadly shot, and the terror of poachers. With his khaki

> uniform, his blue leggings and motor-tyre sandals, his Baden Powell hat and his beard, Mali is a picturesque figure'.[43]

Birkby was clearly aiming to draw foreign tourists to the country, and cunningly advertising his own services as a skilled and experienced mediator of this landscape. The accompanying introduction suggests that the reader will encounter "as strange a set of living characters as ever Rider Haggard invented"[44]. David Bunn[45] feels that it is important to stress how insignificant the writings of Birkby are compared to his literary predecessors, Rider Haggard and John Buchan and so the significance of Umslopogaas and Prestor John as precedents should not be overlooked. Bunn is essentially correct in this view, but there is an extent to which this genre was the product of the *zeitgeist* of post-colonial English literature. It appears that an almost constant procession of writers have fictionalized the South African landscape, but sold their fiction as completely factual, and located themselves in the central role within this landscape. Perhaps it is not unfair to describe Wilbur Smith as the ultimate exponent of this genre and Robert Ruark is perhaps the closest equivalent for the East African context.

In the second quarter of the twentieth century and interesting and influencial group of writers emerged from the province of Natal. In 1925, a young Afrikaans journalist Laurens van der Post cut his teeth in the English language as a writer for the *Advertiser* which was to become the *Daily News*[46]. In the following year, he joined *Voorslag* which was edited by Roy Campbell and William Plomer[47]. Campbell's poem The Flaming Terrapin written when he was 23 was widely acclaimed in Britain and America. He was robust and rebellious, and perhaps he may be described as South Africa's answer to Ernest Hemingway. William Plomer

was slightly younger and similarly gifted. His first novel Turbott Wolfe was published in London to considerable acclaim. He was tall and bespectacled, and looked the part of a London intellectual. Plomer and van der Post travelled to Japan together in 1926. Both Campbell and Plomer were significant influences on van der Post's writing, and J.D.F Jones suggests that van der Post appropriated stories told by both of them, but related them as though they had happened to him[48].

The other writer of the period with whom Laurens van der Post claimed ties was Alan Paton. Both van der Post and Paton were concerned about the injustices done to another group (the "Bushmen" and the Zulus respectively) through an unjust political history, but more significantly, both had a very real engagement with humans and their relationship with nature, and the wilderness ethic. Although they seldom physically met, van der Post and Paton remained in contact for years, and van der Post made some quite generous donations to the Liberal Party which Paton led for many years. Significantly in terms of this thesis both Laurens van der Post and Alan Paton maintained friendships with Ian Player throughout their lives.

**Into the "New Wilderness" of the Kalahari**

Both van der Post and Paton produced an extensive body of work that looked at nature, wilderness, and the relationship of humans with nature, so it might be worth comparing some of their works in more detail. Alan Paton lived most of his life in Natal whilst Laurens van der Post spent a significant portion of his life in the province, but both decided quite independently to go into the Kalahari Desert on

journeys of exploration, which they happened to describe- van der Post with great pride and intention, Alan Paton rather incidentally and casually.

Why did they both happen to choose the Kalahari? It was an arid area where the availability of water was (and still is) a critical limitation on residents and visitors alike, so only the most intrepid explorers went there. In order to contextualize this of course, it should be remembered that the Marshall family, George Silberbauer and others had already succeeded in living out there for months at a stretch, and Tony Traill was soon to spend even longer. Yet, the very fact of the inaccessibility, aridity and sparse population of relatively unknown and remarkable people made the Kalahari the new "wilderness", because there was no place in the whole of South Africa which was equally lacking obvious signs of modernity and civilization. If a writer of this time wrote an epic adventure about their exploration of the "wilderness" of the Kruger National Park, they would have been laughed out of town by hordes of people in South Africa, and even in Britain, who had been there without ever having gotten their boots dirty!

Laurens van der Post made an epic journey into the Kalahari during the 1950's which he described in The Lost World of the Kalahari. I only learnt recently from a published account, that (my grandfather) Alan Paton had gone in search of The Lost City of the Kalahari during the same decade retracing the legendary trail described by G.A. Farini's 1886 book Through the Kalahari Desert and locate "the lost city of the Kalahari"[49]. The latter phrase was used as the title of the book subsequently produced by Herman Wittenberg in 2005- some 17 years after Paton had died. (It appears that Alan Paton had despaired of its potential for publication). Both Paton

and van der Post were more than modestly resourceful in their literary re-creations of that relatively pristine piece of "wilderness", as remote then as very few portions of the planet could be said to be during the 1950s. To both, the Kalahari was a place of incomparable awe, beauty and mystery, with fascinating inhabitants, both human and animal. It is perhaps significant to note further, that both men were the effective sponsors of their respective expeditions. Yet, in respect of their published conclusions, the two legendary men could hardly have been more different.

Sir Laurens van der Post was brought up as a rather humble Afrikaans boy from Phillipolis in the Free State, and might have died in obscurity, had it not been for his enormous gift for using the narrative arts in turning the mundane into the extraordinary, and skillfully mythologizing his world and his life. His fictional notion of reality was so effective that he charmed his way into becoming a close confidante of Prince Charles of England, and the godfather to his son, Prince William, the heir to the English crown. One aspect of his life which he imaginatively re-worked was his contribution to the Second World War. I cannot comment in detail on the accuracy of van der Post's claims to military glory, but they are examined thoroughly in J.D.F. Jones biography The Storyteller[50]. I have, however, thoroughly studied The Lost World of the Kalahari[51] and find that it clearly reveals van der Post as a man of two sides- one remarkably philanthropic and humanitarian, and the other devious, insecure about his ego and desperate for recognition.

Although, through knowing him well, I can vouch that Alan Paton was not a man lacking in certain insecurities as well as certain immodesties, his account of his journey into the wilderness contrasts pointedly with van der Post's tale. Paton's is a remarkable account for the period in which the writer is candid about participating in an expedition which totally failed in its stated objectives to find "the Lost City of the Kalahari". To be fair to van der Post, Alan Paton set out expecting to fail, whilst van der Post was hell-bent on the romantic "discovery" of "the undiscovered world of the Bushmen". Nevertheless, the obscure, "lost piece of writing on the Kalahari" by Alan Paton is far more honest, and would have remained entirely hidden from the world, even the author's family, had it not been for the dogged investigative skills of Hermann Wittenberg.

Paton's writing in this instance demonstrates a consistant meticulous observation without the tendency to the poetic and romantic found elsewhere in his writing and which makes this comparison a valid one:

> The Kalahari is surprisingly rich in bird life. I had no real opportunity to study it, because I always felt unable just to wander off into the bush whilst the others were servicing the truck, making fires and preparing meals. I saw a hundred species in odd moments, but I could possibly have reached 200 with more time; nevertheless I was delighted to identify 24 species unknown to me, and bring my South[ern] African total to over 400.[52]

Some of his descriptions of people linked them characteristically to the landscape:

> I was myself a strange site by this time. My beard was extremely ugly, brown and grey, with no real flow to it. Sailor's beard was truly magnificent, and no-one could have looked more like Henry the Eighth in his more dissolute moments. Sailor's beard was like the waving yellow grass of the Kalahari, while mine looked more like its unkempt scrub.[53]

Paton's descriptions of people who lived in the desert include his conversations with David Frans and Katrina Whiteman, who described themselves as "hotnot"

and “white coloured from the Cape” (presumably meaning that they were of mixed race including European descent) and spoke to him in English and Afrikaans respectively. They are hardly a portrait of “wild bushmen” such as those van der Post was careful to select, and which van der Post represented as though they were the dominant culture in the Kalahari at the time.

There can be no doubt in assessing the influence of these two books that van der Post’s Lost World of the Kalahari is the better known amongst nature guides and the population at large, and arguably the better written of the two books. Other books of Alan Paton are better known and of much higher quality, but although The Lost City of the Kalahari is a modest and obscure book, it is discussed here because it demonstrates that a visit to the Kalahari can still be depicted as fascinating and worthwhile without recourse to the grand exaggerations and romantic distortions which van der Post seemed to feel were necessary.

It is almost tragic that a man as talented as van der Post was so insecure about his ego that he could not help infusing his various autobiographical stories with a variety of exagerations and fictions. Part of his success was due to the beauty and persuasiveness of his descriptions of iconic places and people. The critical lesson for guides is that although fiction is a powerful device, we should be careful we do not confuse it with reality in the narratives which we weave as the normal tools of our trade.

**Of Tall Stories and True Stories**

The previous section makes it plain that integrity amongst writers is a thorny and problematic question. It is worth deviating to discuss the question of whether guides are entitled to present distortions or "poetic truth" to unsuspecting clients. I am certain that quite often guides gauge that their audience have nothing like the depth of knowledge that they do about the subject so may present facts which are "colourfully exaggerated" or even knowingly false into their narrative. The odds of the client detecting these are fairly low, so it may be argued that no harm has been done, but the potentially negative effects of being caught out are hard to underestimate.

In my period of employment by Drifters from 1997-99 I had only one client out of over 300 who ever successfully challenged the full extent of my knowledge, yet the experience left an indelible impression. On the 24 day overland Cape Town-Vic Falls- Johannesburg Drifters Tour in 1999, Ed van Weerd was a remarkable client. He was a retired Dutch zoology professor who had worked for a number of years in Africa- I think it was at a university in Algeria. He compiled lists for every day of the tour of every mammal, every bird and every reptile we saw, and I think even also kept notes on trees. At Cape Cross in Namibia we encountered a bird which I assured him was a Sand Plover, and thought nothing more of it. Small plovers are a fairly difficult category of birds. To my astonishment, some two months later, I received a photograph of the bird in question, with an outstretched wing, which posture I do not recall seeing at the time. In his attached letter, Ed van Weerd said

"Was it not perhaps immature Kittlitz's Plover?" I looked it up in my Robert's and immediately I realized that Ed van Weerd was perfectly correct and I had given wrong information to a client (albeit in good faith), on what I still consider to be one of my strongest areas- bird identification. I wrote back and told him that he was the most astute client that I had ever had, which is still true today.

This experience had a profound effect on me, because it made me realize that even with the best intentions we are capable of giving out misinformation. How much more will we give out if we just don't care or just don't know, and how much more again if we are simply making it up, or blatantly lying? The fact that most clients will not know the difference is often an incentive to guides to fabricate. In the long term, the harm caused by fabrication far outweighs its potential benefit, because any client who realizes that they have been lied to once is likely to become suspicious that they were lied to more times than they realize. The inevitable result is that the integrity of the guide is called into question. Ultimately, the integrity of the whole industry, or everyone in the country, may be called into question, with potentially devastating long term effects on the industry.

Whilst no "historical writing" is devoid of "fiction", it is also worth noting that fictional writing, no matter how fantastic, draws some of its inspiration from real lived experience. H.C. Bosman's short story In the Withaak's Shade[54] discusses the theme of humans and animals, and also the theme of truth and fiction.

In response to an article by Charles Trennery in the April 2006 FGASA newsletter[55] (Appendix VI C on p.623), I wrote an article in the August newsletter called "A Tall Story"[56] (Appendix VI D on p.631) which examines how information derived from ecologists and game rangers usually forms the basis for information supplied by nature guides, and questioned whether this was a good thing or not. To top it all Brent Reed submitted another article in the December edition called "Inspecting the building of a tall story"[57] (Appendix VI E on p.633), which succeeded somehow in equaling the scientific exactitude (including referencing) which Trennery had displayed, but also engaged and somewhat surpassed (or perhaps countered) the tone of skepticism and more anecdotal approach I had taken. Reed suggested that guides should respect ethnology but not accept it blindly, as animal behaviour is bound to exhibit local variation, and the best information guides could give clients would be based on their informed and precise observation. He concluded with the admission that despite needing to be correct about what we sell off as science, people are still attracted to legends and yarns, and these are more likely to attract generous tips than correct information.

The above exchange is an example of a dialogue between guides which addresses the commonly held premise that "scientific" information is more credible than cultural or other information. By taking on the appearance of having scientific sources guides can persuade clients that their information is "factual", but the reliability of guides' information is far more dependant on the guide's integrity than on the "idiom" (scientific or otherwise) which they adopt when giving out information.

Some very experienced and influential guides like Lex Hes, though not necessarily disputing that information needs to be correct, felt that it is important to stress that the function of guiding is not merely the ability to assimilate and communicate information:

> That can be true to some extent, but I think the important thing, and this is actually one of the areas where I feel a lot of training and standards setting in the guide industry falls down a little bit is that, to me, there is far too much emphasis actually on the gathering of knowledge. Do we really need to know about rhizomes and different types of grasses when a guest generally speaking is not ever really going to ask that question? Sure, if there's certain grasses that play an important role in an ecosystem and provide a great food source for the millions of wildebeest that go across the Serengeti plains, then that's something of interest and importance for a guest. But some obscure grass? I feel that there's too much emphasis on incredible detailed knowledge, where there should be more emphasis on how are you pass what knowledge you have across to your guests and are you making your experience interesting and exciting for your guests? So I don't think you necessarily need to know everything, you just have to make sure that you are maintaining the interest of your guests. So if they are interested in grasses, use that as something to maintain interest.[58]

This position is fairly representative of the general opinion amongst experienced guides. For most clients, whilst it is obviously better to be correct than wrong, it is even better to be correct and interesting and the best thing that a guide can be is correct, interesting and entertaining. You should know the difference between opinion, fact, fiction and yarn, and try to ensure that your clients are on the same wavelength as you are (most of the time at least).

**Game-Rangers: Authors and Authorities**

The above discussion is not intended to cast aspersions on the integrity of Stevenson-Hamilton. What it should highlight is that discourse, which can be taken (fairly or unfairly) for natural history or scientific discourse is very often inaccurate,

and can produce (frequently deliberate) distortions of the facts at hand.

In his 1937 book South African Eden: From Sabi Game Reserve to Kruger National Park, James Stevenson-Hamilton describes the Kruger Park as a "Cinderella"[59], who has at last made it to the ball, that is that the richness and value of the Park had belatedly been publicly recognized. When he had been employed as Game Warden for Sabi Game Reserve it was considered that to be shot eventually "was the sole end for which wild animals were supposed to exist".[60] Fortunately, James Stevenson-Hamilton was in some sense open-minded and received fairly good international exposure:

> While in London, I had been a good deal in touch with wild life preservation matters, which were then beginning to arouse interest in certain circles, mainly through the efforts of Mr. E.N. Buxton, who had shortly before founded the Society for the Preservation of Fauna of the Empire. I had incidentally heard a good deal about the American National Parks, and their success as a public attraction. [61]

The idea of the creation of the Kruger National Park as we know it today was more the brain child of Stevenson-Hamilton than any other individual. He records

> I shall always think of that day in Hannemann's Hotel as a red-letter one, on which faintly dawned the Idea which later found its culmination in the creation of the Kruger National Park, and of Hannemann himself as the *deus ex machina*.[62]

From these somewhat desperate beginnings the tide turned strongly in favour of the creation of the Kruger National Park. He recalled:

> The interview took place at Corner House, Johannesburg, on December 9, 1925.[63]

At this meeting land was successfully acquired to expand the Kruger National Park. Mr. Papenfus (an influential cabinet minister at the time) had said the new land would be useful in "replenishing the game and attract citizens (and) overseas tourists". The Park was finally proclaimed on 31 May, 1926, and launched in the

following year. The overall tone of Stevenson Hamilton is of one who was proud of the success of the Park, but he remained noticeably nostalgic about the rustic conditions before its commercial success. This desire for the park to remain consciously 'rustic' was to be echoed by Mike English when I interviewed him, even though what Mike English considers 'rustic' may be a whole lot less 'rustic" than what Stevenson-Hamilton might have meant:

> See, you've got to supply these things to accommodate the tastes of people who are not used to the bush whereas, in the old days you went to the Kruger Park and they hunted for their things, and you would meet and say "What did you see today?" around the campfire. Now you get there, your air-conditioning is making a noise for the next neighbour who doesn't hear the lion roaring. All the mod-cons are spoiling that atmosphere, so you're drawing, not the old keen people and they want to see the Big 5, and they want to know where it is…[64]

The unique character and challenging environment of the area that was to become the Kruger National Park inspired Harry Wolhuter to write Memories of a Gameranger[65]. Wolhuter is justifiably best remembered as the man who saved himself from the jaws of a lion which was dragging him by the right shoulder by coolly stabbing it in the heart with a "Pipe Brand" knife held in his left hand. In many respects he was similar in character to his mentor and friend Stevenson-Hamilton. Both started out as hunters, were outdoorsmen, pragmatists, diplomatic with white people and strict (or even possibly harsh) with most black people, as was the norm of their day. Like Stevenson-Hamilton, Wolhuter was also a gifted narrator with a wealth of experience in the foundation and early days of the Kruger National Park. If Wolhuter lacked the easy eloquence of Stevenson-Hamilton, he did perhaps surpass the older man in modesty, humour and most particularly the ability to laugh at himself and others and even to admit to his own weaker points including the odd lie and theft (see p.55 below).

Whilst Stevenson-Hamilton had to figure out from the beginning what a Chief Warden did, Wolhuter similarly had to invent the role of the Game Ranger by trial and error, seeing he had no exposure to a reasonable and accessible precedent. Wolhuter captured this eloquently and fairly succinctly:

> I was now on the eve of a completely new experience; henceforth I was to protect game, instead of hunting it. My long subsequent experience has taught me that, thrilling though the pleasures of shooting undoubtedly are, infinitely greater and more lasting pleasure and interest can be obtained from the observation and study of wild animals, unafraid and uninterfered with, in their natural haunts; and I never regretted my metamorphosis from hunter to guardian! [66]

The discontinuation of hunting had a distinct area of exception. Initially predators were hunted to allow the depleted numbers of herbivores to recover from their depleted numbers which resulted from the *rinderpest* and thinning by the hunting of the late nineteenth century. The hunting continued in the course of the South African (Anglo-Boer) War (1899-1902). (See p.29 above).

Later in his tenure, Stevenson-Hamilton partly through his exposure to Aldo Leopold, as well as through observation, became more convinced in his belief that predators are an integral part of the ecosystem to be preserved. It appears that he had little difficulty in persuading Wolhuter and his other game rangers of the validity of this position, and culling became a "necessary evil" which may be directed towards any number of species, rather than a systematic persecution of predators as a group.

The fact that Wolhuter describes himself as a liar[67] and a thief [68] paradoxically makes him more honest (or at least more credible) than Rider Haggard, Birkby or

van der Post. Wolhuter has been honest about his dishonesty, whereas, generally these writers were dishonest about their honesty.

**Opening the Gates**

In the late 1920s it became evident that the Kruger National Park had huge potential as a tourist destination. At first the tourists came by train. The South African Railways were quick to popularize the budding game reserve and in 1923 they offered the public a railway special of "Nine days holiday for £8-10/-" which became known as the "Round in Nine Days."[69]

> …a game ranger joined the train at Komatipoort and entertained clients in the "observation coach" and to "lead the singing around the campfire at Newington in the Game Reserve. The veld simply teemed with game and the engine driver blew one blast for game to the right, and two for game to the left. He was never quiet, and the passengers kept running from one window to the other, exited as they had never been before on a train trip.
>
> The "Round in Nine Days" to the Eastern Transvaal remained one of the most popular railway excursions for many years and undoubtedly did much to bring regular visitors to the Park. Then motor cars came into the reserve for the first time. Mr. H.C. van Veen, later to be the Tourist Chief, was there to receive them.[70]

It was initially thought that every tour would have to be "personally conducted"[71] with the view that a guide with a firearm should necessarily accompany every vehicle as a precaution against lions. As it transpired this proved "not to be practicable, and the board found a loophole in the Act, which enabled it to permit one firearm per car to be carried for purely protective purposes." Weapons were then sealed to detect and prevent abuse. It was soon realized that the risk of lions was negligible, and the percentage of tourists who brought weapons diminished to less than 20%.

The growth in vehicle traffic to the Park was phenomenal. In 1927 three cars were recorded. In 1928 180 cars entered, in 1929 there were 850 cars and by 1935 there were over 6 000 cars and lorries, carrying over 26 000 people. Vehicle traffic was encouraged by (and in turn promoted) infrastructural development. In 1928 there were 122 miles of road in the Park, in 1929 there were 382 miles of road and by 1930 there were 450 miles of road. By 1936 there were 900 miles of road. [72]
At first tourists were allowed to move around the park at all hours but families (especially children) regularly experienced misfortune when marooned in the bush, and animals were also often run over. In about 1930 rules were introduced to forbid night traveling.

The initial enthusiasm for guiding tourists in this context seems to have been traditionally under-utilized in the Kruger Park. The later demand for night drives from the 1970's led to a certain escalation of guiding within the Kruger Park, although the execution of night drives was generally relegated to the domain of student guides, whose level of knowledge and experience was not always adequately professional. The idea of tourists being accompanied by a professional guide for their entire visit was strongly developed in the private reserves bordering on the park, particularly in the Sabie Sands. To a significant extent, the private reserves preceded the National Parks in promoting the concept of nature walking trails.

**The Early Days in "the Last English Outpost"**

Grant Hine called KwaZulu-Natal "the last English outpost" in e-mail correpondence (see p.215) which sensitive readers from that province may consider snide. Although I am Durban born I have no objection to this baiting banter, which derives from a comment which once got Tommy Bedford into a lot of trouble[1].

I remember as a young boy in the late '60's how impressed I was when visiting the Natal Parks that you could get a game ranger to come and drive with you around the park for no extra charge. I have a very strong sense that it was here and in the Kruger National Park during the same period that my lifelong interest in "game–ranging" was galvanized. The game ranger was always very neat and in retrospect looked very like a soldier and I remember at least one occasion where a gun was involved, though whether the "game scout" as they were called was merely taking it to the office, or whether it came with us on the whole game drive, I do not remember. The history of a "hop-on game guard" in (what was then) Natal Parks, was never explained to me, and I suppose I never questioned why this service was available in the Natal Parks and not elsewhere. Only during this research did I discover some interesting background to this.

The history of the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park has clear parallels with the Kruger National Park, but certain differences also existed or evolved.

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[1] The fact that the Natal scrum-half had made this comment was viewed as adequately punishable to demote him not only from captaincy, but from the entire Springbok squad.

> The Umfolozi and Hluhluwe game reserves were originally separate reserves which were proclaimed as protected areas for game in 1895. The first officers to take charge of these areas were Frederick Vaughan Kirby (1911) Eddie Lightening (1927) and Captain H.B. Potter (1929)…In May 1936, when *tsetse* fly trapping was extended into the Hluhluwe reserve, Potter considered closing off the reserve to visitors. [73]

This would mean an ongoing loss of revenue, which would put strain on the economy of the park. Instead, Potter concocted an ingenious compromise.

> Visitors had to be shepherded, with Potter or a game guard escorting each party and keeping the tourists away, as far as possible, from tsetse fly operations. Motor cars had to be disinfected before they left the reserves.[74]

Of course this is the origin of the "hop-on game guard", a practice that was still alive more than 30 years later.

In support of the tsetse fly campaign Potter killed many animals as recalled by Brooks' informant Mr. Mdletshe:

> During the time of Captain Potter, he used to slaughter *inkonkoni* (wildebeest) …Every one of us who went there, came back with something. No-one came out empty handed.[75]

Potter's generosity and associated popularity could not last for ever. Whilst the menace of *nagana* had short-term benefits to local black people, it also contributed to mobilizing white farmers to campaign for the abolition of Hluhluwe, Umfolozi and Mkuze. Shirley Brooks[76] argues that conservation-minded activists, of whom her key exemplar is Dr. Ernest Warren, Director of the Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg, fought to prevent this happening and their margin of success was very narrow. In 1924, 1927 and 1928 they were under serious threat of deproclamation, and the best defence was to bring the Natal parks under national legislation, which failed for a complex variety of reasons, mainly because the South African Party of Jan Smuts and H.B. Papenfus was no longer in power. Warren

tried to lobby national ministers, of whom Kemp appeared the most antagonistic and Grobler the most sympathetic, and Kemp appeared to gain the upper hand with Umfolozi temporarily de-proclaimed. The uncertainty of final authority eventually meant that the Provincial Authority signed over the right of de-proclamation to the national government, and also pronounced them responsible for the consequences of de-proclamation. This successfully deterred the central government from taking this drastic step, and the bid for nationalization of these as proclaimed National Parks continued, but stalled due to the failure to rally strong public opinion around a common icon. The suggestion of using Dick King had moderate support amongst English speakers, but was obviously a dismal failure with Afrikaners (although they represented a much smaller percentage of whites in Natal than in the Eastern Transvaal). The marketing of the campaign was also wrong. Warren's approach was to appeal to the public to create spaces for "animal redemption". Stevenson-Hamilton felt that the public should have been sold "a holiday resort of a novel kind so to say at their door."[77] Brooks summarizes this as being the difference between an idealized space of public concern (which did not appeal) and a recreational space of personal concern (which may have appealed more). By the late 1920s or early 1930s the chance of these parks nationalizing had slipped by, and at present the correction of this historical anomaly or curiosity does not appear to be high on anybody's agenda.

The Zululand Game Reserves and Parks Board came into existence in June 1939. In October of that year, the "Natal Provincial council voted one thousand pounds for fencing the reserve."[78] The Natal Parks Board was established in 1947. To

conservative provincialists in Natal this was just in the nick of time, for the National Party came to power in 1948, and would probably have been very keen to nationalize these parks in a form that may not have been popular in Natal. So these parks are still run by the successor of Natal Parks, KZN Ezemvelo and were never nationalized.

Whilst it is interesting to note that the Frederick Vaughan Kirby and Captain H. B. Potter, were military officers like Stevenson-Hamilton, neither of them wrote anything that was extensively published and so they do not hold a position in the history of "nature-guiding" that is vaguely comparable with the status of Stevenson-Hamilton.

Captain H. B. Potter was succeeded as the Head Warden of Natal Parks by his son Peter Potter, who in turn was succeeded by Roden Symons. It must have been the latter who first employed Ian Player, who will be discussed extensively in the next chapter.

**Sandenberg the Successor: Filling the Boots of a Legend**

When Stevenson-Hamilton retired from the Kruger National Park, after what was effectively a lifetime at the helm, he was succeeded by Colonel J.A.B. Sandenberg. The life story of Sandenberg is quoted in full here from a description obtained from his son, Peter Sandenberg. Peter had written this account to Dr. U. de V. (Tol)

Pienaar, Chief Director of the KNP between 1987 and 1991, so the "you" referred to below is a reference to Dr. Tol Pienaar:

> He was born in Rustenburg on 12th August 1909. Where he attended primary school I have no idea but I believe he was at Pretoria Boys High School – and that his family was then living in Pretoria. I never met his father or mother (who was 'Kittie' Beyers, either sister or niece – the former I think - to the Boer general. Gen Louis Botha was my father's god-father). His own father fought for the Boers and had to leave the continent until the war was over after an execution order had been issued by the British on him due to the fact that he was 2 IC a Kommando which summarily shot a group of Cape Coloureds in the service of the British who had allegedly raped some Boer women. He spent the rest of the war in Europe and Russia speaking publicly on the Boer cause and raising money for it. My grandfather's younger brother, however, fought for the British, and was not much talked about in our family.
>
> He entered the SA Defense Force in 1933, I think, and was cadet of the year, if that's the correct term. I have his presentation sword. When the services were split he went into the air force, where his rise was rapid and by the age of 28 he was a Lt-Col. At various stages he was OC Wingfield and Youngsfield (now Ysterplaat I believe) Aerodromes in the Cape, and was at some stage during the war in charge of anti-submarine operations off our coast, and later OC Brooklyn, later Waterkloof Airbase – the largest in the country.
>
> It was during his stint as OC Brooklyn, with 8,000 men under his command, that he fell foul of the NGK, by refusing to make church parades compulsory. As a child he always impressed upon me that a man's belief regarding religion was a private matter and nobody else's business, and indeed he refused ever to discuss his own beliefs with me or, as far as I know, anyone else. He told me that pressure was brought to bear on him by senior officers but that he resisted it, knowing he was on solid constitutional grounds, thereby making the life-long enemies to whom he attributed his later troubles in the KNP. He was a stubborn man but one of principle rather than expedient.
>
> He also fell foul of his immediate superior in the park, the Administrator of the Transvaal, whose name I misremember, by refusing him permission to bring hunting trophies through the park, which would have been in contravention of regulations, I suppose relating to disease, perhaps rinderpest and/or foot-and-mouth. There is a photograph of King George VI on the royal visit to the park in 1947, once published in the Sunday Times Magazine, in the background of which can be seen my father in conversation with another man – he told me that this was the Administrator and that was the occasion on which he told him that should he attempt to bring his trophies through, as he had been ordered to allow, he would

confiscate them. Little wonder he didn't last. The fact that my mother was a member of the Black Sash, and picketed her own front door when her husband's superiors came to visit, before entering behind them and transforming herself into their hostess, could not have helped. Whilst hardly a liberal in the contemporary sense, he loathed the 'Nats' and everything they stood for with a passion.

As a matter of interest, of which you are probably aware, he once recounted to me the posts he officially held as warden of the park, an extraordinary array which encompassed many of no doubt conflicting interests – chief of police, chief immigration officer, customs officer, post master, justice of the peace, and heaven knows what else, due presumably to the fact that there was no one else in this vast area in whom to vest these powers.

His tenure as warden was apparently precipitated by a request to the-then Prime Minister J.C. Smuts, from the retiring warden, Lt-Col James Stevenson-Hamilton. My father was a keen outdoorsman and hunter, and he used to accumulate his leave whilst in the military and go on extended safaris by foot, with a retinue of porters, throughout the region, principally in what was then Portuguese East Africa, hunting elephant, probably to supplement his income. He told me that all they carried was salt, sugar, *mielie-meal* and coffee by way of provisions, supplementing this along the way with meat shot for the pot and other victuals traded with the people they came across. Smuts knew my father as he had chosen him for a mission to North Africa and the Middle East during the war to report to him on the condition of the South African forces fighting there. He went aboard the (name of the ship escapes me) in Durban, and the ship dropped him off at Aden, and was sunk several days later by Japanese submarines, I believe with the loss of all or most aboard. I used to have a photograph of him being piped aboard in some ceremony, and he was bemused by the fact that his cabin had once been occupied on a cruise by Marlene Dietrich.

Smuts arranged for my father to be seconded to the park from the air force in 1946. With the ascendance of the National Party in 1948 my father realized that his military career was to all intents and purposes over, and requested a permanent transfer (for want of a better term), which he was granted with the unusual concession that he was allowed to retain his rank. As a child I was never in any doubt about that, and nor was anyone else, he being known in our small farming community as 'Die Kolonel', and much revered by the local farmers therefore, or so it seemed to me.

He foresaw his dismissal from the park and went into a banana farming venture in Kiepersol, now Hazyview, just outside the park, in partnership with a farmer called George Turner and a company secretary/auditor-type called Roland Cohen. (He very much respected enterprise in people, and held Jews and Indians in high esteem for this quality he perceived in them. He was also in business ventures with Ishmael Gardee, an Indian trader in White River with whom he was on very good terms, and as a child I

> remember having the Gardees and other Indian families in our home, probably illegally at the time, as extraordinary as that now seems). I was conceived in the park in 1954 but by the time I was born in March 1955 we were living in Plaston, outside White River, in a house bought with money borrowed from my maternal grandmother, and relying on the farm for our sustenance and subsistence. My father was very bitter about the circumstances of his dismissal and never returned to the park until your invitation, for which he was very grateful and which visit he very much enjoyed. He was greatly impressed by what you had achieved there.
>
> He married five times – in the 1930s Jean Kerr, by whom he had two sons, John and David, both of whom predeceased him, John in 1961 in a car accident in Rhodesia, and David in 1984 in an aircraft accident in Botswana. The marriage was not a success and they divorced, and on 1st May 1943 he married my mother, Lynette Wingfield, a captain in the WAAF under his command. They had three children, Lynette (Tansy) in 1945, who now lives in Durban, Mervyn (daughter) in 1949 who lives in Maun and with whom you initiated this correspondence, and myself in 1955. My mother died in 1971 after seven years of cancer, and he married three times thereafter in fairly quick succession, obviously emotionally incapable of living alone having been for so long in a secure relationship. None was a success. The lady you met in Waterval Boven, June, was his last wife on whose farm he was then living, and he died married to, although separated from her, in 1994. He was cremated in Johannesburg (his remains sent by registered post to my sister in Durban by the funeral service!) and his ashes lie besides my mother's in the garden of St George's Church outside White River.[79]

I asked Peter Sandenberg to clarify the issue of his father's dismissal, and whether the trophy issue had been trumped up or exaggerated as a means of dismissing his father as Head Warden of the KNP, and he replied directly to me as quoted below:

> He was dismissed on evidence provided by a chap called [Mr.L.B.] Steyn, one of his rangers, who succeeded him as warden. The issue was mal-administration, I think, with a possible whiff of misappropriation of funds. He was exonerated by a report on the park by a Professor Hoek (the Hoek Report) in about 1956, two years later. I used to have a Rand Daily Mail the featured this on the front page but it was unfortunately lost. Old man [Dr. Tol] Pienaar could give you much more information on this, and you have his address on the letter. He doesn't have e-mail. He told me he 'suffered' under Steyn who was evidently a nasty piece of work. The trophy episode wasn't an issue – they could not make an issue out of that and I grew up under the impression that the mal-administration charge was trumped up to get rid of him. Of course, I had only one side of the story…[80]

The end of this chapter corresponds to the "retirement" of Colonel J.A.B. Sandenberg in 1954, and represents the wresting of the position of Head Warden from English speakers to Afrikaners, in line no doubt with the interests of the Nationalist Party which came to power in 1948. If the evidence of Peter Sandenberg is reliable, it seems reasonable that intent to overthrow "die Kolonel" was imminent, and that Mr. L.B Steyn was acting not only out of personal greed and ambition, but also for a broader interest group.

There is one very curious thing about Colonel J.A.B. Sandenberg not covered in his son's description of him, and which Peter Sandenberg will probably be unlikely to be able to answer. Why had he taken over a full set of records in 1946 which were meticulously assembled during almost half a century by James Stevenson-Hamilton, only to have destroyed them before 1954 'as he was starting a new era'?[81]. Was there something in these records which he wished to hide? Did he not appreciate the potential value of Stevenson-Hamilton's work for historians? Fortunately for Jane Carruthers, Stevenson-Hamilton's diaries and many other pieces of writing were not destroyed. Undoubtedly though, some very important records were lost. I don't think Peter Sandenberg, nor anyone else will be able to explain with any certainty why his father did this, but it seems a peculiar thing to have done. For purposes of this thesis, it seemed unnecessary to pursue further opinions on Mr. Steyn with Dr. 'Tol' Pienaar, or any other party, considering that there was little in the subsequent history of the Kruger National Park that was to have a significant impact on the development of nature guiding on foot, until the period of tenure of Mr. Mike English, which will be taken up in Chapter 3. By

contrast during the same period, significant and remarkable progress was made by a group of outstanding individuals in the Natal Parks, which is the subject of Chapter 2.

**Conclusion**

It was with James Stevenson-Hamilton that the South African understanding of a "Game Warden" evolved, a person who might otherwise have been called the "Chief Game Ranger" or "Head Game Ranger". He was soon to appoint assistants who came to be known as "Game Rangers". It is from these that the posts of "Trails Ranger", "Wilderness Officer", "Field Guide" and ultimately today's "Nature Guide" arose.

James Stevenson Hamilton was the first chief warden of the Kruger National Park, which alone was significant enough to make him an influential figure on the style of game ranging and subsequent nature guiding that was to follow.

He was a military man and was promoted from a Major at the time of his first appointment as the Chief Warden, and retired as a Lt-Colonel.

Related to this is the third point that he was given the nick-name *siKhukuza* (usually rendered in English as "Skukuza" -he who sweeps away everything in his path) by the people of the area as a clear indication that he was the sort of person who let no-

one stand in his way, and his conduct was implacable bordering on the ruthless when it came to removing people who believed they had a traditional claim to the area which was proclaimed as Game Reserve.

Fourthly, he was also a more than competent man of letters, so not only did he read the writings of Aldo Leopold amongst others, but he also produced several books including Animal Life in Africa, The Lowveld: Its Wild Life and Its People (1929), and most significantly South African Eden: From Sabi Game Reserve to Kruger National Park (1937).

No doubt, it is an understatement to say that Stevenson-Hamilton was a remarkable, energetic and outstanding individual, but it is hard to miss the fact that he is rendered somewhat benign by Jane Carruthers in Wildlife and Warfare[82], and the modern reader cannot help the sense that although Carruthers is a critical and insightful writer, she had a fair level of pressure to portray Stevenson-Hamilton in a positive light, particularly given the help that she clearly received from his family in her research. This is not to imply at all that Stevenson-Hamilton was a heinous or unsavoury character, but clearly he favoured wildlife, and was not disinclined to establishing a strict authoritarian and patriarchal reign, even if this meant that he trod rough-shod over what today would be called land tenure and other basic human rights. In the short term, this was very effective in creating the Kruger National Park, but in the future his past strategies may become the Achilles Heel of the whole concept when the number legitimate community land claims against the Park

drain the profits of the Park until long-term commercial viability becomes unsustainable.

Fragmentation of the Park back to claimants will almost certainly render it less ecologically and commercially viable. Ironically, on the eastern side of the Park large portions of new land are being added to form an enormous trans-frontier park and turn into one of the largest wilderness areas in Africa, and in the world for that matter.

One cannot wholly blame Stevenson-Hamilton as an individual, as whoever had this task would have had similar orders from the white government to remove people from the planned game reserve. Lest I am accused of judging Stevenson-Hamilton too harshly I should like to make an observation on his character and his personality. He tells a story about a man who came to paint Lloyd's house in Satara. He was able to describe the most advanced Communism or socialism at least, whilst doing no work and shouting at his workers. It also turned out that he beat them physically. Stevenson-Hamilton was stuck by the enormous disparity between the man's theory and practice[83]. Yet Stevenson-Hamilton was guilty of the opposite (or in some sense, the same) disparity, between his official self which was strict and authoritarian and his real self, which was more gentle and compassionate. So in a memorable description of his sentencing of a certain poacher he said:

> Gave old Mbonboni six months for poaching and three for escaping from custody. It is against the grain, and I have great sympathy with the old man as a sportsman, but he is such a desperate enemy of the game…Of course, I sympathize far more with native poachers than most of our sordid, murderous white men…they get off much lighter than the natives do.[84]

To some extent Sandenberg took over seamlessly where Stevenson-Hamilton left off, but one can't help the feeling that although he was less of a hunter than the Stevenson-Hamilton who started out in the 1890s, he was more of a hunter than the Stevenson-Hamilton who left in 1946. The debate as to whether hunters are the worst conservationists, because they destroy their subject, or the best conservationists, because they will ensure that their subject is not driven into extinction for the love of their sport, can be pursued extensively, and often to no avail. Certainly, culling has never fallen completely off the agenda as a necessary item in a fenced space, and in the Kruger National Park it seems to have retained status as a fairly prominent activity, or at least a fairly recurrent prominent topic of contemplation. To blame this entirely on a background of hunting would be to completely misunderstand the principles of ecological management, but to overlook the significance of hunting and the subsequent dominance of hunting motifs would be equally remiss.

The strength of this background engrained colonial, Christian and anthropocentric values became a key feature of Kruger National Park management. Neither should it be overlooked, or forgotten, that both Lt-Col. James Stevenson-Hamilton and Col. J.A. B. Sandenberg, were not only indebted to, but also clearly extremely proud of their military background. Both of them made a concerted effort to retain their military ranks throughout their subsequent "civilian" lives. It would be fair to suggest that the Frederick Vaughan Kirby and Captain H. B. Potter were similarly proud of their military background.

In certain respects, the engagement of military officers as early game wardens made good sense. The bias towards militarism favoured individuals who were marksmen with good tracking and bush skills, who were inclined to strategy and accustomed to fighting and winning against all odds. It also incidentally produced a system which was rigid, uniform, hierarchical, authoritarian, patriarchal, male dominated and frequently tough and uncompromising.

The world of the game ranger and the nature guide have moved on from these narrow and rigid origins, but the imprint of these founding characteristics on the world of the game ranger and the nature guide remains, like the spoor of an elephant, now departed to greener pastures.

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# TRANSFORMATION OF THE MYTH AND THE MYTH OF TRANSFORMATION: OVER 100 YEARS OF GUIDING IN SOUTH AFRICAN GAME RESERVES



restoration

## Chapter 2- Wondering About the Wilderness (1955-77)

## CHAPTER 2- WONDERING ABOUT THE WILDERNESS (1954-77)

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss a critical moment in the separation of the nature guide from the game ranger and refer particularly to the influence of Dr. Ian Player and his earlier career, which also led to the formation of the Wilderness Leadership School. The first section discusses the early career and the conservation role played by Dr. Player, with particular reference to the conservation of the white rhino. The second section examines how the conception of conventional warfare and guerilla warfare influenced the management style of Ian Player and others. The third section looks at how Ian Player's philosophy was influenced by the philosophy of C.G Jung and the implications of this. The fourth section discusses the Wilderness Leadership School and related foundations and congresses which were held in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The fifth section concerns the discussions around black Africans by Jung and Player and whether these are realistic and credible or whether their plausibility is challenged by romantic, idealizing and generalizing tendencies that are attendant to the Jungian perspective. The sixth section discusses how Ian Player was able to impose a good balance of respect and pride in early wilderness guides and set up standards and guidelines for guiding in the Natal Parks which have ensured not only client safety, but a high degree of animal safety and an extremely small number of incidents. The sixth section is a discussion of the decline and possible demise of traditional African (particularly Zulu) culture and whether it is possible and desirable that "roots" culture will experience a resurgence. The seventh section describes the decline in Christianity amongst guides and the possible implications which this might have. The eighth section looks at the possibility of locating guiding so that it contained the correct balance of knowledge, skills and attitudes which derive from

the cultural sphere as opposed to those which reflect the myth of pure nature or science. The ninth section presents and discusses the history of the notion of "wilderness" and attendant conceptual problems and paradoxes which arise with reference to (and strong reliance on) contemporary American discourse. The implications of these positions on the long term existence of the Wilderness Leadership School are then examined. The tenth section attempts to locate the origin of the separation between game rangers and nature guides as a split generated by the Wilderness Leadership School.

**Of Rhinos and Redemption**

Ian Player was born in 1927 and in 1944 he became one of the youngest Allied soldiers in WWII. He returned to South Africa in 1946 and did a variety of jobs in South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In 1952 he succeeded in obtaining a job as a relief ranger which began with a few days at Hluhluwe, from where he proceeded to St. Lucia, where as Player told Malcolm Draper "…part of my duties was to spray lavatories and clean up"[1]. According to Draper, Player's memory of his early days was that

> Back in the fifties and early sixties the Zululand game ranger was a social pariah. No one wanted to be seen associating with us, and there were only five or six homes where we were welcome, one of them being that of Chief Mangusuthu Buthelezi.[2]
>
> A game ranger was at the bottom of the social scale, and the Natal Parks board was disliked intensely. To walk into a bar was to invite a fight.[3]

It is not entirely clear why the (white) public was so antagonistic, but several factors may have contributed. Many of these farmers were Afrikaners who resented the fact that the

pro-British ex-soldiers comprised 95% of the game ranging community. Others may have resented game rangers as representing resistance to hunting as a sport. Some may also have been aware that Player and his companions were friendly with Buthelezi and disapproved of their friendly links with the Chief from a racist perspective. Undoubtedly many farmers who lived in relative proximity to the parks saw wildlife as competing with farming as a commercial activity, and blamed the parks for the spread of *nagana* ("sleeping sickness"), which had killed off entire herds and had seen previously successful farmers become bankrupt. This latter explanation was probably the primary and most compelling factor in the "pariah" complex.

Carruthers notes that Stevenson-Hamilton had earlier experienced similar opposition and alienation, and suggests that to a certain extent he (Stevenson-Hamilton) had invited antagonism

> Indeed, in some respects he seemed to have enjoyed this unpopularity, confessing that he felt more determined to remain in his post 'now that I know that the rascals want to get rid of me'.[4]

But by the early 1950s game rangers were highly respected and almost revered by the public surrounding the Kruger Park, whereas in Natal their mission was yet to gain popular support. Ian Player had the good sense not to frequent the pub, and consequently survived the period. He rose rapidly through the ranks and by 1964 he was Chief Conservator of Zululand.

As mentioned in the previous chapter the Natal Parks had missed their bid for nationalization, but they had also successfully evaded effective de-proclamation, though

Umfolozi came closest, having been legally de-proclaimed but not formally disbanded. The Natal newspapers had succeeded in swaying the public to supporting the retention of the parks in principle and this heralded an emergent awareness in the 1950s that conservation was already in crisis. The species on which Ian Player pinned his colours was the white rhino *Ceratotherium simum*, iconic in its endangered status, through its imposing appearance and its (honorary) inclusion amongst "the Big 5". It is no exaggeration to say that this species owes a debt of gratitude to Player and his closely associated group of like-minded individuals such as Nick Steele, Jim Feely and Magqubu Ntombela. Without this group, the southern white rhino may have already become an extinct sub-species today, due to hunting by poachers. According to Player

> I did the very first aerial count of the White Rhino in 1953, and there were 437. How do I know it was accurate? I know because the pilot who did the flying had been a pilot in the tsetse fly campaign. They had these burners at the back of the Piper Cubs and they had specific targets, so he knew exactly where the rhinos were…somewhere I've got a photograph of him.[5]

The Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park has also made a huge contribution to the preservation of the black rhino *Diceros bicornis* whose numbers have dwindled alarmingly. The idea that a single species should be used as an icon to rally support for a particular project has subsequently come under strong criticism throughout the world. As William J. Cronon (American academic and critic of wilderness theory) said

> The most striking instances of this have revolved around "endangered species," which serve as vulnerable symbols of biological diversity while at the same time standing as surrogates for wilderness itself. The terms of the Endangered Species Act in the United States have often meant that those hoping to defend pristine wilderness have had to rely on a single endangered species like the spotted owl to gain legal standing for their case—thereby making the full power of the sacred land inhere in a single numinous organism whose habitat then becomes the object of intense debate about appropriate management and use. The ease with which

> anti-environmental forces like the wise-use movement have attacked such single-species preservation efforts suggests the vulnerability of strategies like these.[6]

Certainly, it is not uncommon for the use of iconic species to be thoroughly misunderstood by the general public. In a current example thousands of people petitioned Khabisi Mosunkutu, the Gauteng MEC of Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Lands, not to put up a water reservoir above the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Gardens as this would disturb the Verreauxs' eagles (*Aquila verreauxii* more commonly known by previous name of black eagles) that live there. Yet hundreds of the people who signed the petition live in Poortview and the surrounding suburbs. It is the houses which they have bought which have really removed the eagles' habitat, and it is the water which they drink and use to shower, bath in, wash their clothes wash their cars and fill their swimming pools which has led to the requirement of a bigger water storage facility in the first place. Such dilemmas are commonplace in South Africa, and they clearly indicate that the public are quick to criticize the environmental impact of other people's action, but are unable (or unwilling) to recognize that they themselves are part of the problem.

The success of Operation Rhino may be part of the reason why the iconic species strategy of public education enjoyed popularity especially from the 1960s and 1980s. It was a case where the iconic species had been targeted by highly organized syndicates because of the extraordinary price which rhino horn could fetch both in the Yemen (where rhino horn is a highly prized material used to craft traditional dagger handles) and in various Asian countries including China (where it is highly prized as a traditional medicine

including extensive use in the production of an aphrodisiac). So, unlike most cases where species become endangered because of habitat destruction and loss, rhinos were a species where intact and viable habitat was still available, but the animals were being tracked down and killed for a very specific market of powerful rich people.

Such was the success of this operation that Ian Player received worldwide recognition and later two honourary doctorates from Natal University and Rhodes University.

Ian Player was known as Madolo ("The Knee") by the Zulus, in reference to his pronounced limp as a result of an injury at the age of 12, which was compounded when he fell off a tank in 1945 during WWII. His bad knee curtailed what was, by all appearances, great promise in the sporting arena, and it certainly limited the range of sporting activities that he could participate in. Having reduced options led to his area of sporting interest being in canoeing, and he became the founder or the grueling "Dusi". This three day canoe marathon, starting on the Umzindusi River, joining the Umgeni River and finishing where this meets the sea at Blue Lagoon (Durban), has become one of the premier paddling events in the country. Tri-athletes who completed the Dusi, the Midmar Mile and the Comrades Marathon in one year were awarded the Natal Iron Man which remains the highest achievement in triathlon in the country. There is no doubt that the Dusi owes more to Player for his vision and perseverance than it does to any other person, living or dead.

Player also had a rather more fortuitous link to sport, in that he chose his family very well. His brother, Gary Player, became a world champion golfer, and generously financed Ian in establishing the Wilderness Leadership School in 1957. Ian always had a passion for this aspect of his life and although he had already risen to the post of chief conservator of Natal and KwaZulu, he resigned this post in 1974 to pursue his passion for wilderness.

Another of the key participants in Operation Rhino with Ian Player was Nick Steele. The duo formed the core of a group of very resolute conservationists who fought, often against tremendous odds to have the southern portion of Umfolozi preserved as a wilderness area. They were eventually victorious when "the first Wilderness area in South Africa was proclaimed in Umfolozi in 1959"[7]. In this area the first true wilderness trails in the country were initiated.

The idea of tourists' primary experience of Game Reserves (or more specifically Wilderness areas) occurring on foot was initially mooted by Ian Player in the Natal Parks. It took some time for the National Parks to realize the viability and potential popularity of such an activity, by which stage the Wilderness Leadership School was well established. Malcolm Draper (writing in 1998) commented that

> In the maverick lives of Ian Player and Nick Steele, the two white men principally examined here, identification with nature and indigenous Africans did involve some quite radical reorientation away from the milieu of the white ruling class. They anticipated and influenced trends that came to the global environmental movement relatively recently. Player and Steele were, however, caught up in circumstances that made for some curious local twists in their adventures on a 'frontier' where the laws of nature became confused with social ideals.[8]

**Modeled on the Military: Skirmishes and Strategies**

As suggested in Draper's article, a military model was defended and admired by Dr. Player. It is therefore appropriate at this stage to canvass broader opinions on the significance and influence of military structures and strategies on conservation and game rangers, and ultimately on nature guiding.

Draper's article highlights the complexity of Ian Player and Nick Steele. They are portrayed as tough but sensitive, pugnacious but fair, in favour of conservation, but against academia and science, private yet extroverted, brave but calculating. Despite having maverick and individualistic qualities, Player is portrayed as reacting

> …angrily and defensively to being questioned about the military ethos of conservation. He maintained to a researcher investigating this phenomenon that, without such approach, conservation would have floundered, and suggested that she, being a woman cannot hope to understand such matters.[9]

Ironically, it appears that Steele was always comfortable with being labeled 'militaristic' even though, unlike Player and most of his Natal Parks board colleagues, he had never seen active military service. Having not read Draper's article before my interview of February, 2006, I was quite unaware of this background so asked essentially the same question again. Perhaps Ian Player was somewhat less defensive, but a similar discomfort certainly prevailed. Yet, I found Player's answer useful because it made a clear attempt to explain and justify his militarized (if not indisputably "militaristic") thinking:

> I mean when I joined the Natal Parks Board, in 1952, within the space of a couple of years, 95% of the European officers were all ex-servicemen, because our leader

> (Jan Smuts) was a brilliant soldier, in fact the only South African in the second World War to get the PSC [10]…you can over militarize [game ranging and nature guiding] but…well we've got two things, if we're just talking about trails that's one story, but if you're talking about parks as a whole, that's another story! If you're talking about the parks as a whole, that you have to hang on to, and to increase in size, you have to plan like a battle, and that's what we do.
> Do I quote Professor John Phillips in my book? Professor John Phillips was a forester and he started off his life in Knysna, then he gradually went north and he ended up being the chief agricultural advisor to Kwame Nkrumha and then to Julius Nyerere, and then came south again after the war, and I just missed out on the.. They had a scheme going for ex-servicemen. And I thought we produced the finest land conservation corps in Africa. They all went to Rhodesia when the Nats came into power…but Phillips…I'll never forget it…it was 1960 in what was then Salisbury, we had a course of all the young game rangers, and the auditorium was packed…he was an advisor to General Smuts as well..
> And suddenly there's a hush [and we] saw this man coming down the stairs, and by the time he got to the podium, you could have heard a pin drop…he just looked at this hall and then he said "I want to tell you, you young game rangers of Africa, that there will never be a Waterloo in conservation, only a long drawn out guerilla war.." And I tell you, that was one of the best lessons that I have ever had. And that was exactly what was needed so instead of trying to go for an El Alamein [23 October, 1942] we had a long drawn out guerilla war… and that's how we won... I mean a guerilla war with newspapers, radio and ultimately television, I mean it was a lot of dirty tricks too…[11]

Ian Player saw military models as being an integral component in describing strategic planning in conservation, as they were utterly engrained in him in his background and predisposition. This appears to be an admission that conservation models should be paramilitary in their structure, methodology and even appearance, so ultimately the language and symbols of militarism had permeated conservation culture. Although Dr. Player argues that the order of militarism in wilderness trails is different, I feel it is justified to take issue with him here. Wilderness trails cannot avoid being permeated by a militaristic ethos if there is an overlapping of staff and function between game rangers who tend to be militarized and nature guides who are not necessarily expected to be.

Historically, Player indicated that there was a strong tradition of conservation leaders having military backgrounds. Ian Player felt that Vaughan Kirby and Stevenson-Hamilton

> …are similar figures, but look Stevenson-Hamilton had one entity that he had to fight, and that was the Kruger National Park. Being a soldier, you can see how he worked out his strategy and his tactics all the time. Vaughan Kirby was also a soldier, but he had Hluhluwe, Umfolozi, the Crown Lands, Ndumo, Mkuze, Lake St. Lucia- he had half a dozen places that were separated by farms, villages, but he had to try and get that value across. He was not as articulate as Stevenson-Hamilton, but he was very brave Vaughan Kirby- and quite a few people don't know that.
> The Zulus called him Umfohloza because he used to wear long khaki trousers and when the dew…when they would get wet in the morning he would go *fohla-fohla* (as he walked along). Ja, no they were different people- I would say that Vaughan Kirby had a harder battle, and also he was not the diplomat that Stevenson-Hamilton was.[12]

During the interview Dr. Player stressed again that the battle of Natal Parks was quite different from Kruger "…you were dealing with six and more at a time. The establishment of trails was a major part of winning the guerilla war".[13]

From this it is clear that the military style of the early wardens, most notably Stevenson–Hamilton and Kirby, was not perceived negatively by Ian Player, himself an ex-serviceman. Rather, he clearly admired the discipline and strategic minds of both Stevenson-Hamilton whom he saw as a general in a conventional arena of battle and Kirby whom he saw as a consummate guerilla leader. That militarism is also associated with uniformity, conventionality, hierarchy, aggression, violence and a weapons culture did not seem to bother Player.

It is interesting to note that Warren Bekker, a contemporary guide trainer in KZN

Wildlife, shared an essentially similar respect for the military. He said candidly:

> You know what? …I think any form of militaristic or military background is good, because you need to have discipline, and I'm a firm believer, if you don't have discipline within a law enforcement function, then there's anarchy, literally. So, I am a firm believer that, within the conservation areas, especially within KZN Wildlife, there is definitely a need for discipline, which there is. That's good. The guys look smart, they look neat. They all have their ranks, and they are performing a function that is absolutely critical. Now if you, within that function do not have discipline, and the proper training that military- I wouldn't call it a paramilitary, but there definitely is some form of military discipline that is installed *(sic.)* in them, I think that is a very good thing.[14]

Clearly, it would be simplistic to infer from these two examples that paramilitary or militaristic tendencies are shared by all white men, or at least by English speaking white men who worked in KZN Wildlife, but it is significant, in that it demonstrates at least that the attitude has survived amongst nature guides and game rangers, and it accounts for the fixation on uniforms and appearance of this group as well as the obsession with a "gun-mentality" by many in this area of interest or work.

A contemporary Madikwe guide known by the pseudonym of "Dikgang" for this research had a significantly different view. He said

> Yes, we operate with weapons, but our way of thinking with the weapon, and the way of thinking as a soldier with a weapon is completely different. We would use a weapon if you have to- if you've run out of options of getting yourself safe with the clients behind you. Yes, you might have to use a rifle, but also you try to give the animal the last moment of doubt, being that *(sic.)* it would maybe stop, turn around, and also the other thing is the more closer the animal comes if you don't have a choice- if it's charging and not stopping, the closer it is the better, because now your target is slightly bigger that you're going to take if you have to and I haven't been in the army, but I suppose in the army- it's more of self-defence what we're doing. We're more of a protection if something goes wrong, not really being out there combating, or waiting for somebody to shoot at you, that you'll shoot back at so ja…personally I think that they're completely different…As a guide, when one goes for a walk you would carry a weapon that is loaded, but it would have to be safe, there's nothing in the chamber, your bolt is

> closed and locked and you release your firing pin as well so the weapon is safe…[15]

He went to great effort to distance himself as a nature guide as far as possible from being considered in any way similar to a soldier. Although more will be said about the Madikwe guides in chapter 4, it is quite clear that the endorsement of military style, strategies and metaphors have strong approval in KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife, but is met with a strong ground swell of disapproval in Madikwe. If the issue is considered across the full range of subjects interviewed the result would be that pro-militaristic comments come from respondents who are more likely to be old than young, more likely to be white than black, more likely to be from KwaZulu-Natal than Madikwe. I would be inclined to say that support for the alignment of game ranging or nature guiding to military models is also more likely to come from men than women, but my sample of women is simply not big enough to infer this with any certainty.

**Archetypes and Essentialism**

To return to Draper, most of his other comments on Player are well argued, and it is probably appropriate to highlight some of them. Draper[16] argues that although Player is a vehement opponent of late capitalist endeavors (the attempt to mine at St. Lucia being one good example) he derives from van der Post (who is once irreverently referred to as "van der Posture" in Draper's article) and ultimately C.G.Jung an essentialist view of culture, which leads to statements which appear to support the notion of racial and gender

stereotypes. Player follows van der Post's proposal that bushmen are superior to Nguni people because the former are hunter-gatherers (with whom Player identifies more) rather than agrarian pastoralists (whom Player admires less because they are technologically closer to industrialized people). Draper notes the following description of Magqubu Ntombela by Player:

> I was struck by his high cheekbones and wondered if this was not a clue to his genius for wild-land understanding. Somewhere in his ancestry there was Bushman blood. It could have accounted for so much of Magqubu's character, his extraordinary long-distance eyesight, his knowledge of plants and trees, and his sheer physical endurance and his sense of humour.[17]

Even if Magqubu Ntombela did have "Bushman" blood, how would knowledge, understanding and humour have been passed on to him without a cultural as well as a genetic link? Are the physical endurance and good eyesight of "Bushmen" a hereditary skill, or are they mere functions of extended exposure to the bush? As Draper says, Player naturalizes rather than dismantles racial boundaries even if this is the opposite of his intention. The same problem also occurs when issues of gender are being engaged.

Ultimately, Player frequently displays romanticizing tendencies, as did his companion Nick Steele. One cannot help feeling that with his obsession with horses Nick Steele romanticized the American "frontier" myth and saw himself as a cowboy in an African frontier, where he was the good guy fighting for wildlife. Like Player, Steele (although he was never a soldier) was inclined to militarism, and as Draper suggests, a certain degree of violence. His boast that he could cut through red-tape left a cloud after the audit following his death revealed a R17 million deficit as reported by Draper. Yet, he clearly had very admirable qualities of courage, as well as kindness, and hence Player

remained loyal to him, and Draper was left with a degree of ambivalence.

Both Player and Steele seemed always suspicious of academic scientists and of academics. They were men of action, but also men of feeling, men who could produce sensitive observations and colourful prose, and Draper clearly admired them for their "little darks and greater lights."[18]

**The Prophets of the Wilderness**

Ian Player was hurt by J.D.F. Jones' relentless criticism of Laurens van der Post in Storyteller: The Many Lives of Laurens van der Post.[19]

> No, it was malicious and in parts a bit inaccurate, but perhaps malicious is a bit of a harsh word. It was unfeeling. Laurens was very much a feeling type. That's the problem with the world of course- that's why Jung was such a great man. He was saying that if you really wanted to do something, if you really wanted to change the world, you've got to understand what he's teaching us. You can't have a thinking type talking exclusively to feeling types. And this is where Jung was a genius.[20]

It is not hard to see why Dr. Ian Player felt such affection for Laurens van der Post. Not only did van der Post introduce Ian Player to the writings and ideas of C.G. Jung, but he also shared a great passion for the wilderness. Van der Post was one of the people who devoted considerable effort and money and other forms of support to the foundation and maintenance of the Wilderness Leadership School, the establishment of the Wilderness Foundation and the successful running of the first International Wilderness Congress in Johannesburg, in 1977, where Laurens van der Post was a keynote speaker. The other

person who donated a considerable sum to the success of this event was Ian Player's brother, Gary Player.

The conference was so successful that Ian Player was encouraged to plan a second Congress in Cairns in Australia, in 1980 and a third one in Findhorn and Inverness, Scotland in 1983. Subsequent Congresses followed in the United States of America, Norway (1987) and even in India in 1998, even though this was after Laurens van der Post had died.

As a youth Player was not particularly religious or philosophical and after the forced and rather formulaic Anglican rituals of St. John's he contemplated detaching himself from formal religion. He joined the military where it was customary to sort people out according to their religions or denominations on each Sunday, and dispatch each group to its appropriate place of worship. After all the troops had been assigned to all recognized denominations, a motley crew of atheists remained, and as a new recruit Player eagerly joined them. To his horror the sergeant major ensured that they picked up cigarette butts for the next eight hours. The following week when the division was done again, Ian Player was quick to join the Anglicans when they were called out. As he passed the sergeant major the superior man said "Well, Player, I've heard of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, but I think your conversion was even quicker!"[21]

Ian Player has never divorced himself from the general Christian ethos, but it would also be wrong to categorize him too easily as a conservative, or a conventional

fundamentalist. His efforts to conserve the southern white rhino in the 1950s clearly gave him a sense of "custodianship", which is clearly not merely about "dominion". His key role in Operation Rhino clearly stemmed out of a deep commitment to a species, a habitat and a history. The importance of the ethos of trying to avoid killing animals has certainly influenced contemporary young Wilderness Leadership School guides. For example, Mandla Gumede said

> Yes, I will be very, very grumpy, and I do remember one day, I was leading a trail, then one lady saw something, then they said to me, 'No, you must kill this thing' and then I said to them 'No, we conserve, we are not killing!' …It was a big spider. *(laughs)*[22]

In a discussion about the role of Hluhluwe-Umfolozi as the traditional hunting grounds of the Zulu kings, I asked Mandla Buthelezi if he would mind if (hypothetically) King Goodwill Zwelethini had to come to the reserves to shoot animals to which he replied:

> No, I will be very, very grumpy and upset. Because he's not allowed to kill those …animals… because we are conserving those animals, he knows. Yes, on those days it was a hunting ground for King Shaka and other kings, but now because we are conserving he knows, he has got areas. He is supposed to get a letter. If he needs something, he can make an application, but the tourists they mustn't know about that culling, you know. Like you know when we are culling animals- if the other one is- if the species are growing up higher- we need to cull them, so that we minimize them, to keep them in balance.[23]

Taken collectively the Wilderness Leadership School guides do acknowledge that culling is practiced at KZN Wildlife. Mandla Buthelezi was put on a spot by the question, because he is clearly loyal to conservation, but he did not wish to be perceived as disrespectful to the (hypothetical) wishes of King Goodwill, so was also inclined to try to be loyal to tradition and respect for the King. Perhaps the outstanding thing about these relatively young guides from the Wilderness Leadership School is that they clearly

understand the ethos that Magqubu Ntombela and Ian Player have passed down to them, and they are able to represent it well, despite its frequent complexities and contradictions.

After his mother's death, Player ceased to receive solace from religion for some time. But later still he did experience a kind of revelation which was more profound than the realization that the enforced collection of cigarette *stompies* is vile:

> Later still, on a trail and sleeping on the banks of the Black Mfolozi River, I had a dream that resolved my religious problem. I dreamed of arriving at a Norman church that had a big eucalypt tree growing from it to form part of the church building. I went inside and said "The roof is fine." Then I came outside and said, "If the tree falls down, the church will collapse and if the church collapses it will pull the tree down." For me the tree symbolized wilderness, and here was the unconscious telling me that the church and the wilderness depended on each other.[24]

The association between church and wilderness was confirmed for Ian Player by Laurens van der Post who said

> Somehow they emerge from the wilderness transformed, as if they were coming from a highly sacred atmosphere. Indeed, wilderness is the original cathedral, the original temple, the original church of life in which they have been converted and healed, and from which they have emerged transformed in a positive manner.[25]

When I asked Ian Player if he agreed with van der Post's text, and if he did, whether that implied that he was a pantheist, he replied:

> If you look at it realistically, because Christianity embraced the pantheists beliefs, Christmas being one of them. But the church have made some very serious mistakes in that they have not recognized that it was in the wilderness humans have to face themselves. Christ himself was always going into it, yet the church seems to ignore the wilderness experience. An Indian Christian called Ramachacra wrote a book called Christ in the Wilderness. It's the only book on the subject as far as I know, that mentions Christ's time in the Wilderness. In my first experience of the wilderness I realized the value of this as a religious experience. It's a very, very important Christian experience to spend time in the wilderness, and in fact, I feel that if the church is to be honest to itself, that would be the way to reinvigorate the church. I mean a lot of people aren't going back to

> church- it hardly surprises me. They're not giving the congregations the numinous experience of very wild country, where one is not only a part of humanity, but also a part of the landscape. If they want to get people in the churches, they would have to give them the wilderness experience. Laurens van der Post and I had many discussions about it.[26]

Carl Gustav Jung started out as a disciple of *psychoanalysis* which derived from the ideas of Joseph Breuer, but which was brought to fruition by Sigmund Freud. Freud examined the hitherto unrecognized portions of the mind known as the sub-conscious and the unconscious[27]. Although some of this content could be revealed through hypnosis, Freud preferred that it be examined through extended contact between the psychologist and the patient. From about 1911, both Alfred Adler and C.G. Jung began to have differences with Freud and the three gradually drifted apart[28]. Jung also felt that Freud placed too much emphasis on sexuality, and not enough emphasis on spirituality. He believed that people apprehend their experience in four main ways- sensing, feeling, thinking and intuiting- and that one of these is predominant in any given individual. Jung felt that the unconscious mind did not only contain repressed material, as suggested by Freud, but also faculties which had not been allowed to develop, such as the emotional side of a very rational man, or the female side of a very masculine man. Furthermore Jung proposed the existence of a collective unconscious which contains *archetypes* and "include primitive notions of magic, spirits and witches, birth and death, gods, virgin mothers, resurrection etc." So a large part of the philosophy Jung's psychology was directed towards explaining the background to why we are able to believe in a religion that does not always make rational sense, or that cannot always be justified using logic.

Like Freud, Jung believed that the dream was a fundamental tool for understanding not

only our minds, but our entire beings, and Ian Player was strongly convinced by the critical emphasis on the dream. For him it is important to remember and record dreams because

> It's the symbolism in the dream that's so important, and the associations that go with it, I always think of old Morten Kelsey, an Episcopalian priest who came and stayed here, and he told me the story of how he woke up one morning, and the moment he awoke he knew what his dream was saying and he shouted out in ecstasy "God, why don't you make all my dreams so easy to understand?" and a week or so later he had a dream in which he heard a voice, and the voice is important- because it is literal. Images are images- they are symbolic, but the voice said "If I made all your dreams so easy to understand you wouldn't work hard to come close to me.[29]

So according to Ian Player the symbolism in dreams is important in our quest to understand ourselves as people. Not surprisingly, these symbols may take the form of animals:

> Aesculapius was the Greek god of healing and what would happen is that people in need of heeling would go with the priest on a pilgrimage and the priest would walk in front and in front of him was a dog, and why the dog? Because the dog is aware of things that we're not aware of- in fact C.G. Jung used to keep a dog in the parlour of his house, because he said that the moment that anyone walked into that house who was psychotic, the dog knew and it warned him. Anyway, they would go, and they would go to the temple and they would lie down in the temple and the priest would then release snakes. Then the priest would interpret their dreams and the healing would begin. Why snakes? Because snakes are symbolic of change because they change their skin…[30]

This quote demonstrates that Ian Player is inclined to interpret animals on both a conscious literal level as a dog and a snake, and also on an unconscious level as symbolizing the intuitive or unconscious (in the case of the dog) or as symbolizing regeneration, transformation or even transcendence of the mundane, or even of mortality (in the case of the snake). The ideas of C.G. Jung must certainly have had a strong resonance with Player's reverence for all life forms and his deep, fundamental and

charismatic love for animals, whether domestic or wild, though particularly the latter. Not only does Ian Player have these feelings and this energy within himself, but he has been able to turn it into energy and convey it to other people, and in the process he has become more fired up about his beliefs. Many people who encountered the level of resistance that Dr. Player was faced with at times over the years would have crumbled under the pressure. He had no hesitation in admitting his immense debt of gratitude and his admiration for the great psychoanalyst:

> I've done an incredible amount of reading in my life, but as I get older it's getting less…if I knew twenty years ago what I know now, I would only have read Jung…he's incredible- the shadow, when you understand yourself, when you understand your own shadow, it is pure gold! What a revelation! It's all there…"The wind used to cry, and the hills shout forth praise…"[31]

By what Jung would call synchronicity, when Jung went to Africa in 1925, he happened to board the same boat as Carl Akeley. For Ian Player, the symbolism of these two as travel companions would surely invoke a pilgrimage or safari of the body or conscious (Akeley) with a doppelganger or shadow soul of the pilgrimage or safari of the unconscious (Jung)[32]. As it happens this only occurred to me after interviewing Dr. Player, and though he spoke at length about Jung ("the pioneer of the inner safari"), we did not discuss Akeley (who may be called "the pioneer of the outer safari") at all.

**The Dark Shadow of White Men in Africa**

Jung was fascinated by Africa and he captured it very vividly and very convincingly, and he saw it with fresh eyes and in a new light, and yet he felt he had seen it before. When

we read Jung we need to ask was it the sunlight and people of Africa that were different, or was the strange light in the eye of the beholder who was accustomed to European environments and captivated by the exoticism of the perceived "other":

> When the first ray of sunlight announced the onset of daylight, I awoke. The train, swathed in a red cloud of dust, was just making a turn around a steep red cliff. On a jagged rock above us a slim, brownish-black figure stood motionless, leaning on a long spear, looking down at the train.
>
> I was enchanted by this sight- it was a picture of something utterly alien and outside my experience, but on the other hand a most intense sentiment du déjà vu. I had the feeling that I had already experienced this moment and had always known this world which was separated from me only by distance in time. It was as if I were this moment returning to the land of my youth, and as if I knew that dark-skinned man who had been waiting for me for five thousand years.
> The feeling-tone of this experience accompanied me throughout my whole journey through savage Africa. I can recall only one other such recognition of the immemorially known. That was when I first observed a parapsychological phenomenon, together with my former chief, Professor Eugen Bleuler. Beforehand, I had imagined that I would be dumbfounded if I were to see so fantastic a thing. But when it happened, I was not surprised at all; it felt it was perfectly natural, something I could take for granted because I had long since been acquainted with it.
>
> I could not guess what string within myself was plucked at the site of the solitary dark hunter. I knew only that his world had been mine for countless millennia.[33]

Jung's seductive prose appear to be simultaneously mundane and romantic, aiming perhaps to enhance the mystical aura he is trying to communicate to readers. The mundane component of this description can be quickly dismissed, by saying that the essential details are enormously credible. Jung was on a journey of exploration to Africa. There was a long train trip. When he woke up and looked outside, a man was standing on a cliff, looking at Jung, who looked at the man. They saw each other for a few seconds at most. They recognized each other as simultaneously different and familiar. The familiarity was about their common humanity, there common looking with slight surprise

at a man who was in some way the opposite of themselves. In recording this, Jung recognizes the romantic notion of the "noble savage". This is hinted at by his inclusion just previous to this description, of a quote from Rousseau. Why does the sight of this man generate an intense *sentiment du déjà vu* in Jung? It is impossible to say for sure, but there are two factors which should not be overlooked. The first is the obvious device that an African man, especially one in traditional clothing and leaning on a spear, is the perfect archetype of "the Shadow or the Other ". In the mind of the European, he is all these things that the European is not. He is of the landscape, wild, free, independent. The look of recognition comes from the African, who may well at that moment merely have thought "I wonder what it's like to ride in the train." Furthermore, the African is one other thing that the European craves almost above all other things- he is the rural idyll, an unhurried, eternal, and statuesque being. The one thing that the European desires is time. The African man may not have all this free time by any means, but the European who sees him for a few seconds does not know this, and imagines romantically the life of an African man, who can stand dreamily on a cliff and watch motionlessly as the train chugs by. The shadow man, the other, is what Jung would call an archetype, but he is dangerously close to what we today would call a stereotype. This is an example of how the Jungian perception of the world is reductive and essentialist. Jungians seem disinclined to apprehend, or to at least to acknowledge the significance of their own reductive and essentialist tendencies, because such an acknowledgement undermines the cornerstone of the edifice of Jungian belief. Relativist (post-Marxist or Postmodern) social critique deconstructs such Jungian tendencies to mystification of human relationships, and most contemporary rationalists are not attracted to the concept of

"archetypes". These building blocks of Jungian psychology are premised on the notion that meanings of symbols and even the symbolic significance of race are universal and immutable rather than constructed and contextual.

It is tempting to go further and dismiss Jung's use of the traditional "white explorer's" view of Africa, as an entirely mumbo-jumbo fabrication of a foreigner who did not understand the landscape and its contents. Jung idealized African cultural practice, custom and belief partly because he saw them as dark and irrational, and standing in sharp contrast to the modern European mode of thinking. Once again the danger of Jungian thinking where "archetypes" may easily be read as stereotypes looms large.

Nevertheless, we should remember that remnants of traditional life are alive and well. To Moloko Phaho (a Kruger Park guide):

> We are chosen by god [to have] awareness and intelligence and all these things… Even when I'm in the bush I do believe in them, because my belief is these Leadwood Trees, the dead ones, they come as our ancestors. That's why they stand for a long time. Our belief is if maybe you are looking for something you don't find it…my grandfather [taught me this]. Yes, I'm a modern traditionalist.[34]

Although Moloko Phaho was fairly unique in the extent of his traditionalism, "Dikgang" (a Madikwe guide) observed regular concordance between traditional and contemporary teachings on how one should conduct oneself in the bush:

> I still remember when we did animal behaviour, a course, with Chris Lucas, making a scenario saying should you be charged by a lion, what do you do, and everybody said, ja, we'll climb a tree, or run away, and he said 'No, no, no, stand your ground!' and it was something I thought challenging to stand your ground against a predator coming at you, though something that I should be thankful to my grandfather about is that he always told us that when we were going into the

> bush the main threat would be a leopard, maybe a snake, so he said 'Whenever you see anything that would cause a threat to your life, just stand still, and cross your legs' because basically when you're doing that you can't move, because when you try to move you'll fall down. So when we ran the course, especially with animal behaviour, and they told us this advice, I thought 'Hang on, I think I've been taught this' and, ja, it's like a reminder.[35]

The above statement by "Dikgang" is a reminder that although "traditional culture" is declining, it has neither completely disappeared, nor was it ever completely static, but rather threads its way into the fabric of contemporary life. This inclusiveness appears to be at odds with the Jungian polarity between the "rational" European and the "instinctive" African. Clive Walker (Limpopo guiding veteran) acknowledged that it is not only black guides who can benefit from traditional knowledge, but that he himself had benefited enormously:

> Science alone is not the forming of one's own personal intellect or understanding about the natural world. Science is there for specific reasons to discover, and it's not necessarily important in my terms. When you look at the men who trained me, most of them were illiterate, but they knew more about the African bush than any Masters or Phd. could teach you about the workings of nature. So you can't dismiss the one, and you can't dismiss the other. They're essential elements of our understanding of life.[36]

Despite the skeptical reading of Jung above, it is fair to say that in the guiding fraternity, there has been a huge degree of cultural exchange in nature guiding, and that it would be very difficult to find a more inspirational model than the great Jungian disciple Ian Player and his trails partner Magqubu Ntombela. It must be added that without the writings of Laurence van der Post, and of Jung himself, it is quite possible that Ian Player might never have formed such a close bond, and realized the real value of this man, and by this failure (common in white South Africans of the period), Player's sense of humanity and *ubuntu* may well have been retarded.

Interestingly, when I asked Ian Player what was to become of his mortal remains after his death he replied

> Well my mortal remains for what it is worth, are to go into a pine box, nothing too elaborate, a pine box and rope, and go through cremation. As you turn out the drive here on your right hand side, there's quite a big yellowwood tree, where my father's ashes are buried. What is quite interesting is that my father died in 1978. But after that my mother died and her ashes were buried under the yellowwood tree and over the past five years or so it's grown a huge new branch. Perhaps this branch represents my mother. So I would like some scattering to be done at that tree, some scattering to go at the Karkloof Church, because it's a lovely little church [and the remaining portion scattered at Umfolozi].[37]

For me that symbolizes Players symbolic attachment to his ancestors, his church and the wilderness, and ties in with the belief as revealed in the dream, but also with family and ancestors, as was perhaps re-enforced by Magqubu Ntombela. In my interview with Dr. Player I asked him who the most memorable person he had met was and he replied:

> The most memorable person [I knew was] Magqubu Ntombela. There he is over there *(points to bust on mantelpiece)*, I greet him every morning, and I say good night to him every night. Until I met with him I believed in "racial superiority", but not long after meeting him I realized that this man was…you go to the classics- somebody said I was a classicist (which I am, I suppose)…but I had a very limited education in my early days… but Kipling says it in Gunga Din, do you know the poem Gunga Din? "You are a better man than I, Gunga Din!" Well, Magqubu Ntombela was a better man than I. Unashamedly, I'll state it…so I had limited education, but he had none at all! [38]

Magqubu's pot was a three-legged *potjie* familiar to most South Africans, but clearly having an elevated significance for him. (The poem on the following page attempts to elucidate the symbolism of the *potjie* from Ian Player's perspective in more detail). Magqubu bought it for five shillings (in 1925 [39]or in 1958[40]) and even insisted on taking it to London for the Fourth Wilderness Congress[41] and going back to fetch it in the face of angry lions[42]. To Dr. Ian Player it clearly had both religious (he was a Shembe and

feared being fed pork, or poisoned food) and survival value (he could cook with it wherever he went). Player also saw it as a symbol of Ntombela's Spartan and non-materialistic philosophy. "What would Magqubu do with two pots on trail?" he asks rhetorically. From the above, I was inspired to pen the following poem:

The Three Legs of Wisdom

I met a wise man I could probably name
Player of the daring and dangerous game
And asked him how do you survive the stress
With one leg always in the wilderness.

He said he learnt from a better fellow
Not Gunga Din, but Magqub' Ntombela
And from this man he'd learnt a lot
That the symbol of life was a three legged pot.

And to do your best you need all three
One leg is a branch in your family tree
The second leg lives in the wildest place
Joining you to nature and the human race

And the third leg, though you might find it odd
Is the leg that takes you back to God
Magqub' could never be called a fool
He learnt all he knew in the Wilderness School!

To the young Wilderness Leadership School guide, Sicelo Mbhatha, to follow in Magqubu's footsteps is his dream:

> Now, because we are living in such a- under a harsh situation, you know, we're dying young, and it's like that and that and that, because of different things happening in this universe, but what can I say is, I am just willing, I am just willing, just to touch where he was standing, do you know. I've read a lot of Dr. Player's books, like the book that I am reading now is Shadows and Souls-Zululand and you know, it's really touching me, it's striking me, the way he did things Baba Magqubu, the way he did things in the wilderness, it's really- I'm always laughing at those things, so I am just willing, I am just willing to touch his stage you know, to make sure that I reach his stage.[43]

Clearly, the great spirit of camaraderie, friendship, mutual respect and cultural exchange between Ian Player and Magqubu Ntombela has not been ignored or forgotten. They walked a very long way in each other's company over a very long period of time and never stopped learning from each other. They faced close encounters with a demented lioness, an enraged buffalo and a writhing black mamba, as well as many other incidents. If it was not for Magqubu's excellent judgment, if it were not for Player's enormous trust and ability to act as a team, one or both of them might easily have been killed in any of these episodes. They inspired game rangers and nature guides who followed them to look beyond race, and age, and class, and culture, and educational background and see your lead rifle or your back-up as another human being who you can always trust and rely on with your life. Not only that, but you are aware that he will never harm an animal unless there is an absolute crisis, and will always give his best to clients. The generosity and sharing relationship between these men, although they are ordinary mortals, set an example of teamwork and friendship that is indelible and immortal. Modern guides should remember the example of these men who fought against the limitations of their narrow society and emerged victorious and proud, and remained friends until the end. Does Ian Player have a tendency to turn Magqubu Ntombela into an icon- an archetype to the Jungian- perhaps a stereotype to the skeptic? There is no doubt that Ntombela was an outstanding guide. This was because of his positive predisposition and quirky and unique personality, his dedication to guiding and impeccable service, his love of people and his rough and ready firearm handling and bush craft. We should be very wary of starting to believe that this was because he was a Zulu, because he might have had some Khoi-San genetic ancestry, or because he was black, or because he was a member of the Shembe

faith. For those to whom the latter become of primary significance have bought into the mythology of Jungian essentialism.

**"If you kill my rhinos, don't come back"**

Paul Phelan recounts how Dr Ian Player used to tell his guides

> If you shoot one of my rhinos don't even bother reporting to me, just get the hell out. We will send your furniture after we have deducted the damages![44]

Evidently guides took this threat very seriously. Perhaps Ian Player was bluffing in the manner of the stiff-legged bluff of a charging male lion, but no-one went there to test if he was serious. The point is that (bluff or no bluff) he initiated a tradition of wilderness guiding where the ideal encounter with an animal was the one in which the animal didn't even know you had been there. For the record, Ian Player says that an encounter where the animal is unaware of a human is impossible, because animals always know that you are there. Once again, this is a clear reflection of his essentialist perspective. I believe that most animals have much higher sensual acuity than humans, and are aware of humans before humans are aware of them in most instances, and I also share Ian Player's desire not to view animals from an anthropocentric perspective, but think that statements like this are as likely to incline critical readers to dismiss Player's perspective as they are to glean sympathetic support for it. My personal experience is that in most encounters between humans and animals there is a reduced level of awareness of the presence of the other by animals or humans or both. It is easy to say that an animal that ignores you still knows that you are there, but if the animal does not respond to you at any stage with any action that clearly demonstrates that it knows that you are present, it is hard to prove whether the animal was aware of your presence or not.

Nevertheless, the outcome of Ian Player holding this belief has encouraged a policy which has inclined guides to err on the side of caution and this means that the incident record of KZN Wildlife (Natal Parks) is admirable, whilst that of the Kruger Park can reasonably be called disappointing.

Ian Player is without doubt the most influential living man in nature guiding in South Africa today, and so it is vital to produce a summary of why he should be noted with admiration and respect by all who follow in his path.

Player started out as a conservationist. He was primarily engaged in protecting the southern white rhino from imminent doom, a role which always took precedence above his role as a *veld* manger, so he always sought to save rather than kill. The notion of preserving at all costs must have weighed upon his mind. He was far sighted enough to realize that species preservation goes hand in glove with habitat preservation, and so relatively untrammeled land was important. He was a believer in walking through the wilderness, and seeing nature first-hand and hands on. He demonstrated that not only was it statistically very safe to do this, but he believed in this experience as critical part of modern spiritual practice.

His Christian faith was always durable and robust, but was never conventional. He believes himself able to communicate with God, yet despite this never treated animals with disdain or arrogance (and so has accepted the elevation of Man without accepting

the implicit denigration of the beasts). He developed a deep love and respect for Magqubu Ntombela, who started out as a humble game scout, but proved to be a most extraordinary guide, with a deep understanding of nature and a warm and natural fondness of people. The friendship between them elevated them as fine examples of believers in respect for and appreciation of others, or perhaps of "the other" in Jungian terms. He encountered the ideas of C.G.Jung through Laurens van der Post, whom he befriended and who was a co-founder of the World Wilderness Convention. Van der Post, although regularly dishonest in his writing, and at times quite flawed, was very generous and a great patron of Ian Player's projects. Player's acquired familiarity with Jung gave him a particular understanding of dreams and the sub-conscious mind, but also of symbols and re-enforced his love for animals and the wilderness to an extent which has become uncommon in modern guides, even amongst those whom he influenced.

He used his energy and his influence to start the Wilderness Leadership School, which deeply influenced Clive Walker and others. Ian Player, and Clive Walker too, did not just reach one person in a thousand. Indeed they reached thousands, and today hundreds of thousands are aware of the Wilderness Leadership School and the World Wilderness Convention[1].

[1] It is an unqualified privilege to have interviewed Ian Player and understand his influence. He is remarkable because he is both a deeply thinking and a deeply feeling man, a man of both culture and of nature, a man of both introspection and extroversion, a

For Ian Player, the light is in the Wilderness. For many people, Christianity was the framework that informed their sub-conscious belief in their own dominion over animals. The wilderness experience was numinous and enlightening to Player, the most valuable part of his religious experience. Christianity was not about dominion over animals, but rather a deep love and respect for all creatures, which have senses and faculties which are infinitely superior to those of humans, and thoroughly incomprehensible to us. Humans should be responsible custodians of animals, and to Ian Player, the prospect of human dominion was thoroughly incomprehensible.

I do not share what I perceive to be the reductivism and essentialism components of Jungian thinking; neither am convinced of the need for militarism and the war-based metaphor for strategic thinking, or the use of battle imagery as a justification for rough action. Also I am not convinced by the integrity of some of the people to whom Ian Player is immensely, immeasurably and eternally loyal, but I should hasten to state that I believe his personal integrity is above all criticism.

In my interview with him I learnt some very powerful personal lessons. Player appeals to people, and especially men, to concentrate more on feelings, and less on thinking. South African men resort easily to thinking or action, but often avoid participating in the

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true African and a true World Citizen, a sincere lover of animals and people despite whatever faults they may or may not have, and a light in the Wilderness.

emotional realm with depth and sincerity, and he caused me to rethink my attitude in this area. I realize I am inclined to think too much and dream too little. Thinking leads to an understanding which is rational, tangible, quantifiable and often quite depressing. Ian Player also encouraged me to honour the dream- and I do agree that dreams are an important pathway to self awareness, empathy, imagination and most of all to hope. Ian Player's continuous striving to elevate dreams has required a brave, pioneering, resourceful and creative leader whose life and philosophy deserves to be applauded by all South African game rangers and nature guides, and by all citizens who cherish hope, enthusiasm, optimism and who believe that we should live our dream. The dream that the southern white rhino could be saved preceded the action that achieved that result. If we lose the dream, then positive future actions may become impossible.

During the course of his life and his career, Ian Player had to deal with a lot of oppression, opposition and resistance:

> Well, there was definitely resistance. A lot of the senior staff saw it as locking up the country. I tried to explain that in fact it's the reverse- it is unlocking human minds, unlocking the soul, not locking up country. They were afraid that tourism was very much on the rise and that the trails would lock up areas that could be developed. In a way they did lock up the country, of course you can't go in there in a vehicle- but they were against wilderness areas.[45]

The greatest of Ian Player's achievements is that he was able to unlock space and the space he unlocked was not just the wilderness of Umfolozi. This achievement alone was great enough, but furthermore he was able to unlock people a space in people's minds, a space that had been filled with prejudice, with conservatism, with doubt and with cynicism. This example should influence us to always search in our hearts, in our minds

and in our dreams, for new combinations that will unlock the free space not only of today, but also in the free space of tomorrow and of the distant future.

**Pulling Our Culture Back by the Tail**

Although remnants of traditional African customs and traditional beliefs still exist, they are in some respects practices which are as endangered as certain wild species. According to Mike English.

> I know that my field rangers, even some of the younger ones, have lost [their traditional customs and beliefs]. The older guys, it's just something that they've grown up with, the tradition, all sorts of belief and that sort of thing you quite often see. Well, I remember when we used to go and camp, before put your tent up, you take a bit of salt, or dried vegetables even, you put that down there and you ask the ancestors to look after you in that place. And that was part of the custom. Part of the thing, it wasn't a show, it was a genuine belief, and that too also has its place, because that's the way that they survived…and we don't see that these days…[46]

The current Wilderness Leadership School Guides were unanimous that internationalism or "American" culture is eroding traditional practices very fast. According to Mandla Buthelezi

> …we are loosing our culture, because of Coca-cola culture you know, so, like Magqubu Ntombela time, he used to connect with the spirits, and then using his heart, so now we changed, you know, we are getting there because we have got knowledge, and then we keep learning now you know, so in this time, we are like losing the spirits called *amadlozi*, like or respecting them, you know, some other people they don't respect them, they work, because they do the job, because they are working, not with their heart, with a what-do-you-call-it? With your passion, with passion with your job, what you are doing, with love you know…[47]

Sicelo Mbhatha said

> Well, I think we are loosing our culture, yes, I agree, but it's not that bad- we can still pull the tail of our culture, and pull it back to us, and like uBab' uMagqubu the way he grew up, yes, I can say he, even he used to stay with animals, he grew up with animals, crossing the rivers, herding cattle, so it was easy to him as well,

> but and us as young people of South Africa, we can still try to live together with animals. When I'm saying that, I'm not saying just to go in game reserves and stay with the animals, but we as youth in your area or in your township- you can organize sort of things like that, you can try to contact places like Wilderness Leadership School, and then we can live together by doing that with animals.[48]

According to Mandla Gumede:

> Now we are using American style. It's just because the way they feed us at school. They're encouraging us- like if you finish your matric, you have to go and do your studies, so things like that- they can't tell us that we have to go to collect some cows [for lobola] and things like that. Even now people don't know how to play stick-fighting- so things like that- they can't do things like that, that's why we're using another culture, not our own culture. Some people they still do our cultures, but most of them they lost our culture.[49]

A remarkable phenomenon is that of "pulling our culture back to us by the tail!" For it is often when once cultures are really disappearing that they are energetically pulled back. The nguni cattle culture is a good example. The rapidly declining pride in knowing these names was shown when Sicelo Mbatha was inclined to congratulate himself after he was able to name three traditional cow colour words (I tried to transcribe them, but the names given by Sicelo were not confirmed by the book described below). Yet, they form a very rich tapestry of valuable traditional knowledge which has been studiously assembled as The Abundant Herds- A Celebration of the Nguni Cattle of the Zulu People by Maguerite Poland and David Hammond-Tooke, illustrated by absolutely superb paintings by Leigh-Voigt[50]. The value of this book for a nature guide in KwaZulu-Natal cannot be overstated, seeing that most of the traditional cattle names have referents in nature, including birds, birds' eggs, mammals, reptiles, stones, sand, shadows and clouds. Another example of culture which needs to be "pulled back by the tail" is the Zulu traditional calendar, on which I have collected information on over a number of years and for which I attach a copy of my work as an appendix (see appendix VIIB). I hope that

Sicelo and the Mandlas manage to acquire that book, and they devote some time to studying it.

A lot of young black guides seem to hold the belief that white people do not suffer as black people do from a loss in their traditional culture. In my interview with Ian Player he referred to traditional roots of people (such as both himself and myself) who have a significant claim to traditional Celtic roots:

> I mean wilderness is a sacred place, and these have always been sacred places and every nation of the world and every tribe and every sect have places that are sacred, and that's what we did not acknowledge. Perhaps I am- and you are too with your Celtic background- Celts used go on their pilgrimages to the Nemetons, which were the sacred oak groves and they went there why? To experience a soul mood. A soul mood of the landscape. A soul mood of the Nemeton Forest, and it's very, it's very interesting that the original definition, one of the original definitions of wilderness was to experience the soul mood. Now here you've got what 5 000 years ago, 6 000 years ago, our Celtic forefathers- if you look at the book here on wilderness as set aside by the United States Senate- and there you see modern descriptions use the same terms as the ancient Celts. So, it's deep within, deep within. Everybody has their sacred places.[51]

Cultural roots of any individual are complex and most people are not comfortable that they are merely "Zulu" or "Celtic", whatever those specific things might mean to different individuals.

I consider Ian Player's remarks with respect to roots very valid because if we do not make a conscious decision to attach ourselves to a traditional identity, however contrived it may be, we seem to automatically assign ourselves to a default "international", "modern" or "Americanized" culture, which generally has a superficial and indifferent

relationship to the past, and priveleges amalagamation and assimilation above discrimination and uniqueness of identity.

**The Exodus of Faith**

In the case of many contemporary black guides, traditional belief has been replaced by a conventional framework of (conservative) Christian belief. Mandla Buthelezi had no problem describing the wilderness experience in Old Testament terms:

> You know when you are crossing the river- it's like people of Israelites, when they are crossing the river. When you are getting back, you have washed yourself, and you get clean, and you get out. It's like when you are blessed. When you get out, you are clean now, because you left those stress away- you'll get back to your civilization again.[52]

To Moremi Keabetswe, who is a qualified teacher, guide and manager, there is clearly a tension between science and religion:

> There is a lot of things we do, as Christian people we do have belief that the world has been created…….. but if you look at science, it says there was a big ball, there was a collapse and then all those things gets formed and then we are now getting to believe more in that because science like that one, it shows you that there is an evidence of saying why we say South America was just actually, was once in line with Africa because you can see the species that you get in South America, you also get in the western side of Africa. And you can also see where they actually fit together if you put them together if you like make them a parcel. So I think science is actually realistic and we are now talking about global warming which is going to effect as right to the future, or something like that which is part of science and we don't think like, God has put aside things that he is going to put to us to benefit in the future to come, we think about what we see from the science that you get of what is happening around the area.[53]

In describing the cause of the unseasonal weather in the current world he felt some difficulty:

> I am Christian. I don't really want to commit myself there, but I will say I think it was time for these things to be happening now but I won't know when to say we might have contributed to this but if you look at [the] point, like if you think about science, you can talk about pollutions and things like that but I think for us to get this more rain, we have been praying to get some rain, so I will say God has given us rain, I don't know what we could have done without it.[54]

Elsewhere he perceives that Christianity and western science are compatible, and fall into one lifestyle, which collectively or co-operatively have eroded many traditional practices:

> We get to think Christianity is the only belief to get into. And then we don't have our own cultures we used to have; we don't do some other things we used to do. I will give you an example, there is a lot of trees and plants that we believe could be medicines to us, that has been in practice in the past but once you get a headache, knowing that you can use a certain species of plant to heal it, we don't do that, we just go straight to the chemist.[55]

To the even more highly educated guides, and particularly the white guides, science, particularly in the form of Darwinism, has caused a collapse in traditional Christian thinking. According to Graham Vercueil:

> I think that science began a new religion with the advent of Darwin and evolution. I don't think it's recent. Or maybe that is recent, if that's the time frame that you're looking at. But I think science and evolution became new religion. It is to my mind a religion and not really a science. In a nutshell.[56]

The ethics of sophisticated contemporary people are not dependent on traditional cultural and religious values. As Graham Vercueil said:

> In a lot of people I deal with I think there's more and more individualism rather than established and understood religious or cultural values. It's just what everyone else, I'm sure so many people you've spoken to see around them. It's just all about the individual. I'm number one.[57]

Graham Vercueil argued that the modern ethics that are independent of traditional culture and religion have led to unresolved problems which are often not being addressed, for example the unregulated over-consumption of alcohol by talented young guides:

> The reality in this country is that we have a lot of young guys who don't always know where to draw the line...I do think that employers and the organizations don't take nearly enough responsibility in helping the guides in their employ understand and manage alcohol consumption in the workplace, because there are not that many workplaces where alcohol is not the stock and trade of every outing. And it's an environment where young people are almost encouraged to drink with alarming regularity and it's the norm. And it's a high pressure environment in that the hours are long and the demands are high, but the ambience and the mood has to be light and relaxing, and relaxed and easygoing. And so after hours late at night, to relieve all that, people are drinking, because everyone's drinking all the time. I think employers don't take enough responsibility in counseling their staff. I think there are way too many guys drinking way too much, with no-one's input.[58]

Sadly, they will be stuttering, staggering and stumbling at this stage of the evening. Can we return to them later to give them some direction? Many black guides have lost their traditional animistic beliefs associated with ancestor worship and a variety of intermediaries and spirits- in most cases this is through conversion to Christianity. Within not many generations, this belief system is also crumbling- often as an indication of a more educated and critical society. The level of disorientation of such rapid succession of displacement of beliefs is hard to gauge, but the chances are that it is more severe than most people realize.

**Trying to Find Our Balance**

Like Graham Vercueil, Ian Player is aware that many young guides just think about women and beer, but clearly from a fairly early age he thought about the components of a balanced approach to guiding:

> Good guides are born…it doesn't matter where you are, you should have a sound grasp of history- that's very, very important. When you're walking through a space you must be able to read that landscape, and introduce it in such a way, that you are bringing all the aspects together, and most particularly instilling in the trailists a sense of place.[59]

The striking thing about this statement is that Player is stressing the holistic nature of guiding, and to some extent warning against the false division of nature guiding from culture guiding, which has come to characterize the tourism guiding system of today. There are still very few guides who are qualified nationally for both culture and nature guiding. (I believe in 2005 I was one of 3 people in the country who held both qualifications). After the initial implementation of the THETA system, it was widely recognized that an imbalance was created by dividing guides up between culture guides and nature guides, and one of the earliest significant modifications to the system since its effective implementation in 2001 was to add the requirement that nature guides were required to pass a rudimentary culture guiding component and vice versa.

Dr. Alex Coutts is somewhat younger than Dr. Ian Player, but has still reached the age where he could retire without being considered lazy. He shares Ian Player's sense that balanced individuals offer the richest experience:

> Then I came to the conclusion that, for example, any guide who is trained in both culture and nature will find his cultural topics a lot easier to master…[because] You do 200 km on a cultural tour, you engage with one cultural site, you learn it, and you study it before you get there. In five years time its by and large there unchanged. It's for example a battlefield, or it's a cultural village. You move on 15km, then you're at your next fixed site, your next, your next…you learn your ten sites very, very well, and you're always pretty competent if you do enough work at it. There's no excuse for not doing a good job.
>
> But nature? Wow! You walk into your nature reserve with your guests. You could be somewhere in southern Africa confronted with a selection from 80 000 insect species, 24 000 plant species, perhaps 982 birds, 967 grasses, 853 butterfly species, 300 mammalian species and even 74 species of bats! And as you walk into the nature reserve, it's somehow the wrong tree, it's one of those you didn't know out of the 24000, it's a patch of grass that you'd never seen before, and dammit it's the nine hundredth and whatever bird it is, and maybe it's one of

> those you're not too sure of, out of the thousand or so…it can cut you down to size.
>
> What you need in nature guiding is an ability to work and work and work until you're "there"…but you've got to realize that you'll never ever get there, entirely. It's infinity that you're grappling with, and until you are pretty competent, you're almost nothing in nature guiding…you've got to have at least a threshold of ability, then suddenly a lot of it is revealed to you. You get the biological stuff behind you, but it's the wild creatures and the numbers of them you've got to really handle. Once you know it though, you'll find it quite easy to transfer your knowledge from one region to another region in the country if you move, because you've got the principles behind you and species crop up in very different areas.
>
> With the cultural stuff, by contrast, when you go elsewhere you then re-start almost from scratch, although to a much lesser extent some principles can be learnt and applied. So cultures are easier in a first region, but very hard to go to another region, because you start again from scratch. It's a very different battle, the new museum is nothing like the other one, etc. Nature's very hard to get off the ground, but once you've got it you've got a lot of principles and an awful lot of wild creatures that start cropping up again hundreds of kilometers away from where you qualified first.[60]

"Dikgang", a Madikwe guide who requested to be referred to by a pseudonym, is adamant that a balanced and diverse (mixture of culture and nature) is more likely to be effective in engaging clients:

> I think it depends on how one sells the story to the people, but I think quite a lot of international people that I've met, so far the past 7 years, I find them getting more interested in knowing how people live. It's not just about coming to see an elephant or coming to see a giraffe, or whatever animals they can see but they also want to know how we are living, how we are doing things, customs, traditions…[61]

Alex Coutts blames the lack of a culture-nature interface partly on the (SETA / SAQA / NDE) "system":

> I think that the powers that be are responsible for that…For 4 years I have offered both areas as electives. I believe the human mind can have a pretty good go at it if people work hard enough. As I've said, you never absolutely get there, but we try and urge all of our learners to do both culture and nature…and if they fail in either domain…let's say they have no nature background whatsoever, it's going to be a three year task to get there if they've got nothing behind them.

> Some people become dedicated cultural guides- others become nature guides, but there's a massive integration in this. If you're a cultural guide why can you not in fact go through a nature reserve and speak about the medicinal use of plants and how indigenous inhabitants would have used the wild creatures? In other words, legally, can someone stop you from going through this terrain which is largely nature when you're actually interpreting it as a cultural phenomenon? I think you'd be well within your rights within the law, if you were a cultural guide, going through a nature reserve. But once you start talking deeply about biological principles, then you're perhaps getting out of your depth. And similarly with culture, there's quite a lot of nature wrapped up in it, even within cities, though you might be reduced to talking about feral pigeons. Oh dear…[62]

The effect of Ian Player's belief that nature guides should develop cultural interests has had a deep effect on other Wilderness Leadership School adherents. As Clive Walker put it:

> The advent of modern life and society- people in my opinion have tended to undervalue traditional ways of life. Part of my philosophy behind this museum in arresting not only a part of Afrikaner culture- in this school [*ie the school on which the Rhino Museum is built*] was an Afrikaans Primary School, but I have brought in elements of our natural history- I am particularly interested in the histories of previous societies that actually lived here. I spent the 23 or 24 years that I was at Lapalala encouraging the universities at that scientific level to actually unravel that knowledge. It's very much part of my own philosophy and it's linked to a spiritual as well as a philosophical approach to these things.[63]

> There's something about what the school stands for, its ethics, its principals, its founder Ian Player every one of us look up to- as Americans look up to Aldo Leopold and John Muir, here in South Africa the wilderness movement look up to Ian. That's, you know I'm not trying to blow Ian's trumpet, he doesn't need it, but that sort of filtered over all of us, and we felt we had a duty to actually impart knowledge about simple little things to do with botany and nature in general- I mean I had a reputation of being an elephant man, because I was always in the thick of the elephants, but that was only a portion of the 8 or 10 hour day that we encountered. There were things like battle sites and grave sites and archaeological sites going back to the Mapungubwe on the Tuli Block side there's this continuation of Mapungubwe so the pioneer history came into our trails, the archaeology came into the trails, the importance of rivers…[64]

**"The Wilderness": Paradigm or Paradox?**

The paradox that in order to experience the wilderness one has to be a participant in its gradual (but inevitable) destruction cannot be overemphasized. The point is that, for wilderness to be known to exist, the human observer is always the referent. As Clive Walker said

> One thing I firmly believe in, and I feel very strongly about this, is that there is a tendency in our country to look over a vast area like Lapalala, and we call it wilderness, but we conveniently forget that humans have lived in that environment, for thousands of years, or possibly even three million years at the longest, and they have tinkered with this so called "wilderness" over a very long period of time and they've used it. So if one is talking about a "wilderness" that is the absence of humans, then you're heading in the wrong direction, because humans are an integral element of wilderness. With most of the people that I've known, the philosophy that we've taught is, that they mustn't talk about wilderness in isolation from humans.[65]

American academics of the past decade have been particularly vocal in their criticism of the "wilderness myth". The primary sources which have been considered and summarized here are The Trouble with Wilderness; or, getting Back to the Wrong Nature by William Cronon[66] and Dwellness, A Radical Notion of Wilderness, by Martin J. Wortman[67]/#[2].

Perhaps the most fundamental premise of both of these theses is that "wilderness" is a

[2] Secondary sources from these include Kathleen M. Squadrito (1979), Robert Nozick (1974), Michael P. Nelson and J.Baird Callicot, and these are mentioned where the ideas outlined or modified by Cronon and Wortman ultimately derive from them. There are subtle differences in opinion between Cronon and Wortman, but for purposes of this thesis their ideas are sufficiently similar to be dealt with as a single stream of thought or criticism.

cultural construct. Adherents of "wilderness philosophy" tend to try "naturalize" the wilderness, whereas there is nothing "natural" about the "wilderness" except that it is often defined as an area where human impact is minimal. According to Wortman:

> The United States of America Wilderness Act of 1964, within the section "definition of wilderness" states that for an area to be wilderness "man himself is a visitor who does not remain". This definition is patently false for at least two reasons: (a) if humans believe that they are separate from nature, then they may not care for nature and how their actions affect it; and (b)…humans arise from, and are a component of nature.[68]

So, although "the wilderness myth" is a cultural construct, it has been produced over an exceptionally long period of time, and requires us to examine an extensive history.

Let us then examine the Judeo-Christian origins of the "wilderness myth". In the Middle East, where the historic component of the Bible was enacted, the wilderness was clearly an inhospitable desert. The first mention of the wilderness in the Bible is when Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden of Eden[69]. Clearly, here, the wilderness is somewhere where you go to get punished, and not a location to be celebrated.

Neither is the Wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Sinai, initially a particularly hospitable place for Aaron and Moses as the Israelites complained at having nothing after leaving Egypt, where they were slaves, but at least well fed [70]. In response God provides miraculous food for them called "Manna" (literally "whatsitsname?")[71]. Thus, Moses led his people for many years through this inhospitable terrain, after which they arrived once more in the Holy Land (which even then was not uncontested territory, although the wilderness implicitly was). The "wilderness" of Exodus is a location, but a location on a journey to somewhere else. It is not where the Israelites really wanted to be- they were

on their way from where they didn't want to be (in slavery in Egypt) to a promised land, and the "wilderness" served to test their endurance and their faith.

Jesus went out into the wilderness for spiritual and physical purification, and as symbol of faith that he would be protected by God, and similarly ate nothing for forty days[72]. The "wilderness" of Christ is about fasting, cleansing the body and mind, withstanding the temptations of Satan, and preparing for the task that was to come.

Historically in the English speaking world (c. 1750), wilderness was to be described as "deserted," "savage," "desolate," "barren"—in short, a "waste," the words nearest synonym. Its connotations were anything but positive, and the emotion one was most likely to feel in its presence was "bewilderment" or terror.[73]

Clearly there was a significant change in attitude in century that followed this as by 1862 Henry David Thoreau famously declared, "In Wildness is the preservation of the World." This statement indicates that the international "radical" rise in Romanticism in the first few decades of the nineteenth century had deeply infused American cultural norms.[74]

When John Muir arrived in the Sierra Nevada in 1869, he declared "No description of Heaven that I have ever heard or read of seems half so fine."[75] According to Cronon:

> The emotions John Muir describes in Yosemite could hardly be more different from Henry Thoreau's on Katahdin or William Wordsworth's on the Simplon Pass. Yet, all three men are participating in the same cultural tradition and

> contributing to the same myth—the mountain as cathedral. The three may differ in the way they choose to express their piety—Wordsworth favoring an awe-filled bewilderment, Thoreau a stern loneliness, Muir a welcome ecstasy—but they agree completely about the church in which they prefer to worship. Muir's closing words on North Dome diverge from his older contemporaries only in mood, not in their ultimate content. [76]

Van der Post latched onto this precise symbolism when he said "Wilderness is the original cathedral."[77] The effect of this statement is to combine two of the most powerful agents in the mind of a person with a western and Christian background – nature and God. The "creation" is now given the authority that was formerly accorded to the "Creator", so it becomes both omnipotent and revered. Of course, the above is a huge simplification of aspects of the Romantic movement that appear pertinent background to the Wilderness movement around the world, but particularly in South Africa. (I have not even engaged Cronon's extensive discussion on John Locke's notions of property and land, and the philosophy that preceded them, and their effect on the "wilderness" myth, but he devotes over 20 pages to this discussion).

The other aspect of "wilderness" in America is how it relates to the frontier myth. In 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner wrote romantically and nostalgically about the declining frontier. Theodore Roosevelt wrote with much the same nostalgic fervor about the "fine, manly qualities" of the "wild rough-rider of the plains." No one could be more heroically masculine, thought Roosevelt, or more at home in the western wilderness:

> There he passes his days, there he does his life-work, there, when he meets death, and he faces it as he has faced many other evils, with quiet, uncomplaining fortitude. Brave, hospitable, hardy, and adventurous, he is the grim pioneer of our race; he prepares the way for the civilization from before whose face he must himself disappear. Hard and dangerous though his existence is, it has yet a wild attraction that strongly draws to it his bold, free spirit.[78]

It is interesting to see how Draper interprets Nick Steele as modeling himself as a cowboy, who is the central character in the American frontier myth. Most contemporary groups in South Africa have strong (but often conflicting) frontier myths such as the colonization by the British, the Great Trek of the Afrikaners and the Zulu Empire. These myths try to recall the people who were on the land preceding the invasion by the narrating group, but ultimately need to explain how these people disappeared without saying how their ancestors killed them, chased them away or subsumed their people and culture, which would serve as a more honest rough generalization.

Michael P. Nelson (1999)[79] notes five problems in the purist understanding of wilderness:

1: "The wilderness myth" is not universilizable. [He notes that the Alaskan Natak have lived in "wilderness area" for 11 000 years. Khoi San people could claim even longer periods of occupancy in southern Africa, but the claim to lands by hunter-gatherers and nomads were easily forgotten as their relatively sparse populations were easily annihilated, and even the survivors could not show long association with "property" which notion did not exist in the modern sense].

2. "The wilderness myth" is ethnocentric. American settlers thought area was wilderness and wiped out 90% of locals with inadvertently imported diseases. [The same is largely true in southern Africa. The extent of settler eradication of Bantu groups may be exaggerated, but of Khoi-San groups it would not be.].

3. "The wilderness myth" is ecologically naïve (ecosystems don't remain in a stationary state- paradox of managing wilderness to appear "still-shot"),

4. "The wilderness myth" separates humans from nature (humans and nature are two separate entities). [Humans are creatures whose existence came about through natural evolution. Human activities cause effects which are experienced throughout the natural system such as: the clear-cutting of forests, ozone depletion, acid rain which may fall anywhere- even in "wilderness areas", polluted rivers which may flow in and out of "wilderness areas" and oceans which are shared with other humans with indistinct national delineation and with other species].

5. "The wilderness myth" referent is non-existent (by definition wilderness has never existed since the rise of *Homo sapiens*). [See the discussion related to the American Wilderness Act of 1964 on p.115 above].

Cronon points out that belief in the "wilderness myth" by people living in the contemporary urban, industrial, capitalist society (and even those such as nature guides who live off this society rather than absolutely inside it, in the most extreme sense) allows us to evade our real environmental responsibilities:

> Worse: to the extent that we live in an urban-industrial civilization but at the same time pretend to ourselves that our real home is in the wilderness, to just that extent we give ourselves permission to evade responsibility for the lives we actually lead. We inhabit civilization while holding some part of ourselves—what we imagine to be the most precious part—aloof from its entanglements. We work our nine-to-five jobs in its institutions, we eat its food, we drive its cars (not least to reach the wilderness), we benefit from the intricate and all too invisible networks with which it shelters us, all the while pretending that these things are not an essential part of who we are. By imagining that our true home is in the wilderness, we forgive ourselves the homes we actually inhabit. In its flight from history, in its siren song of escape, in its reproduction of the dangerous dualism that sets human beings outside of nature—in all of these ways, wilderness poses a serious threat to responsible environmentalism at the end of the twentieth century.[80]

So in summary, he rejects the "wilderness myth" as unacceptable romantic escapism:

> But the trouble with wilderness is that it quietly expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject. The flight from history that is very nearly the core of wilderness represents the false hope of an escape from responsibility, the illusion that we can somehow wipe clean the slate of our past and return to the tabula rasa that supposedly existed before we began to leave our marks on the world. The dream of an un-worked natural landscape is very much the fantasy of people who have never themselves had to work the land to make a living—urban folk for whom food comes from a supermarket or a restaurant instead of a field, and for whom the wooden houses in which they live and work apparently have no meaningful connection to the forests in which trees grow and die. Only people whose relation to the land was already alienated could hold up wilderness as a model for human life in nature, for the romantic ideology of wilderness leaves precisely nowhere for human beings actually to make their living from the land.[81]

Perhaps America is an extreme example. We would, according to statistics require six planet earths for everyone alive today to live by the same consumerist standards that Americans enjoy. Yet the same pattern of destruction, displacement and marginalization of original indigenous occupants of land has taken place in the wake of "technologically advanced" people throughout the world, and the land thus vacated has always been mythologized as "wilderness". Even the displacers are themselves displaced over time.

Why then do we even look towards "the wilderness" at all? We look towards the wilderness, because in it we see signs of what once existed and the hope that it might continue to exist in perpetuity. We should look at wilderness to remember that wilderness is always being destroyed and never being created. We fly in aeroplanes, drive cars, use electricity, eat meat, take over land, build houses, buy and sell over-packaged (and often unnecessary) merchandise and create waste. We more than replace the number of people who believe it is their right to do all these things. Yet we choose not to see that in these acts we are polluting the atmosphere, consuming fossil fuels,

contributing to global warming and desertification, contributing to the destruction of the rain forests, eating up the habitat for increasingly threatened species, and creating tons of unnecessary waste.

So what does having a "wilderness experience" count for? If we want to see something beautiful, we can bury our heads in the sand, or in the wilderness. The wilderness is easy to look at and think about. The beautiful sunset, the marvelous mountain, clear water, clean air, the weaver's nest and the trumpeting elephant. The lions roar can send a shiver down your spine and the call of the fish eagle can cover you with goose bumps. Millions of struggling people belching out smoke and waste in a concrete jungle is not easy to look at and think about. Who wants it, by comparison? Who is making the modern world? Who is buying it and selling it every day? Who is exempt from it?

So a "wilderness experience" on its own means nothing in the grander scheme of things. It can easily be a "feel good" experience and it is a way to feel that the damage to the planet is being done by "someone else, somewhere else". Then you drive back to the city and resume all your old habits, and forget that "someone else, somewhere else" is now the person who you see in the mirror every day.

The mythical Garden of Eden, where humans were at one with God and nature, may (or may not) once have existed, but it is never to return. The vision that we have in the midst of the city will be far more effective than the vision in the wilderness, because then we are engaging the problem and not the declining remnants not yet chronically affected by

the problem. We will do more for our planet by working in the present for a future in which conditions cease to decline and a better quality of life for all can be achieved than we will by dreaming of the paradise of the past which can never come again! Yet, here lies the paradox. If we do not believe somewhere in our heart that the wilderness can and must be preserved, we will resign ourselves to living in an anthropocentric, imperialistic, capitalist, consumerist, technocratic nightmare. So, we must attain the wisdom to know the difference between a powerful hope and an idle dream.

**Guides and Game Rangers: Separation or Symbiosis?**

Harry Wolhuter demonstrates quite clearly that neither he, nor Stephenson-Hamilton were initially quite sure what a game ranger did, but the job description grew organically, and the main purpose of a game ranger soon evolved to become assisting the game warden (or head ranger) with conservation of species and habitats. (see pp.55 & 66)

Through the collaboration between Ian Player, Hugh Dent, Jim Feely, Nick Steele and others, a new type of game ranger was created, and so the trails officer or wilderness guide was born. It is quite clear that Player conceptualized that a cross-functional capacity should continue to exist between game rangers and trails officers, although he was obviously aware of quite a high level of resistance in certain quarters:

> A game ranger is an officer, who you would also use, I mean when I was doing trails in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, I would take rangers out of outposts, and make them take trails because they should know what it was to be with [the trailists], but the functions are different. I mean you can get a good game ranger

> who can be…you take him off ranging and you put him in charge of trails, but they're not the same tasks, I mean a ranger is just that- he's got to run an outpost, he's got to maintain standards with his game scout staff, whereas a wilderness trails officer is dealing with the public… most game rangers become game rangers because they don't want to be with the public…hate it! No names, no… after he was doing it for about a year or so aiming at them [the trailists] with a rifle! He had had it! *(Chuckles)* I mean I was very fortunate because Magqubu Ntombela loved people, so consequently he absorbed all those kind of pressures and all I did was acted as a facilitator…he wanted to- he was doing all the hard work...[82]

It was deemed opportune at this point in this thesis to canvass a much broader range of views on the relationship between a game ranger and a field guide. Mike English and Ian Player both went to St.John's College in Johannesburg. Although it is conceded that the career of Mike English was in the Kruger National Park, he and Ian Player regularly exchanged ideas, and in general English endorsed Player's "cross-pollination" strategy:

> I'm inclined to agree with Ian [Player] on that, but it's not every ranger who is a trails ranger…and it's not every trails ranger who is a section ranger. You have to judge from the merits of each individual…we've had a lot of trails rangers who have aspired to become section rangers. You've got to have a fantastic knowledge of the bush and picked up quite a lot of bush craft, and bush knowledge and develops his botanical, ornithological and other sides depending on the individual that you get, but it isn't necessarily that you get…we've had one or two section rangers that weren't good trails rangers…so you've got to judge each individual according to what post you set him to. Now there are guys who have been trails rangers and have been very successful ...you can't force anybody to one or the other.[83]

Mike English explained clearly that, in his opinion, it is horses for courses. Some people clearly have a guiding leaning, whilst others prefer unhindered conservation work:

> I don't know what your feel would be for being on the section. But a lot of guys break their hearts…there's that- I don't know what it is… a lot of guys are there for the macho image, or who'd like to be there for the image, and then there's a lot of guys who are genuinely into the bush, I mean they want to be a game ranger, and they want to help with conservation, and they may not, they see a trails ranger in a setting and the longer he goes…I mean like my son Don, he can get on with people, but its not everybody he can get on with. He's got to have a temperament to be able to absorb and handle that.[84]

It is interesting that young black guides in the Kruger National Park agreed with Player and English on this question. Moloko Phaho felt that people could learn each other's jobs:

> They will learn from it. That's when you bring up THETA and those assessment things. We have to be assessed and trained and then you go the same level. Nothing is impossible.[85]

Rangani Tsanwani added:

> I think it's much better if you can guide and the field ranger working hand in hand. Because in other ways we are doing the same things. When I do my walks I'm doing anti-poaching on the other side. I'm doing patrols the other side. So if I don't have any other activities now, I can go on patrols. Then I will see lots of area where I can walk. If I can move from tourism to conservation I think that will be much better.[86]

Warren Bekker, a young and influential trainer in KZN Wildlife had no problem encouraging the separation, but felt that it was important that both eco-tourism workers and conservationists were aware of each other's perspective and experience**:**

> Look, I think, and in certain of the reserves that I've been to, there is this clash between eco-tourism and conservation, and that clash can sometimes lead to very negative repercussions within the guiding side, and the guest side and the conservation side. So, I definitely think that a person who has some form of guiding background and moves into conservation, will see the perspective of the guide's side of things. When the guide comes and asks the conservation manager "We're looking for a place for a bush breakfast, a bush *braai*, or a picnic that doesn't impact on the environment, that won't impact on anything," suddenly the conservation manager will turn around and say "No, sorry, we don't do those kind of things in our reserve" not realizing the implications, and the money that's generated that will eventually come back into the park, if everybody works together. So there is a clash, and I think that either people need to be a bit more open, or they need to have a bit of cross-pollination, which will ensure that everybody understands where the other party is coming from.[87]

Lex Hes, like Mike English, has spent many years in the bush of Mpumalanga, but with the private sector rather than in the Kruger Park. He is intermediate in age between Warren Bekker and Mike English, but tended to closely echo Warren Bekker's thoughts:

> I don't think people should necessarily do both lines of work, but I do think there should be some understanding of what each person does. If you're a guide in a wildlife area, you're a guide, and your role is almost more of an entertainer than a conservationist. You're a communicator and your conservation role really is to communicate to people the importance of environment and wilderness. So that's from a conservation point of view that would be the role you're playing. You're not necessarily playing a management or wildlife or environmental management role. But I think you do have to have an understanding of it. So you want to be able to when you are driving around and showing your guests around a reserve be able to talk fairly knowledgeably about the way a wildlife area is being managed. And then I think on the other hand game rangers should also be very aware of the important role that tourists play in wildlife areas and not look at them as intruders in the environment which I think has been a fault in many conservation areas previously, I think maybe it's changing a bit now. They should be aware of the importance of eco tourists and the role they are playing and they can feel more welcome and maybe even play a role in helping to educate them. There should be something to change, but I don't think they necessarily both of them have to be doing those same jobs.[88]

Mandla Gumede (a Wilderness Leadership School guide based in KZN) worked his way through conservation, but leapt at the opportunity to work in guiding:

> I came at Mfolozi and I met a guy Craig Reed. I introduced myself, then I started working as a volunteer, but it was very, very short, and then I was doing patrol, doing fence line and I was working as a Field Ranger as well, and then after a few days he gave me some piece-job, I was removing *Chromolaena* [or paraffin weed, a hazardous invader], and after that he gave me some piece-job again, we were fencing Mbeyo Camp. After that he introduced me at Wilderness Leadership School, then I started working as a trainee, and after 3 years they gave me a good, good position, now I'm leading trails…[89]

Rangani Tsanwani (a Kruger Park guide) felt that to become a section ranger is

> …each and every guide's goal. Because in guiding you can see that you go to this level, you go to this level, then you stop. No more…on the guiding. That's why people want to take some other branches. Being *(sic.)* a section ranger and all this stuff. Because the same qualification you have, is the same qualification the section ranger needed to have. That's the other problem with guiding. You will be a night drive guide, then you become a backup guide, you become a first rifle as I am. Then that's the end of guiding. But [it would be good] if they [could] introduce some other steps.[90]

Manzi Spruit (also working in the Kruger Park) conceived of there being three separate but inter-related job-descriptions descended from the "game ranger":

> I do agree with that because a lot of the field guides, which is the right term, talk about a guide, not a ranger, if you work with people, if you do tours, or day walks, you are a field guide. However, if you are permanently into ecological management, if you are a section ranger, or whatever, then you are a ranger. The border line is being a trails ranger, because in the past in the park what happened is if you worked yourself up to becoming a section ranger, you had to pass- I think it's a couple of years that you had to be a trails ranger as well, before you could become a section ranger. Nowadays it doesn't work like that anymore, but a lot of the field guides has *(sic.)* got the same qualifications, as the section rangers, or rangers as we call them, and some of them has *(sic.)* got higher qualifications, so I think it would be fantastic if they use the field guides out with ecological management and surveys- that would be just- it's part of the training process, part of growing. They've got the knowledge, all they want is the opportunity to also do *(sic.)* their input. That would be really nice.[91]

It is evident from the preceding comments that there is a strong parallel in the evolution of the field guide in both KwaZulu-Natal and in the Kruger National Park. Both areas have a recorded history of game rangers or game scouts (which really meant black game rangers of a lower rank) sometimes interacting with tourists which goes back almost to the moment of inception of the parks. But the establishment of trails meant that the park management needed to identify individuals who could do this work on a regular and professional basis. Due to the initial erratic nature of trails, the most logical candidates to operate the trails were the current game rangers. This resulted in a strong correlation between management policies and activities, and the philosophy, principals and ethics of the field guides. The fact that exposure to management policies such as culling led to trails guides who are more willing to shoot animals becomes evident when comparing their position to attitudes to the subject in institutions which did not have this type of history, such as at Madikwe. When Madikwe Game Reserve was established in 1997

park management was conceived of as completely separate to guiding: the former was a government function, and the latter was a private sector function. There seemed to be a clear intention that the guides should come from the community, and an organization called Mafisa, with financial support from the British Council, engaged the services of Environmental Training Group, to select and train people from local communities to work as guides in the privately owned lodges which were being developed at the time (also discussed further in chapter 4). The result was that none of these guides had a game ranging or game or environmental management background, so they did not perceive the link between game ranging and guiding.

The establishment of the Field Guides' Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) in 1992 was an acknowledgement or embodiment of the coming of age of the field guide as a career path independent from that of game ranging. (This is discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

According to Ignatius Bogatsu:

> I think that anybody that registers with FGASA and they get a FGASA module before they write a level I exam should know the difference between a game ranger and a field guide and trying to mix the two will probably complicate things. A game ranger and a field guide are two completely different people and they don't maybe, given their environment- that's the only thing they do have in common, but their job descriptions are completely not the same.[92]

Other guides in Madikwe who had the same background expressed the same opinion with separate career-pathing being envisaged as the norm, or at least preferable. Is this separation a good thing? Will this model spread back to KZN Wildlife and the Kruger

National Park? The answers to these questions are complex and are dealt with implicitly or explicitly below.

The traditional term “game ranger” is often still used to describe both environmental managers and tourist guides. The current reality is that these exist as two distinct career paths, although overlap exists between them particularly in KZN Wildlife Reserves (formerly Natal Parks) and the Kruger National Park. The establishment of the Field Guides’ Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) has asserted the identity of the field guide as separate to the game ranger. The growth of trails and other guided activities such as day walks, night drives and open vehicle drives has meant that permanent employment and a degree of career-pathing is available to the field guide, so in the independence of field guides will certainly be maintained and will in all likelihood become more entrenched and emphasized, due to the difference in skills and experience requirements.

The existence of trails officers and other field guides springs directly from the vision of the middle management of Natal Parks in the mid to late 1950s, strongly shaped by the vision of Dr. Ian Player. It is impossible to overstate the importance and influence of Ian Player through over half a century of work in conservation and in the recognition of wilderness, and in the appropriate development of human and other resources to facilitate people’s experience of wilderness. This influence comes through in the career of Clive Walker.

> From then onwards I gradually got more experience by going on further of these trails, until I was offered a position in 1974, if I am right in my memory, by the Wilderness Leadership School, at the time under the Directorship of Barry Clements, and I went back to Zululand for additional training. One of my principal instructors was Jim Feely, who was the architect behind the concept of wilderness trails, and he brought it to the attention of Ian Player, and Ian has always very generous in admitting or acknowledging that it was Jim Feely who brought the American concept of wilderness trails to Ian's attention.[93]
>
> I once said to Ian Player years ago, I said 'Ian, do you really believe that all this hard work and all this effort can make any difference?' and he said to me 'Clive, I want to tell you one thing. If we make one convert, one disciple out of a thousand, it's been worth it!' and Ian Player's 100% right.[94]

The influence of Clive Walker in turn on the wilderness movement has been extensive and he recalls a former wilderness participant who

> …then got a job at the "Big Five" restaurant- he worked there for 5 years. He is now the chef of this very, very lovely place in Marakele and he was so excited that he had seen me, and I couldn't remember him because there are thousands of kids that are lectured to. And he's one of a number- another very good example, is the lady who today is the manager of the Green Trust of South Africa, who also as a 14 year old school girl went to Lapalala- I lectured to her in a group of 60 kids and when she left school she just said to her mom she wants to go to University and she got a degree and she joined the Department of Environmental Affairs, and today she's been in the Green Trust now for 4 or 5 years- all through that wilderness experience she's had.[95]

Hypothetically, if the conservator were to disappear, it is probable that the systems that conserved natural areas would no longer function and human encroachment would soon destroy the wilderness area. The result would be that the nature guide would no longer have a game reserve to show to tourists, and that he too would be a member of a doomed species. If the nature guide were to disappear the game ranger may be unable to derive revenue which supports the management of the park, (unless, as formerly, the system was subsidized by the state) and so the game ranger would soon also disappear to find a paying job elsewhere.

The fact that tourism and management should be interdependent was stressed by Bruce Bryden in discussing his motivation for the shooting of an elephant bull, which began to harass people at Tshokwane.[96] Bryden argued that tourist guides had participated in habituating this animal to human presence, and had not acted responsibly in warning tourists of the prospective danger that was thus created. On the day that he shot the elephant a tourist guide had allowed his tourists to move within dangerous proximity of this elephant and clearly an incident where the elephant would have killed people was imminent.

Thus, in the modern tourist system a relationship seems to have developed where the nature guide (or more broadly tourism) is the economic producer and ecological consumer, whilst the game ranger (or more broadly management) is the ecological producer and economic consumer. In other words tourism degrades the environment and makes money, whilst management maintains or improves the environment, but this costs money.

It is possible to conceive of models where, on the one hand the state provides money to conserve natural areas without recourse to revenue from tourism, or on the other hand a nature guide continues to derive revenue from showing people natural areas even though these are not managed. It is fair to reckon that neither of the above models is really sustainable, so the separate yet inter-dependant functions of conservation and tourism

will in all likelihood continue. The trend to separate career-pathing for game rangers and nature guides will continue, and is becoming the norm.

Thus motivations of the nature guide are primarily related to economy and ecology, but the third pillar of this "*potjie*" (traditional three legged pot) is ethics. Motivation for an ethical practice, and the history of its derivation, is what occupies the rest of this chapter, and in a broader sense, much of the rest of this thesis. (A specific discussion on ethics is contained in Chapter 5).

**Characteristics of the Wilderness Leadership School Guide**

The Wilderness Leadership School is the home of romantics and dreamers, of people with big hearts who want to make the public experience and appreciate nature in a state where it seems independent of human influence, where the elements are primal and where people live on the same plane as plants and animals, as our ancestors once did before the advent of advanced technology. Without sponsorship, the School will be faced with becoming too expensive for its client market or closing down. The School has produced a group of guides who are passionate, enthusiastic and idealistic, and although they are aware of the existence of culling programmes, they present themselves as opposing these, or at least offering them clearly qualified support. The separation of the School from the state run KZN Wildlife has allowed them to maintain this very idealistic ethos, and not be tarnished by the pragmatism of people who are regularly required to kill

animals for management purposes. On the other hand this separation also means that they also have no access to significant state funding. Nevertheless, the Wilderness Leadership School seems to have proliferated successfully beyond KwaZulu-Natal.

Will the Wilderness Leadership School survive, especially after Ian Player dies? I hope it does, but there is no doubt that it will need to continue with a very pragmatic approach to fundraising and organizational management. I also believe that the School needs to examine its own sell-by date. Will sophisticated people continue to buy into the "wilderness myth" when there are compelling arguments from critical environmentalists that the whole myth of wilderness is too riddled with paradoxes and questionable cultural constructs to be enduring? I strongly propose that the School does some serious introspection and considers re-aligning its strategies and policies to respond to the accusation that wilderness experiences are nothing but feel-good escapes from urban and technological life that have no fundamental impact on the lives of people who live on the cutting edge of the late capitalist system which drives environmental degradation in the first place. This will be a very difficult exercise, because to completely alienate capitalist organizations would be highly detrimental to the future of fundraising.

Will "wilderness" itself survive the pressure from humans for farms, for housing, for mining, for industry and for a million human uses? This tide may be held back with the temporary dyke of money and planning, but the only real way to prevent human exploitation is a wide-scale educational intervention to persuade people of the fundamental wrongness of anthropocentric justifications for resource use, and instill a

consciousness that both culture and nature are everywhere, in different degrees, and that natural environments have a right and a need to exist for their own sake. Otherwise any utilitarian policies and practices will eventually lead to the destruction of all natural habitats.

So it is fine to sense senses, and to feel feelings, and to dream dreams and to see visions, but the Wilderness Leadership School needs to start looking at itself as a small, but critical, branch of the World Environmental Preservation Movement. It is too late to merely be letting people live a moment in time when they realize that termites keep their mounds at a constant temperature and humidity, or hear the heart stopping call of a fish eagle, or see a white rhino having lunch near the banks of the Umfolozi. Of course, those things will warm their hearts. Making sure that those things will be there requires something much bigger than saving the "wilderness". We must save the world.

**Conclusion**

The above section looks at the Wilderness Leadership School Guide, but does not discuss the KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife guide. It is through the creation of the Wilderness Leadership School in 1957 by Dr. Ian Player that these became two separate entities. Dr. Player maintained that there are people who can do both jobs, but some people become game rangers because they are natural introverts or loners, and they are inappropriate as guides. Guides need to have outstanding people skills, be excellent facilitators and have a massive amount of endurance. One of the purposes of keeping people doing both jobs

was to ensure that they did not get “burn out”. Today’s Wilderness Leadership School guide should be chosen as someone with experience and insight into conservation, but who necessarily needs to have a different vision. The separation game ranging (management) and guiding (eco-tourism) has allowed some idealism to persist.

The KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife officer or ranger still wears a uniform and is encouraged to act much like a soldier at all times and perceives his purpose as being to manage nature. His attributes are neatness, punctuality, obedience and discipline, and he should understand nature in a cold and rational fashion. He must be realistic and pragmatic- and willing to burn bushes or shoot animals if that is what is required, but he will also spend time mending roads, vehicles, fences and pumps. He can be somewhat introverted, solitary, or even anti-social as long as he has the ability to execute and obey orders, and to generate them when he becomes more senior. His ultimate objectives are a well-run game reserve. Someone with the above traits and attributes is often not suitable to be a guide, so the choice of guides within this structure needs to be very careful. People who are guides are typically extroverted, independent and critical.

By comparison, the Wilderness Leadership School Guides are warm, emotional and romantic. Although they understand the logic of why animals are killed for management purposes, they have the luxury of being able to divorce themselves from responsibility for these acts. They are gregarious, sociable and personable as well as polite and friendly. Their understanding of nature needs to be open, romantic and idealistic, for these are the kinds of sentiments that appeal to the majority of trailists. Their aim is to instill hope,

enthusiasm and optimism in their clients, though their over-riding objective is that clients should be happy with their wilderness experience. Wilderness Leadership School Guides still display some of the attributes of rangers: they should be neat and their appearance is modeled on that of game rangers, and they need to have excellent weapons handling skills should an emergency arise with a dangerous animal. They also have to be resourceful and creative to handle other kinds of unexpected incidents which may threaten the comfort or safety of his clients. Ultimately they need the sensitivity to know whether their clients are happy enough, and the experience and skill to alter the circumstances, or perceptions of the circumstances, if they are not.

The fact that the roles of game rangers and nature guides have diverged since 1957, has allowed a fairly pronounced split to occur in KwaZulu-Natal between game rangers and the Wilderness Leadership School guides, but within the KwaZulu-Natal Parks, there are still people who are specialist guides and who are necessarily a hybrid between the two roles rather broadly sketched here.

Obviously, there are challenges which face the idealistic and romantic vision of the School. To hope is better than to be defeated; to dream is better than to despair. Hopes and dreams should be tempered by thoughts, and the Wilderness Leadership School needs to transform itself to educate its guides and clients that the underlying causes of problems and threats to the wilderness are ultimately the causes of problems and threats to the entire planet.

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[13] Int. 1 Dr. Ian Player, p.7, L17
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[35] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.1 L30
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# TRANSFORMATION OF THE MYTH AND THE MYTH OF TRANSFORMATION: OVER 100 YEARS OF GUIDING IN SOUTH AFRICAN GAME RESERVES



brotherhood

## Chapter 3- The Evolution of Trails in the Kruger National Park (1978-1991)

## CHAPTER 3- THE EVOLUTION OF TRAILS IN THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK (1978-1991)

This chapter will focus mainly on the Kruger National Park and discuss issues that relate to the dominant guiding style in that conservation area. The first section documents how Mike English and others persuaded people that trails would be relatively safe and were a desirable way of utilizing "wilderness areas" and giving the general public of South Africa access to the Kruger National Park on foot, a privilege that was previously the prerogative of game rangers. The second section explores the strong bond of loyalty that exists between rifle-bearing guides in the Kruger National Park and throughout the country is discussed. The third section addresses the mysterious origins of "the Big Five" and how the consciousness of this elite group crept insidiously into the agenda of almost anybody visiting the African bush, particularly foreigners or people who did not visit too often. The fourth section looks at guided encounters with dangerous animals which are always interesting and exciting, but are sometimes quite hair-raising and occasionally have a tragic outcome for the animal concerned. The fifth section examines trails "incidents" and the complex set of circumstances and causes which surround these. It contrasts the perspective of guides who do not think that the level of trails "incidents" is problematic with the arguments of those who think that it is. The sixth section describes how the Kruger Park Trails Company was privatized and how and why it is currently being re-incorporated into the core staff of the Kruger National Park. The conclusion attempts to summarize the chapter and to present a profile of Kruger National Park guides and identify the factors which give them their unique character.

**The Kruger National Park finally sets out on the Trail**

Ever since the advent of technology humans have undoubtedly been the most dangerous creature on the planet, and human impact increases daily. The fact that public trails have been conducted in the Kruger National Park since 1978 without any directly consequent human fatalities is in itself a remarkable achievement (see pp.169 & 175 below). This has only been made possible because the public have always been accompanied by armed, competent and alert guides, who have always been able to dispatch the charging animal concerned before it reached any of their clients. The initiation of these trails only came about after an extended and intense period of deliberation and planning. In order to make any judgment concerning the impact and value of these trails it is important to understand this background.

It is impossible to describe the history of trails in the Kruger National Park without mentioning Mike English. Despite his often self-depreciatory remarks, it is quite clear that English was the driving force behind the initial conception and implementation of the trails in the Kruger National Park. He explained the background to this story as follows:

> I was allocated to research the area on the western boundary and I had been on previous occasions up into that area, into the Makuleke, when I was still farming from Louis Trichardt. I just had a feel for it, and riverine bush on the Limpopo and the Levubu was to me an ideal place to conduct day trails for guys from ornithological societies and dendrological societies, because its one of the choice vegetation areas and as a result of the vegetation you have a variety of different birds, but you can also climb up and there's a series of pans along the Limpopo River which used to draw all sorts of birds in season. I saw the potential of trails-day trails that I had first in mind, and that's where my fixation on trails I would say was initiated. I had to deal with people on the demarcation of the boundaries and I found a whole series of pans along the Limpopo that we would be able to utilize and unfortunately we were not able to include the Newadi Pan, but we managed to get the Sopinyo Pan. The Newadi is a massive pan and it would have completed the system, but unfortunately we weren't able to get it… and then I heard about the trails going on at Umfolozi…and at that stage there was an

> anthrax research station there that was becoming sort of not utilized, as such. I thought that we could perhaps use that as a base camp- start out from there and do walking trails back-packing and sleep out in the bush- in the winter months- and having a group come in the afternoon late, sleep over, take off the next morning, early in the morning, take off from there on two, three day trail, whatever it may be along the Levubu. I thought perhaps of doing a bit of fishing- beautiful birds there along the river, …perhaps on the second day have a group come in and we could perhaps have three or four groups going at the same time. I heard that they had trails going on now and I had now and then something to do with parks rangers and we discussed this amongst various other things.[1]
>
> Well, you could say that [this was setting the foundations for trails in the Kruger Park], but I don't think you can say that. We went up as a family and he [Trevor Dearlove] took us out for a night or two nights enjoy the scenery and they slept out under the stars and when I came back I wrote to Ian Player and I asked him…and I got a basic idea of how he ran trails then in Zimbabwe. I invited Dr. Robert Filmer (who was then head of parks) up to Lanner Gorge and I pointed out to him the idea was setting good trails and how I envisaged trails going out along the Lebvubu and walking back and being picked up at a certain point through the areas we were looking at. Then I took Trevor Dearlove up and I told him of my ideas and he was pretty enthusiastic, and he motivated for the trails, and I said to him 'You work on your side and I'll work on mine', and I would visit him when I went down and he would visit me when he came up. Then it went to the board for discussion and approval, and as far as I can make out the voting was split equally for and against and the chairman who was the Administrator of the Transvaal [Sybrand van Niekerk] had the casting voting and he voted in favour of it, and that's how it all began.[2]

The background events described above occurred in the early to mid 1970s and

> Trevor [Dearlove] was the first trails ranger there, and I said to them 'Look you know, I feel that trails are something we can offer the public of South Africa'. We have this opportunity and to have the experience of walking in the wild (to me) was a privilege that belonged to game rangers. [I believed that the public] were entitled to do it and to be shown everything that we were familiar with.[3]

In general terms, though, the idea was new and unfamiliar. Mike English is very "conservation minded", and might even be called "cautious" or "conservative" in terms of broader contemporary norms. However it cannot be stressed enough that his life was a continuous battle with people significantly more conservative than himself:

> I don't think there was resistance as such that it wasn't a good idea, I think it was the danger aspect, because let's face it at that stage people weren't allowed out of their cars- this was the perception that it was a dangerous thing to get out on foot,

> but I don't quite know. I wouldn't say it was a resistance, but people were a little bit wet behind the ears, they didn't think it was possible. I'm not sure why they had these fears, but there were specific wilderness areas set aside. But I would say it was regarded as dangerous. The opportunity of getting out into the bush and that also was the utilization of areas that were normally closed to tourists. There's pressure upon conservation areas, if you don't use it you lose it. Within reason- don't over-utilize it then you kill the very thing you're taking the people out to. From the trails point of view, and from the day trails that they're doing up there, if you over-utilize the commodity you'll kill the atmosphere, and I think we must remember that. It mustn't be a question of making money, and it was my suggestion to Parks Board that rest camps, in fact normal tourism and rest camps are making enough money to support the wilderness trails and we mustn't make this financially out of reach of the normal South African citizen. And I'm afraid at some stages a lot of these Private Reserves are far out-pricing themselves and have placed themselves far out of range of the normal South African citizen, and it would be a sad day if we did the same. It's part of our South African heritage, and we mustn't out-price the local guy. People here are bush-lovers, but because of the fact that they haven't got the finance, we must never deprive someone of that opportunity and must be prepared to carry the cost of the trails, without relying on that fee, and that was my suggestion to Parks Board.[4]
>
> Well, Parks Board approved the trails then Wilderness Leadership School said they'd like to do it as a concession and in fact they held a meeting with Jim Feely. Don Richards was there, and Johan Schoppers, and we met them and Johan wanted it down at the pump-house where there was water and that sort of thing and they said it was too close to the edge of the wilderness, so Johan said 'Well that's the only place we can easily get water'. Anyway they went and they thought about it and we said 'Why can't we do it ourselves?' Then Trevor [Dearlove] and I went and looked for the ideal trail and we started the trail and called it the Bushman Trail because of the all the bushman paintings found there, but we found that most people weren't so interested in the paintings.[5]

Possibly for this reason the Bushman Trail was only established in 1983. It was preceded by the Wolhuter Trail (established in 1978), the Olifants Trail (established in 1979) and the Nyalaland Trail (established in 1980). Subsequently the Metsi-Metsi Trail (established in 1988), the Sweni Trail (established in 1990) and the Napi Trail (established in 1991) were developed. The Bushman Trail is in the south western corner of the Park and is considered as a good trail for lion sightings. The base camp for the Wolhuter Trail is between Berg-en-Dal and Pretoriuskop and blends beautifully into the surroundings which feature silver terminalias and marulas and is considered one of the

best trails for white rhino sightings. The Olifants Trail is a superb scenic trail with the base camp and much of the trail overlooking or on the banks of the Olifants River. The Nyalaland Trail is on the Madzaringwe stream, roughly equidistant from Punda Maria and Pafuri. The vegetation includes baobabs, tambotis, leadwoods and mopanes and the large animals encountered often include elephant and buffalo. The Metsi-Metsi Trail is north-east of Tshokwane. A generous variety of large herbivores may be seen on this trail, and so consequently lion encounters are quite frequent. The Sweni Trail is near Nwanetsi and is rated by Leo Braack the former Kruger National Park ecologist and author of several books as his favorite trail for its marvelous habitat and species diversity. The Napi Trail is largely along the Mbyamithi River to the east of Pretoriuskop.[6]

Mike English demonstrated that visionary and progressive thinking in terms of the norms of nature conservation and tourism management at the time by persuading people that walking trails in the Kruger National Park would be feasible and supported by demand. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that he took this position, he was quite clearly very cautious, and arguably conservative about how trails should be conducted. He clearly believed that there could be no compromise in terms of the trail leader and backup guide always carrying rifles. Furthermore, although outspoken in other areas, Mike English was not prepared to criticize Kruger National Park management, or the Kruger National Park Trails Company, for the number of animals killed by trails rangers:

> …if you are walking trails without a rifle in an area with dangerous animals, you are exposing the lives of eight or ten people (however many you have with you). No, there's no way you can go into the bush with a group of people. We had one or two section rangers who never carried a rifle, but then they're out there on their own. It makes you more alert…if you've got a rifle you're not as alert as if you haven't got a rifle. I never went without a rifle.[7]

Mike English did not feel that the 41 reported incidents in the trails history of Kruger

National Park (see page 169 below for synopsis and appendix IV for details[8]) was necessarily alarming or unjustified:

> I can't comment on what would be acceptable…you would have to look at the man hours spent on trails and there are various other factors…but I don't think that one can point a finger at any specific person or any specific group who are working in a specific area. I don't think that one can be judgmental on this thing until we've summed up all the circumstances, and until you can determine the gravity or the seriousness of the charge that came from whatever it may be. I don't know…[9]

The trails ran from 1978-1983 without any episodes which resulted in the shooting of an animal. (These are routinely called "incidents" particularly by informants who work or have worked in the Kruger National Park in some of the quotes which follow). The first "incident" occurred in 1983, and thereafter they became more frequent. Mike English suggested that:

> [In 1978] there was only one trail going. Now you've got them all over the place…you're sitting with a problem, especially in the central and northern area, of these refugees coming in from Moçambique who are encouraging lions. Lions are getting used to approaching people and every time they see a trail they think it's a group of meat and they come and you've got to protect- there's no stopping a lion. He'll soon meet a person he's going to eat.[10]

However, when confronted with trails incident statistics (see page 169 below for synopsis and appendix VII for details) English immediately conceded that lions are not the most significant species in terms of trails incident statistics:

> …you can frighten a lion off, but if you've got a charging elephant, or something like that you shoot to kill. But rhino[*] are a problem because you're in a thickish bush and you're on the only game path in an area, and here this guy comes charging along. The guy at first rifle is the first guy in line, and he can jump out of the way, but what about these guys [the trailists] So he's got to make a decision in a split second must I shoot it or not? And the Natal guys say that they've had how many rhino there and they've only had to shoot one or two. I know that there was one ranger [from] the GRA and he was here at Sabie Sands

[*] English did not say whether he meant black rhino *(Diceros bicornis)* which do prefer thick bush, but have never been shot in KNP, or white rhino *(Ceratotherium simum)* which do not normally frequent thick bush, but which are the most commonly shot animal in the history of KNP trails. It is reasonable to be skeptical of the suggestion that white rhino are frequently shot because of thick bush.

> [Bruce Dell, who] got an award for bravery, he lured the [white] rhino away and it gored him and saved the lives of the other people, but the other thing that could have happened is that that rhino could have killed him and then come back for the clients. So where do you draw the line?[11]

When English was reminded that the above incident was in Natal, he responded that "one can't compare apples to carrots", suggesting that there are significant differences between conditions in the Kruger Park and those in other places such as the KZN parks. At the suggestion that one should investigate the causes for these differences, Mike English responded cautiously that:

> I don't think you can draw up a set of rules…I always went from the viewpoint that if you are in an area and you detect one or other of the dangerous animals, don't go looking for trouble, and don't go after the specific animal unless you know that you are completely safe. I mean, I always used to say to the guys if you pick up a lioness or a [leopard?] cub [spoor?] and it disappears into a thicket, don't go into the thicket- go around and see where they come out, and if they haven't come out, you can either sit and wait for them, to see if they come out or whatever it is. But then you know, you've got a group of people, so you leave that and go elsewhere, but don't try and impress the group by showing them a lion because nine out of ten you'll be in trouble.[12]

He was adamant on the position that neither Kruger Park management nor the typical trails ranger should be criticized:

> I've never really come into contact [with trails rangers deliberately angling for "adrenalin tips"], but it's something I've heard from various people that some of the guides take chances, to get the adrenalin pumping and if it comes off you know, the clients give them better tips when they go. But I don't think it's a question specifically in trails and think in vehicle terms people do absolutely stupid things with wild animals, with elephants and things that can hammer the car- to get the feeling of Africa from a charging buffalo. I've never personally (except one guy- I wouldn't like to mention who)…really come across that with our guys in Kruger. Really, I don't think so. Ignorance, perhaps, at some stages, but not to get the adrenalin pumping, but I've heard it said that a couple of the guys in trails may do it…[13]

The competence of Kruger National Park trails rangers is beyond dispute. Bruce Bryden recounts that during the

> …25 years of running trails while I was there we had about 452 000 visitors- an

> average of 56 people per day- on foot in the *veld* during any 11 month annual period, and we didn't suffer one fatality.[14]

The trails started in 1978 and Bruce Bryden retired on the 30th May, 2001[15] (less than 24 years by my calculations, to split hairs). The only client fatality that can be cited which occurred since this date, concerns a fatal heart attack of a client of Richard Sourey's (see p.175 below), and it is clear from the outset that no degree of culpability by the guide could reasonably be implied.

It is absolutely clear that Mike English dedicated his life to making the Kruger Park as well managed as possible, although (like Stevenson-Hamilton did before him- see pp.20, 21 & 54) he feels that the rustic character of the Park is being inevitably and regretfully eroded. Despite his modesty, it is obvious that his contribution to the establishment of walking trails in the Park has been enormous. He executed this job with passion and attention to detail and made a major contribution towards the establishment of a series of trails which easily match those in KwaZulu-Natal in quality. With the expansion of trails across the Park, the diversity of offerings in Kruger is unrivalled in the region, and arguably in the world. Not only do the Kruger Park trails cover a significantly broad variety of habitats, but they also have significant features of cultural interest such as on the Bushman Trail. In addition, Mike English clearly has a deep interest in nature and real compassion towards animals, but he is also concerned that the common citizen of South Africa should be able to access the Parks, and most specifically that trails should always remain affordable and attractive to South Africans. Apart from his excellent record of leadership and service, another notable quality was his extreme loyalty towards his former employers the Kruger National Park management and his former peers and

subordinates, the trails rangers and other staff of the Kruger National Park. The failure to criticize any of the aforementioned parties in anything other than the most oblique fashion, indicates extraordinary commitment to a bond with this group, which will be explored in detail below.

**The Brotherhood of Lead**

My strong impression has been that women are very under-represented as guides in game reserves. Dr. Ian Player didn't entirely agree with me and cited two examples.

> Yes, we do, a tiny little woman. Kim Gillings is her name. A little bit taller than this stick. The gun that she carries is bigger than her. And there's also another one…San-Marie Botha… and they're very good. And all the men [make out as though they have a problem with shooting]. Nonsense, these women can shoot as well as any man, and they have an added aura! Yes, today there are many women trails officers- in my day there were none! And in fact my wife would get very angry because my game ranger friends would say that the role in Parks Board for woman was either as a typist or a receptionist. No, they make very good guides. San-Marie and Kim are both at Umfolozi. And I was looking in my diary today- there's a woman that I met- she's from Anchorage- she leads horse trails- and they've got bears and other dangers. But they're very interested in dreams too, I might add…I spoken to most of the males who do wilderness trails, but the moment I get amongst the women they want to know a lot more about the inner journey. It's not surprising.[16]

Regrettably, no input from either Kim Gillings or San-Marie Botha was obtained for this thesis. The only women game reserve guide featured in this research was Manzi Spruit, who described her rather unique life story:

> It all started with the fact that I was born at Tshokwane in the Kruger Park- it's between Satara and Skukuza, and my father had a very big impact on my life- he was a section ranger there. And I tried after that- he asked me to go and study music, but the bush was no place for a female because your real Afrikaans people believed that a woman's place was barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen, so I did go and study music, and after that I asked him if I am now allowed to go and

> study nature conservation, and then he gave up and said, "Okay, go for it!" [then] I was in the army- the first year I was with the military police, because there were no positions open at nature conservation, then after a year a position went open, and about 6 months later I was chief conservationist of the army, with 58 cadets under my command which was magic…the areas where they play their war games- you have to do an impact study before they can go in for war games because the idea is to give the area back to the government in a better condition, so that was a fantastic job.[17]
>
> Initially, I was at a place in Pietersburg called Korwesdraai Roodewalt Shooting Range, but then after I was at army headquarters in Pretoria, but I have to confess that I rarely visited other areas- my favourite area was the Nshakathini strip which is from Musina and Pafuri Gate in the Kruger Park, going all the way down to Vembe [Dongola National Park], and most of that has been given back to the government, and that Makuleke area has also been given back, and then I came back to the Kruger Park in 2000. I started off as a night drive guide, and slowly worked my way up as walk back-up on day walks, then lead rifle, and then I was very fortunate to become a trails ranger, which was the ultimate…after that I went to Eco-Training and I worked for them for about seven months as an instructor, and now I'm back in the Park. Unfortunately, I can't stay away from the Park.[18]

The military career and sometimes hard attitude may tempt the reader into thinking that this is the biography of a man. In a certain respect, women who become guides in game reserves have to be even tougher than the men, because they face an ongoing barrage of opposition and prejudice:

> In my youth it used to bother me a lot being a female because your male colleagues, especially the Afrikaans speaking ones couldn't forget the fact that you're a female, and you were just not competent to do anything in their eyes and consequently you had to prove yourself, which is very tiring. But in the period that I was trails ranger, I had none of that- I was treated as one of them, and I think that that was the highlight of my life. I was born to work- I love working, I love people and the combination of being in the Kruger Park and working with people all the time is having your bread buttered on both sides- absolutely loved it. The experience that you get with trails, you can't compare that to anything else, not even day walks. I think that is about the best you can have if you like this kind of thing. [I didn't have that common urge to leave after a few years although] I think that if you're young, and especially the young guys- they need a female in their life- it's only natural, but I didn't have that problem. My husband died many years ago, so I'm a loner and I don't need other any thing than strictly the bush. I am at an age where you don't give a damn. We did get a lot of breaks in between- it's not always busy, and they do rotate- every second week somebody else would walk, but a couple of times I worked for six weeks in a row- no burnout- how can you *(sic.)*?[19]

It might seem reasonable if someone with this sort of experience had a negative attitude towards men, but it seems that Manzi Spruit is remarkable for being both hard and extremely forgiving, and furthermore has a deep respect for the skills of men who have influenced her:

> The few that I have had the privilege of walking with are some of my colleagues in trails, also assistants that I had on trails. Actually the one guy is now a trails ranger. He used to be my assistant, but he was so brilliant that I just said to the bosses that this guy is trails ranger material. I actually wish you could speak to him- he's from Punda Maria…he's Christopher Nthathi. He's based at Nyalaland. He's now the trails ranger there. He's absolutely amazing. Another guy who really is great with a lot of things, not just tracking, is Daniel Maluleke. He's an old man now. I think he retired already. That also, the time that I spent with him, I think it was my best school ever. Then you get other people like Nick Squires- he's still walking trails. He is absolutely amazing- so is Jaco Badenhorst. People that know what they're talking about. There's a lot! Ag, and I can't neglect to say my father as well. He was also brilliant. You see my dad didn't have a son, and being a staunch boere Afrikaner, he believed that a little girl's place is there, but because he didn't have a son, I was fortunate, I was the youngest, and I sort of landed in that part of being the "son" in the house. I was lucky. It was a fantastic school. Between him and his tracker as he called him then, Petrus Ndlovu. Actually, I blame them that I do this, because they just made it my full world. It was great.[20]

Manzi Spruit acknowledges that she does not consider herself a typical woman. She has two traits that appear almost universal in the Kruger National Park- incredible loyalty to her rifle and incredible loyalty to her colleagues:

> If I've got paying guests with me, and I am responsible for their safety, no, I will not [go into the bush without a rifle]. You might be with colleagues. If you are going out with colleagues, not all of you are going to carry rifles. It depends on the situation. If I go out with the state vet, then the section ranger will be there with a rifle. That's something totally different. I'll just add something. I went out with the field rangers a couple of times…on a bicycle. In that instance I was with three other guys, sorry, two other guys- I was in the three, and I had no rifle with me, and it was quite a unique experience, because we were happily pedaling away, and we had an elephant situation, and it was amazing how those guys looked after me. I was quite capable to look after myself, but once again, in their culture, looking after a lady…I enjoyed that. *(Laughs)*…it's a brotherhood… If you really want to do it, you're going to work for it because it becomes a way of life. The wealth that you get is not money-wise, it's something totally different, so it doesn't matter what colour you are or what you are, it's actually beautiful- you've got that opportunity to prove yourself and say 'I'm a good guide.'…If you

> prove yourself, you're in. You're part of a brotherhood.[21]

The strong bond and reluctance to criticize fellow members unites rifle bearers in a brotherhood of lead. A woman can join this brotherhood, but to do so you have to just about sweat blood, so not many women do. But like Ian Player, Manzi Spruit could name a couple of other exceptional women besides herself:

> The very first trails ranger was Annelle- she then met the man of her dreams Peter Scott, and they got married, so she was in trails for 6 months. The next lady was Janet Webb- she was in trails for one year, and then she resigned and joined the private sector. Both ladies very competent, also never shot an animal on trail. I want to mention that to you, by the way, that in the time that I've been doing trails, I haven't shot an animal in the Park. I'm not talking about earlier. Since I joined the Park, I've not shot an animal….if you're a female, it doesn't mean that you'll have to able to pick up buffaloes and drag them around. It's a different kind of strength. It's not in your arms, it's in your head. You have to be a strong person, you have to be focused, and if you have that love for what you're doing, then you're one very happy person. And those two ladies, there's a lot more, I can mention a lot more, that just get in there and just fight, if I mean fight I mean not with your fists, to get into the position were in. They were very, very focused and they made very, very good guides.[22]

> I won't say men [are] better, I won't say women [are] better. You're a guide, whether you're male or female. Depends once again on your insights, how strong you are mentally, whether you're a good guide or bad guide but no, I wouldn't say females are better guides, or males are better guides… It's not about being male or female, definitely not. It's about your attitude, what kind of person you are- some men are absolutely incredible and patient and good with people, and some are not, and the same with females- some of them are good with people and some of them are not so it's not about being male or female.[23]

Manzi Spruit expressed pleasant surprise on hearing that Dr. Ian Player thought that women were better guides because they had a greater sensitivity towards people, they had a greater awareness of trailists being unhappy. It was not mentioned to Manzi Spruit, though she was probably aware of this, having worked with him, that Lex Hes had also expressed a similar view on the abilities of women:

> I think women are quite as capable and in fact the beginning of our discussion was sensitivity and I think women are far more sensitive. They're better with understanding people and they are better with understanding or being sensitive to

> the environment. And therefore I think sensitivity being such an important part of guiding, generally speaking, women probably will make better guides than men. There's also less of this macho attitude, which a lot of men have about, let's see how close we can get to this elephant bull that's in *musth* and let's see if we can throw a stone at this buffalo and see whether it will charge and stuff like that. You're not going to get that kind of thing from women. And I think there are some barriers. I think there is still a perception on the part of some employers that women are not capable of doing the job, but I think that that is changing.[24]

Clive Walker described an example of a woman who had made a concerted effort to become a nature guide despite the difficulties:

> Look how hard it is. I interviewed a young lady the other day who has just done [FGASA] Level I. She left University, she took up catering, she became qualified in catering as a chef for 15 years, she went into IT she qualified in that, and she wasn't getting enough satisfaction out of life, and she decided to enroll on her own bat and she did FGASA at least entry level I as a guide. That's all she wants to do now, and she's taken a year off to get as much experience and exposure before she takes the next step. That girl is going to make it. She is 35 years old. She is going to be an outstanding guide, there's no doubt about it.[25]

It seems clear that these women are the exceptions that prove the rule, despite all the above assertions. The percentage of female nature guides in game reserves remains low, and that it is probably not rising at anything like the rate that is implied. The Kruger National Park was able to supply figures for management, but not for guides. (see pp.249 & 250)[26].

If women do have natural instincts or tendencies (or socialized qualities) which make them well suited to nature guiding why do they remain a very narrow minority amongst trails officers and nature guides in general? Clive Walker stated that

> Most of our officers in the Environmental Programme were women with the children…they're not facing elephants and lions. But I never had a lady on my adult trails programme. In those days it didn't seen that that was the field in which the girls were going. Look at it today. Many of these organizations employ very, very competent women. I believe there's *(sic.)* equal opportunities, and should be in that sense.[27]

According to Wendy Carstens,[28] the majority of guides at Melville Koppies are female, so there is no reason to suppose that women are universally less interested in nature guiding than men. The answer may have to found in the difference between Melville Koppies' guides and game reserve guides, using Kruger National Park as an appropriate example. Melville Koppies guides differ from Kruger trails rangers in the following respects: firstly, they are volunteers, not professionals. Secondly, they work clearly at the culture-nature interface, and are not "pure" nature-guides. Their site is much smaller, their tours are shorter, physically easier, and they are not faced with the potential of encountering dangerous animals.

The last two reasons- that the trails are physically demanding and that women may not be capable of dealing with dangerous animals- are the most commonly stated explanation for the apparent lack of numbers of female nature guides in game reserves. "Dikgang" said he felt that fewer women went into guiding because of the physically demanding duties that this work may entail:

> I think guiding is hard work- hard work in a sense that you've got a lot of hours that you put behind it- looking at the fact that you'll be driving that vehicle out there- you've got to change a flat tyre there- sometimes you've got to fix your own flats- you're looking at the heavy luggage that often you have to pick up, so yes, it's a fact that women are capable of doing anything, but…you know, I know a few ladies that are guiding, that are very good guides, but some of them still believe that guiding is too hard for the ladies…so the answer is yes and no.[29]

Sicelo Mbatha was clearly somewhat uneasy with the idea of female guides in dangerous game areas:

> *Hey-ye-ye*, they are good, but there is…*(laughs)* just imagine the woman in front of the elephant, just a bit scared here and there, but ja, if they are following their heart, they will be strong, and they will confront those challenges as well. The thing is to come with heart, and then follow your dream, and then you will be strong in front of that situation.[30]

There is clearly a perception amongst some male guides that women have inferior weapons-handling skills, and that the bearing of rifles will ensure safety for trails as any animal which becomes troublesome or aggressive can be shot. Bruce Bryden describes a disastrous learner called Suzi on the shooting range[31], and then tries to assure his readers that he is not prejudiced against females on the shooting range by discussing the assessment of a learner called Kathleen[32], but quite clearly was more impressed by her appearance than her shooting ability necessarily. It does not occur to many male guides that many women (and some men, too) may have ethical and emotional objections, both to weapons on principle, and to the idea of killing animals as a means of client protection.

Rifles have been institutionalized by custom in South African game reserves and they are now arguably institutionalized by law. As Warren Bekker stated:

> So that's now where we are at the moment, so by the end of 2006, as an official institution, which we are, we are required by law, to have all of our guides, any person carrying a firearm, must conform to the conditions of the amended Firearms Control Act 2000 (as amended in 2003)[†]. Now, we are very fortunate in that we have developed our own training material (in accordance with the Act) that has been accredited and registered. We are all accredited and registered as assessors and moderators, and we deliver our own training. We are not reliant on anyone else.[33]

The relevant legislation states that only guides who have demonstrated proficiency in the handling of a .375 inch calibre rifle or above may guide legally in game reserves which contain dangerous game[‡]. According to Grant Hine[34] a technical loophole remains because the law does not say that the guide has to be armed, only that they have to have shown that they conform to the conditions of the amended Firearms Control Act 2000 (as

[‡] Many guides carry a larger calibre, especially a .458 inch, as the use of a .375 is considered marginal against an oncoming elephant.

amended in 2003), which requires legal ownership and a skills certificate *if they are carrying a rifle* (my italics). So the requirement to carry a rifle, widely believed to now be a mandatory legal requirement in South Africa is in reality still only a requirement of insurance companies and not totally obligatory according to legislation.

Mike English is absolutely convinced that rifles *are* a necessity for trails rangers (see p.145 above) but it should be remembered first and foremost that a rifle is a weapon and potentially dangerous. As Manzi Spruit said, an accident with a rifle

> …could happen, I mean it's not a toy, and you've got to know what you are doing, but I don't know about any accidents with rifles. They won't issue a rifle to a guide if he is not competent.[35]

Guides at Madikwe were unanimously critical of the (management) requirement to carry rifles. According to "Dikgang":

> One should look at Botswana- they don't operate with weapons, you would hardly hear of somebody being killed. They do trails, they do game drives and you know…what is wrong with us in South Africa?[36]

Details of how operations in Botswana are conducted without weapons is further elaborated on by Pete Sandenberg, a tourism operator in the Okavango Delta (pp.157-158) below. According to Ignatius Bogatsu:

> I do go out walking on my own without a rifle, without any weapon of a sort, because I'm more alert, and I'm very much aware of my surroundings when I walk. I tend to think that rifles do give people a very, very false sense of security.[37]

The identical sentiments were expressed by Moremi Keabetswe, the third interviewee from Madikwe.

Although part of Warren Bekker's job concerns rifle training, he had certain reservations about the use of rifles by nature guides:

> Look, I think, and this is my personal opinion again, I think that a rifle is a false sense of security, and people will tend to take a rifle, and push the boundary because they know that they have got the weapon, and if there is a problem, they will be able to shoot their way out of it. As a result, they will try and get closer and closer and closer. What I have found is that the guides in Botswana, because they weren't allowed to carry rifles, took far less chances, and the guests had a far better understanding and experience because of that. So you would view an animal from quite a distance, but you would feel safe, the guests would feel safe, the animal wouldn't feel threatened in any way. At the end of the day, you go back to the lodge, the guests have had a great experience, and they rave about it.[38]

It is remarkable that both Ignatius Bogatsu in Madikwe and Warren Bekker in Pietermaritzburg used the same phrase that rifles give "a false sense of security."

Lex Hes in Mpumalanga also concurred and tried to offer some explanation of this:

> So I think that carrying a rifle shouldn't make you less [alert], and this may be a mistake that people make is that carrying a rifle they end up being less aware of what's going on around them because they know they've got that rifle as back up and if something happens I *(sic.)* can just kill something. So it's perhaps even a good idea to train oneself by going into the bush on your own without a weapon and spending time in the wilderness surrounded by big game animals without a weapon, and that will teach you to become much more aware.[39]

Although there is no clear consensus, the most typical opinion expressed by nature guides was that going into the bush without a rifle is fine, but as soon as you have clients with you may need the rifle. Mike English and Manzi Spruit were the most adamant of all the interviewees that you cannot guide without a rifle. "Dikgang" was most certain that you can, citing the common practice (and indeed the law) in Botswana, where guides may not carry weapons. His view was also supported by Peter Sandenberg (son of Colonel J.A.B. Sandenberg, and tourism operator in Botswana), who wrote:

> I was brought up to consider it irresponsible to venture into the bush unarmed. However when we started here we were not allowed to carry firearms (still aren't) but there were no animals in our area. Over the past 23 years however the game (in the Okavango Delta) has returned and we have learned to deal with situations unarmed. Several points arise:-
>
> (a) There is always the possibility of someone being shot by accident, especially in a tight situation. It's happened.

(b) There is a very real danger of either the guide or the guest or both labouring under a false sense of security when armed. The guest wants the photo, the guide wants the tip. Not all guides that have carried rifles for years can drop a charging lion/leopard/buffalo in the required time.
(c) Wounded animals are very much more dangerous than those that aren't.
(d) When you are unarmed, no one takes chances.
(e) In 23 years of walking from two camps we have never had a fatality or injury on a walk.
(f) We have been in many tight situations, especially with lion. Each of our guides has been charged many, many times by lion.
(g) We have never in this time had a situation where a firearm would have meant a better outcome, and many where a firearm might have spelt disaster.
(h) I don't say a situation could not arise where a rifle could save a life, it just hasn't happened to us.
(i) Walking unarmed is a life-changing experience in a way driving or walking armed is not.

> Had it not been for our experience with this, I would not have believed it. How many times haven't I heard a ranger say if he hadn't shot an animal it would have had him? Our experience proves otherwise. Lion will stop if stood [up] to, maybe only a few yards away, but they will stop. People carrying rifles never discover this. All but the most enraged cow elephants will stop – we avoid cows and very seldom come across them. Buffalo – keep a sharp eye out and get up that tree. Leopard – don't look at them until 30-40 metres away. Hippo – up the tree or lie flat – the curved tusks can't quite get you (we had one of these, torn shirt and slight abrasion the only ill effect!). None of this applies to wounded/ injured/ sick animals, which must be avoided at all costs and destroyed ASAP.[40]

I think it is fair also to note that camp manager of Swamp Thing, David Sandenberg, (Peter Sandenberg's nephew) had at least one incident involving buffalo where the guides made it up the tree but the client was tossed, and was lucky not to be gored. This implies that Peter Sandenberg is speaking for his own operations only, and not for the operations of all those known to him.

Peter Sandenberg has maintained a friendship over the years with Dr. Ian Player. It should be remembered that Ian Player and Magqubu Ntombela once had occasion to shoot off a pride of lions that showed unusually aggressive tendencies towards humans[41]. Nevertheless, it is clear that they worked hard to promote the idealistic notion of harmony

with nature, and both found the episode of dispatching the rogue lions unpleasant and unnerving, rather than in any way satisfying. One of their most loyal disciples is Sicelo Mbhatha who shared their sense that using a rifle was a desperate measure in nature guiding and that killing animals in any circumstances was not a matter that gave them any pride. He summed it up well in the following statement:

> As I said, I'm going with peace.
> Rifle is nothing, rifle is nothing.
> You can get squashed by the elephant while you are carrying your rifle,
> with bullets, with rounds in your magazine.
> It's nothing, it's nothing.
> I will be happy, I can lead a trail with my naked hands, without carrying anything,
> with my bare feet, just to feel, I mean grass under my feet.
> You know, I will be very happy,
> I don't mind it, I don't mind it, I trust myself.
> Thank you.[42]

Turning this statement into a poem format was not by intentional design of the speaker, but due to his style of speech it seemed irresistible.

Most white South African males born before 1970 had the experience of being conscripted to do two years of military service. This both familiarized and conditioned them to the use of weapons, and significant percentage of them gained a relatively high degree of proficiency. Women and blacks did not have this experience, and as long as weapon skills are considered a pre-requisite for nature guides, white males will enjoy a statistical advantage at having these skills which are deemed useful to nature guides. In practical terms, the real question to ask is- just how dangerous are the animals of the African bush? Unsurprisingly, nature guides in South African game reserves seem to have a huge amount to say in response to this question, which is recorded and discussed below.

**The Super-Niche of the 20th Century- "The Big Five"**

The Pocket Oxford dictionary describes a niche as "a shallow recess, especially in wall; fig. comfortable, or suitable position in life or employment." In terms of ecology a niche is the position or role of an organism within its ecosystem. In terms of marketing a niche is a portion of the market which can be very clearly identified, defined and targeted.[43]

Dr. Alex Coutts was clearly quite conscious of both the ecological and the marketing (or more broadly economic) interpretations of the word niche, when he said:

> …people are becoming better informed about the other wild creatures. They are becoming more knowledgeable, with more books, like Attenborough's remarkable stuff . There's greater diversity of knowledge. Just think of what DSTV has done now, where you in fact have Animal Planet and a host of other things like that, there's much more insight into things, and when you come now with "the Big Five" they say "ho-hum".
>
> There's also a definite evolution of interest and ability- you've seen it, I've seen it, most guides know what I am talking about. You go into Kruger Park "Impala! Click-click-click-click-click! Films gone, head for the nearest shop, because all they've done is taken every impala in sight! Now they come to the giraffe – ooargh! The zebra- ooargh! Go for it! Snap! snap!
>
> That quest for "whatever there is" graduates to a taste for "let's see The Big Five" So, once you've seen animals, then you've graduated to collecting your "Big Five". Go in later, again, again, again and now you're into "can I pick up a Serval or can I see a *Rooikat* [Caracal] somewhere? Can we go out on night drive? What's that insect? What's that beautiful butterfly? Hang on let's have a look at that you-know-what butterfly…with only 853 species, let's see if we can find it". There's a definite evolution of taste, and I think it's on a micro level with an individual and it's on a macro level with populations. Agencies like DSTV are feeding this. I mentioned Attenborough, but a host of other nature films helps spark wider interests. The fact that biodiversity is disappearing fuels greater concern. I also think people's tastes are steadily becoming far more sophisticated. Alright, marketing follows that. So have your big flagship, don't destroy it because some people are at that marketing level, but go onto the more refined ones too. Watch how peoples' tastes evolve, and even on a national level you might find slight diversities and divergences between one group and another, so you marketing should try and hit at different categories…they're too big to be called niches.[44]

The argument that people who come to Africa to see "the Big Five" are too broad and

generic a collective to be called a niche may (or may not) be valid, but it is worth noting that some people from this "super-niche" will graduate (in subsequent visits to South Africa or the region) to niche-like markets, such as birders, botanists, geologists or environmentalists, to mention only some of the "eco-tourist" groups. These niches appear to be a growth area as people from countries with more advanced economies and educational systems become increasingly more diverse and specialized in their interests. Before discussing of any of these, it is critical to look at the "Big Five" "super-niche", which appears to be a powerful and seductive icon of the "eco-tourist" market.

Although the subjects included some of the most experienced and critical nature guides in the country, it was surprising that none was certain of the precise origins of the "Big Five" expression. When asked, Lex Hes laughed and said:

> As far as I know it's an old hunting term which referred to the five most sought after trophy animals in Africa. That's as far as I know. I don't know whether it might have originated from somebody like I think Teddy Roosevelt was a big hunter, so possibly somebody like him, but I know the first time it was used in a commercial sense for safari operations was by Mala Mala when they were issuing Big Five certificates in the mid seventies when I was just starting out in the industry. That's the first time I heard the term being used on safari operations.[45]

Ian Player suggested that the expression "the Big Five" is

> …a marketing term of very recent origins, and it's been used as a marketing term by some of the up-market game lodge owners...A really good wilderness trails officer would not go out of his way to show them "The Big Five", in fact the reverse- he would treat them with great respect, because what has happened in the past is that a rhino will be lying down, or a lion will be lying down and the guide will pick up a stick or stone and throw it at the animal to get it on its feet. In fact, it still happens.[46]

Mike English could not have agreed more about the over-marketed and clichéd phrase that has imposed itself on the guiding industry and allowed marketing people to dictate the type of experience that clients have when they visit the *bushveld*:

> I don't know who started it, but most people come to South Africa and they want to see "the Big 5", they're not interested in the little *nunus*, they just want "the Big 5". I think that that's the worst phrase that anyone's ever thought of…[47]

The phrase is hated by people in the industry, because despite its corniness it is a concept which is almost unrivalled in the marketing of wildlife throughout Africa.

English was also very conscious that most trailists are beyond the first stage:

> Ja, I think certainly, with areas like the Kruger Park, Natal Parks and any game reserve whether it be national or private…is certainly helping but the whole thing of people trying to boost tourism and tourism numbers by quoting …"we've got the Big 5" and a lot of people are just coming to see the sensational things…there are far more interesting and far more important things other than the Big 5, and I think with wilderness trails you are able to bring that out, but it is only a certain type of person who goes on a wilderness trail.[48]

Alex Coutts was somewhat less emotional, but no less damning in his description:

> …with this, I think you do need a big, flashy marketing brand in South Africa, and in Natal we have the Kingdom of the Zulu and then everything else is sort of subordinate around that, but what I do think is that I agree with you in far greater diversity…depends on your client target and your client market, and I think one has to have a multi-faceted marketing thing. You have a shot at "the Big Five" brand, but you know, it is so overdone at the moment that, I think there are people who with an increasing knowledge of wildlife as it gets more trashed, more eliminated….Big Five is for the more ingenuous, less sophisticated first time traveler. It's the first thing you want to see. It's my first trip somewhere, its also that serial thing. First, second, by the time you're on your third trip somewhere, and we hope you get people returning they're into far more exotic types of creature.[49]

Warren Bekker took a pragmatic approach, and feels that "the Big Five" story is inevitable, but can be utilized a step towards a more refined niche:

> You know, I think that…and this is where it comes down to you having a solid structure within your guiding ranks, is that if you have a head guide, or a head ranger who has got the ability to pass down his ideas and his philosophy, and everybody has a buy-in to that, then I think it will work, and I don't think the guys will be set up for failure, because, yes, there are, in the majority of all these new reserves there are, there are 'The Big Five'. They are available, and there's a very good chance that you probably will see the majority of them over a three-four day stay, but it's that guide's ability to make them understand that they're not here just to see 'the Big Five'.[50]

After offering a one hundred rand reward for anyone who knew the actual origins of the term “the Big Five”, which I posted as part of an article which was published in the Field News (FGASA Newsletter) I received an e-mail from Mark Thornton, a safari operator from South Africa who frequently takes trips to Tanzania, in which he said

> To my knowledge, the phrase, "The Big Five", was first coined by legendary Kenyan hunter named JH Hunter in his book, simply called, "Hunter". He came up with the term as a result of being continually asked by people which were the most dangerous animals to hunt. After providing a disclaimer in that the most dangerous animal depends on the hunter who is hunting it, his experience with particular species and his skills (some are better hunters of lion than they are of elephant, for example). We all know what the 5 are, but he went on to rate them one-five which, in his opinion, were the most dangerous. It went like this: 1. Leopard, 2. Lion, 3. Buffalo, 4. Rhino and 5. Elephant. He rated leopard the most dangerous animal (when wounded and hunted) because of its speed, camouflage, and its stubborn ability to hold a serious grudge.

Mark Thornton declined the one hundred rand. Perhaps the jury is still out, but this explanation is the most credible one I have encountered to date.

The “Big Five” concept may be annoying and it may trace its origins to an entirely mythological root, but as a marketing device it proposes a myth which is iconic, dramatic, romantic, mysterious and desirable. In a phrase it is “a fantastic and successful marketing tool.” Whilst most guides and guide trainers are very wary of the concept, to produce an alternative icon of the African bush would be very difficult, and to disseminate a new myth or new myths to replace it will be challenging and expensive, but is certainly under consideration. As Lex Hes said:

> I think it’s a very difficult thing to market...it sounds a lot more pedantic to talk about ecology and interactions and things. And I almost think that one doesn’t necessarily have to market it. What you do is you use “the Big Five” as your draw card and when your people are there you change their attitudes and perceptions by revealing what else is going on around you. I think that’s the only way to do it. It’s not an easy thing to market. You can’t specifically market that. You can try and you’re going to attract a certain small percentage of people who are deeply interested in that kind of thing, but then you’re kind of preaching to the

> converted... there already is (a new sort of marketing to encourage more progressive and specialized fields of interest). I've seen a few game lodges sort of talking about their deep ecology experiences and so on, and I think they can try and market those things and you will, but like I say, I think from a business point of view it's a very small percentage of the market and whether it's big enough to sustain businesses on a long term basis I don't know. I love the idea of changing people's perceptions. I think that's a very, very important thing. Like I say, you're marketing deep ecology, you're basically going to get people that are interested in that kind of thing already. Whereas if you're marketing the Big Five, you're getting people who are superficially interested and are going to come to your area, and then when you get them there you're going to open up a whole new world to them and you're going to change their perceptions and you're going to have a whole lot of people that maybe ultimately would go away and say, 'Oh now I'm interested in deep ecology'. So I like the idea of trying to change people's perceptions, but without being like a missionary about it.[51]

It appears that many guides have applied themselves to getting their clients to a more sophisticated level, and are grateful for those clients who are on a more sophisticated level. According to "Dikgang":

> Well, I suppose that also depends on how one sells the product. But I believe if one comes into the bush, one is not really into seeing "Big Five". Now of course, people will travel half-way across the globe wanting to come and see lions and you know that at the end of the day you have to produce, but if we can try to change people's mind set, and not get more into big game (which, yes, that should be part of the package) but one should get into the whole aspect of guiding. Guiding is all about getting into everything that is around you. We are looking at the stars at night and we forget that these people from Europe, or from overseas, they've got the problem of light pollution, they don't see the stars. You know one wants to come to Africa to see the Southern Cross, and know how you can get direction with that. One wants to come and see the Magellanic Cloud, which is a galaxy that doesn't get seen overseas or north. The insect life, the whole interaction that you've got with everything that is around you…yup![52]

Ignatius Bogatsu was also very enthusiastic about allowing more sophisticated guests to evolve:

> Clients that come to the wild for the first time, or the first few times, yes, are more interested in seeing big stuff, than stopping for a blister beetle, or stopping for an African monarch butterfly, or stopping for a caterpillar, or stopping for a millipede track, or picking up a millipede. They're not really interested in things like that. They want to see lions, they want to see cheetah, they want to see elephant, ja! But people that have been coming into the bush for a while, are now gaining interest in small little things that they have overlooked over the years.[53]

It appears that the general perception amongst is that the “Big Five” brand is superficial, and they treat it with the thinly disguised annoyance one would expect from librarians if most people kept taking out comics. The myth of the “Big Five” appears innocuous enough, but what is really being sold is the comfort that we still live in a society with anthropocentric and colonial values. Most people do not have to hunt wild animals to establish a meaningful relationship with them, yet some of the stereotypes and values associated with hunters have wide appeal and has the following associations: The wilderness is something to explore and conquer. The safari is a search for wild creatures while wearing khaki and carrying binoculars. The stalking of animals is a sign of our guile- that we have retained the hunting instinct. We derive the satisfaction of possessing the animal by getting within close range of it, often by photographing it or getting it in the sites of our binoculars. We leave victorious with the idea that we have had a lion and a buffalo in our sights. We can tick off species, often without concern for habitat or context.

It should not be surprising then that people imagine the guide to have a pith helmet, or a leopard skin around his hat, nor that the guide should be male, nor that he should be white. For the “Big Five” myth is a thinly disguised nineteenth century hunting myth which is based on colonialism, sexism, racism, narcissism, cruelty, aggression and dominion over “the Other”.

For the present day South African government to devote significant time, energy, and most particularly, human resources and money to create a “Big Five” game reserve inside

of Gauteng Province, as they are doing in the Dinokeng Game Reserve project, suggests that very few people perceive or are significantly concerned about association with the images described in the preceding paragraph.

The apparently slow rate of transformation within the guiding industry may well have to do with the lack of vision of the previous regime when nature guiding was not taught or encouraged as a subject (with or without career prospects), particularly for blacks. A competing, and probably equally compelling reason why today's women and blacks are making a slow incursion into the nature guiding industry, is that they are not comfortable with the working environment and/or the image of guiding as a career generated by the marketing industry with the consent of the guiding industry itself. We need to find fewer reasons to celebrate retrogressive, narrow, macho and anthropocentric values of the past, and put more effort into producing a new vision of nature guiding in the future, which appeals to the majority. We must project an image which will facilitate real transformation, not only of gender and race, but also of the attitudes and values held by the public, the influential marketing companies, and most importantly, the end users (or sometimes, non-users, unfortunately) the guides themselves.

Whilst the profile of the nature guide is changing very slowly, it is clear that the profile of the trailist during the same period has changed significantly. Jaco Badenhorst said:

> At first it was a lot of all-men groups, only guys coming. And then now it's definitely closer to fifty-fifty, men and women. Also in the past we worked it out that the average age was about 45, and it's definitely younger now as well. Young people are earning bigger salaries nowadays and can afford the experience. Then there's also a change, there used to be a lot of South Africans on the wilderness trails in Kruger Park specifically. 95% of our clients when I started were South Africans and only 5% overseas. Apparently we have 15% foreign clients and 85%

> South Africans…I think it's easier for overseas people to get to know about these trails with internet...[which] played a very important role. It's easy to go and look up on what you want. I also do think that foreign tourism in the country has increased in the country. But then also specifically with walking… wilderness trails specifically, I'm not talking about day walks…but if you wanted to walk in the Kruger Park, or anywhere there is Big Five country, Kruger Park [was] your only option...about ten, fifteen years ago. But nowadays there's so many other options so the competition for wilderness trails is getting bigger and bigger.[54]

Marketing and clients also have an ability to influence and compromise guides ethics and values. This discussion is taken up (on pp.290-298) below.

**The Daring and Dangerous Game**

> The animals left these things called men alone. In return for this kindness man killed them, cut off their skins and put them on the floor; cut their heads off and stuck them to the walls. But if ever an animal killed a man, it was ALL in the newspapers!!
> Spike Milligan (from The Story of the Bald Twit Lion)[55]

It should not take Spike Milligan to remind us that humans are by far the most dangerous animal on the planet, and that most humans automatically proceed from the anthropocentric assumption that in the event of a confrontation, the human has a right to kill the animal if his own life or that of one of the people in his party is threatened. Animals often do not have the luxury of choice when it comes to killing humans, but all animals are potentially lethal, most often through desperate acts of self-protection, or occasionally through deviant dietary habits acquired in almost all instances as a result of injury or sickness, or as a consequence of human interference. Sometimes the species which injures or kills a human is an unlikely one. Stevenson-Hamilton noted that

> …during the first eight years during which the tourists were let loose among unconfined wild animals, there was only one accident, and this was not in respect of a beast of prey, but a herbivore, a bull sable in fact. A visitor, seeing it standing motionless behind a tree, thought he would get closer for a photograph, and against the regulations he got out of his car and walked up to within a few yards of the animal. He did not know of course that it had recently been wounded in a fight with another; so crippled in fact, that it died of its injuries a few days

> later. When he was about six paces from it, it put its head down, charged him, drove one horn through his thigh, and undoubtedly would have killed him had not his wife and a native servant rushed to his assistance and pluckily driven the beast off with sticks and stones.[56]

For Dr. Alex Coutts "…Selous' best [unusual episode of an animal injuring a person] for me was the *nyala* in the 1890s…"[57], but there have been other similar encounters, which prove that our notions of which animals may or may not be dangerous are often rough generalizations. Rangani Tsanwani recounted how often a potentially threatening encounter turns out quite benign, not to mention interesting:

> The last person he was the official, our staff, it was his first time to join us on a walk. Then I walk fast, then the rest of the people walk fast. Then there was a big, big python. A very big python, I never saw that python before and that was my last time to see a big python like that. Then when I turned that guy was standing shivering. I said, 'Man what is wrong?' He just pointed on that python. That python he saw us then he put his head down. Then we walk past. We were walking on the elephant path. All of us we walk past that. But he thought maybe everybody pass and decided to lift up his head, he wanted to cross. Yo! That snake was very, very big. I think he was four meters long. Then he climbed a tree. We were having guests from...they said they were from Moçambique. They were Portuguese. They were publishers….I think they working for some newspaper in that area. Journalists, yes. They were taking some nice pictures on that python who was moving. [They] said 'Oh, this is interesting.'[58]

Lex Hes, one of South Africa's top nature guiding trainers, considered it a bit difficult to decide which animals are the most dangerous:

> I think that's always a difficult question to answer because it depends on the situations you're getting yourself into. Any animal is dangerous at the wrong time. So I don't think one can say that one is more dangerous than the other. But if I was to have a look at my own personal experiences from where I've been living in wilderness areas, and most incidents where I've had some indirect contact has been actually with Cape buffalo, where we've had staff members, plus on one occasion a guest knocked down by a Cape buffalo, and gored by a Cape buffalo. And I think it's something like four or five incidents in the fifteen years I was working at Londelozi. So possibly Cape buffalo, but I don't think one can generalize. It depends on the situations.[59]

Having spent a significant number of years in the Kruger Park as a trails guide, Wayne Lotter wrote:

> I have been in threatening situations with – elephant, buffalo, lion, hippo, black and white rhino and snakes. My trail assistant shot an elderly lioness on one occasion when she and a younger lioness with cubs charged us and a warning shot failed to stop the old lioness's charge. I have not had a client injured or worse.[60]

Of the "Big Five" animals, only the leopard failed to bother Wayne Lotter.

According to Manzi Spruit

> Okay, well, a lot of animals can be dangerous, not just your 'Big Five'. In my experience, I would definitely say lone buffalo, the ones walking alone, and second I would say hippo, outside the water, especially when you do an early morning walk. They graze during the night, and you might just land between them and the water, but you shouldn't be there. It depends, anything is possible, and then ja, elephant in *musth*. But it's a difficult one to answer, because there's different situations- I mean a lioness with cubs also is very, very, very dangerous, or an injured animal. But basically, those three, ja.[61]

She explained that the "Big Five" were

> …animals that can actually fight back and were dangerous. Big animals, that is you can't just go in and shoot them, they can actually turn around and attack you. Very fast, very unpredictable, so it was a big challenge for them to go out and shoot them, but I do differ a little bit, I don't think it's "Big Five", I think it should be the "Big Six", because they neglected to name the hippo as well. But probably being hunters it was easy for them if they want to shoot a hippo just to go to the water. But a hippo outside the water is extremely dangerous- he should have been part of it. But I think the term "Big Five" comes from the fact that those are, as they see them, when you're hunting, very difficult animals to actually shoot because they're so dangerous. [62]

The Kruger Park Trails Company have kept a record of all animals killed for client protection in the history of wilderness trails in the Kruger National Park. Analysis of animals shot by species to date produces the following results:

<u>Summary of trails incidents in from 1978-2006 the Kruger National Park, by species</u>

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| white rhino | = | 13 |
| elephant | = | 11 |
| buffalo | = | 8 |
| hippo | = | 7 |
| lion | = | 2 |
| (black rhino | = | 0) |
| (leopard | = | 0) [63] |

Manzi Spruit was quick to point out that one should not infer from the above chart that

leopards are harmless:

> …if you go a bit back in history here in the Park, we haven't lost any tourists due to a leopard attack but staff in the Park- a lot of people have been killed by leopard. [64] But that's from his side not us…but leopard attacks are frequent, and it's usually staff people that becomes blasé, and then they get attacked, or the type of work they do- going out into the bush and…[at 15h45 on 15th August, 2003, a nine-year-old boy, Tshikani Nobela was killed at Skukuza staff village by a post-prime male leopard in reasonable condition[65] possibly partly because]… the staff village doesn't have a fence around it. It's almost like a suburb. It's extremely big, but there's no fence around it, so one tends to get a false sense of security with the roads and the houses there, but it was close to the river that he actually got attacked by the leopard. [(On 21st August, 1998) … a night-drive guide (Charles Swart was) killed by a (TB-infected male) leopard (when he was taking a smoke break on the Matjulu river bridge near Malelane[66])].

Despite the above episodes, and others on record and despite Manzi Spruit's warning, it appears that healthy adult leopards generally avoid confrontation with humans. Moloko Phaho felt that leopards were usually more wary of humans if they perceive the human concerned to be in a large group:

> Sometimes, because as you're walking in the bush you're walking single file, that leopard thinks you're on your own and then that's when the leopard sees you as a prey. And then that's what happened for me because I was a backup at that time and my colleague (Mark Macgill) was right up front, so we were standing far away and then it was drizzling as well and the leopard was about twelve metres away from us. So when I stamp on the ground I saw that leopard ready to jump then I couldn't even have time to inform my colleague that there is danger, just cocked the rifle, that's when he realized something's wrong. Then that leopard saw us as a big group and decided to move away...[67]

Ignatius Bogatsu, considered his closest encounter was with elephant bulls:

> Well, I was doing a team-building walking session, an hour walking session, and our lodge is on the banks of the Groot Marico River, so we walked out the western end of the lodge and we did a circle around the lodge on a walk doing insects, footprints, grasses, flowers and all that, and we got to a river crossing, and as we started descending into the river, we encountered two elephant bulls that had just finished having a bath. It was a very hot summer morning and they just stormed from out of the water towards us so, ja! I screamed at this one that was in the front, he would not stop until I took off my cap- this particular one- and threw it at his face, and he got a fright. He stopped and he turned around and he ran off, and his companion followed behind him.

> At this stage I was definitely calm, because you can't let your nervousness show. The clients have to rely on your behaviour, so if you start panicking you've obviously lost control of the group. Yes, I did pick up my cap and check if everybody was alright, and then we had a five minutes breath out breath in session before we carried on back to the lodge. By the time we got to the lodge, the one lady fainted on the couch.[68]

It appears that most guides would do more walks and less work on vehicles if they had the chance. According to "Dikgang":

> I suppose it depends on the clientele as well. As we all know that if you're driving, you've got more chances because you're covering a lot of ground, hoping that at some stage when you come around the corner there will be animals. You might be able to go closer, not close enough to threaten the animals, but to be able to take a picture, if you have a good camera, whereas with walking, yes, it's wonderful, it's quite amazing, I mean I'd rather walk than driving, if I had to choose, but walking is more about giving that experience that you don't have from the vehicle, looking at the little things that you can't see from the vehicle, being able to smell, being able to have that feeling of being within a dangerous animal area…ja![69]

It is quite clear that Stevenson-Hamilton initially thought that lions posed the greatest threat to tourists, once the latter started to arrive in the Kruger National Park in greater numbers. It was soon realized that the game reserve could not supply adequate staff to protect people from lions, so initially people were allowed to bring guns into the Park for their own self-protection. Within a few years only about twenty percent of visitors brought in guns, and the biggest problem was that people, especially children got lost whilst camping in the bush, so demarcated camps were established, and tourists were not allowed to sleep anywhere else for their own safety. The evident lack of aggression by lions, or virtually any other animals, led to the idea of open vehicle game viewing, which gained popularity in the private reserves far before the practice was allowed in the Kruger National Park. Lex Hes suggested that the practice of open vehicle safaris probably started in the 1920s.

> So I think that [the famous picture of the woman leaning out with an old box camera that she looks down on a lioness right in front of her, taken in the 1920s]

> is possibly where it started….the very first private game reserves as far as I know were, I remember when I was growing up in Johannesburg picking up a thing called the Transvaal Weekender which had places you could go and visit. And there was a private game reserve…in the Timbavati, where you were able to do game drives in open vehicles and night drives, and that was the first place that I'm aware of that anybody was doing that kind of thing. And then of course Mala-Mala was the other pioneer. It started with hunting. There used to be big game hunting there. Take people out in open land-rovers to go and look for the animals that they were going to hunt. And I think that's how the sort of private game lodge open land-rover safaris developed.[70]

The fascination with, and aura around lions in particular, seems to be a recurrent theme with nature guides. Rangani Tsanwani recounted several such incidents. He was walking day walks in the vicinity of Shingwedzi, and on one day:

> Suddenly we just saw the lion jumping…ten metres [from us]. Jumping, jumping. But in most case lions they run away and forget the young ones… Several times I saw such things happen. [It's] a very dangerous situation. When they come back for the young ones, especially the female[s] can give you trouble. That's why in most trails, people kill females [rather] than the males.[71]

Tsanwani further argued that panicking clients can precipitate far more danger than the lions on their own. He recalls another occasion where a pride of lions

> …all run away. But they just run in different directions. Some run that direction, some that direction. So the little cats run towards us. Then the male have to come and look for those young ones. The big male come very close to us. The lady who was very close to me, she just jump on my body, screaming, and remember I was carrying my rifle. Then luckily that male lion just turn away. Then the young ones follow him. We were lucky, because it wasn't a female one who followed them. So people want to see lions, but once the lions come close to them they get nervous.[72]

Bruce Lawson reported an incident in the FGASA Newsletter which occurred when he went out with clients and tracked a pride of lions[73] and in the course of tracking them realized that they had cubs with them and insisted on continuing to track them. As a result he and his group had a close encounter in which both a male and a female continuously charged them about 18 times in 12 minutes. And Bruce Lawson never once said that he was a fool to do this, nor apologized in the description in the article, so I

wrote in now to the FGASA newsletter reprimanding him. His subsequent apology was somewhat equivocal.

Manzi Spruit's comment on this was:

> I don't want to talk too much about that, I'll just comment that normally we don't track lions when we do walks. You walk your route. You have to be careful with lions, but it is not advisable to track them because you might land into a situation as I said earlier- maybe it's a lioness with cubs, maybe it's mating lions. You are responsible for the people behind you. If you're working with colleagues, you're on your own, you can track all you like, but you do not take people's lives into your hands. That's not right. The fact that he [Bruce Lawson] is still alive [after this episode], he can be very happy about that.[74]

Manzi Spruit herself landed up shooting a young male lion which she had been tracking in Klaserie and which charged her as she approached. She expressed great remorse about killing the animal, and blames herself, saying that she was "stupid and young."[75]

Wayne Lotter recalled how he was the responsible guide during the ninth recorded incident on Kruger Trails. It was the first recorded incident in which a lion was shot and the first recorded incident on Sweni.[76] On the 14th of October, 1990, a group of trailists led by Wayne Lotter came upon a pride of lions and two females began charging. Wayne Lotter stepped out in front of the clients to draw the charges, and fired a warning shot. This seemed to have deterred the younger lioness, but the older one continued to charge. In the meantime Ozias Cubai had stepped out the side of the group, and when the lioness reached about 6 metres from Wayne Lotter he took the shot. As the lioness fell, Wayne Lotter followed it up with a shot of his own. On inspection they found that Ozias Cubai's first shot had been a perfectly accurate fatal brain shot, and that Wayne Lotter's instinctive follow up had been unnecessary. The shot lioness turned out to be very old-

possibly 14 in Ozias and Wayne's estimation (based on when it had originally been collared for a study during the 1980's) and therefore far too old to have cubs. (Lionesses in the wild are not usually expected to live past 13 years of age). They speculated that as the other lioness had had cubs, possibly this lioness may have been the grandmother or even great-grandmother of the cubs.

The incident was reported by radio as soon as was possible. After the clients were sent safely on their way the next day, Wayne sat down and drafted his report. He had not even reached Skukuza with his report the next day when he tuned into a national radio station to learn the Parks Board had already notified the media and that he and Ozias Cubai had been hailed as "brave heroes". It concerned Wayne that the Parks Board had been already prepared to make a media statement even before they had read his report of the incident. A person of lesser ethics may have found this announcement gratifying, but Lotter was concerned about the incident having been handled in this manner, because it suggested to him that all guides in Kruger would be automatically exonerated after shooting animals in client protection, regardless of their actual degree of accountability and/or negligence. The subsequent report back mildly criticized Wayne Lotter for firing a warning shot, and potentially compromising his client protection capabilities. He was not moved by that criticism and said that if he had the same incident over he would probably handle it in exactly the same way. If anything, although Ozias Cubai had fired to save him, Lotter considered that it was not too improbable that the lioness may still have pulled up on the charge and may have thus been saved. A number of other guides- including Malcolm Douglas- have held off a lion charge to inside of 5 metres without firing a shot[77]. In fairness to Ozias Cubai (who reacted in the interests of a close

colleague), the comparison is a little unfair because the lion in Malcolm Douglas's case was a male performing the stiff-legged charge which is recognized by many experienced guides as almost always a bluff.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that lion charges can euphemistically be called stressful. An extreme example was when Richard Sourey[78] was leading a trail in the Kruger National Park at Sweni with Ozias Cubai as his backup. After several fairly close charges he managed to placate the lions adequately only to find that when he turned back to his group, one of his clients had suffered a fatal heart attack. At time of writing Richard Sourey is a section ranger at Kingfisher Spruit near Orpen Gate.

Lions seem to be fairly intelligent animals, and Wayne Lotter believes the aggression of a specific pride may be decrease or increase as a result of the conduct of humans which they regularly encounter, and cites the resident pride in the area of the Sweni base camp which became less aggressive during the course of the first year of the trail as a result of regular calm yet respectful encounters with trails groups.

Wayne Lotter further feels that the number of incidents in Kruger, compared with uMfolozi Game Reserve for example, may confirm the view that Kruger Park management have perhaps not been concerned enough about whether incidents where animals were killed were avoidable or not. The fact that there were a few guides who have killed three or four animals each, suggests to him that the enquiries into Kruger Park incidents are not in depth or critical enough in exploring guides decisions leading up to incidents. In the whole history of Natal Parks Wilderness trails (where trails started 15

years before Kruger and where the game density is considerably higher than in Kruger) apparently only four animals have been shot[79], and in three of those the ruling was that the guide had been to an extent accountable for the confrontation, though in no case did the report extend far enough to suggest that the guide had been negligent. (The extent of the guide's failure was described as "complacency" or "a failure to exercise the maximum degree of caution in the situation").

Wayne Lotter supported the view that a deeper examination of game viewing and safety conduct and ethics by nature guides is a topic which has been under explored and researched, and would be an excellent topic for a future Masters dissertation by anyone with appropriate guiding experience, acumen and capabilities and adequate methodological and academic skills. The constructive function of such a dissertation would be to encourage ethics and practice which aimed to minimize the trails incidents in which animals were killed, needlessly harmed or unnecessarily disturbed.

In a context where culling is the norm, and in which numbers of certain species, most notably elephants, arguably appear to be more populous than they should be according to carrying capacity, it is difficult to convince certain groups within management that the shooting of a few animals every year in front of the paying public is an unethical practice. Whilst some may agree that to practice cropping in front of clients is not good for public relations, it could be argued that if cropping or culling on principal is an acceptable practice, the morality of the action is not affected by the presence of trailists. Surely the majority of people who go on nature trails do not harbour a subliminal bloodlust, which will be gratified when they find suddenly that they are on a little bit of a hunting trip. It

must be conceded that carrying a rifle during guiding proceeds from the anthropocentric assumption that you are prepared to kill an animal to protect a human.

Lynn Hibbert (a former trailist) recounted her discomfort when a trails ranger told her that considering how common people are, and how relatively rare rhinos are, and how he would therefore be disinclined to shoot a rhino if their group should encounter one[80]. If you take a radical eco-centric view and offer to guide people in an area which contains dangerous game without a rifle, it is probable that the majority of people would not be willing to indemnify the guide. If such a business ever had an incident in which somebody who is not the guide is killed by an animal, the business would in all likelihood not be able to defend yourself from the weight of the ensuing lawsuit.

The view that it is better to have a rifle and not need one than to need a rifle and not have one is evidently compelling, but the degree of need is often proportional to the willingness to use it. Guides who are very willing to use their rifles are therefore very willing to enter the comfort zone of animals, and thus increase their chance of provoking an incident enormously. Such encounters are invariably impressive, and many people experience adrenalin very positively and are inclined to give guides who take them into animals comfort zones superior tips to those that do not. Thus, the level of risk is market driven and the limits are determined by the comfort zone of the clients rather than the animals, leading to guides who frequently contrive, encourage or at least endorse the creation of risky situations. The ideal nature guide is one who has a high degree of rifle proficiency combined with a low degree of rifle enthusiasm, a combination which reality dictates is virtually non-existent. The difference in incidents between KwaZulu-Natal

Parks and the Kruger Park does suggest that the practice of guide trail conduct is more dependant on the ethical and critical culture which underpins the guided experience than the factors of frequency and duration of client visits, frequency of incident free encounters with potentially dangerous species, density of vegetation, refugees moving through the reserve(s) in question, or proximity of areas where animals have been hunted.

As a former Trails Ranger with over six years experience, Wayne Lotter did not feel at all convinced by the argument as presented by Mike English. Firstly, he noted that the incident record as presented by Jaco Badenhorst is confined to Wilderness Trails, and appears to exclude records of day walks or other activities which may bring even further animal incident statistics to light (although Manzi Spruit suggested that the day walk incident rate was very low indeed). Wayne Lotter did not agree with Mike English that the volume of trails incidents may be acceptable because he is "aware of a number (of incidents) that could arguably have been avoided". He agreed with my refutation of the 'refugees in the Park' argument for the simple reason that lion attacks constitute only 2 of the 41 incidents, and he was a particularly closely involved with one of them. He further said that the suggestion that animals had been traumatized earlier across the borders (in Moçambique and Zimbabwe) "may have been a factor in one or two cases". Dense vegetation was no more of an excuse in the Kruger National Park as it is in KwaZulu-Natal (with parts of Umfolozi as dense or denser than anywhere in the Kruger Park).

He was prepared to be outspoken and did not always agree with or align himself with the way that certain things, like guiding ethics and incident reporting, at KNP were managed. Lotter stated that "We need to manage nature responsibly (sustainably) and should not

manage nor modify large protected areas, which perform an essential service to the wellbeing of the planet, any more than is absolutely essential."[81] To Lotter wilderness is "'virgin' at its purest, unadulterated best *and that the guide should* help them discover the value of wilderness for themselves."[82]

Lotter felt that one of the key ethical dilemmas for guides was "Whether or not, and how much, they may criticize management policies/practices of the protected areas in which they work."[83]

Lotter was so disappointed by the way that he and Cubai received blanket exoneration and were made heroes of even before he had submitted his report that he soon quit as a Kruger trails ranger, and now works for Sappi. As you can see from this, not all gun carriers are necessarily trigger-happy.

So the statement by Peter Sandenberg that "people carrying rifles never discover this"[84] is a bit extreme. Nevertheless, it appears that being armed does not stimulate better nature guiding. Clive Walker described one incident, and the background to it:

> The ethical side of it comes into how you approach your job in terms of dangerous game. The liberties that you might take, or the dangers you might put people into terms of giving a high end experience…there has to be that kind of ethical approach. One of my officers had to shoot an elephant once- it was very difficult for him and our organization. There was an enquiry into it, and he was exonerated with full exemption…it had nothing to do with him. It more likely had to do with other people driving around that caused the problem in the first place, unbeknown to them that there were even [other] people there.[85]

Clive Walker felt that generally lions are less dangerous than elephants:

> I think the secret to any of these problems, or any of these situations that can develop is that you must eventually develop knowledge of the distance at which you can be from these animals, and the circumstances in which you place yourself

> that can cause that. In the case of the two lion experiences, we stumbled on them and they didn't see us till the last moment- happened very, very quickly. In both instances the lion stopped after a full blown charge. No rifle shot was fired.[86]

Television has also created unrealistic expectations. According to Moremi Keabetswe:

> I would say more people like to come to the bush just to see animals and learn more about them. And people that will come over to the bush, they might be people who might have seen some documentaries about the animal and they get to think, you know how about I see this thing happening live. And then I would say thanks to the people that make the documentaries because they make it so easy that we think we see a lion stalking and chasing and killing a wildebeest in two seconds.[87]

Warren Bekker strongly believes that the attitude of the guide has a strong influence over how the animal will behave:

> Ever since I started guiding, the old guiding fraternity used to be a lot of old bush veterans, that used to come out, and they enjoyed being out in the bush, and you got that type of khaki fever macho guide image which tended to filter down, and I believe that a lot of the guides that are up and coming are a lot more educated and they have a different philosophy and outlook to nature guiding and animals in general and they are more for the protection and the conservation, rather than pushing the envelope. The unfortunate thing is, and this is where I have a problem with certain of those guides that we've mentioned, and also certain television programmes, like "Mad Mark & Mike". That is the exact opposite of what I think should be portrayed, because people looking at that think "Well, if they can do it, I can do it." And you'll push that envelope, a little bit more, a little bit more… because animal behaviour is so dynamic. An animal behaving one way the one day will be totally different the next day, so you cannot predict 'O no, fine, I know the animal, I know the animal…' The next day you push the limit, and then something happens." [88]

It is interesting that less than six months after Warren Bekker made this statement Steve Irwin, the most popular presenter of wild animal television shows in Australia, and quite possibly in the world, was stung by a sting ray which jabbed its tail straight into his heart. It was described in the media as "a freak accident", and popular opinion was that it was a most tragic occurrence. The position that I took stating "see what happens when you spend your entire career poking, prodding and harassing animals" was not a very popular one to express in the week following Irwin's death, and was received by most people as

"callous and unsympathetic". My point is that if you make your living by molesting animals, you do not deserve sympathy when one day one lashes back in self-defence. Popular demand keeps "Mad Mike & Mark" and their ilk in business, because people get so much of a thrill at seeing people within striking distance of potentially fatal animals that they do not consider the constant cruelty and harassment of the animals, and potentially dangerous consequences, to be a matter worthy of consideration. The animal molesters are popular because they reinforce the anthropocentric belief that animals are there for the pleasure and entertainment of humans, and to consider that animals deserve any moral or ethical rights of their own remains the belief of an extremely small minority of humans.

This failure to consider that animals have a right of privacy and a comfort radius which they do not like other creatures (especially humans) to penetrate is a probable cause of several, or even many incidents, especially with the apparently docile white rhino. According to Rangani Tsanwani:

> White rhino, yes. Because the problem with guides, we respect a lot of black rhino than a white rhino, so we took an advantage of a white rhino then we decided to go that close, but they started to charge us. If you notice, most of the people they shoot white rhino [rather] than a black rhino, but the [more] dangerous one is a black rhino [rather] than a white rhino. I always give it as a joke to my guests that once you see the black rhino you don't have to ask which tree you have to climb, they just automatically climb the tree. But if you see the white rhino, you can ask yourself, 'Oh I will climb this one if it's coming.' Because you know…they are very good animal[s].[89]

The guide's attitude towards animals seems to be a critical factor in the occurrence of trails incidents. Mike English explained that the ability of guides to deal with pressure or crises was considered a vital attributes of a good guide in the Kruger National Park:

> So if there was a method of assessing people of taking people into the bush…

> that's what I feel should be the method- you can go and you can do as many deployments as you like…but somehow training of guides, selection of guides…you can go and you can put him through anything you like but his reaction to crises in the bush you can only get from pressure situations…there were those that felt that they should be put through that test in culling situations where they had to shoot a charging elephant coming at them…I wasn't always sure that that was the best way to do it, but it was a good way of seeing how they would perform under stress… and we were shooting those that didn't come towards them from the helicopter…I have my views on the cruelty of this, I won't go into in detail…but that is a way to test a guy that works.[90]

Although Mike English is correct that this method would certainly enhance the ability of the guide to fire under pressure, it also has other effects. It normalizes the killing of animals, and arguably even encourages it. As a result of this method of training (which reeks of macho initiation schools), most game rangers in this system don't mind killing animals, and in fact, some may even enjoy it. When these people become nature guides, such as in Kruger, you may have a number of people itching to fire a shot. Becoming a better shot affects your physical abilities, but shooting real animals affects your ethical boundaries.

According to Dikgang

> I suppose it might be sometimes being, not being in a good area, that it might be that the terrain wasn't good, or often that the terrain might be good and that you walk into the animals sleeping, and that you get too close and that they might feel threatened, that's understandable. I suppose if you follow the rules and regulations and ethics, I don't think one would have to shoot an animal. [91]

When is was put to him that animals in northern Kruger may have either come from Moçambique or Zimbabwe where they've been shot at before, whilst animals at Madikwe had not had that experience, he countered that

> Elephants within Madikwe…came from Gonarezhou, north of Kruger, south of Zimbabwe where there's been a bit of a problem with poaching, but that also depends on how one treats the animals, how you approach the animals and also that's what we did, so I suppose that we should pay a penalty for our wrongdoing

> within these animals. But I would say that over time they will learn, and they would know that we're not bothering them anymore, and we will live in harmony as we used to live 300, 400 years back.[92]

The belief that historical animosity between humans and elephants, two species renowned for long memories, stubborn personalities and the tendency to dominate the habitat, could be forgotten, if both sides played their cards right, indicates remarkable optimism. "Dikgang's" vision is easy to hope for, but difficult to conceive of as a realistic future scenario, because of the probable lack of buy-in by humans (though not necessarily by elephants). Ultimately, the increase in human population without an increase in available habitat makes competition amongst humans more severe by the day and human concessions to wildlife correspondingly less likely. It appears that the human intellectual capacity to recall and the emotional capacity to forgive are easily overwhelmed by greed, the dominant driver of human "civilization" and economic and material culture

**The Pride and Prejudice**

> Being sociable, outcasts associate, preferably with members of the same sex. This is just the reverse of the primarily intra-sexual aggressiveness displayed between resident and non-resident lions. Within prides, too, females associate and behave much more affectionately with one another than with males, and vice versa for males. Companionships may last a lifetime. In fact, this social bonding, usually between closely related individuals that have grown up together, and particularly between mothers and daughters, is the very foundation of lion society. Male littermates often stay together after leaving their pride, and when ready to leave their territory they operate as a team. A single territorial male that finds himself confronting two challengers is clearly at a disadvantage. Two established males are clearly at a disadvantage against three challengers, and so on. But the advantage of an additional male decreases as coalition size increases and nine is the largest number I have heard about. A Serengeti septet dubbed the Seven Samurai took over and divided their time amongst three or four different prides.[93]

The above description of a pattern of behaviour is also applicable to field guides. Although it is not true that they actually work with a sibling or parent, they do divide

themselves into loyalty packets which are remarkably reminiscent of the social behaviour of lions, as described by Richard Estes above. The first level of loyalty is to your own pride, or territorial or philosophical grouping. Nature guides in South Africa tend to be loyal to all other nature guides. FGASA guides are particularly loyal to each other. Kruger Park staff do not criticize each other, or their management, and Kruger Park Trails Company would never dream of criticizing each other. They will stick together, even at risk of compromising the truth.

There is also a clear intra-gender bonding, which makes female guides very aware of each other and particularly loyal to each other. Male guides on the other hand are very gender loyal, even if this means being suspicious of female guides and being skeptical of their competence. One can infer from discussion that there are differences between guides. Yet they are alarmingly disinclined to criticize one another.

As mentioned on p.169 (and explained in more detail in Appendix IV), forty one large mammals have been killed in client protection on KNP trails between 1983 and 2006, which is equivalent of just over 1.7 animals per annum. One could easily consider this satisfactory, but only four incidents have occurred in KZN Parks over the same period and Madikwe has yet to report any incidents.

Mike English was quoted as saying “There are many problems in criticizing animals killed” (see p.146) so declined to comment further. However, when he said he can’t comment, he really meant in my interpretation that he wouldn’t comment, out of loyalty to Kruger National Park management and the Kruger National Park Trails Company

(formerly trails rangers of the Kruger National Park and currently in the process of returning to that status).

However, Lex Hes said:

> I think that if any animal is killed that's one too many... If I think about it that I've been guiding for thirty odd years, I've never had to shoot an animal. Although I think what you need to look at with those statistics if there's 41 animals that have been killed you need to look at how many times animals are encountered on foot in a place like Kruger. How many trails have been conducted there? And just have a look at it from a statistical point of view. In other words how many animals per number of tourists going through there? I mean that might be a more realistic way of looking at it. Because there's no doubt if you spending more time on foot in wilderness areas you're more likely too bump into or get into dangerous situations, whereas my career mostly has been vehicles. So there's less chance that I would end up getting into trouble.[94]

One cannot lightly dismiss Mike English's assertion that there are rather too many factors to easily analyze, nor Lex Hes' assertion that any animal killed is one too many.

Jaco Badenhorst is one of the most experienced members of the Kruger Park Trails Company. When asked what the most dangerous animals may be, asked:

> Apart from tourists? *(wry smile)* It largely depends on where in the Kruger Park you walk. Three of the seven trails in the Kruger Park is down in the south. And the southern side of the Kruger Park there's been a lot of white rhino. So the most dangerous animals that we meet down in the south is definitely white rhino, because there's so many of them. And then I think followed by elephant definitely.[95]

He said that he had "unfortunately" had occasion to shoot animals, but added that

> It's obviously not something that you brag about….But I must just make it very clear, the last thing we want to do, we're definitely not cowboys. None of us that works for wilderness company. And we got rid of the all the cowboys…And it happens. I can show you that print out...there's about forty incidents now over the last twenty seven years. I was also involved in quite a few….It's just a number of incidents. I'm a bit worried about this thing because I do not want that to end up in the wrong hands. Because you know what the media is like. If they get hold of that document...they can just turn that whole thing around and make a negative

> connotation of the Kruger Park trails. Why I say that and just to explain that, one of the incidents that I've had with a white rhino bull, a lady that was with us on a trail was a journalist for the Mail & Guardian. You read the article "To Shoot or not to Shoot", it may be an interesting inclusion to have as well...
>
> But anyway she (Mail & Guardian journalist Fiona McLeod) turned around, she was quite happy and content on the trail, she didn't say a word, she was very grateful of the fact that I saved their lives, which I probably did. Because she and her friend, a photographer, they were standing in the open on my left hand side. Myself and the rest of the group were more or less in a safe spot. I was more or less in the open but I could jump out of the way. I said to the group, move behind a bush. Everybody did except the two of them. The rhino was coming and I said to them "Move the fuck out of here", and they didn't respond to it at all. I don't know why, sometimes people freeze, or whether it was just the reporter in her to be in the thick of things. And the same with him, the wildlife photographer. And I couldn't let that rhino come past me. But anyway, she turned around and she wrote an article "To Shoot or not to Shoot". And her whole reasoning behind it is, because we carry rifles, we take chances, because we know the rifle is going to help us out in a [difficult] situation. And she also went further in saying that just before that, before our walk in the park, she was somewhere in the swamps where they also went on a [*mokoro*] trip.[96]

It was suggested to Jaco Badenhorst was that the one possible explanation of some of the incidents is over familiarity by the guides, so they just become blasé or they maybe also have experienced burnout, to which he replied:

> I think you know in my case, the longer you walk the more careful you become. Familiarity is not the right word, you think you're bullet proof when you start off doing trails. I remember my first year or two I took chances, and bad chances, and I think back about them now, there were things that I never should have done. Nowadays I just don't take chances. I try to eliminate risk like that. It's always in our favour out of a safety point of view. With burnout, I think burnout is definitely a problem and that is definitely the case of too many trails, and it does put a lot of stress and pressure on you, and people also put that pressure on you. Let's go a bit closer, where's the lion, why don't we see these things. So the guide can if he's burnt out or sick and tired of listening to the same story, just say what the hell, let's go closer, that's what these people want. That side effect of burnout might be an influencing factor. I think the more familiar you get with dangerous animals, if you've got three brain cells you would know to keep away from them. That's my opinion and most of us feel the same way. The longer you walk, the more careful you become…If you know that there's a lioness with cubs, turn around and go the other way. If you know you're bumping into a breeding herd with small calves, turn around and go the other way. And that's what Mike English taught me that when I started doing trails. He said to me just that. See a breeding herd of elephants, turn around and go the other way. So in a situation

> like that if you know that there's a breeding herd, if you know that there's cubs and you still go close, then you're looking for trouble. And to talk your way out of that if something happens that's going to be quite difficult. But totally unexpectedly, neither you or your client or your tracker knows what's going on, then obviously, but things happen.[97]

Manzi Spruit was vociferous that Kruger National Park guides are

> definitely not [trigger-happy]. You see, if you do shoot something, there's a board of inquiry. Now it's not just that, when you go out with people the idea is not to shoot an animal. That is not why you do this. If you look at statistics now in the Park- I'm not talking about trails now because that's privatized, sort of, I'm talking specifically about day walks, very , very few incidents, very few, which proves the point.[98]

It seems that Manzi Spruit had more points to prove than most guides. Trails incidents do need to be more severely scrutinized and criticized, for the protection of clients, for the protection of the guides, and not least for the protection of the animals, hopefully with a view to the reduction of incidents.

**The Return of 'the Prodigal'**

> I was born to work- I love working, I love people and the combination of being in the Kruger Park and working with people all the time is having your bread buttered on both sides- absolutely loved it. The experience that you get with trails, you can't compare that to anything else, not even day walks. I think that is about the best you can have if you like this kind of thing. [99]

Let us now examine how trails in the Kruger National Park became privatized as the Kruger National Park Trails Company, only to be re-incorporated into the core staff after less than a decade. The title of this section is intended to be ironic as, in strong contrast to the biblical parable, it was the "parent" (Kruger National Park management) that decided rather unilaterally that the trails division should be privatized and then later repented and reversed this evidently erroneous decision.

After Mike English retired, the Parks Board decided, rather rashly in most people's judgment, to privatize the Kruger Park trails guiding programme (which became the Kruger Park Trails Company). The Kruger National Park policy was to take all staff who were not part of "the Kruger National Park core function" off the books, and contract out to them as a private company for their services. The rationale was that trails ranging was not a core function, and that it was better to cut the costs of keeping them on the staff. It is likely that some influential senior managers considered trails officers as redundant to the "core function" of the Kruger National Park, conceived at the time as being to "manage the environment". Walking trails had grown so much in popularity that there were full-time trails rangers who did not need to double up as game rangers. By this logic trails rangers were therefore no longer participants in the "core function". The fact that certain of them were planning on becoming (or hoping to become) section rangers was not really adequately taken into consideration. To many this was an error from the outset, because although this is a very noble goal, it is thoroughly unpragmatic. If the core function was re-conceived as "to manage the environment and produce profit" then trails guides would be considered high performers in terms of the latter objective.

The overwhelming majority of trails rangers were still white males, which may have influenced Parks Boards intention to privatize, and thus effectively to improve levels of black economic power through "affirmative action", or more specifically through statistical manipulation. According to English:

> I'm not sure what the prices are of [doing the trails], but Parks Board obviously are making money out of it…it could be that trails officers are better paid-I'm not sure. I believe that the outsourcing will be stopped and they'll be re-absorbed into the park- I'm not sure, but that is what I heard…Trails guides are [now] considered to have a core function.[100]

Many black guides also disagreed with the original privatization of the Kruger National Park Trails Company. Moloko Phaho said

> We have got a limitation of white guides…That's why I'm saying previously I think it was alright…I don't really know what happened about that one [the separation of the Trails Company from permanent staff], but it's not a good idea, I think it has to come back to the park. I think they have to re-employ them. It's [been] all about privatization, because they wanted also to privatize the nature guides…I think it's a failure. It's not a good thing, because they came up with certain systems which are not functional, like "payment by activity" came, for example fifty rand per activity. It's all about competition, people who compete and cause a lot of trouble, because they are well experienced guides. The system was better before, like if they're looking for guides sometimes they don't find an experienced field ranger…Experience plays an important role, because these days people they just do it just for money, to impress their clients and it's not a good thing because you are endangering the animal's life at the same time…for myself during that period from 2003 I learned a lot from experienced guides and they are gone now to different national parks…I'll name them because they taught me a job and I'm following their steps. Mark Macgill [whom] I was working with [at Satara] and Jan Kriel [whom] I was working with at Orpen.[101]

Once again this demonstrates the loyalty of guides towards each other, even though the guides concerned are from different race groups. Obviously this is immensely admirable in terms of loyalty and commitment to maintaining standards. Rangani Tsanwani was equally vocal that his former (and future) colleagues had got a bad deal:

> I remember, I think it was 2003 where they said guides would get a salary according to the activities. You do these activities you get this amount. So that was something that was discouraging the guides…when it rained there was no food on your table. That is the problem. Some camps they are very, very busy camps. Some camps they are not busy at all. We have got bush camps in the Kruger Park, we have got big rest camps like Skukuza, Satara and Letaba. It means the guides in that area they will have to earn a lot of money than the guides in a bush camp, because they can't expect you to do a hundred activities in a bush camp where only a few people come. So that was something that was discouraging the guides to keep on doing their job…I don't know why they [management] think that way because the money that we put in this organization it just comes straight. You can see this is money from the game drives, this is money from the day walk. You can easily tell how much the day walks made for this month. So that I wonder why they said this. Maybe because it was something that was just introduced. And the men who were on top maybe was not marketing it very well. Maybe that's why guides since, they are contract.[102]

It appears that, whether through the solidarity of affected guides, or for reasons of their own, the Kruger Park management did an about turn in mid-trail.

The current management of Kruger interprets this turnaround quite differently to my proposed explanation (on p.188) above. According to Dr. Freek J. Venter, the HoD for Conservation Services in the Kruger National Park, there was a strong drive for commercialization at that stage (wrongly in Dr. Venter's view). Trails was viewed as an income-generating activity instead of a conservation interpretation focused activity. This decision was reversed because

> …it was realized that this was a core constituency building function and that it was a mistake to outsource such. How can outsiders effectively defend SANParks policies, especially sensitive ones? The wilderness guides will join us again by February, 2007. At this stage we need to maintain quality of guiding in that section, as well as look at the gender and race ratios. This will be done with great sensitivity.[103]

The success of transformation will be difficult to judge, as previous demographic figures of guides were not available. If the relationship between nature guides and game rangers is accepted as described (on pp.123-32) above as comparable to facultative mutualism, and most particularly as argued as obligate mutualism, then the return of the Kruger Park Trails Company to the core function of the Kruger National Park, not only makes good sense, but it is imperative to the survival of both tourism and the environment.

Despite contrasting spin of interpretation on this decision, current management and myself are agreed that it appears to be a good one. It emphasizes once more the strong mutualism (approaching obligate mutualism) that exists between game rangers (conservation) and field guides (tourism). Despite the long waiting period which it took

to extract the above information, it appears that Kruger Management made an about face which was both strategically sound for their management, commercial and interpretative objectives, and also very well received by a vast majority of guides.

**Conclusion**

The late 70s through to the early 90s were a tumultuous time in South African history. The country underwent an unprecedented militarization, and white males were the most affected group, and were also the most common group in nature guiding (and probably remain so to this day, though their majority is significantly diminished). The entire country, but these recruits in particular, were subjected to a brand of propaganda which try to inculcate in them a fear of "Communists" and "terrorists". History has shown that Communism has not become a particularly successful ideology in South Africa, and "terrorists" were a motley group of radicals who shared the vision of the majority of South Africans, that South Africa could, and should become a democracy.

The Kruger National Park began a trails programme which in many respects was highly successful, thanks to a core group of pioneers, including Mike English. He has shown himself to be a fundamental democrat in so far as he worked for many years to ensure that a version of the wilderness experience was available to all the citizens of the country, and continued to exist within the economic means of as many people as reasonably possible. In his mind, Mike English remains loyal to the Kruger National Park, its management and its guides, and especially to the guides of the Kruger National Park Trails Company. In his heart, he has a great love for Ian Player and others who have made sacrifices for conservation and a sense of compassion for animals especially clearly

intelligent animals such as elephants, and he despises cruelty, so management acts like elephant culling in the past left him feeling very conflicted.

From 1983 onwards a significant number of animals were killed for "client protection". Initially, guides were drawn from the ranks of game rangers, who were had first-hand experience of implementing the management policy of culling a variety of animals, particularly elephants. For a significant duration, elephant culls were used as a testing environment to investigate how guides would perform under pressure, and in some sense "initiate" them. This certainly assisted in giving them the skills to deal with highly pressurized confrontations with animals, but it also normalized killing of animals and conditioned the guides to think that if they got into trouble, they could always shoot the animal. There is no doubt that the Kruger Trails Guides have saved a significant number of human lives, but they could quite possibly have saved a significant number of animals lives, if that had seemed to them a more important thing to do.

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[1] Int. 8 Mike English, p.2 L1
[2] Int. 8 Mike English, p.2 L28
[3] Int. 8 Mike English, p.3 L7
[4] Int. 8 Mike English, p.3 L14
[5] Int. 8 Mike English, p.4 L8
[6] Braack, Leo A Visitor's Guide to the Kruger National Park, Struik, Cape Town, 1996, pp.165-171
[7] Int. 8 Mike English, p.9 L14
[8] Document obtained from Jaco Badenhorst
[9] Int. 8 Mike English, p.9 L23
[10] Int. 8 Mike English, p.9 L33
[11] Int. 8 Mike English, p.10 L6
[12] Int. 8 Mike English, p.10 L24
[13] Int. 8 Mike English, p.11 L2
[14] Bryden, Bruce A Game Ranger Remembers, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2005, p.241.
[15] *ibid.*, p.18.
[16] Int. 1 Ian Player, p.4 L26
[17] Int. 9 Manzi Spruit, p.1 L3
[18] Int. 9 Manzi Spruit, p.1 L20
[19] Int. 9 Manzi Spruit, p.1 L33
[20] Int. 9 Manzi Spruit, p.5 L38
[21] Int. 9 Manzi Spruit, p.8 L31
[22] Int. 9 Manzi Spruit, p.11 L26

[23] Int. 9 Manzi Spruit, p.12 L10
[24] Int. 7 Lex Hes, p.9 L4
[25] Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.13 L39
[26] Information sent by Dr. Freek J. Venter, HOD, Conservation Services, KNP
[27] Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.13 L25
[28] Wendy Carstens, personal comment
[29] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.11 L29
[30] Int. 4 Sicelo Mbhatha, p.14 L2
[31] Bryden, Bruce A Game Ranger Remembers, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2005, p.233.
[32] *ibid.*, p.238
[33] Int. 2 Warren Bekker, p.2 L4
[34] Personal comment from Grant Hine
[35] Int. 9 Manzi Spruit, p.9 L32
[36] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.10 L10
[37] Int. 13 Ignatius Bogatsu, p.5 L33
[38] Int. 2 Warren Bekker, p.7 L 27
[39] Int. 7 Lex Hes, p.6 L40
[40] Personal e-mail correspondence with Peter Sandenberg
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[44] Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.20 L12
[45] Int. 7 Lex Hes, p.4 L17
[46] Int.1 Ian Player, p.5 L4
[47] Int. 8 Mike English, p. 4 L 18
[48] Int. 8 Mike English, p.13 L12
[49] Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.19 L20
[50] Int. 2 Warren Bekker, p.4 L36
[51] Int. 7 Lex Hes, p.7 L34
[52] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.8 L10
[53] Int. 13 Ignatius Bogatsu, p.5 L13
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# TRANSFORMATION OF THE MYTH AND THE MYTH OF TRANSFORMATION: OVER 100 YEARS OF GUIDING IN SOUTH AFRICAN GAME RESERVES



adaptability

## Chapter 4- Developments Towards Democracy (1992- 2007)

## CHAPTER 4- DEVELOPMENTS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY (1992- 2007)

This chapter describes the period from 1992 to the present and discussion of themes arising out of the key issues during the period, which began with the founding of the Field Guides' Association of Southern Africa (FGASA). The first section attempts to capture some of the history of FGASA, the wide support for the association and some criticism of the association. The second section describes the background, development and strategy of the Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority (THETA), which is the body which regulates National Qualifications Framework (NQF) qualifications for the tourism sector as a result of the promulgation of the South African Training Authorities (SAQA) Act of 1996. This system has also elicited a wide range of comments from nature guides, so its merits and problems are discussed in some detail. The third section discusses how, during the period under discussion there was a marked growth in the nature guiding industry, but it would appear that there was a significantly larger percentage of growth in the nature guide training industry. This suggests that some people were studying nature guiding for pure interest and did not intend to enter the industry. The ultimate causes of this growth in the industry are interesting, but theories offered below are speculative, inconclusive and would be impossible to defend without further analytical quantitative research. The fourth section examines Conservation Corporation as an example of nature guiding strategies, philosophies, attitudes and values in the private lodges. Due to its having operations in different provinces Conscor has avoided producing guides with a clearly provincial "corporate personality" by comparison with KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife guides as discussed in chapter 2 or those in the Kruger National Park as discussed in chapter 3. The fifth section examines guides at Madikwe who have been used as an example of guides who have a local identity distinctive from those described above. They may be taken to represent an emergent system of relatively progressive and

ecologically sensitive ethical guiding paradigm. The sixth section describes and analyses demographics of transformation amongst management in general, and nature guides specifically and suggests that although transformation may be in progress, the process is much slower amongst guides than it is in management in general. The seventh section examines language and cultural barriers which are amongst the most significant impediments for racial and gender transformation of the industry. The conclusion contains a summative discussion of the past decade and a half, with particular reference to the transformation of the industry.

**The Field Guides' Association of Southern Africa: "The White Boys' Club"?**

The 1990s saw the birth of democracy in South Africa, a country which had gained world notoriety as the inventor and producer of apartheid and the heinous suite of laws which accompanied it. Yet after three decades of imprisonment Nelson Mandela and the ANC Leadership emerged remarkably strong and miraculously forgiving, given the circumstances which they had endured. A group of guides which in 1992 was named the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) emerged during the same period. The response of FGASA to the politics of the day was cryptic and complex.

FGASA did not obviously embrace the spirit of the blooming democracy, and to some it appeared to be a rather reactionary association which was later to be described by Leone Whateley of THETA as "the White Boys' Club". In order to decide whether this was an unfair epithet, it is worth examining the origins of FGASA and asking whether the idea of the association was planted in soils which nurtured conservative or even reactionary attitudes, or whether FGASA just had the misfortune of suspicious timing and a membership who were primarily white and male.

Clive Walker described his recollections of the founding of FGASA as follows:

> I don't know if you were aware of it- I was the first chairman of FGASA... together with old Don Richards. He and I organized the first field guide's conference or workshop that ever took place and it was at Lapalala. He and I long pushed, together with a number of others that have done some fantastic work, encouraged the formation of FGASA, which in my opinion has done an exceptional job in lifting the level of the awareness of what serious guides are all about. Today it's a lot of hard work to become very proficient. To get to FGASA level III, you've got to put a lot of effort into it, it isn't anymore good enough that your uncle has a game farm, and you've shot an impala and you know the signs of the wild. It goes far beyond that, so I am delighted that today field guiding is regarded as a serious profession, and it's not just the so called "jungle fever" as you have mentioned.[1]

According to current CEO, Grant Hine, FGASA was

> …started by a small group of nature guides, then referred to as field guides, wilderness guides or game rangers. [They] got together and decided to try and set some sort of standard of professionalism for field guides. This group consisted of various individuals who were involved in field guiding at the time. Two people who come to mind are Ria Milburn and Clive Walker. Various other individuals always claim that they were there at the start of FGASA, however the minutes from the first meeting ever held, reflect about twenty people in total who were instrumental in getting the association off the ground. Looking back at the archives of the minutes taken at all previous meetings it is clear that the Association was formally started in 1992.[2]
>
> The association was started by these individuals who felt that there was a dire need to set some sort of standard for field guiding in those days. There were many individuals working in the then 'guiding industry' and each one following their own ideas as to what a guide is and should do. There were no requirements in those days and any 'Tom, Dick or Harriet' could just decide to be a guide and there you were taking clients out with not much of an idea of what was to be expected. They just did their own thing.
>
> The establishment of FGASA aimed to provide guides in the jobs as field guide[s] with some sort of standard and way of getting people in the industry to subscribe to some sort of ethical code of conduct and a standard of field guiding based mainly on experience. There was initially no formal examination system, guides joined as members, they were interviewed and based their experience and their willingness to subscribe to FGASA's principles they were awarded a membership category. It was only later that some form of assessment was introduced to determine how much knowledge a member had and based on this they were either given a qualification (membership category) or not. Practical assessments were carried out for the FGASA Level III qualification only and were based largely on knowledge rather than on guiding skill.
>
> FGASA's membership grew over time particularly in the light of the agreement that FGASA had with SATOUR that guides practicing as field guides had to join and gain a qualification with FGASA before they could register as a legal guide with SATOUR. In

> principle this was meant to apply to all guides operating as a nature as opposed to a culture guide (traditional tour guide). The majority of [nature] guides in those days (Pre-THETA/NQF) joined FGASA, and steadily the membership grew. FGASA gained a reputation, not only amongst guides, but amongst lodges and companies who employed field guides. There were many field guides however, including myself [Grant Hine] that initially had the attitude of 'who do FGASA think they are to tell us what we should know to be a guide?' To a large extent FGASA's initial success was due to there being no other standard setting association for field guides, the fact that they were supposed to join FGASA and get a qualification before they could register with SATOUR [see Ch.4, pp.30-31] and the fact that many employers of guides valued the standard set by FGASA.
>
> FGASA's subsequent success is based on its trustworthy methods of assessment standards that have been upheld, if not raised, over the last few years. It has proven that many guides may have gained the required national qualifications, but they may not necessarily be competent to carry out the job as a nature guide at the high level of standard that employers have come to expect from FGASA qualified guides. Hence the demand for FGASA qualified guides only but enhances FGASA's position in the guiding industry.[3]

Although these claims by Hine appear grand, there is no doubt that in certain quarters within the guiding industry, for example in the middle and upper management of the Kruger National Park, FGASA was heartily embraced, supported and encouraged. Bruce Bryden and Manzi Spruit were full of praise for FGASA methods and praise for their achievements:

> If you take an institution like FGASA- since FGASA started off being there and you had to work through them, they actually created a standard that's fantastic. That's the second time I talk about FGASA- I've got a lot of respect for what they do- and I would advise any guide to go through FGASA, and they do set a standard, and you don't just get your qualifications, you really have to work for them, and you have to do certain practical years as well before you can go to the next phase, which is super.[4]

It should be made clear here that when Manzi Spruit said "you have to do certain practical years as well" she was alluding to the fact that as a matter of policy in FGASA, you may sit Level I as soon as you have joined. After you have successfully passed Level I (which consists of both a theory exam or workbook exercise and a practical assessment) you must be able to demonstrate that you have worked in the industry for a year before you are eligible to sit level II. Again, after you have passed both your theory test and your practical assessment you must demonstrate that you have worked for a year before you are eligible to sit level III. Only candidates who have passed Level

III are eligible for Special Knowledge Skills (SKS) assessment. So a guide with Level III knows a fairly high level of theory (equal perhaps to 2 or 3 years at a technikon) and also has at least 2 years of experience, and a guide with an SKS has at least this and usually more and is able to demonstrate additional expertise in their area of specialization.

Manzi Spruit quite clearly indicated that she thought that the (past) Kruger Park management liked the FGASA system because:

> FGASA proved [itself]. How many years have they been there? And they know that those guys have really got to work hard to get their qualifications. Bruce Bryden who used to work here in the Park, said it very well, he said "Level I is the pedal, level II is the bicycle and level III is sheer hell"- he didn't even get to the SKS bit, because he did it as well. And being the Chief Ranger…in the Park, that says a lot about the standard of FGASA.[5]

Hine concedes that there was no magical formula and that FGASA has not been without certain shortcomings or drawbacks:

> There are benefits to being a member of the association; however FGASA could be doing a lot more for its members. The focus thus far has been on developing qualifications, related assessment tools and alignment directly through THETA with the National Qualifications Framework and the regulations of SAQA. A shortcoming of FGASA has been the neglect of other benefits of which there are potentially never ending resources. If only "we" had the time to go out and get them. If FGASA could offer guides more than just an avenue to gain the required qualifications and the odd benefit of cheaper books, the membership could quite easily triple. Another major shortcoming of the past was FGASA's inability to adjust the method of assessment which focused more on knowing "everything" instead of the ability to transform what you do know into a memorable guiding experience. In this way the potential to gain members and the cause of member loss was increased as many companies, like CCAfrica in those days felt that FGASA was trying to dictate to guides and to the employers of guides and through that seemed to have lost the whole idea of what makes a good guide. Things today are fairly different and many members are slowly returning given FGASA's new philosophy and the attitudes of those driving the association.[6]

It is all very well for Grant Hine to try to say this, and in some sense he is certainly right, but what constitutes "a memorable experience" is very hard to objectively quantify or assess in a fashion which was relatively consistent regardless of assessor subjectivity. Experience has shown that

objectivity within a "knowledge based" system is far more possible than within a "skills based" system and that the assessment of concepts like ambience, attitude and ethics were the most subjective by far. The current system recognizes knowledge, skills and attitude strictly in that order- and not least because of FGASA influence over the THETA system as to what would be practicable and feasible. Lex Hes thought it important to remind people that it is easy to allow knowledge to become overrated (and other critical inter-personal and communication skills to become under-rated):

> I think the important thing, and this is actually one of the areas where I feel a lot of training and standards setting in the guide industry falls down a little bit, is that, to me, there is far too much emphasis actually on the gathering of knowledge….[7]

The suggestion that FGASA have a "new philosophy" is a complex one, and requires some background. This could be interpreted as referring to the difference in outlook between FGASA's former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Douwe van der Zee and Grant Hine's own position. It would not be overstating the case to suggest that both CEOs have been significantly more liberal in outlook than any of their chairmen or most of their executive committee members. (There may have been one or two possible exceptions in the exco, including myself. My tenure on the FGASA executive committee was terminated due to appointment as a Quality Assuror at THETA during the same period. I therefore tended my resignation from the exco to prevent any accusation of a conflict of interests.)

After the initial establishment of FGASA, Ria Milburn was more or less in control, until it appears that she fell out with Andy Dott over matters of how the organization was run. Dott was evidently instrumental in giving the organization a more professional executive structure, and installing a system with a separate Chairman and CEO. Initially, Douwe van der Zee was installed as CEO, but

he resigned after a few years due to a variety of frustrations which he experienced in the post. He was succeeded by Grant Hine.

Before commenting further on the position of Grant Hine as compared (and in some respects, perhaps contrasted) to the position of Douwe van der Zee, it should be mentioned that in an association with over 4 000 active members (plus another over 3 000 "lapsed" members) there is no way that the "new philosophy" of FGASA can simply be reduced to a difference in opinion, policy and management style between two individuals. If such a "new philosophy" really did come into being, it is more likely to have done so because of changes in the broader context over time, as is suggested in more detail below.

As a brief aside, it is interesting to note that the lapsed members counted above are drawn only from people whose membership have lapsed in the past couple of years, and if the count was made over the entire history of the society, this number would be considearably larger. The phenomenon of "lapsed members" indicates that many people are "fair weather friends" of the association. Many members join when they need something, usually to sit an exam and assessment to obtain an increase in level, and are then they cease to pay up their membership subscription fees for a few years before returning again for the same reason. By contrast a hard core of the 4 000 members have been paying their subscription fees without protest for 10 years or more, indicating that some people are happy to give and take.

No doubt Grant Hine was appointed as a pragmatist, having shown a bent to astute management throughout his career as a guide and manager. It would certainly be overstating the case to describe

Grant Hine as a radical (or FGASA as a progressive organization) although he is at times prone to demonstrating thinking that is remarkably independent for a career path deeply rooted in management practices. For example, he once said "It's a pity that white men don't *toyi-toyi*", and went on to expand as follows:

> It would seem as though white men are scared to rock the boat, lose their secure jobs and generally don't stand up for what they believe in if it means potentially losing what they have. In other words they don't agree with the whole system and upbringing that put them there but they seem to be happy to just carry on within the ideological framework that they find themselves in. It is probably because they have always had it "good" and don't know what it means to climb up out of nothing to get somewhere in life. However, this is a generalization as there are many who have had to work hard to where they have got to, and cannot quite understand it when some guides just want to be given qualifications just because they feel they deserve them.
>
> If guides are not happy with the situation within the guiding industry, no matter what aspect of the industry, to gain some sort of emancipation they will ultimately need to "*toyi-toyi*" in some manner. They cannot rely totally on stakeholder representatives (like FGASA) to have all the impact to have process and policy changed. Yes, stakeholder representatives can have some effect but their "powers" are limited to a certain extent. It's as though white guides don't feel passionate enough about their jobs as nature guides that they can always fall back on something else if it doesn't work out. It also stems from the fact that guiding has not and is still not yet fully taken to be a recognized profession. The recognition of this by individual guides will probably only happen when those who employ guides see the job as a professional career and treat guides accordingly.
> Thus, I see the attitude of white guides not willing to stand up for themselves based from within the industry's lack of recognition of guiding as a profession. Thus far, this attitude seems to have crept into the minds of black guides as there has been very little resistance from black guides in the industry in terms of unhappiness with the process, procedure and policy. If the profession is recognized then there would be something worth *toyi-toying* for, maybe then we could judge if white men have rhythm.[8]

Hine argues that one of the root causes of the lack of solidarity is that guides may share an understanding of what they oppose:

> It's a bit of a catch 22, given that the lack of *toyi-toying* is due to not being recognized as a professional career, but the very reason to *toyi-toyi* would be to attain that recognition. Thus, they would *toyi-toyi* for professional recognition if they were recognized as professionals in the tourism industry in the first place.
>
> What is a game lodge without the guides? Just a room with a potentially changing view, good food and nice white linen. There is no "safari" experience, the ultimate reason for

> visiting a game lodge. Lodges still don't get it, the most important aspect of the company is the guided experience be it on a walk, a open vehicle drive, sundowners, bush breakfast, dinner in the *boma* all with the up close and personal nature guide. The marketing focus is always on the room, the view, the food and wildlife, but very seldom on the expertise of the professional guide who will either make or break your stay at the exclusive game lodge.
>
> It is this recognition that guides would be *toyi-toying* for; to not only improve their salary (based on experience and qualification), their accommodation, working hours, ability to have a family, but to be given the respect for what they have put into becoming a professionally qualified guide and no longer treated as the "dog's body" who will be asked to do anything and be expected just to do it. You would not ask a professional doctor to fix the leaking toilet after he has made a house call to treat an illness. When are employers of professional guides going to treat the guides like guides and not "jack of all trades" and get the maintenance person to sort the leaking toilet out?[9]

Hine is suggesting that the current system (by which he presumably means both the National Qualifications Framework, and the way in which this has impacted on the role, strategies and methodologies of FGASA) has led to a higher level of professionalism and seriousness of people entering the nature guiding industry, and a corresponding expectation on their part that they should be received as professionals:

> The majority of guides who are passionate about the nature guiding environment in which they work and who love their "entertainment" role as guide and host would want the respect as a professional given the new requirements placed on guides. Due to the qualification and registration requirements placed on guides today, there will probably be a drop in the number of guides who are guiding to fill a gap year, or have nothing else to do because the military no longer requires their services for them to do nothing but think about what they want to do in terms of a career. Guides who are serious would like to be taken seriously and treated accordingly and under conditions given to them as professionals would support proposals that would provide them with a better life as a professional nature guide. [10]

He suggests that most guides would not risk joining a union because they would not want to jeapardize their more dubious benefits and privileges:

> Some unions have tried to get off the ground, but they have failed dismally due to lack of support, again possibly due to the attitude of is it really worth it and on the other hand what power does the union have if its only just starting up in the very unprofessional manner that they did try and get things off the ground.
>
> It would take a lot to establish a union for guides that had clout and could both stand up for guides and take into consideration what unionization would mean in terms of changing

> existing conditions for guides from an employers point of view. Bear in mind that employers, especially game lodges would arrange many of the existing "perks" in such a manner that it would cost the guide financially even if higher salaries were paid. I get the impression that many guides would not opt to join a union based on some of the potentially negative changes that may replace some of the perks they have at present even though there might be other added benefits.[11]

He does not believe that unions would be effective in the context, neither is he convinced that they would really be an effective tool in convincing the industry of the guides' real worth:

> The value of a professional guide should not have to be forced onto companies who employ guides, which a union would, given the role that other unions have played in the tourism and hospitality industry. It works in terms of work hours and pay increases but it would not work in terms of showing respect for guiding as a profession and what they are worth to the company. Under these conditions the guide would only be worth what the union says she/he is worth in terms of monetary value according to salaries and living conditions. Do we really want to force (by law or union) employers to treat guides according to union negotiation, is that really only what guides are worth?[12]

Hine does not believe that a union (or even another association) would threaten FGASA, but he also suggests that the market is not big enough for such a concept to be effective:

> There is potential for other associations to be established be they in the form of a guides union or just another grouping of professional guides. However FGASA has earned a reputation which has taken many years to develop through good and bad years in terms of attitudes towards FGASA. The difficulty in developing a new association would be the resistance from guides in terms of "why should be join another association and pay more fees?" A number of disgruntled guides have threatened to start their own association but never followed through. I feel that the reason a union would not be able to be more popular and acceptable than FGASA is due to the fact that unions in the "traditional" sense can't offer guides training and qualifications. Put it this way; FGASA is not threatened by the prospect of other guiding associations or unions being established given that competition is good for further growth and development.[13]

The unwritten sub-text concerning FGASA is that the majority of people elected to the FGASA Executive Committee (Exco) are either managers or owners of small businesses which are either in the business of tourism or of guide training, and thus FGASA's own Exco may not be in touch with, or entirely sympathetic to the reality of the guides on the ground. In addition the overwhelming majority of members and of the (FGASA) Exco are white and male.

The FGASA Executive Committee as recorded in the FGASA newsletter (Field News) of December 2006 consisted of the following members:

**Grant Hine**: Managing Director and Chairman. This position was changed from chief Executive Officer (CEO) within the same year that this thesis was written. The office of Chairman was formerly held by a member of the Executive Committee (Exco). The last holder was Adriaan Louw.

**Bruce Lawson:** Vice Chairman and Director. Lawson manages Lawson's Birding Academy in partnership with his father (Peter Lawson) and wife (Dee Lawson) (also Regional Committee Representative for Lowveld South).

**Brian Serrao**: Operations Director. Serrao is a former South African Airways manager who got into Field Guiding through being on the team at Environmental Training Group.

**Ian Owtram**: Owtram is a highly experienced guide trainer, owner and manager of Antares Field Guide Training Centre (also Regional Committee Representative for Lowveld North).

**Andrew Desmet:** Desmet is a Human Resources manager and guide in Kruger National Park.

**Vanessa Strijdom:** Strijdom is a manager and guide trainer in Kruger National Park.

**Fanie Fouche:** Fouche is an executive member and Regional Committee Representative for Eastern Cape.

**Louis Willemse**: Willemse is an executive member and Regional Committee Representative for Western Cape.

**Sakkie van Aswegan:** Van Aswegan is a highly experienced guide trainer and manager, owner and manager of Bushveld Training Adventures.

**Kerry Slater**: Slater is a former FGASA administrator and current lecturer in Ecology/ botany at UNISA / Wits Tech.

**Alan Yeowart:** Yeowart is the Head of Guide Training at Singita, a private game lodge group in South Africa and Tanzania.

In addition the following other people are Regional Committee Representatives:

**Julian Simon:** representative for KZN North

**Dave Honour:** representative for KZN South

**Lee Gutteridge**: representative for the Waterberg, SKS assessor in Wild Flowers.

All the above people are white and only Vanessa Strijdom and Kerry Slater are female.

It is possible that they are representative of the real demographics on the ground, where nature guiding has not been the choice of black learners with a professional capability, so the traditional stereotypes, where your trackers and field officers are black, and "game rangers" or field guides and most people in management are still white. Whether this is the case or not, there is still a strong perception that FGASA is "the white boys' club". Hine responded to this by saying:

> Looking back at the early years of FGASA I would say that this statement may have been fairly accurate. I say fairly accurate in terms of reference to the white part, however there were a number of women who were instrumental in FGASA's early development. Over the years the number of female members has increased dramatically. Given the present makeup of members in terms of race the statement would have to be taken as an unfair description. FGASA has more non-white members than any other association in the tourist guiding industry. FGASA has never discriminated against any racial group or gender and a guide's status in terms of race and gender was never reflected on the FGASA database. It is only recently that FGASA has had to make these distinctions on the database in order to comply with regulations so that the transformation process can be clearly reflected. At present FGASA is still trying to allocate race and gender to all of its seven thousand-odd members. Results so far indicate that the association is so far off from being "the white boys' club".[14]

Lex Hes indicated that he was less persuaded of the fact that this demographic transition had been accomplished:

> No, I don't actually [think Leone Whateley's original comment is unfair to FGASA]. At one point I thought that I might get involved with FGASA more deeply because we felt that the private game lodge industry and the views of the private game lodge industry were not being carried through in FGASA enough. There was too much emphasis on the trails guide and the rifle and walking and not enough on what they derogatorily call jeep jockeys. And you would sit in FGASA and they would talk about jeep jockeys in this very negative way and we felt that actually FGASA should be looking at a different view that these so called jeep jockeys are probably the most important guides in the country. They are the people that are probably dealing with more people, more sophisticated people, the people that are bringing the most money into the country and so they need to be looked after and cared for and standards have to be maintained with those people. So I thought well it's time for me to try and get involved and so I stood for the committee and it was elected to the committee. And I remember at that AGM when I was elected to the committee there were 150 people in the meeting, there was one black person, and that was Anthony Ngumani who had been

> invited there by FGASA. And that was the only black face in the whole meeting. And that's when I thought to myself there's a problem here in terms of race and FGASA is perhaps not being inclusive enough, and certainly in the early days, and maybe they're trying to change it a little bit, but their whole system of testing and assessing and so on is based on written exams and studying very academic material. And that is a barrier to a lot of the local people, but I see with the whole new local guide standards and so on that's maybe a way of bringing more of the locals in.[15]

Lex Hes' suggestion was confirmed by some of the black guides, who had got the impression that the FGASA exam system was mainly for white people. For example Rangani Tsanwani said:

> I first wrote my FGASA when I was in technikon….only white people who pass FGASA, and all of us, the African people were failing FGASA. Then that thing was in our mind that this thing is meant to help white people to be in conservation than us. Because if you can look, white people they can do that things than Afrikaans, and they do it much easier for them to understand that language. If they ask you something about FGASA, if you're not an experienced guide, it is not easy to pass FGASA. And most of the Afrikaans people they grow up on farms so they know a lot of things. So it was a … for them to be in guiding.
>
> The advantage was that they were having all those things. So for us it was a disadvantage… To see a black person with FGASA qualification it wasn't totally easy. At technikon we used to fail this every time. There is a FGASA test, we'd go and write FGASA, we'd keep on failing all the time, then we started to hate FGASA. So…lots of African people…were hating FGASA, but at least now they understand…they thought this was an easy way for them, because most of the people would go to the technikon, study three years trying to learn nature conservation. But FGASA can cover some of the stuff in conservation in three months. Do you get my point? So that's why most of the people were thinking this is made for whites, to make it quicker and easier for them to be in the industry.[16]

He maintained that FGASA exams were more difficult than technikon exams for black learners:

> Yes, it wasn't that easy, because [in the FGASA written exams] they will ask a different type of a mouth of a bird, stuff like that. They just show you a beak, which type of a bird is this? That's the stuff [and other things like astronomy which are in the FGASA exam] we don't do in the technikon. It's a little bit different. That's why it's not easy for the technikon guys to pass FGASA.[17]

"Dikgang" also added that there was a sense in which the difficulties experienced by black guides were the result of the terminology and obtuse vocabulary used in FGASA exams rather than necessarily a lack of relevant and practical knowledge (see quote and discussion on p.264).

Clive Walker agreed that this was an example which illustrated that non-English speaking learners have a good case (see p.264).

Tsanwani believed that the subject matter of FGASA should be incorporated into Technikon courses, so that black learners were given a fair chance to pass:

> If they [FGASA & Technikon] can co-ordinate, yes. If they can introduce FGASA in schools as a one year course, then it can be easy for people to pass FGASA, because they will give you lectures…on that FGASA they just give you manuals. Then you have to go down and look for books by yourself, and start to compile your own notes. Then if it's your first time it wasn't easy to pass FGASA level I.[18]

Rangani Tsanwani does not appear to be unique or exceptional in this belief and his attitude may be typical of black guides in many parts of the country, and most particularly in Gauteng and Mpumalanga, where formerly uneducated communities have taken a quantum leap forward in education.

Initially, black guides felt discriminated against but in many cases as they became familiar with the FGASA system they came to realize that it was not necessarily a racist plot to exclude them. Their exclusion was based on the fact that they were being assessed against criteria for which they were not adequately prepared. In a large number of cases, when once these individuals started to understand the basis for the FGASA assessment criteria, they moved from being serious objectors to the FGASA system to being converts and even ardent advocates of the FGASA standards, notwithstanding that most retained significant and relevant objections. FGASA were to some extent aware of this gap between their current position and a potentially strong black support base. Being a voluntary association they did not have the means (or perhaps in the case of some FGASA members, did not have the inclination) to bridge the gap between educationally disadvantaged

black guides and relatively privileged white guides. It should also be added that in 2005, in response to the perceived unfairness of the written exam the option of a written assignment rather than sitting an exam was extended to all FGASA Level I candidates, with the intention of making the FGASA qualifications system more accessible to historically educationally disadvantaged individuals. The newly formed democratic government responded to the broad problem of unfair access to certified qualifications by introducing producing a system that would aim to recognize this gap and try to address it so that true equity was created. This resulted in the SAQA/SETA system, which is discussed below (pp.219-230).

But Grant Hine was adamant that that FGASA membership trends indicate a satisfactory level of "transformation":

> FGASA's encouragement of increased black membership is based on a recognized standard of guiding excellence which has encouraged many black guides to want to attain a FGASA qualification over any national skills programme certificate from THETA. However, part of the encouragement has been that guides who attain the FGASA qualification will automatically then also attain the required skills programme from THETA. We have been somewhat surprised at many black guides who (no matter how many times they go through assessment) want to ultimately attain the FGASA qualifications. This was particularly evident in some of the National Parks who over the years have not always encouraged their guides to go with FGASA. Many of these guides still wanted to go through the FGASA process and get a FGASA certificate.
>
> The development of new assessment tools, particularly the workbook format of the FGASA Level I qualification encouraged many black guides to join. Not that it was an easier option, it was less threatening. This has changed FGASA's ideas as to what a theoretical written examination may mean to black guides who may not have had the privilege of having gone through the same sort of education in the old South Africa. It is now felt, even though the workbook form of summative assessment has been canned, that extra attention must be given to the assessments of black guides who may have issues with written theoretical examination. FGASA's aim is to develop skills in as many individuals in this country as possible outside *(sic.)* of race and gender.
>
> To a large extent the amount of transformation that FGASA has hoped for to date has been hampered by cost. It is expensive to train guides, particularly training carried out by trainers who carry out training as their livelihood. FGASA has tried to sponsor a certain

> number of black guides on endorsed training provider courses, but this amounts to very few. One of the major factors is the fact that FGASA has not been able to tender for government funding to train and assess guides given the issues of accreditation. This has led a large number of black learners to go to other THETA accredited training providers who have outside funding to train and assess guides free of charge. Why would a black learner who may also be unemployed want to gain a qualification through an association for which they have to pay membership and assessment fees when they can enroll on a course and gain a national qualification at no cost to themselves. This has been the main stumbling block for transformation in FGASA. If FGASA was able to get outside sponsorship, [and] train and assess guides according to the FGASA standards, the total number of black members would more than double the white membership.
>
> The female membership of FGASA has not needed any encouragement as the number of female members almost matches the male membership. I feel that over the past few years there has been major encouragement for woman to become guides for a number of reasons, one being that many female guides make better hosts than male guides, and in the stereotypical manner woman have felt that they have had to prove themselves, and in this way end up being more professional than many male guides. It seems as though female guides have found their place in the guiding industry as the stereotypical role of the male game ranger starts to dwindle and a new breed of nature guides with different attitudes towards wildlife and people is emerging. Thus FGASA's transformation in terms of female members has taken place fairly successful and will continue to be encouraged.[19]

FGASA has not traditionally noted the gender and race of its members, and it is somewhat ironic that it only began doing so at the behest of THETA, a purportedly more "progressive" and "less racist" organization. If Grant Hine has correctly represented FGASA membership in terms of gender, then it is clear that around half the new generation of nature guides are female. This does not correspond with the gender ratios in trails guiding by a long way, and this disparity needs to be understood.

There are two possible explanations for this: the first is that the new generation of relatively heterogeneous (in gender terms at least) guides are out there and as they work their way through the system, a higher and higher percentage of trails guides will be female; whilst the alternative explanation is that, although the relative numbers of female guides in the industry have grown steadily, they do not aspire to becoming trails rangers to the extent that men do, so they land up as

"jeep-jockeys" or in other roles where they will not be visible in a study which assumes that trails rangers are the "apex" of nature guiding (which may be cited as an implicit bias in this thesis). It is possible that neither of these explanations are absolutely correct, and that the reality is a complex and subtle blend of these two, and indeed of other possible explanations.

Quantitative research could be done by a follow-up to every FGASA member asking their race, their gender, their precise current work category, and the work category which is their ultimate goal or objective. Such a survey may be skewed merely in terms of who chooses to respond, and who does not, but a control could be kept against the known race and gender of all people to whom the survey request is sent in the first place, and if a reasonable segment (say 20% or more) were to be received, the results could be extrapolated as being reasonably valid for the entire group. It would be useful to conduct such a survey amongst non-FGASA members as well, but the logistics of this would be exponentially more difficult than with FGASA members for whom a database already exists. Nevertheless, any future researchers whose interest is in gender and racial "transformation" in the guiding industry would be well advised to start with this as a baseline activity.

Hine suggested that FGASA has not compromised standards and that there are economical and policy strategies, specifically implemented by THETA which have curtailed prospective increase in black membership:

> FGASA has not sacrificed its guiding standards in the name of transformation just to get better ratings or to be seen as "look what we have done for the PDI's". The transformation process as previously mention has been a slow one based on lack of funding to provide PDI's with financial support for skills development. However, it has what I refer to as an "honest transformation" and the qualified black members of FGASA have attained the qualifications by going through the same assessment processes that all FGASA members go through. Thus the transformation in FGASA, be it slow has produced black guides who are competent and may be seen as professional guides with the skills to carry out the job as a

> nature guide. They are not paper qualified guides who when it comes to the crunch cannot perform the tasks required of them competently, they are fully competent and real working guides who have earned their FGASA and THETA certificates based on competence and not on certificates issued to prove transformation through funded training.
>
> FGASA's role in transformation (I feel) has been to show that transformation can take place, albeit slowly, without sacrificing high standards, ultimately producing quality guides who are proud of what they have achieved at a greater depth than if something is just given to you because of guilt.[20]

The relationship between THETA and FGASA has been a fairly complex one, because the legislation which promulgated the SETA system stipulated that only qualifications from accredited training and assessment providers accredited by the relevant SETA (in this case THETA) would be recognized on the NQF. THETA had a tremendous backlog of providers who had applied for accreditation due to the huge scope of their industry (tourism, hospitality and sport). In terms of the requirements of this legislation, they could not process an average of more than 3 or 4 of these a week, yet in 2003 they had a backlog of several hundred applicants. The case for FGASA receiving fairly high priority should have been strong. Instead THETA palmed off FGASA with the argument that FGASA could not be a training provider, because that would mean that they would have to set up an enterprise which was in competition with the businesses of some of their own key members. FGASA accepted this argument, which bought THETA a lot of time, and caused nothing but frustration for FGASA and some of its key trainer providers who were hoping to gain THETA accreditation through their membership of FGASA, because they lacked the capacity to register as providers independently of FGASA.

In the meantime the Standards Generating Body included both FGASA and a provider called Drumbeat, who had established a fairly lucrative contract with INTAC, which was the development wing of THETA in nature guiding training and assessment. Eventually Drumbeat and FGASA had

to form an active sub-committee to try to create uniform standards for assessment of nature guides, in which FGASA was the active and effective partner, having already written and refined appropriate standards which required very little modification of content. However, the style and context of the FGASA input had to be modified to conform to a generic Outcomes Based Education format. When asked whether THETA transformed FGASA more than FGASA has transformed THETA, Grant Hine replied:

> FGASA has contributed to THETA in a number of ways be it in the form of stakeholder representation on the Standard Generating Body for guiding, questioning various processes, adding valuable information in terms of qualification requirements, pointing out sub-standard practices (even though not always followed up on) and general support for a system that if carried out properly could work in favour of all. FGASA have created some challenges for THETA in that they have had to think about new models of relationship between SETA and provider given FGASA's place in the guiding industry. I think FGASA has transformed THETA more than they [THETA] are willing to admit.
>
> On the other hand FGASA has been transformed in a large way by its relationship with THETA. It has forced FGASA to develop policies, procedures, learning materials and new assessment tools and processes which in the long run have led to a more formalized look at the running of the association. Thus, THETA has definitely indirectly, and to a certain extent directly, transformed FGASA for the better. FGASA has been transformed into a more professionally run company with many changes still to take place based on the influence of THETA and the ongoing development of the NQF.[21]

The very notion of "transformation" is an ambiguous and very problematic construct. Douwe van der Zee argued that "transformation" is a process with double standards: it seeks to create a non-racial society, then imposes conditions that appear to favour one race (black) and one gender (female). Grant Hine responded to this charge as follows:

> The present government may very well see transformation as the process in which to favour black and female members of society, they are only deluding themselves in order to gain favour for them to continue to live off the fat of the land, and live out racism in reverse to what it was in the previous government regime. This smacks of trying to make a right out of two wrongs, a way of getting their [own] back on the previous governments atrocities.
> The time will come when some government of this country will realize that any form of displayed racism does not work when trying to run a country and maintain stability. All white guides cannot just be replaced by black guides just because of inequalities of the previous government more than ten years ago. This may be their thinking, however this is

> not a reality, if standards are to be maintained. If a learner is honestly declared competent to carry out the role of a guide, then it does not matter what race or gender the individual is. It is no point in placing incompetent individuals (black, white, male, female) in positions that require competence to maintain standards and the integrity of this country just for the sake of trying to prove a point which the whole world got years ago. In saying this, the world is full of racism and to date no country seems to be able to provide an adequate solution to living without racism.
>
> Yet it would seem that transformation is a double standard approach, steeped in discrimination. It will however not work in the long run and already many companies have come to realize (including black owned companies) that individuals need to be employed for their competence, and not for their race or gender. Transformation is the buzz word for now, and has been for a while, but it will eventually change its meaning. Let's hope it does change before the standards, efficiency and integrity of not only the guiding industry but the whole country are compromised beyond recovery. [22]

In Grant Hine's opinion the white male is

> …not [an endangered species] in Formula 1 motor racing, or perhaps that's also financially related and not skills related, I wonder. No, I do not think [that he is endangered], given that this whole transformation drive to oust the white male will probably not last very long. Yes, the stereotypical masculine and feminine associations with certain jobs is slowly changing, however once this has "transformed" and is totally integrated then there will be no need to discriminate against the endangered white male. One way to make himself relevant is to rid himself of the stereotypical masculine ego that he prides himself on and accept himself as a human being and not as a superior testosterone driven predator. This will not be easy, but if he realizes that his masculinity is a learned trait through his own societal reinforcement and not a natural inherited state, then only will he be able to fit into a new transformation process that takes all individuals as equal in terms of competence development. The perception at present is that the white male is an endangered species. However, this is not quite a reality.[23]

In consideration of the immensely positive attitude of Garth Thompson who wrote The Guide's Guide to Guiding[24], despite the obvious frustrations he must experience working in Zambia and particularly in Zimbabwe, Grant Hine said:

> Being positive is supposedly a state of mind outside of the surrounding conditions. However, if the surrounding conditions are so imposing, it would for most people be very difficult to remain positive. There are exceptions such as Victor Frankel and a large number of dedicated Buddhists. If we look back to what guiding was, free of imposing criteria in terms of qualifications, registrations, licences and tax-free tips, life was much easier and it was a pleasure being a dedicated passionate guide with not a worry in the world. Some countries have not yet placed as many restrictions and criteria of what is means to be a guide and this would definitely maintain a positive attitude. Botswana is slowly introducing

> more and more requirements and have recently introduced a form of NQF similar to South Africa, but not yet as intense. I personally do not think that guides who are working in countries with very little restrictions would be able to easily adapt to guiding in countries where there are huge and ever growing restrictions and regulations.[25]

When asked to reflect on the attitudes of guides in KwaZulu-Natal, Grant Hine commented:

> The last English outpost, not to be discriminatory, but there is definitely a different attitude which probably stems form a different philosophy and a definite open mindedness, compared to other traditional government run national parks elsewhere in the country. This would probably account for some of the resistance shown by certain individuals from KwaZulu-Natal towards FGASA in terms of not wanting to be dictated to by an outside organization. This shows a certain amount of caution shown by guides from this province based on their thinking attitude. I take my hat off to them for not just blundering ahead in the name of an authoritarian attitude towards others.
>
> Generally guides from the province, and it is a generalization, want to make sure what they are getting into and how it will impact on their world and how does any form of intrusion fit into their philosophy. FGASA has many supporters and they tend to be loyal and enthusiastic. I do not know if this has anything to do with their upbringing and education. Just a note; I was in the military as a psychologist and went through military training with medical doctors who had gained their medical training through an Afrikaans university. They all said that they had wished they had gone to an English university as the doctors trained in English universities seemed to be a lot more open minded and were taught to think and not just learn and accept what they were told to learn. There may be some similarity to the philosophy and attitude of many KwaZulu-Natal guides. I am not saying that this is the case, but I do get this impression.[26]

Warren Bekker conceded that the support of FGASA in the province is relatively low.

> Look, FGASA has always been, I'm a member of FGASA, I've been for a long, long time. I don't have anything to say about them other than the majority of our guides are not FGASA registered. In fact, let me rephrase that; there are the majority that aren't, but I'd say probably 30-40% of our guides are, the rest of them aren't. Because FGASA is not a minimum requirement to guide within a specific area, the guys haven't gone that route, although the level at FGASA, and their standards are very, very high.[27]

Although he was clearly a supporter of FGASA, he offered no real compelling reason why others did not share his views. Another very influential trainer, Dr. Alex Coutts said:

> FGASA meet here at my home quite often- they meet under the tree and have *braais* down there- not recently, but I was [on the] National Executive in FGASA and I need to say about the FGASA system, they've done a most remarkable and lovely system where one went through level I, II and III- I went through it all, it took me three years by the way. I was allowed to jump into level II and was allowed to jump into level III and I was about 90(%)

> in each case, and they said very good, very nice, well done, and I said to myself, it's not that you know 90% of this, you know the 10%, 90% you don't know, then I thought no that's arrogant, you don't even know…at the end of it, and this is no disregard FGASA, this thing is so big that you don't…no human, and I'm talking about Ian Player, who I think will be honest with you, you hardly scratch the surface of nature. And if one says, no, I'm really into it, I know what I'm doing, well then you're either stupid or arrogant. Now the point about this, I went through the whole system, and I don't want to talk about me, I want to talk about that system. Now the system was a good system, it was graded, there were examinations, stringent requirements, a beautiful system, also coupled to the fact that you had to go and do a work place competency.[28]

Like Warren Bekker, Alex Coutts made his support for FGASA very clear, and justified his support, but he offered no comment on why there is a tendency in KwaZulu-Natal not to support FGASA.

The lack of support for FGASA by guides in KwaZulu-Natal may reflect the historic independence of the province's game reserves, which in turn has very complex causes (discussed on pp.57-61) and it may also be influenced by the unique "wilderness ethos" fostered by Ian Player. Alternately, it may reflect a dislike in the province for some of the leading figures on the FGASA exco within the last decade. Another possible cause is provincial rivalry and perception that FGASA is a Gauteng-based or "Transvaal" based organization (which now includes Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and arguably North West Province), despite its having a substantial membership in both the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. It appears that a combination of all these factors may contribute to the comparative lack of enthusiasm for FGASA in KwaZulu-Natal, but that no single factor on its own can really easily be highlighted.

As mentioned above (see. Manzi Spruit and Bruce Bryden quotes pp.199-200) it was in the Kruger National Park where very high support for FGASA was evident. Jaco Badenhorst suggested producing a level above the current three levels- a level IV assessment:

> Another thing, I think guides like myself and yourself, we need to upgrade ourselves every now and again, because FGASA 3 was maybe good enough five years ago but not necessarily good enough [at] the current time. So that's where FGASA also maybe need to upgrade or to add onto their...level 4.[29]

In a similar vein, Manzi Spruit and about expanding the current range of Special Knowledge Skills that were on offer:

> Ah, there's a lot…you can't just have the Dangerous Animals and the Birds, there's so much more. What about Tracking? What about Butterflies? Butterflies is a whole field on its own as well…Plants- there's a whole lot of places that you can specialize in…[30]

Clive Walker felt that the frustrations of black guides have been country wide and expressed his sympathy for what black guides have had to go through:

> It's not like a…these people have emerged and started to come up, and it's a changing situation. I think that people must accept that for 40 years most black people were denied the opportunity of having those kinds of opportunities- it's changed a lot.[31]

Some black guides in Kruger National Park and Madikwe only too happy to be identified, and to make strong criticisms of FGASA. Yet, despite being critical elsewhere, Rangani Tsanwani stated that he liked FGASA in certain respects because:

> That [the FGASA system] was very, very clear because all those levels; if I pass this level I move to this level, and this level to this level. The other good thing in FGASA [was that] you must have experience to do this other level.[32]

To explain this a bit more clearly, the simple, prescriptive and descriptive qualifications categories appealed to him, as they would appeal to many black learners in outlying areas. It remains to be seen whether the THETA system which contains an almost infinite variety of permutations will appeal to more of these learners when once they have a better grasp of how appropriate qualifications and unit standards may be selected and combined. His second point is that you could not pass to a higher level of theory without an intervening year of practical experience.

**The Emergence of THETA: Improvement or Imposition?**

After winning South Africa's first democratic elections in April, 1994, the African National Congress inherited an uneven political and economic landscape. Whilst the economy was relatively vibrant and surprisingly sound considering the battering it had taken in the wake of disinvestment and boycotting by the international community, and tourism was a particularly successful sector, there were some areas that were, and remain to this day, highly problematic. Healthcare was probably the most ailing sector (to coin an apt term), and if anything has deteriorated subsequently. Crime, policing and law and order remained another area where the control of the state was undoubtedly rickety, and delinquency, criminality and recidivism still have the potential to rob the country of the future which in many other respects it richly deserves . Arguably the third most challenged sector was education. The legacy of policies which promoted a fragmentary and discriminatory society abounded, and school education was problematic due to a number of causes. Some of these causes relate to the fact that the very source of political opposition that ultimately led to change had been located within schools. Other causes relate to the fact that the dominant pedagogy was conventional, rigid, propagandistic and was clearly outmoded and in desperate need of revision. The new dispensation rightly perceived that skills-based learning, literacy and adult education were key areas of neglect. An urgent remedy was called for which included the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The desire to produce a system that could be rapidly and effectively implemented led to a period during which lip service appears to have been paid to public consultation. The result of this process was the creation of a series of Sector Education and Training Authorities, which have come to be known as SETAs. Originally there were 25 but now they have been amalgamated, mainly because some of the original SETAs were deemed to have underperformed badly.

As mentioned above, the SETA for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector is the Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority, which is known as THETA. THETA obtains its mandate directly from SAQA, and its educational methodology is informed by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which purports to be firmly based in Outcomes Based Education (OBE), a system which has been imported from industrially advanced and Westernized countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the OBE system faces a fairly high chance of being eradicated in all of the above countries, to a certain extent for the same reasons as it is being challenged in South Africa. Why an Outcomes Based Education system was chosen above all others, and whether a real mandate was received from a significant proportion of the general public, are moot points.

THETA is not a provider of training, assessment and moderation, but rather a quality assuror for providers who perform these functions within the sector. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, when THETA was initially established they had hundreds of providers who had submitted their ("Phase B") applications, but because they had to do a full and comprehensive audit of all applicants THETA could only assess about three or four a week, and Dr. Alex Coutts having spent thousands of hours preparing his documents, had to wait many months before these were even read, and longer still before he received accreditation.

It is quite clear that Alex Coutts considers THETA primarily as an entity which has relatively little control of its own context: "I think that picks up what I was saying earlier about the society, government, the law, SAQA, the NQF, THETA as an agent within this whole system, and the brief

answer to that is yes, I absolutely agree with what you have said".[33] What I had said was that the problem harks back to the SAQA system where it was conceived that Outcomes Based Methodology would be used and certain other general assumptions were imposed on THETA, and THETA are merely the victims of a system where they were required to implement. The SETAs had to make what is essentially a very idealistic system into a practical one.

Almost immediately, there were problems and ever since there have been serious questions hanging around SAQA, the NQF, OBE, the SETA system in general and THETA in particular. Coutts sees these as going to the very core of the SETA system:

> Democracy, of course, is very fine from certain points of view, but it does mean everyone has a say, everything is stalled, everything is slowed down. I am not criticizing democracy. I'm merely saying it's a phenomenon that slows things. And the point is that these SETAs are now working in a radically and continuously changing playing field.
>
> THETA have nevertheless finally managed to get up their website, they've managed to get their audit programmes established, and all sorts of other things in place, but I think they are having a difficulty with the fact that they are concerned very much with the workplace, and very much with free market stresses.
>
> So, THETA have had two huge disadvantages. They've had a free market situation where in many, many people's minds, making money, rather than offering quality for intrinsic reasons, is number one. It's just a business. So, with some, if you have to "do" quality to make your money, you begrudgingly do your quality and you make your money. So the quest for quality is forced, and not intrinsic. And that has been, I think quite true in South Africa for some time.
>
> That's one problem, and here's another. There's never been the luxury of time for an overall conceptualization of the full range of jobs and their related qualifications in each domain. We need an integrated job and qualification structure for nature guiding, for outdoor recreation, conservation and everything else under the sun. I'm talking about it being structured totally and in an integrated way, from level 2 to 8.4 doctoral level.[34]

For Coutts there are two clearly defined and contrasting categories of individuals, who have problems with this system:

> I think…I can see the hidden agenda there as well, but there are people who are very competent both in teaching, but also in the learning side, in other words becoming, say a

> guide or a conservation officer, who encounter the bureaucracy, and are offended by what they are expected to go through…and although I can understand the conceptualization, as I pointed out…a very good thing…not a bad thing for well educated and highly literate people, they can by and large cope, but it's those very people who usually have, because of their better education, a liberal outlook, and they feel that instead of being able to climb the rock face and get up into the sunshine, they're actually being put into little boxes, so those very people who best adapt to it are the very ones who probably find it most difficult to encounter. The other people who may not be well educated, of course find it difficult for another reason, largely to do with language, because it is still so wrapped up in jargon.[35]

Coutts expanded on the first part of this comment by saying that:

> Regarding nature guides, if they are not A-type personalities, rugged, outgoing, independent and with original thought, they've probably got no chance of leading people in nature reserves. My point is that guiding as a whole is made up of A-type personalities because its tough. The B-type, the phlegmatic one who is accustomed to being cosseted and looked after and all that; well they're gone in a few months because guiding's too hard. So when you meet guides, generally they're rugged, outspoken, independent people. If they're not, they will not survive out there.
>
> Trail-guiding in nature is even harder. You're not in a comfortable bus there, you're out in the bush, and if you're not careful, you're going to get nailed, you'll lose a client, somebody will have some horrible experience. So you've got to be in charge, and you've got to think independently. Now when suddenly with that frame of mind, guides have to do formal training with lots of bureaucracy and tick-boxes, they resist it. They're no longer enjoying the freedom to think for themselves, to be their own person, plus a little Rambo. They're put in a box by someone else "In your box, into your box you go!" "But I'm a free thinker, I'm Tom Cruise leaping across the cliff and climbing up the rock faces and standing at the top, and now you say 'Sorry, Tom, back in your box, buster.'"
>
> And to put a guide, who loves the outdoors, who feels at one with nature, to keep shoving them into tick boxes, check boxes, is terribly, terribly hard and almost damaging psychologically.[36]

The second part of Coutts statement was borne out by Rangani Tsanwani:

> No, the THETA is not against [us]. The THETA I think is a hundred percent. Because in THETA like what I said, if you can't write somebody can do it for you, you just interpret. Then that other person can write it for you then you can [be] able to have [a] qualification. So if you notice in some of the guides in the Kruger National Park, they can't write, but they speak very well.[37]

Tsanwani further stressed that he particularly liked the fact that the system was deliberately conceived of to assist illiterate learners:

> The way they assess us. They want to know what you know. Then they will coach you where you are lacking…you don't have to pass matric to have THETA qualification. Like I said, I was working with Daniel Congo, he didn't even go to school, but the time they were assessing us I was with Congo. The guy who was assessing us, Ian Kruger, he understand *(sic.)* that Congo is not good in writing, but he can interpret, he can speak English. Then he ask *(sic.)* me to write for him. Congo was interpreting, then I was writing everything down. He knew that this guy is a very experienced guide…but he can't write that thing. So before THETA, a guide like Congo, they were getting no credit. But THETA thing they give him now even though he's at home, he have got THETA qualification, because they know that he can …do that job, but he can't write those things down.[38]

But Rangani Tsanwani did criticize the programme and unit standard descriptor system, which he considered too complex and opaque:

> A lot of the stuff I like, but some I don't like. I don't like the way they put their qualifications, because there is a lot of qualifications that you must have. NQ what what, NQ what what, lots of lessons. So, if they can try to shorten this lessons *(sic.)*. I think it can be much better.[39]

In this regard it is likely that the less educated guides with a lower access to the information highway will always prefer a system that is presented as simple and prescriptive, rather than one which is complex and filled with choices that appear to be very difficult to make. This is largely because they do not understand the range of choices fully, and these are increasing steadily as the THETA Standards Generating Body (SGB) adds new qualifications, skills programmes and unit standards. The most complex components to comprehend are the criteria of unit standard selection and combinations which can result in a qualification.

As an individual with an unsurpassed understanding and experience of the system, Alex Coutts went much further in explaining where the system was failing the under-educated, illiterate or previously educationally disadvantaged sector of the industry:

> I'm not criticizing SAQA gratuitously. They've got their jobs to do as they see it, they've got change coming through parliament, and they've got requests from the SGB's, but one of the biggest single probable failures of the whole thing is: this was all meant to advantage the disadvantaged, and I don't believe it has done so. I believe the reductionism, confusion,

> and the complexity has worked against the disadvantaged. We need a much, much, much simpler system.[40]

Coutts is not himself fundamentally opposed to the system and believes that it has some very good aspects to it, for example that the assessment criteria require the assessor to check the current level and status of the learner and are not merely dependent on a rusty, crusty and dusty certificate:

> I would not allow anybody through who could not perform well in the wild environment. One of the reasons for that is this word "currency". In the NQF they want to see a certain demonstration of "current capacity". Now you can come with all your papers and all your testimonials from 10 or 15 years ago, but can you still do the job? And if you're going to be qualified to do the job now, I want to see up-to-date, over-the-top-currency.
>
> So I insisted that all my people should go through a proper practical assessment of two hours with some very tough and perceptive, but thoroughly sensitive assessors who would like to see the person succeed but who would not like to see the person succeed badly. They would never compromise quality for a quick pass. I lost some of my students at first. They went to other people where they could simply put in pieces of paper and be qualified on those grounds...or so I was told. That, I think, is totally wrong.[41]

Coutts believes that not all training providers have demonstrated the integrity which is implicitly required to uphold the system:

> One of the worst times of my life was 2002-3 when I started getting rumours (and I mention no names) of trainers literally qualifying people with paper qualifications, but little substance. I just hope it wasn't true. Now one can argue that perhaps they were not educationists, didn't know how deep the water was, and that they thought if they did a desk top study and took in some pieces of paper submitted to them, that would then qualify the person as a nature guide. Well, I doubt it![42]

Coutts also feels that the THETA provider accreditation system often focuses on the existence of a particular policy or process without regard to the quality of the policy:

> I did chat to people in THETA asking if they could please discern between quality and non-quality, but I have been quite surprised to note that one of the ways they look at the quality of submissions for what I call company accreditation, is largely a matter of asking simply: "did they write their policy down?" There's no apparent attempt to assess whether it's a quality policy, a good policy, a sound one. That, by the way, would be an admittedly massive task. You'd actually need a staff (including programme strategy assessors) to be on top of that approach, otherwise submissions would again be lying there for eight to ten months, or a year. THETA has always needed staff in that field, three times, four times the

> size of what they've got at the moment. They were always on a hiding to nothing with the few people they had.
>
> Everyone shrieks and shouts. Look, my own stuff once lay there for five or six months. I was very angry, until I started thinking "but how many people have they got working on it for the entire country?" I don't think it was a fair thing that they were having to do with so few staff. They needed much more funding, they needed high quality people with honours degrees, to do it.[43]

Lex Hes considered it very important to indicate that recently a level of anarchy has existed towards THETA or towards the entire national system of guide registration system (which was not the same thing). This occurred in part at least because there was of a lack of guiding legislation compliance enforcement on the part of the government or any other authority. It is critical to explain that the institution of the SETA system meant the end to the SATOUR system which continued for the first few years of democracy, but was disbanded in the late 90s. SATOUR qualifications were initially granted through the prospective guide being interviewed by guiding veterans and being awarded qualifications for different provinces as a result. Most of these board members were culture guides, so when FGASA offered to use their qualifications as the level required by nature guides, SATOUR accepted this as a good solution. The loophole was that unlike the culture guides, no distinction was made for area of operation of nature guides, so any person holding FGASA Level I was effectively a National Field Guide (as a nature guide at the time was known). The SATOUR system remained associated with the "old South Africa" and was completely disbanded, but it was very clearly a case of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, and to this day the THETA system has failed to achieve the level of efficiency and authority which the SATOUR system held. The fact that the THETA / Provincial Tourism Authority system is still experiencing "teething problems" after nearly a decade since initial conception does not trouble everyone. According to Lex Hes:

> I don't know if you can call it a problem, because some people might look at it as an advantage, that the government at the moment is not implementing the legalities of guiding, for example, I think there are still many guides out there working in game lodges all over southern Africa who don't have the so called legal qualification for whatever reason, and there's no sort of law enforcement regarding that kind of thing…in the same vein I don't think the government is making an effort to, for example, go to a private game lodge and have a look at their guides' quota and say look you haven't got enough black guides here, we're fining you or whatever. There's none of that kind of law enforcement or enforcement of the laws and views of the government. So at the moment my feeling is that particularly the private ecotourism industry is cut off a little bit from government and how government [is] trying to implement these things. [*SideA ends*] [*SideB starts*] ...I think that maybe eventually it will come. But I think a lot of the private game lodge employers would maybe see that as a positive thing, because it means they are maintaining, keeping their competent guides and not being forced to bring in incompetent guides because of affirmative action.[44]

Why does this lack of enforcement exist? Why it will be difficult to remedy as long as the current system is in place? As mentioned above the SAQA Act empowers THETA to accredit training and assessment providers, who in turn train and assess guides. Once assessed, a guide does not automatically become legal. The results of their assessment need to be sent to THETA and captured, at which point a THETA certificate can theoretically be issued. This process can take up to two years but there is at least one case (the National Nature Qualification TGC14 assessment of the writer of this thesis) in which a certificate has not resulted in over five years since the initial assessment date[*]. According to Lex Hes:

> I think that the whole THETA system is so cumbersome and so difficult for people to understand and difficult for people to follow up on all the paper work that is required, and so the result is...I hear stories, I don't have personal experience and I haven't looked at it closely but I hear stories that people have been waiting two years for their THETA certificate for example. So until the guy has got his THETA certificate he's operating illegally. So it's impossible to enforce something when the government themselves are falling down.[45]

The certificate is then taken to the provincial guiding authority, which in Gauteng is called the Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) which is mandated by the Department of Environmental Affairs

[*] Submission of this portfolio of evidence was by Anthony Paton to Diederik Reinecke of Drumbeat Academy in June, 2002. When Drumbeat was called in March 2007, they said they are sure that they will be able to get this certificate from THETA. This indicated that they did not actually have the certificate on their files yet. At time of final proofing of this thesis in August, 2007, the certificate had still not reached the learner, although Vance Grey of Drumbeat had promised to draw this to the attention of THETA in their August, 2007 audit..

and Tourism (DEAT) to issue guides' badges and cards and thus render them legal and compliant. However, due to the immense backlog of THETA certificates the GTA (to much kicking and screaming from THETA) began to issue badges against certificates of competence from providers. As long as the mere execution of the system is so fraught with loopholes, the enforcement of compliance will be virtually impossible.

A further reason why compliance enforcement is virtually impossible is that no compliance enforcement officers have yet been trained. Policeman, traffic policemen and game rangers, who would be the natural compliance enforcement officers have an incomplete understanding (or in many cases no understanding) of the system. To most of them, anyone wearing a guides badge is a legal guide, and they would send them on their way without checking their card. Cards must be current, but only those who know the system well, would know to check for this. Cards also have a descriptor of where the guide is authorized to guide. With the highest level guides who have national or provincial qualifications, this is not problematic. A national guide may guide anywhere in the country. A provincial guide may guide anywhere in the province or provinces for which they are registered. On a technicality an official who questioned what a nature guide was doing in the middle of Johannesburg, or what a culture guide is doing in a game reserve, would in all likelihood be unable to make a case against the guide concerned. However, a local guide may guide only at a particular site, and the definition of what comprises a site has never satisfactorily been resolved between DEAT and THETA. If a site guide has been given a site qualification such as "the Kruger National Park" it is a well defined area which a compliance enforcement officer can understand. Very few compliance enforcement officers would have any idea of where "the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site" begins and ends and even sites that are smaller such as "Melville

Koppies" are not clearly demarcated in the minds of anyone but an absolute specialist. Can a nature guide who is qualified for Gauteng justify his presence with his tourists in central Johannesburg?

If one extends the above problems to culture guides they become even more difficult. Does the site guide to Hector Pieterson become illegal if he takes his tourists to Vilikazi Street (which is two blocks away from the museum and central to his story)? Is the Soweto Guide illegal if he is at Crown Mines or Sophiatown? The most problematic category is undoubtedly the local or site guide, and many of the early local or site guides obtained cards which said they were a local or site guide, without specifying their site. This is highly fraught because even though they are the most minimally qualified guides there is no way that even the most informed enforcement officer is empowered to stop them from guiding anywhere!

It should be noted that FGASA have always opposed provincial categories and would have preferred classification by biome. But a traffic officer who stops a guide and sees that he is allowed to guide in "the grassland biome" would be unlikely to be certain whether the guide was compliant or not. This problem was somewhat solved during the production of the qualification for FGASA Special Knowledge Skills in Birding, where FGASA used the provincial structures, but said that for any province a guide must know all the biomes in his or her province. Thus, a Gauteng guide needs only know the grassland biome, but an Mpumalanga guide must know grassland and bushveld. In addition a guide in KwaZulu-Natal must also know montane, coastal, estuarine and marine biomes, making KwaZulu-Natal a far more difficult province to reach provincial competence in than Gauteng.

Many of the objections to the THETA system are not related to the broad DEAT/ provincial authority area of concern, in other words have nothing to do with guide legality and compliance enforcement. Rather they are related to more fundamental questions of training and assessment methodology and practice, so ultimately address the applicability of OBE and the NQF as required by SAQA to the situation the industry finds itself in now. Dr. Alex Coutts was the most analytic and astute observer of many of these. His first point was that (particularly in the top echelons of the lodge industry, where he frequently worked) you were having to assess guides who had undergone the most stringent "natural selection" by the industry:

> **…**these people [guides in the top private lodges] learn on the job naturally, and they are assessed every morning and every afternoon practically by their guests and clients. If they were no good, they would have been out of the system immediately.
>
> So its very, very difficult to foist a bureaucratic, and I believe reductionist type of system (and I'll explain that if I need to) on guides who are actually learning well in the workplace. They simply don't need a huge amount of massively structured intervention in their lives. At the end of it they are probably not advantaged by going through any of these NQF courses. The point is they're about as trained as you can get. They are handling the job with clients directly, with vehicles that break down, with wild creatures that can do serious damage to anybody if they make a mistake, with people who can have an uncomfortable experience if the weather conditions are not read well, and they're assessed on a daily basis. If they're not good enough for the quality of overseas people who could be paying a great deal per night for a room, they're out! And believe me, some superimposition of a structure on them is not going to make them very much better![46]

The most wide-spread criticism of the THETA system is that it is beaurocratic, unwieldy, and there is limited buy in from one person or small training providers because the provider requirements of THETA make it impossible for them to run legally. According to Graham Vercueil:

> Yes, I think it [the THETA system] does [project a fundamental mistrust of the integrity of the assessors and moderators]. I think it places completely unrealistic administrative and bureaucratic restraints on assessors and moderators, to the extent that it almost drives them out of the ballpark.[47]

Lex Hes on the other hand feels that there is not enough content focus and that one-person

operations are strongly disadvantaged by the systems requirements of THETA:

> I agree with you, definitely [the THETA system is it focuses too much on the systems of training providers and it doesn't focus enough on the content]. There's a huge amount on system for the training provider and the problem that FGASA had highlighted is that because of all the systems that need to be in place, a one man training provider…is not able to become THETA accredited because he's a one man show. If you have a look at all the systems that have to be put in place, he has to have an administrator for this, a moderator for that, etc. and can't afford to do that because his business isn't big enough.[48]

The guides selected for the interviews which form the basis of this thesis fell broadly into two groups: younger guides who were the end stage users of the new system, and older guides who were trainers and assessors and so had a deeper insight into the mechanics of the system. Yet it is fair to say there was a broad level of consensus concerning THETA. Besides being the only woman interviewed, Manzi Spruit is also one of the few subjects who falls within the intersection of these two broad categories of subjects. She has considerable experience as a trainer, but is also a current rifle carrier who does regular walks with clients in the Kruger National Park, which can be considered as a typical "dangerous game" area. The comments by Manzi Spruit seem apt in highlighting the worst and the best aspects of the THETA system:

> This whole thing of THETA and NQF is relatively new, and in the end it will work out, but there's a lot of loopholes so they're very fresh still, like when they issue certificates, there's a whole thing about it- people that's been waiting 5 years for their certificates that hasn't come yet. So the one says it's THETA, the other one says it's NQF no really - it'll get there- you've got to realize that they're new, it's a new thing, but what they stand for, yes, I agree with it…[yet] it's also part of creating a standard, and also creating opportunities, the whole system they have got is amazing. One of the black guides actually told me that last night, he totally agrees with that, he's so fortunate that they actually have that, that they recognize prior learning, not having the papers, but having the knowledge. They just basically do an assessment and say wow, look at this guy's knowledge. It's a good thing.[49]

**Areas of Growth since 1992**

Up to this point this chapter has focused on the establishment and influence of FGASA, and the subsequent institutional influence of THETA. Few people in the industry would deny the importance of this successful association or of the overarching and not always positive effect of THETA and the legislation and strategies associated with it. It is also possible to overstate the significance of these to bodies on the industry as a whole, as it should never be forgotten that the industry continues regardless of the activities and influence of associations or the imposition of qualification policies, legislation and the implementation of these.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the percentage of women and blacks in the nature guiding industry has increased, possibly significantly, but generally attitudes within the industry are still in some respect "white male" attitudes. The subjects selected and interviewed for this thesis may be a biased section of the industry, and represent a disproportionately large number of subjects who still hold the belief that first rifle trails officers represent the apex of the nature guiding industry.

Regional differences should not be under-emphasized, but it is also difficult to know whether certain differences or similarities are based on institutional culture, age, gender, race or factors of area of operations, or they are merely personal idiosyncrasies. For example both Mike English and Clive Walker admit to the significant influence of Ian Player, but so do Mandla Buthelezi, Mandla Gumede and Sicelo Mbatha, and it is fair to say that the former two are more similar to each other than either of them are to the latter three. Is this because they have not worked in KZN Parks or under the KZN Wilderness Leadership School, that the former pair are older, that the former pair

are white, or because they shot elephants earlier in their career, whilst the latter did not?

The career and some of the opinions of Mike English were discussed extensively in the previous chapter, and it may be worth examining the development and some of the opinions of Clive Walker by comparison.

The guiding career of Clive Walker started off somewhat accidentally when the boat that was bringing him from England to South Africa in 1960 stopped off in Kenya for a few days, and despite being himself still a fairly young man at the time, he persuaded some fellow passengers to come with him on a safari to Tsavo:

> I convinced them that they should go with me and that I had some experience but the truth is, if it be told, that I never really knew where I was going, but I knew that at the end of where I was going there was Mt. Kilimanjaro, which is really what I wanted to see. If I could see *(sic.)* elephants, and black rhinos that would be wonderful. I got to achieve all three of those objectives and as a result of sharing the cost with two English girls, a South African girl and a Rhodesian (at the time) tobacco farmer, I thought this was wonderful. I had more knowledge obviously than they did, because I had had exposure to Africa and its wildlife, and just the mere fact of being able to explain to otherwise fellow passengers who knew far less than me something about the bush, which in reality was nothing…I really knew very little, except I knew something about elephants.[50]

This experience remained in his mind, and in the early 1960s he made the deliberate effort to learn more about nature guiding from the Wilderness Leadership School:

> The trails officer was Don Richards who was based in Durban, we flew down, we joined the other two- six trailists at the Blue Waters Hotel in Durban for the night and the next morning we set off for what to me was the most glorious experience possible. A Zulu game guard, Don Richards, the eight of us, I think four or five donkeys with all our gear on it, and a donkey handler, and into the wilderness of Umfolozi we went for four days, and that experience ignited something in me and I vowed there and then that this is what I would like to do, and I set about on that trip which included two days at Lake St. Lucia of getting as much information that I could out of Don, which I kept notes about.[51]

This experience firmly cemented Clive Walker's interest in nature guiding, but his involvement with the Wilderness Leadership School was soon to become even more intense:

> From then onwards I gradually got more experience by going on further of these trails, until I was offered a position in 1974, if I am right in my memory, by the Wilderness Leadership School, at the time under the Directorship of Barry Clements, and I went back to Zululand for additional training. One of my principal instructors was Jim Feely, who was the architect behind the concept of wilderness trails, and he brought it to the attention of Ian Player, and Ian has always very generous in admitting or acknowledging that it was Jim Feely who brought the American concept of wilderness trails to Ian's attention.[52]

Clearly Clive Walker had become not only a convert, but a fairly zealous one too, who felt he wanted to spread the Wilderness Leadership School ethic:

> I came with a view to setting up a trail based on Don Richard's Wilderness Leadership School philosophy. I was successful in coming to an agreement with Dale [Parker] in 1981, to his death in the year 2001 we created the Lapala Wilderness School and over 55 000 learners and teachers went on our courses which were anything from two nights to five nights, led by trail guides both men and women. The school today continues with the wishes of the late Dale Parker's wife.[53]

Clive Walker clearly made a conscious and deliberate effort to systematically produce a replica of Ian Player's model:

> There's something about what the school stands for, its ethics, its principals, its founder Ian Player every one of us look up to- as Americans look up to Aldo Leopold and John Muir, here in South Africa the wilderness movement look up to Ian. That's, you know I'm not trying to blow Ian's trumpet, he doesn't need it, but that sort of filtered over all of us, and we felt we had a duty to actually impart knowledge about simple little things to do with botany and nature in general- I mean I had a reputation of being an elephant man, because I was always in the thick of the elephants, but that was only a portion of the 8 or 10 hour day that we encountered. There were things like battle sites and grave sites and archaeological sites going back to the Mapungubwe on the Tuli Block side there's this continuation of Mapungubwe so the pioneer history came into our trails, the archaeology came into the trails, the importance of rivers…[54]

It is fair to say that the Wilderness Leadership School ethic and methodology was never reproduced with such loyalty anywhere else. This may owe in part to the fact that Clive Walker got involved long enough ago to meet Jim Feely and Nick Steele and to interact with Ian Player when he was still in his prime.

In the case of Mike English, he was at St. John's College at the same time as Ian Player, although some years his junior their school careers overlapped, so they were exposed initially to a very similar institutional culture and value system. However, regardless of Mike English's respect and sympathy for Ian Player, he was employed as a ranger of the Kruger National Park, where he had a tremendously difficult time persuading the board and others to even consider trails in the first place, and so he was constrained to a significantly greater extent than Clive Walker as to how he would set up trails in the first place.

As mentioned earlier in 1992 Clive Walker was one of the founder members of FGASA. It has been suggested that this had little obvious to do with the greater politics of the day, unless it was a rearguard reaction against democracy. From what I have argued, it should be clear that this is too simplistic an interpretation of what did indeed transpire, and could reasonably be called unfair to FGASA. There remain several alternatives. The suggestion that FGASA wholeheartedly embraced the new South Africa would be to exaggerate to almost the same degree but in the opposite direction. The explanation that FGASA arose purely by co-incidence during this period is also not quite satisfactory.

It is clear that individuals with outstanding nature guiding skills were in demand in the 1980s. Trainers (and a growing proportion of the marketing industry and even the public) became aware that there was a higher demand and (arguably also a higher turn-over) amongst nature guides than amongst game rangers. Field guides were trainable to an acceptable standard within a lesser time period and with less practical experience than game rangers who were involved in conservation management, and clearly field guides generated more revenue, and were thus potentially better

remunerated than game rangers. This situation owed to a vibrant and growing tourism industry despite what appeared to many to be a perilous political climate. The increase in training providers offering courses in "game ranging" (which normally effectively amounted to "nature guiding") increased enormously, and some of these successfully recruited an average of more than one new learner for every day in the year for some time at least.

In the wake of this growth and consolidation of the industry, a number of committed and dedicated training providers rose to prominence in the 1990s throughout the country, but particularly in Mpumalanga. It is interesting to note that despite their physical proximity to the Kruger National Park, they have distinctly different, and at times diametrically opposed views on management and training ethics.

One example was Allenby Campus which appeared to recruit hundreds of learners every year in the mid 1990s. The course required a 28 day practical, and for this purpose, they had established an effective partnership with Ecotraining. The Ecotraining course could accommodate 20 learners, and they were full for most months of the year, suggesting that over 200 learners completed the practical course each year. Yet, when it came to the Allenby exams, no more than 20 learners (about 10% of students) wrote exams in 1996[55]. Most of these learners passed quite easily, being presumably the cream of the crop, or at least the most dedicated of the learners. It would be interesting to know what happened to the other 180 learners every year. Most of them probably never got to the exam and just did it for fun, thinking of it as an interesting thing to do, but not a career opportunity. This may seem like bad news for the guiding industry, but it was great news for

Allenby Campus and Ecotraining. It meant that far more people were interested in being trained as nature guides than the numbers who actually wanted to work in the industry.

According to David Bunn, the Wildlife Campus, run by Todd Kaplan, was an offshoot from the "Africam" project[56], which expanded and then collapsed both very dramatically. Todd Kaplan had previously been employed by Allenby. The entire business of the Wildlife Campus is based on internet courses in nature guiding. The Ecotraining practical course ran on the first of every month and was managed by Paddy Hagelthorn and Duncan Rogers who sub-contracted to a variety of other trainers including Malcolm Douglas. At the time Ecotraining was run at Alicecot in the south-western corner of the Sabie-Sands near Newington Gate.

Hagelthorn and Rogers were bought out of Ecologics by Anton Lategaan and Lex Hes. Hagelthorn returned to the Eastern Cape where he runs a successful butchery business. He was an excellent guide, but he was not particularly passionate about aspects of training. By contrast Lategaan and Hes are both passionate about their subject and gifted in both interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate knowledge, skills and values to their learners. Lex Hes tried to briefly outline the modern Ecotraining methodology:

> In the 28 day program that we do there are two main focuses. The one is techniques of guiding and the other is gathering knowledge. The first part of the course a lot of the emphasis is on gathering knowledge and getting some basic understanding of the eco system and how it works. And then the latter part of the course, once the student has the knowledge then he's got some knowledge that he can start communicating. And then we spend a lot more time and effort on the actual guiding techniques. And there a lot of emphasis is placed on things like sensitivity and how you drive your vehicle sensitively, and how you conduct your walk sensitively, how you communicate with your guests in a sensitive way, how you ensure the comfort and safety of your guests. So in a nutshell that's what we are covering. How we actually cover it or how you get people to become more sensitive and ethical and better guides is more of an inspirational thing. What we try and do is you take them out to beautiful spots. You take them out and spend nights under the stars

> and you do things like Solitaire where you take people and leave them. For example give them an emotional lecture on conservation problems that we have in South Africa or southern Africa, and how we need to look after our environment, and then you take them out and you leave them by themselves in the bush for a few hours, so that they can think about things and just have nothing but their own thoughts and the wilderness around them. So a lot of our training is based on trying to inspire people with wilderness and the peace and quiet and beauty and excitement and drama, etc. of the wilderness.[57]

Despite the committed and interactive approach of the new Ecotraining methodology described above, it is still unclear whether their success rate has translated into a significant higher percentage of theory graduates and people who eventually gain successful employment.

Clearly, the market for nature courses for interest was burgeoning and another good example was Environmental Training Group started by Chris Lucas in the 1990s. He based his training course on the Friends of Pilansberg (FOPS) model which had a good following, and recruited top experts to give weekly lectures on their subjects. There was some turnaround amongst the experts, but some of them were quite happy for a fairly modest fee to come every year to lecture on their specialities: Peter Apps lectured regularly on mammals, Ulrich Oberprieller and Geoff Lockwood on birds, Johann Marais on reptiles, Vincent Carruthers on amphibians, Astri Leroy on spiders, Bob Scholes on trees, Leslie Brown on Veld Management and Ecology, Lance Kinnear on Astronomy. Almost all of them had a doctorate in their subject, or were professors of it, or both, and almost all were extensively published authors on their topics. In addition Chris Lucas collected a training team mainly of former Environmental Training Group course graduates, some of whom had remarkable subject proficiency themselves- Pitta Joffe was a good example. Sakkie van Aswegan was the leader of this training team, and a vital part for the FGASA recognition of this course, as he was the only FGASA level III in the team, which was a requirement for the FGASA recognition of such a course. Chris Lucas paid his staff poorly[58] and the training team were only paid their petrol

to practical weekends which they had to attend once a month, and they attended weekly and assisted in marking assignments for no remuneration. Members of this training team became dissatisfied with their arrangements (whether financial or otherwise) and eventually a breakaway company Africa Nature Training (ANT) was formed by Lorraine Doyle, Mark Turner and Sakkie van Aswegan. Chris Lucas tried to sue ANT for stealing his materials, but they were able to demonstrate to the court that they had an entirely original re-draft of the course. Lucas decided to give up on the training front and concentrate on his tourism business at Mosetlha in Madikwe. Within ANT personalities clashed and Doyle and Turner split with Sakkie van Aswegan, who went on to found Bushveld Training Adventures. Both companies have survived to date. All this merely shows that the nature training market has burgeoned even in the greater Johannesburg area, and that people who have no intention of becoming nature guides are very interested in a fairly high level engagement with this subject matter. Clive Walker commented on it by saying:

> I lecture Africa Nature Training Students every year. The field exercise here, mainly to do with archaeology, linked to rock art and that extending the whole training, then I give them a talk in Johannesburg, I can tell you that out of a group of say 30, there could be as many as 20 in that group who are women. Not all of them want to be guides. What they're doing, they're doing this guide training course because they want to advance their own personal knowledge of the environment. That didn't happen 20 years ago. 20 years ago there probably wasn't guide training, and today, look at the number of guide training schools. Look how hard it is![59]

Nature guide training appears to be a growth industry in other parts of the country too, so it is fair to say that one of the best explanations for why FGASA came about when it did was a response to demand in the market, rather than as a direct consequence of socio-political change.

In an attempt to analyse the root cause, it is possible that this growth in interest in nature was experienced largely amongst whites, who were insecure about the possible consequences of the

socio-political changes that were taking place around them, and sought refuge in focusing on an area of knowledge which appears unaffected by the shift of power in the human arena. This explanation is speculative at best and would be difficult or impossible to examine empirically. Another factor which partially explains why in the 1990s there was suddenly a burgeoning of interest in seriously studying nature amongst the highly educated and well informed, is that people have become increasingly aware of environmental effects following increased coverage of the ozone hole, global warming, food and water crises and health and population crises. Studying causes and effects of environmental change is too grim and depressing, but people suddenly felt a need to gain a better understanding of the environment that was thus affected. Arguably a significant percentage of these people preferred to view the environment more romantically as though it were immutable and permanent, and many saw the best means of doing this as doing nature courses. Interest in more specialized aspects of nature also seem to have gone through a boom, with birding or bird-watching described as the fastest growing hobby over the same period in both Europe and the United States of America, and being at or near the top of the list for growth in South Africa over the same time period. It is easier to focus our attention on the victims and results of environmental degradation (nature, and the struggle to survive of its constituent species) than it is to focus on the causes- the human being whose technological development, consumerism, overproduction, waste, pollution and expansion across the planet are the real reason why nature is threatened and declining.

**Conservation Corporation (also called Conscor or CCAfrica)**

I applied unsuccessfully for a job at this company in 1997. My interview was conducted by an HR Officer who was noticeably younger than me and was unmoved by my enthusiasm or

qualifications, and dismissed me fairly shortly, never subsequently contacting me with any offer of employment. I am uncertain to this day whether my qualifications, my age, my attitude or whatever else that was considered undesirable. Despite this, I still hold the company in high esteem, so I was pleased when this research gave me the privilege and opportunity of speaking to Graham Vercueil. He was very enthusiastic about the Conscor approach which he tried to explain as follows:

> I think that the first thing is to get the right guides into the crew. And I think the next thing is to inform them as broadly and specifically as possible about the whole organization and what it stands for and what it does and doesn't do. And to give people the opportunity to decide as to whether they or not they'd like to take ownership of that. And then during the process they have to decide whether they're in or out, whether they're part of it or they're not. And I think it does make a lot of difference for guys who are going into a guiding job to know that when they do a really hard day's of work, there are really significant conservation initiatives and community development initiatives which are driven successfully by the fact that people get to work every day and do a hard day's work and succeed in the eco tourism industry. If every guest you keep happy, every room that's brilliant, every land-rover that goes out on a successful game drive has got a lot to do with driving those two major projects of conservation development and community development.[60]

So ultimately the Conscor standard derives from staff being filtered through the stringent pre-selection described by Graham Vercueil above, as well as the "natural selection" described by Dr. Alex Coutts (on p.229 above).

Conscor succeeded against the odds at times, but mainly through selecting their guides very carefully and then giving them a fair package and developing reciprocal loyalty. They have also taken training and skills development very seriously and had a strong sense of social commitment, which included providing jobs for 220 people at Phinda for example, and then developing schools and facilities for the local people, who in turn became loyal to the company. This attitude permeated the society so thoroughly that it was suggested that Phinda's development programme was the root cause of a clear decline in poaching that was to become evident. Both issues of guide

packages and community development are taken up in more detail in the following chapter. The application of this model appears relatively limited because it can only be effective on the basis of securing a sufficient number of top end clients. The strategy of budgeting generously for both training and remuneration of guides appears to have been the most successful method of maintaining a high level of nature guiding. The CCAfrica ethic certainly contains more than a whiff of snobbery and self-congratulation, but it is undeniable that the private reserves of KZN and Mpumalanga have far more in common with each other than they do with the dominant style of guiding in either the KwaZulu-Natal or the Kruger National Park. Although private reserves are controversial in many respects it appears that they are leaders rather than followers in the bench-marking of guiding standards.

The classic Wilderness Leadership School of Ian Player (and largely also the derivative chapter of Clive Walker) considered nature with a high degree of reverence and respect and are associated with a strong conservation ethic, especially of rhinos (both white and black) and also to a certain extent of elephants. The classic Kruger National Park guide was steeped in the hard science of *veld* management and did not get emotional at the death of pachyderms because of their high impact on the habitats which they share with all other species. The private reserve guide was used to operating in a vehicle, doing fairly short and pleasant day walks, and receiving generous tips from wealthy clients for a part well played, almost like an actor. It is interesting that whilst Graham Vercueil of CCAfrica is the epitome of this school of guiding, it should not be forgotten that Lex Hes came from a fairly similar pedigree. Both Vercueil and Hes worked their way up through the ranks of the private reserves of Mpumalanga in the 1980s. They are similar to an extent, but it

would be fair to describe Graham Vercueil as extremely calculating and pragmatic, whilst Lex Hes could reasonably be said to be more idealistic, optimistic and concerned with the rights of animals.

**The New Environmental Sensitivity, Madikwe Style**

There is another stream of guiding evident today which is epitomized by the new guides at Madikwe. Despite the best efforts of General Jan Smuts, the additional Transvaal reserve proclaimed by him (Rustenberg Game Reserve, between the Madikwe and the Malopo Rivers) was de-proclaimed in the 1930s. It would appear that Smuts' instinct that a game reserve in this region of the country would have been a success was correct. Development of Madikwe Game Reserve, on the Madikwe River (and not very far from Smuts original Rustenburg reserve) began in 1992.[61] Extant game included leopard, brown hyaena, kudu, gemsbok, nyala, klipspringer and mountain reedbuck. According to Des Webster:

> Madikwe's Operation Phoenix is the code name of the largest reintroduction of game undertaken by man in any game reserve in Africa. During the early 1990s, the relocation of entire herds of elephant, various antelope species, buffalo, black and white rhino, zebra and more recently lion, cheetah , spotted hyaena and endangered wild dogs have increased the large mammal population to over 10 000.[62]

Clearly, the "new" Madikwe guides share some of the idealism, optimism and the relaxed and confident manner of Lex Hes, but they are a lot younger and lack his refinement, his mastery of English and his impressively rich tapestry of experience. "Dikgang" described his observations of the local guiding style and their tradition:

> I think within North West things are done slightly different we are more into conservation than into stocking areas. I don't know much about the *low-veld* or other places in the country, but from what I hear from other people especially quite a lot of guests that I do get, talking about chasing big game up in other areas, not being sensitive to the area, in a sense

> that you know, people don't drive on the road, you know, you get a guide that thinks "Ah! We had a lion there two days back, so I'm going to drive in there and see if the lion might be there, maybe that's the favourite spot!" because at the end of the day, we're creating a lot of impact with the vehicle by destroying the grasses and I think that also education must play the most important role, like as I said, you know with the courses that get run that are very short, yes, you know they are great, at the end of the day somebody needs to start somewhere, but if you're thinking of a short period of time of running a course, having to know what ecology means, having to know what grass succession means, because that's the main thing that we're not taking into consideration because sometimes we get somebody driving over decreaser species of grasses, not knowing what that grass is. What's going to happen to that area if you go off road there? So it's all about being competent and having a good general background of knowledge, that needs to be done by people that have been within guiding for the past 20-30 years, but can no longer be part of guiding, because they are family committed, and they can't do this anymore, but we need to try and change this, make it work for everybody, and we need those people that's been in the field for quite a while.[63]

The guides at Madikwe have a unique form of cultural respect which is related to modesty and humility and an approach to nature that is clearly not aggressive. As Moremi Keabetswe said:

> We try by all means to be honest enough to our clients and to make sure that we teach them effectively, and then you know, here and there you might make some mistakes, because nobody is perfect. But we try by all means to make sure that whatever I say is something that I found out more about it. And if ever there is any client in the vehicle that knows better about that, you are also flexible to get his point of view, and then you will learn something more from him and then if you get convinced of what he is saying, and then maybe could use some research that you have made. You also get to align yourself with that or maybe go further to research more about that and find out that the client was right and correct whatever you have been saying in the past, because it is wrong.[64]

A lack of arrogance characterizes all of the Madikwe subjects:

> The thing is you never know who you got in a game drive, so you just to be careful of what you are doing and then you got people who have paid a lot of money and they will want their money worth in there, so you just become flexible with that. So, if they try to become bossy with you, you also try to become submissive, it helps a lot! More over that I am in charge of them out there and if something happens wrongly out there, I am responsible, so I always try to be harsh to them, but you know you can't be harsh to your client otherwise we going to upset him, and he is not going to come back, and we want his business….[65]

What is impressive amongst some of the Madikwe guides is that they maintain a dedicated group learning programme, having weekly training to try to develop each other in areas which they know well

> Yes, we at Madikwe River Lodge do a week cycle session where somebody does insects for a week and then somebody does trees or flowers or plants for a week. Next week we move onto something, so we rotate the whole information- in five weeks time, everybody has got something new to learn and to teach the others.[66]

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of the "new" Madikwe guides is that they are all adamant the you can guide perfectly well without a rifle, and that a rifle should always be thought of as a last resort. It is difficult to know whether this is because of their awareness of gun free guiding going on in Botswana and their cultural and linguistic identification with the people who run these practices, or whether it is because all three of these learners had a very solid training from Chris Lucas, Sakkie van Aswegan and others. This training was made possible through a grant from the British Council to a group called Mafisa. This organization was headed up by Eddie Webster (no relation of Des Webster) and the Madikwe projects were largely managed by Lucy Kaplan (no relation of Todd Kaplan). Although a resounding success, this training course was never repeated. This training had cost close to R 1 000 000-00 and only the five of the eight people of who completed the course are currently working. Of the two female graduates, one, Rene Matshediso, worked as a gate guard[67], but never managed to progress to employment as a guide. A second female learner struggled both practically and academically, and her selection was possibly at fault. One male graduate Julius Gaseithlawe worked at Tau Lodge and then at Madikwe River Lodge, but left due to personal problems. The high cost of this training was a function of trainers coming in from Johannesburg, but also of the learners being sourced from 3 different villages surrounding Madikwe, so transport and logistics caused operation costs to escalate markedly. The fact that British Council commissioned Mafisa who contracted Environmental Training group also created an additional tier of costs which was (arguably) unnecessary. Obviously the cost of R200 000-00 per job created (or alternately even R125 000-00 per learner) can hardly be economically

justifiable.[†]

There is no doubt though that the lucky recipients have become guides of a high caliber and a distinctive style. The lessons behind the Mafisa training need to be seriously noted. Undoubtedly, good training can produce good guides, but better logistics are vital in reducing costs and making practical interventions in job creation and local development in Game Reserve areas. Despite the above objections in terms of cost, the Madikwe graduates do represent a benchmark in standards achievable by local rural guides with no real prior skills. The guiding industry should be trying to nurture more guides who are knowledgeable, ethical, polite and enthusiastic, and FGASA affiliated training providers may hold the key.

The "new" guides at Madikwe are remarkable because they are evidently very progressive in terms of weapons legislation and strongly believe that we can guide in dangerous game areas without weapons, yet they were very conservative concerning unions, with which they did not identify at all. They received a high standard of training, but did not have a background in game ranging or wildlife management, so do not show strong the strong anthropocentric biases common in guides from the management or "game-ranging" background . Although Moremi Keabetswe is a Christian, he shares his friends' empathy for all living creatures and does not have the "dominion attitude" which translates in modern times to an anthropocentric perspective. They also notably all have quite a well developed sense of the environmental crises that face the planet and are able to

[†] In 2005 the Cradle of Humankind Management Authority in co-operation with the Cradle of Humankind Field Guides, Trust and the Field Guides' Association of Southern Africa, trained 32 guides for local guiding jobs, plus giving additional skills to over ten additional learners and eight assessors at a cost of R250 000, the effective cost of R 8 000 per learner for one year's worth of training, is considered far more of a commendable achievement in terms of value. However, this calculation does not represent the value of the my time (as project manager), so perhaps at current value, one year training projects should aim to budget between R10 000 and R20 000 per learner, again depending on group size. This does not include subsistence, transport and accommodation costs, which generally cause the cost of training to escalate.

communicate these to clients with calmness and concern. The quality of these guides illustrates many of the benefits of a systematic training with good trainers who have nurtured a developed sense of broader issues and ethics. Compared to some guides in other areas they lack a deep sense of cultural traditions, but this may be more of an advantage than a hindrance as we move rapidly into the changing and uncertain future (see pp.112-15). Many clients at Madikwe do not have the good fortune of interacting with these more progressive guides and the sense that Madikwe is still dominated by inconsiderate vehicle based guiding is still fairly common.[68] Whilst it cannot be assumed that market forces will drive the "new" guiding at Madikwe to become the norm, it is naturally hoped and believed that they will have a positive impact on the ethics of guides and the expectations of clients.

**Transformation- Meaningful or Mythical?**

It is quite easy to make a case for the effectiveness of demographic transformation in the guiding industry but to the skeptic, the jury is definitely still out. There seems to be a clear sense of intent in some quarters, but the results are indecisive and the key role players appear either unconvinced or seem to be co-operating begrudgingly. Very legitimate objections to the government's version of transformation have been raised, and the current process is far from having a convincing effect on the world of field guides.

The ability to confront, engage, direct and lead change is a pre-requisite if nature guiding is to produce healthy fruits in the future. Graham Vercueil tried to summarize whether he thought nature guiding had been transformed:

> It would be naive to think that that's all disappeared out of our system. I think it's changed a lot for gender, for white women. I still don't see many black women guiding, particularly in the private sector. In big game areas there's a huge dearth of black or coloured women guiding. I think there are a lot more black guides than there used to be and the opportunities for black guides are opening up. Whether it's a case of the market changing, or department of labour just getting their way, I'm not too sure. I think it's a bit of both. But I think the demographics have changed and there are social push and pull factors which are working for and against that process. But I think that the sad reality is that a legacy of not educating people is preventing a lot of people of entering the guiding industry, because guiding by nature, if you're guiding international first world sophisticated international people, it's a tough job to do if you're not a good communicator and you don't have a world view. So there it has a ceiling. And the upper echelon lodges are by nature dominated by young educated people who, at this stage… a lot of them are white people. It needs to change, and I don't know how fast it will change. I think the guiding industry would do well to implement a process by which black people with potential are given the opportunity over a period of time to improve their language skills more than anything else. I think that would open a lot of doors, if we had more specific English language training programs available to people with prospects in the guiding industry.[69]

Graham Vercueil was undoubtedly one of the most concise and focused subjects of these interviews. Both his problem statement and his proposed solution describe key elements of what is required, but taken in isolation, this statement is too pithy and too simple. This thesis aims to demonstrate that both the problems facing the guiding industry and their possible solutions, are complex and daunting, but not insurmountable.

In 2007, the majority of nature guides are still white and male, but they are probably a declining majority. It is difficult to obtain empirical evidence of this, but it is a reality that is evident to observers who have regular contact with the industry. An ongoing demographic analysis of nature guides has not been done anywhere in the country. FGASA did not initially require their guides to submit information on their race and gender, and so did not do so until they were required to do so by THETA and ultimately by the Department of Labour.

A quick survey of current FGASA registered guides (assuming race and gender by name) on 17

December, 2006, suggests that 53% of members are white males, (at least) 23% are white females, (at the most) 23% are black males and no more than 1% are black females. This figure might be slightly distorted to over-represent the percentage of black males and if so to under-represent whites due to the sample taken including the surnames beginning with m and n which may include a higher than average proportion of black surnames, but probably is accurate to within 2-3 %. Conversely, it may under-represent blacks (taken here to mean "coloureds", "Asians" and "Africans"), if there is a significant number of "coloured" people who have been taken to be white on the grounds of having a "European" surname. This survey clearly does not bear out the suggestion by Grant Hine that there were an almost equal number of female FGASA members, but it is possible that the percentages of white females is growing fastest, followed by black males, and that the evident sparsity of black females is a reality of the industry. Whilst the choice of the FGASA database may not be a totally objective section of the industry, it would still be reasonable to say that the majority of guides are still white, the majority of these are still male, and that the percentage of blacks and women is increasing slowly but surely, whilst the percentage of black women remains very low.

The Kruger National Park did not have figures for guides but Fig and Cock examined their employment figures as supplied at January, 1999. [70]

TABLE 1: Employment profile of South African National Parks, specifying numbers of employees by occupational level, gender and race, January 1999

| Occupational Level | Male | | | | Female | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Afr. | As. | Col. | Wh. | Afr. | As. | Col. | Wh. | |
| Management | 30 | 1 | 9 | 165 | 11 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 231 |
| Skilled | 66 | 3 | 24 | 148 | 15 | 2 | 7 | 96 | 360/361 |
| Semi-skilled | 716 | 2 | 220 | 9 | 92 | 3 | 73 | 100 | 1214/1215 |
| Unskilled | 1489 | 0 | 82 | 3 | 756 | 1 | 97 | 4 | 2432 |
| Total | 2301 | 6 | 335 | 325 | 874 | 6 | 182 | 208 | 4237 |
| Afr. = African | | As. = Asian | | | Col. = Coloured | | | Wh. = White | |

This was compared with figures as supplied by Dr. Freek Venter in September, 2006. The discrepancy in total numbers is presumably because table 2 contains figures for management only whilst table 1 is for all levels. If the highlighted areas in table 1 are totaled they include 1805 people (as added up in original chart: or 1807 using the corrected totals on the right) and can be assumed to be roughly the same segment as table 2.

TABLE 2: Employment profile of South African National Parks, specifying numbers of employees by occupational level, gender and race, September, 2006[71]

| PATERSON GRADING | BLACK | | WHITE | | COLOURED | | INDIAN | | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | |
| A | 335 | 712 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 047 |
| BL | 79 | 369 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 458 |
| BU | 34 | 114 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 153 |
| CL | 16 | 47 | 8 | 17 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 92 |
| CU | 13 | 37 | 9 | 14 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 75 |
| DL | 9 | 11 | 5 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 44 |
| DU | 1 | 9 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 |
| EL | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| EU | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | 490 | 1 301 | 36 | 62 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 901 |

Assuming the above understanding is correct, a third table can drawn up which displays the percentage of change in management over the period from Jan., 1999 to Sept., 2006.

TABLE 3: Change in Employment profile of South African National Parks, using percentages of employees by occupational level, gender and race, from January, 1999 until September, 2006:

| PATERSON GRADING | BLACK | | WHITE | | COLOURED | | INDIAN | | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | |
| TOTAL 1999 | 118 | 812 | 205 | 322 | 85 | 253 | 6 | 6 | 1807 |
| TOTAL 2006 | 490 | 1 301 | 36 | 62 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 901 |
| PECENTAGE 1999 | 6.5 | 44.9 | 11.3 | 17.8 | 4.7 | 14 | 0.3 | 0.3 | |
| PERCENTAGE 2006 | 26 | 68.4 | 1.9 | 3.3 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | |
| PERCENTAGE CHANGE | +19.5 | +23.5 | -9.4 | -14.5 | -4.4 | -13.9 | -0.2 | -0.1 | |

If the above statistical table is at least generally correct then the groups whose percentage stake in management is declining are white males, “coloured” males and white females in that order, whilst those whose stake is increasing are black males, followed by black females. The evident decrease in “coloured” males leads to the suspicion that these are not completely comparable segments and that perhaps only the first two lines of Fig and Cock’s chart should have been read, but this was also potentially problematic as the sample size would then be significantly different. It is possible that Fig and Cock’s segment was mistitled and the chart was applicable to the Kruger Park only, but then the number of semi-skilled “coloured” males would then be suspiciously high, so the assumption that the charts are comparable has been retained. Nevertheless, even if the charts are not completely aligned, the general trends appear to be valid. The conclusion that can be drawn is that racial transformation (in management) is approaching a distribution that is representative (or proportional at least) for each group, but gender transformation is lagging, with women (who make

up more than 50% of the population) still comprising less than 30% of the management component.

If the assumptions made about reading the above tables are correct, then it appears that Dr. Freek Venter is correct when he claims that:

> according to the attached table it [the rate of transformation amongst management] is not slow, but quite fast.[72]

It is quite clear on the ground that the same ratios do not exist amongst nature guides (particularly nature guides working in dangerous game areas) on the ground, but the same trend certainly exists (albeit to a proportionally smaller extent). That is to say that the rate of racial transformation is greater than the rate of gender transformation. SANParks were unable to supply similar information for nature guides in general.

Neither the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), nor the Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) offer this information on line, and attempts to obtain this information from the organizations did not result in access to their databases.

The single largest intervention on guides and wildlife managers was the THETA Integrated Nature-Based Tourism and Conservation Management (INTAC) Project which was managed by Clive Poultney. The figures of learners indicate that when these graduates are assimilated by the industry this initiative will further accelerate "racial transformation" and somewhat accelerate "gender transformation". (To really address the shortage of black females in tourism and conservation, numbers of female learners should actually exceed numbers of male learners, but it is very difficult to do this in practice, largely because of the difficulty of finding suitable numbers of enthusiastic female learners).

TABLE 4: Record of all trainees from THETA INTAC project (extracted from THETA website).

**THETA INTAC PROJECT : Labour Market Segments**

| African | | Coloured | | Ind./Asian | | Whites | | N/K | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | | |

An alternative strategy for assessing the gender ratios on the ground is to survey training providers concerning their ratio of learners. According to Lex Hes

> I actually don't know the actual statistics, but at first glance I would say that there hasn't been an increase, but there has always been a fairly high percentage of women on our courses, so I would say probably around about 40% of the people that attend our courses are women. And that to me is quite a high percentage when you compare who's working in the industry….We don't actually have a formal sort of system of tracking careers but we do try where possible to stay in contact with certain people and get some idea of where they are and where they're going. And we do often bump into people in the field who are working as guides whom we found out were with us sometime in the past.[73]

The perception of certain guides on the ground is that despite the elapsed time since South Africa became a democracy there is still prejudice amongst lodge owners and other employers in the industry against female and black guides. As "Dikgang" stated:

> I think you know as New South Africa, literally that [old South African racial prejudice] has died the past 15 years or 14 years of democracy, but what I do find is that some of the operators, and I'm sorry to say this, but are still against the fact that you could have a guide that is a lady. Some of the operators are against the fact that you could have a guide that is- how can I put this in a good way- African guide (I don't want to say black or white), but yes, there's still a little bit of that.[74]

The government's notion of "transformation" is that presumably all industries, but particularly state run projects should aim to select candidates who are black and/or female if they are available. It has never been clear whether this would continue until equitable ratios have been achieved, or indefinitely, but there is a perception that it is intrinsically unfair or discriminatory, and one of the people who felt strongly about this was Douwe van der Zee, former CEO of FGASA. Van der Zee expressed his belief that the contemporary government use of the word 'transformation' reveals an agenda with double standards. It wants to transform things, and on the one hand transformation is

supposed to be seen as an unbiased and objective thing, but on the other hand the people that you want to promote are of a certain race and gender. So (van der Zee argues that) transformation is really not about transformation, it's about reverse racial discrimination. Graham Vercueil supported this position when he said

> I think Douwe's right. I think there is a lot of reverse racial discrimination and I think that at the expense of operating standards within the industry. I don't know that the government as it stands has got a choice if they're to keep the people happy. But I think that as we were discussing earlier, I think there has to come a point where if we're to keep the competent people in this country who as it happens, some of the competent people in this country happen to be white, and if we hope to keep them here as economically active and productive members of society, we have to give them some sort of hope that they'll also be okay in applying for a job, and that they are not going to be reversely discriminated against simply because they are white, and the previous system that discriminated against black people was [right?]. And until there's hope on the horizon that that's going to happen I think we'll keep losing good people out of this society because they don't see a future for themselves. Even now amongst the young people that are coming through into the guiding fraternity, there's an uncertainty and a lack of future and a lack of vision amongst them. Where, if you question what they're doing with their time and their guiding, there's only a small percentage who really can give you a coherent answer about the next five or ten years.[75]

Whilst Lex Hes took the point, but distanced himself from this position to an extent by saying

> I think the government has to do it that way. I don't think they have a choice really because if you think about it the majority of the people in this country are blacks and the majority of the people in this country were disadvantaged by the apartheid era, and for the government to bring transformation about, they have to place the emphasis on the black population. So there's really no choice as far as I see it.[76]

It seems Lex Hes made this statement, because he was concerned that to show unqualified agreement with Douwe van der Zee may appear superficially to be taking a reactionary position, but in terms of his practical reality, he was concerned about the potential effects of reverse discrimination, particularly towards his own children:

> There is that threat and certainly I think that's what's happening. I have my own children that are now reaching an age where they're starting to think about their careers. We all know that it's much more difficult for a young white male South African to get a job because there is affirmative action all over the place. So there's no doubt that young whites will have it more difficult. And then in terms of the experience that you're talking about, I personally don't think, if you have a look at the guiding industry certainly at the moment,

> there's no danger of that happening right now. I don't know what the statistics are, but if I was to go and visit all the various game reserves now, you would still find the majority of guides are whites. So I don't think there's a problem immediately. I do maybe ultimately [think] there could be a situation where that's happening, and now the government I believe is sending word out to civil servants that had lost their jobs because of affirmative action and asking previous white civil servants to come back to assist the people that have been put in their place, because they've realized there's a level of incompetence which needs to be redressed by bringing the experience back. So I think that the government is realizing that, that you can't just get rid of all that experience. So hopefully that will change. But like you say there are perceptions and maybe there are threats to that skill being lost.[77]

The assertion by Douwe van der Zee that the government take on transformation is discriminatory is very interesting. Douwe van der Zee, Graham Vercueil and Lex Hes are not conservatives or reactionaries in any terms, and certainly not by comparison with others in the guiding industry. The call for the maintaining of standards within the guiding industry was stressed in the FGASA Newsletter of December 2006, where Grant Hine on completion of an article on the current qualifications process, inserted the by-line "TRANSFORMATION WITHOUT COMPROMISE." It is worth noting that this message is supported by a significant number of young black guides. As Molakho Paho in the concluding statement of his interview said

> I'll say if it doesn't bring standards up I think we'll lose lots and lots of guides, and then we'll have inexperienced guides all over. So the standard has to go a little bit up...[this can be achieved by]…Just includ[ing] like some of those skills that I was talking about like qualification levels and also that hierarchy. I think that's good! [*Interview ends*][78]

It is clear that the word "transformation" is not universally understood as intended by the current government. Mike English clearly understood transformation from another perspective that of learnt and acquired information and cultural values. In his understanding transformation was not an instantaneous process, and could not be effected without patience and perseverance of which he said

> …because let's face it, all I know about the bush I learnt from a black man. And you don't pick it up in a month, you don't pick it up in a year, you pick it up over thirty, forty years. You don't know everything. That I believe. Now Don, my son, was in a position from what age? He got out with field rangers, he used to go fishing with them, he spoke their

> language, he asked them questions, and he had even over me, that experience. I thought I was reasonable. I thought a couple of colleagues of mine were reasonable. But Don is far, far, far ahead of us. So there it comes again, practical experience, the environment in which you grew up, and your social environment.[79]

Dr. Ian Player suggested that one of the critical ways in which white people needed to transform themselves was to learn from the patience shown by black people. A practical example is the case of Moremi Keabetswe, who could not get a job as a guide after qualifying as a nature guide so

> …the whole year [after I qualified as a guide] I worked as a barman and then if I got an opportunity I'll go out for maybe as a tracker for another guide, if there is a need for a relief guide I would stand in every opportunity to go and do it, but I missed it a lot.
> I did [occasionally guide], but not a lot…Huh, you know it mainly depended on the owner to decide on you, especially if you was just fresh from school, then maybe he didn't think I was qualified enough to do it so I didn't want to push anything there and then I decided okay I will just wait for him to decide when does he think I am going to be ready and then there wasn't any other opportunities around the park unfortunately, and there was some other things that were, I'll say could have may be got to keep me behind, was I had just received my drivers license and you know going out and driving a vehicle without that experience is not easy. So they decided just to keep me aside because of that, I think…but by the time they decided to give me an opportunity I think it was a relevant time for me to start doing it full time. They gave me just a minimum opportunity and then the aim was to keep me for another lodge which they were going to build in the future but River Lodge desperately needed a guide and I found out that I had to go to River Lodge, there was no other way.[80]

Over the five years since then Moremi Keabetswe has caught up and indeed progressed very well in his career and he is now Head Guide and Assistant Manager at Buffalo Ridge.

Warren Bekker was convinced that working in nature guiding and training nature guides has made him

> …I think more of a patient person, and the reason why I say that is because I deal with a lot of the local guides, who sometimes have slight English problems, with literacy- it's developed my patience incredibly. So from a guide training point of view, I think that I am a lot more patient than I was, and I am able to see that it's not so easy from a local's perspective to come up and suddenly start guiding people. There's a lot more to understanding human nature and people's overseas behaviour and what they expect, and all of those we sometimes take for granted, but to put yourself into one of the local guide's shoes is very, very different, and that's where I think I've changed my perspective is that it's helped me understand how much needs to be done in order to try and facilitate a lot

> more local guides within a certain area. There's no question about it [that blacks are more patient than whites]. There's no rush, and I'm sure you've heard the saying "there's no rush in Africa" and that is very true, and sometimes that can be a little bit of a sort of negative thing, because I'm a very punctual and *paraat* kind of person and sometimes when your back-up guide or the guide that you're managing doesn't see it as you see it, it can sometimes cause problems.[81]

Graham Vercueil responded to Dr. Player's suggestion that white people have to transform their level of patience by saying

> ...we have to make some very broad cultural assumptions about saying that perhaps there is a certain timelessness about southern African culture. And as certain agitated consumer driven impatience about the white western driven culture in South Africa, we're very materially driven. So yes, I do agree that some of the black people are more patient. There's some strange and maybe non- representative observations about perhaps...you know in a reserve you'll get the black trackers and guides, very few of whom travel anywhere, even though they may be earning the same as the white guys. Even though they might buy and own their own cars, very few of them will travel to the cities around the country, whereas it's something that the white youngsters do all the time. It's a social, cultural, economic background that they've had. But if your whole family lives in the community that joins the reserve, and your whole family and community are not inclined to travel and move around and take up opportunities in the far flung corners of the country, then I think the residual effect of that is that you're resigned to being here. And in resigning to being here you have to take the view that you got to take what comes and you've got to ride out the rough and the smooth. But when your head is filled with hundreds of other places and other options and travel opportunities, when the grass is greener on the other side and things are not going so well here, well then up sticks and move. And that's what they do.[82]

Lex Hes was similarly cautious about giving blanket endorsement to Player's assertion that blacks are patient, because it bordered on stereotyping and failed to consider a critique of the social, political and economic context in which such attitudes might be formed:

> Look, maybe that's true, but I think that what I read into what you've just said is that a young black guide is coming from a low economic base, and so therefore his first goals in life are to get himself a car and a roof over his head, and to borrow money so that he can buy a lounge suite for his house. Whereas a young white guide is coming from a very privileged background. He already has all of those things really, if you were to look at it…. so there's less need for him to be concerned about that. He's rather going to go and travel overseas, because he knows that when he's *gatvol* of guiding he can go and start working on the family farm or whatever. So I think that is maybe the difference, these young blacks are trying to uplift themselves economically.[83]

Transformation is the process whereby things become different from what they were. To some the

phrase is synonymous with progress and change and is hopeful, but to others the concept contains a threat of regression, decay and collapse. The real issue in South Africa is to eliminate unfairness without falling into the Orwellian trap of replacing it with an alternative form of unfairness dressed up as an improvement. In Animal Farm the pigs rose to power on the slogan "four legs good, two legs bad", but when once firmly entrenched in the farmer's house they reverted to "four legs good, two legs better"[84]. Institutional transformation will not be effective unless it enjoys the support of the people it affects. Ultimately the changes that have been the most meaningful for people in the guiding industry have been those that have happened between individuals and not necessarily through institutions. The possibility of institutional change to guiding is a very real one, as is the possibility of resistance from guides. Naturally, people who are black and female are far more comfortable than people who are white and male. Although it is a broad generalization, it is worth suggesting that our recently past society has conditioned black females to lack experience in (or even inclination towards) assertively managing complex social and knowledge systems, and simultaneously conditioned white males to lack experience in (or even inclination towards) assertively managing and actively preventing their own dispossession through organized or collective action. Clearly, the end of apartheid has not meant an instant end to these highly engrained patterns of social conditioning.

There does seem to be a very real concern amongst guides that standards (particularly of knowledge and skills, but to a certain extent attitude as well) will be compromised by "demographic transformation". Institutional change is being imposed by government, and the current drive for "transformation" will be continued. The perception from government may be that the nature guiding industry has failed to transform itself with the same purported vigor as other

sectors in the industry. If the government paradigm of what transformation should encompass is accepted, this is more than just a perception, it is a reality. Yet, there are some very real and complex reasons why "demographic transformation" has not occurred in the nature guiding industry to an "acceptable extent" and these reasons need to be carefully described, assessed and analyzed. Some suggestions of the causes are addressed in the segments which follow.

**Problems of Language and Culture**

One of the most compelling reasons that demographic transformation in nature guiding is as slow as it is, is because of problems which are related to language and culture. It is quite clear that nature guides, particularly black nature guides are often highly or very highly linguistically gifted and polyglots are almost the norm, but their grasp of English is often still perceived, especially by (especially older male) white guides as sub-standard. It is generally felt by the latter group that (although young black guides have a good subject matter grasp in the field) they don't have the ability to conduct conversations on more sophisticated topics at the camp-fire, the bar or the dining room table, because they have a very limited exposure to the cultural milieu and norms of clients. It is difficult to determine whether this should be analyzed as a linguistic or cultural weakness (because the problem lies in the interface between language and culture), but it is certainly an area which is not commonly addressed by formal tutoring and it is argued below that this certainly does needs to be addressed in the formal and informal training given to young black nature guides.

There can be few groups in the world chosen by country, broad ethnic and professional description

that are as linguistically capable as young black South African nature guides. According to Moloko Phaho he found that working in the Kruger National Park, most (local) people speak

> …Shangaan, so you don't have the choice, you have to cope in because other people they don't understand what you're saying and others don't even know English. So you have to lower your ground and understand everything. [My home language is] Tswana, from Pretoria side. [I realized I was good at languages] when I first went to KwaZulu Natal for my studies. The dominance was Zulu and I had to cope. In conservation there was mixture of languages, like Shangaan, Vendas, Tswanas, then you have to cope with that. So that's when I realized I'm getting there. So then I came here I just take it easy with Shangaan and then I was alright. That's what they ask me here, how do you know all these languages? I said, I'm not shy, I try, I make mistakes, they laugh at me and that's when I rectify myself.[85]

So this places English as one of at least five languages that Molakho Paho speaks regularly. The statement that the real key to learning languages is to be prepared to often make mistakes and be laughed at is very profound and in my experience should be endorsed on the highest level. Rangani Tsanwani mentioned that he was conversant in nine languages:

> I can speak English, a little bit of Afrikaans, I speak my language which is Venda, I'm fluent also in Tsonga, I can speak Swazi, Zulu also I can speak, Sotho and Xhosa. So I can speak a lot of languages. Last year I went to the course to learn French, then I can speak a little bit of French. But even though that time was very, very short. It was only a two week course…The other group they are learning German. [Our group] are learning French. But the thing is the government who introduced that learnership, it was French. Then the organization said that we can't take all the first group who went to French, so they had to learn the German. Some people go to the German and some people to the French.[86]

Despite their bent for multilingualism the young black guides shared the concern (articulated most commonly by more experienced older white guides) that their English was still sub-standard. So Moremi Keabetswe tries to ensure that learner guides are pressurized to cope with the "sundowner banter", because that is where they need to develop.

> English is not our mother tongue so you always struggle to be able to express yourself. So, what I always try to push into him [an apprentice guide] is that he must try always to speak it because that's the only way to learn it. I think he becomes shy and it becomes very difficult and so if we are hosting guests together for sundowners, I always ask him to be able to speak to the guest. Sometimes I leave him with the vehicle, may be I'll go

> somewhere else and the guests will ask him some questions and I don't want to interfere when I find him busy explaining it to the guest because it's the only way to learn.[87]

To Moremi Keabetswe on the job mentoring is a very useful process for improving knowledge, language and communication skills of both the apprentice guide and the mentor.

> When I make a mistake he can just easily point it out and say today you have said that instead of this, which makes it (which is actually) quite impressive for him to be able to help me. I think I am his teacher and if he can point out a mistake, which means he has learnt a lot. And we sometimes we always ask him if he understands a thing because sometimes it is difficult for him to ask me a question when I'm with some clients. I'll say he better just keep it and when we get back to the lodge, he'll say you know you said something about this but I didn't clearly understand what the thing was and then I'll explain to him in a better way and sometimes if he sees something which he is not sure of, I always ask him to point it out even if out on a game drive so that you can all learn from it.[88]

Sicelo Mbatha made the very valid point that all people, no matter how linguistically gifted have to make some sacrifices in order to make other achievements.

> I can say- the thing is- I can say yes, it's like Americanized, and the other thing is what you suckled at school, what you're absorbing at the school- it's English! And then you are realizing, "I must grab on English" then you have forgotten your route *(root?)* backwards. So it's like that. I can say if they can add- the teachers at the school- if they can try to put more pressure even in Zulu things as well, it can be better.[89]

In other words, no matter how linguistically gifted you are, your time is still limited, and improvement in English language and culture only occurs at the cost of a reduction in home vernacular and/or other language skills.

The dynamic nature of culture was also alluded to by "Dikgang". In his assessment, the dynamics of contemporary South African black culture were such that, the very processes that were making people more urbanized, wealthy and inclined to visit game reserves as guests, were simultaneously eroding the values of traditional indigenous rural culture which were in the past a prospective strength of people who wanted to become guides:

> …now, what we're doing is that we're taking away the values and the customs, our tradition, away from our kids, because now we're not exposing them to that, in a sense that the kids don't really get the time, even in holidays, to go and visit the grannies, that might tell them good stories about how we used to live, a way of living. Our holiday now has become more Westernized- we're going to the beach, going to game reserves- which is still fairly good to do that, but yes, it [traditional culture] has definitely declined.[90]

As an experienced guide and guide trainers Lex Hes stressed that this weakness in the language-culture interface was a critical area of restriction of black guides progressing in the system

> I think it's a very difficult thing to put the necessary training in place, because first of all, it is language skills. There's a certain amount of language barrier. Their English isn't nearly as good as it should be. So, if one can set up programmes like English bridging classes for these young guys, that might be one way of doing it. But the other thing is, for example you and I will go home and we'll put DSTV on and catch the BBC world news and we'll go and buy the newspaper and read about Mohammed's cartoons and the outrage of the Moslems around the world, and when we sit down at breakfast with our guests we can talk on a level with our guests about those kind of things. But a young guide living in a village in northern Botswana who comes to work in a game lodge doesn't have that kind of contact with the outside world and so he's not able to talk to his guests about sort of general day to day things like that. I think that is a very difficult thing to try and instill in those guys and perhaps the way it can be alleviated (and I know it does work in various lodges) is that you maybe have a management team who are responsible for more of that hosting part of it, and you let your guide concentrate on the bush aspects. So that might be a way of overcoming that problem, and perhaps as the guide picks up experience and maybe gets a chance to go to the United States or to Europe he'll start being able to develop more of those hosting skills.[91]

On reflection Lex Hes considered that the cultural or sophistication component was if anything even more critical than the language component

> Look I think there's maybe two things. One is that many black guides still...I still think that the main problem with black guides, many of them are very good at showing and giving their people a good bush experience, but when it comes to sitting down at a breakfast table like you and I and communicating on a level with sophisticated European and American and western people, that's where they fall down. And I think that the more up-market sort of game lodges are looking for a guide that can be a host as well, and so that's what they will be employing.[92]

Whilst Lex Hes has tended to operate in the private lodges and training schools of Mpumalanga, Jaco Badenhorst made similar observations concerning the Kruger National Park. He said the ability to speak English was

> Not as much [of a problem] as it used to be. Of the fourteen guys that we've got at the moment, all of them can speak Afrikaans and English, except one. Whereas five years ago it was quite a few. I had to learn Fanigalo very, very quickly when I started in '92, '93, because half the assistants couldn't speak Afrikaans. The old trackers communicated in Fanigalo (Shangaan-Fanigalo). Apparently most of our assistants got matric and also another half of them are busy with their nature conservation or something similar in the field guiding.[93]

He echoed Lex Hes sentiments about language problems and the need to improve these skills

> Especially …I think people want to do it, but it's just the people that's driving it, I'm not going to point fingers at anybody, but there's not enough oomph behind the whole training and the language thing. Tomorrow morning, out of our own pocket, we're going to take our guys…beg borrow and steal and we're going to take them outside the Kruger Park on a farm to go and shoot, because inside it's just too much red tape. Nothing illegal, it's a shooting range, but it's that type of thing, so we must show our own initiative to train out of our own expense where that should come out of Kruger Park's budget. But there isn't enough money for bullets or not enough time to organize courses and training sessions, evaluations. Evaluations is (*sic.*) really important. Even if you've been doing it for fourteen years like myself I would also like to be evaluated every other year also to keep me on my toes …or not it doesn't matter.[94]

Badenhorst similarly saw the lack of cultural sophistication as a critical area for attention.

> You get to Paris you don't insist on having a *braai* and *pap*. You fall in with whatever is going on there. And I think it's the same for them[foreign tourists]. But obviously you [local guides] have to know with whom you're dealing and to make it easier for yourself… and obviously to increase tourism and to make people happy. As far as our language concern, I think if you can speak English nowadays, that's fine. I know that there's some companies that do offer guides that can speak Portuguese or French or German.[95]

Mike English saw the failure of local guides as a case of a lack of social exposure, and speculated that whilst the incoming generation may well have ironed out this disparity through improved education and social exposure- it was quite possible that a decline in first hand bush skills would accompany this "leveling of the playing fields":

> Most of these black guys haven't had the social exposure, because their way of life and standards have not always been the same as ours. I would say that the guys who are coming up through high school now will be far better, but then again, not all of them will be suited to the bush life. I think where the difference between a black field guide and a white field guide is bush experience with the older guys, but they're dying out. The newer guides who have never been exposed to the bush, may have heard things from their fathers, but are not able to put it into practice, so I think you're sitting now with the expertise- because let's

> face it, all I know about the bush I learnt from a black man.[96]

It is interesting to compare this to Clive Walker's comment in his introduction to Signs of the Wild:

> I must state at the outset that our basis knowledge of what we have acquired in our understanding of this subject [tracking] has been passed on by the black man.[97]

(It is curious how both Mike English and Clive Walker chose to describe their coaches using similar phrases that sound impersonal or patronising. Perhaps, referring to a collective of people as an individual is indicative of generalizing or stereotyping. I am not suggesting that either of them are racists, or even harbour racist intent, and no doubt this type of English idiosyncrasy is common to others of a similar age). The real point is quite the opposite and that is that (idiosyncratic turn of phrase notwithstanding) they both felt that they had been transformed by their contact with black colleagues (or sub-ordinates) who had made an enormous contribution to their learning, which was achieved at a time when intimate social interaction with people from other race groups was discouraged.

There is a further ironic twist to this subject and that is that most of the young black guides interviewed acknowledged that they received most of their training (even on bush-lore, bush-craft and tracking) from white mentors, so the skills have come full circle. In certain respects the important thing is that these skills are preserved and transmitted, and interestingly it is an area of training that has largely transformed itself beyond ownership in the narrow racial (or even monocultural or monolingual eg. Tsonga / Shangaan) sense of the word.

"Dikgang" tried to describe how it was difficult for someone conditioned to certain terms and expressions to adopt to the type of casual inter-personal norms which are typical of English speaking white South Africans, or even more so of international English speakers:

> I suppose that is a difficult one because…I'm Tswana, and with our culture, we don't look elderly people direct into the eye. If you're older than me, I'm not going to call you direct with the names- it will be *Mma* or *Rra* which is a formal way of "Sir" or "Ma'm", and now coming into tourism, that is completely wrong, or opposite, but that is something that one has to work over. But when you speak to somebody, especially being responsible for lives of how many people you'll take in a vehicle doing a game drive, or perhaps maybe going for a walk, you know, one has got to look into people's eyes, so that they can believe what you are saying. Then they will put their lives into your hands, thinking that you should be responsible, or capable, or competent in doing whatever you are doing. Also coming to the fact that people don't like to be called "Sir" or "Ma'm". They would like to be called by their names- that I find them getting more impressed. But they shouldn't be impressed, actually, but ja, I find them doing that…[98]

If a relatively extroverted black male is this intimidated by cultural norms, this should be taken as a very significant factor in explaining why rural black females, especially those who are not natural extroverts or non-conformists, have a reduced chance of becoming guides and a highly reduced chance of succeeding in the industry.

The SAQA/NQF/THETA system was supposed to address the inequalities of the past. Certainly the provision which is made for illiterate learners was novel and met with almost universal approval (see Rangani Tsanwani quote about Daniel Congo 222-23). Yet learners who are literate but do not have first language grasp felt that they were still discriminated against. "Dikgang" felt that vocabulary used in formal testing did not always have a reasonable relationship to spoken English. He felt very strongly about the fact that there is still linguistic bias in FGASA (and to some extent THETA) and assumed anonymity on the basis that he wanted these criticisms to be recorded, but didn't wish this to held against him as a "career limiting" comment.

> I'm a fully FGASA member and I think FGASA has done quite well within the country, and the past few years and putting the standards of guiding, and trying to promote guiding and getting it a bit more professional, but people forget that we're not all English- you know English speaking, but as education, one has to speak English, but what I find as a problem is the terminology that gets used within the exam. About two years back I wrote an exam Level II and there was a question within first aid about "abrasion", saying "what is abrasion?" You know I am almost thirty years now and getting involved on a daily basis

> with English speaking people for the past eight years, maybe ten years, and I haven't heard a single person talking about the word abrasion. So often here and there they would put terminology within the exam and FGASA and I actually do find that as stealing a point away from me, because one is trying to work for a higher mark, which is 75% and you cannot afford to loose a point of something that you don't know.[99]

In response to being told about this, Clive Walker said

> I think he's ["Dikgang" has] got a point. I think guiding should never get to the point, and you raised this right in the beginning- guiding is not just simply about science. Guiding is about human beings, and taking other human beings into the bush, and if you get to the point where you become a university professor, talking to people from the big city going into the bush, actually that's where guiding is going to loose its real value. We're dealing with ordinary people here. Guides are ordinary people.[100]

The new African National Congress government did away with the old SATOUR guide system almost before the new SAQA/NQF/THETA system was in place. They were desperate to install a system which was more equitable and democratic, but in the rush to do so took advice from educational experts who seemed more concerned with implementing a contemporary pedagogy than they were with canvassing the perspective of people on the ground. As a result, there is a reasonable case to be made that the current qualifications system has replicated the inequalities of the past. Dr. Alex Coutts made the following comments:

> I find this [the fact that past inequalities have been replicated] true on a number of levels. One is that if one takes a person from a disadvantaged background, with language problems, [and remember, Soweto blew up on the 16th of June, 1976 because of a certain subject (biology) taught through a certain language (Afrikaans)], not only did they have the complexity of biology, but they had to learn it through a second language. Now much training throughout South Africa, is people doing it through second language. There is a role incumbent on any good trainer to ensure that those gaps are bridged to a certain extent. When you have mixed classes, you can't slow down a class to the disadvantage of other people, to any great extent, I mean we are talking about realities, and I do find with a highly jargonized, and esoteric, and obfuscatory type of structure- I'm especially using some of those words to make the point, it becomes very, very difficult for some of our colleagues from second language backgrounds to actually cope, and I do think that every trainer in South Africa should try and simplify their language as much as they can.[101]

Coutts was not confident that the current structure was effective in producing the required transformation because of the complexity and opacity of the jargon used in association with the

Unit Standards that nature guides are required to be assessed against:

> Now, I'm a great proponent of this sort of not symbolic underpinning- you need language and maths, no-one disputes that, but when I read the actual unit standards I am appalled, because its literary criticism by and large that comes through. You're describing what paragraphs are. You're describing the intentions, here, there and everywhere, in the most esoteric academic vain. The very language used in the unit standards is academic language, and I just want to know why that isn't done in communication, where in the mathematics you need number, you need money, you need distance, you need time for a thing like guiding. You don't need other mathematical abstracts.[102]

Besides the lack of linguistic mastery by the non-English speaker, Coutts further argued that this was compounded by the poor educational background of many black learners, as well as a glass ceiling based on racial stereotypes imposed by the industry:

> …there's a language thing there, and there's an educational background thing. There is a traditional thing where black people are the trackers and a white person is the guide who has the rifle etc. I think that is gradually breaking down, but its breaking down to different extents, as I can make out.[103]

Some of these stereo-types in literature which go back to Rider-Haggard, Hemingway and Ruark were touched on (pp.41-44) above. Popular movies that have represented safaris are often set in restrospective periods in the first half of the twentieth century, so Born Free, Out of Africa, White Mischief and even The Ghost and the Darkness have done nothing to dispel the stereotypes of the *bwana* (white boss) wearing a pith helmet or a hat with a leopard skin band, khakis, riding boots and carrying the obligatory a rifle on a sling, whilst the *mensahib* (madam) has numerous black servants running around after her every need. The advertising industry has done little to dispel these stereotypes, so many Europeans and Americans actually expect these scenes to be recreated, and our industry co-operates by playing the part to an alarming degree. (Lodges and game reserves where khakis are not the standard uniform are the exception. The waiter and trackers are always black, the guides and managers are still usually white, but as Alex Coutts says, this is starting to break down).

Coutts was not totally despairing or pessimistic concerning the THETA system, and he felt that it contained some possibilities for authentic improvement of people in the guiding industry:

> I think that the avenue (because I've written quite a lot of programmes for Phinda and Londolozi) is that there is from tracker to an ABET[‡] programme with a higher level of literacy.[104]

Despite the arguably relatively slow rate of demographic transformation over the past decade, both the guide training experts as quoted above and nature guides on the ground are proud that standards appear to have been maintained. They tend to believe that real transformation is taking place and see themselves very positively as role models for the new order. According to "Dikgang":

> I suppose it's about seeing how things have progressed with conservation, how the opportunities have opened to every body. It's actually quite interesting to see how guiding has changed the past 15 years, with FGASA coming in which is the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa, because guiding in the olden days used to be something you used to do if you were bored and you didn't know what career to follow- more into the Afrikaans culture (perhaps I'm being a bit racist there). It was more into people that has been in the army and didn't know what to do, because you could use a rifle, and you have a little bit of survival skills, then it was something you could do, not really being informative as such. But the past 15 years, I find guiding getting more professional, and a little bit more technical as well- getting into the scientific researches that has been done now, looking at how animals interact with each other, into their habitat, and how us people can benefit out of it, and live together within conservation areas as well, so ja! Definitely.[105]

It is quite difficult not to be charmed by the youthful enthusiasm and optimism reflected in some of the statements by this determined young black nature guide and others of similar positive predisposition, and it is easy to become jaded and a little bit too skeptical, and forget what progress has been made in the past decade and a half in terms of removing these glass ceilings (or at least making them bend and stretch a bit). Yet there is a long way is to go before, on arriving at a lodge, it will be difficult to guess who does what, based purely on their age, race and gender.

[‡] Adult Basic Education and Training. The purpose was to give basic, literacy, numeracy and other life skills to people who had sub-standard, little or no primary school education. ABET remains one of the cornerstones of the SAQA / SETA system.

**Conclusion**

FGASA is a voluntary association of field guides in southern Africa. The organization is fortunate to have a membership of some of the most experienced guides and guide trainers in the country. Accusations of racism have been leveled at the association, and certainly the rate of transformation of gender has been slow, and transformation of race slower, with very few black females in the field. FGASA is broadly respected due to its high standards, stringent assessment methods and levels of professionalism.

THETA is the Sector Education & Training Authority which regulates the tourism industry in South Africa. Introduction of new standards for guiding have produced confusion due to perceived complexity and frustration in terms of inefficient processes, but the process has also been welcomed by (previously or currently) educationally disadvantaged (and especially illiterate) individuals.

Since the formation of THETA, there has been a continuously improving and co-operative relationship with FGASA and at the present day their processes dovetail quite well.
During the late 1980s and the 1990s there was a significant growth in both the nature guiding industry and the nature guiding training industry. The causes of the growth in these industries may relate to political insecurities of both the local and the international kind, and there is clearly a growing environmental awareness (at least in the narrow, if not the broad sense). This produced a mushrooming of training providers. The standards of these providers and their advertising through word of mouth, as well as media has stimulated continued growth in the guide training industry.

Delivery of meaningful experiences to learners by a significant portion of this sector must also be a real factor. The demand for guide training has also increased with the continuous growth (post-1994) of the tourism industry.

Large private companies such as Conservation Corporation have had a very positive influence on the success of the tourism local community interface, as well as with maintaining standards within the industry. The development of Madikwe game reserve has been successful in bench-marking the promotion of guides from local communities. These guides are not only very professional, but have a highly developed sense of ethics, and they are especially progressive (or at least very idealistic) in their attitudes to both weapons and the environment. These attitudes are influenced by at least three key influences: Botswana, their training background and their lack of "game-ranging" (environmental management) background.

They have been influenced by their affinities with the style of guiding in Botswana with whom they feel a cultural, linguistic or "ethnic" affinity as they are also Batswana. Historically Botswana is one of the least militarized countries in southern Africa, having achieved independence from their former colonial masters without a war of independence such as those which occurred in Angola, Moçambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It is interesting to note that there are more Batswana in South Africa than there are in Botswana. The Madikwe guides have received a high quality of continuous theory and practical training for almost two years. It turned out to be one of the most extensive and expensive training programmes ever carried out in the region. Their idealism and progressive inclinations are also driven by their complete separation from and general lack of exposure to environmental management or "game ranger's activities", which has meant that

they have never had to cull, crop, dart or otherwise intervene in the lives of animals.

The first half of the 1990s saw a range of developments which were significant in guiding- the recognition of the field guide (now normally called a nature guide, due to preferred THETA terminology) as a separated entity to a game-ranger, and the formation of FGASA a volunteer association, and a proliferation of nature guiding and nature guiding training organizations. Nature became a more popular subject to study, both as a prospective career choice, and as a subject of interest. In the second half of the 1990s Seta's were created, including THETA.

The concept of "transformation" is flawed, both in conception, and in execution. Transformation of the race and gender of people in the guiding industry will not reach representative proportions from all groups soon (or even ever) unless there is a transformation of the hearts and minds of the typical representatives of the guiding community as they appear today. If the guiding community seriously wishes to achieve an egalitarian ideal, they need to create a collective cultural identity that is more inclusive of women and particularly of black female colleagues. There also needs to be a critical shift in training methodology, with a far higher emphasis on development of language (especially English) skills, and more effort made to familiarize local guides with internationalist cultural norms and customs. Simultaneously, it is also vital that traditional cultural norms are preserved, and even that white learners receive formal cultural education in traditional African knowledge and cultural systems. Such a shift would be both radical and seemingly self-contradictory. It will require the conception and implementation of a perspective that is attractive to blacks, but not racist, and attractive to women, but not sexist. Furthermore, given the reality of the current demographics of nature guiding trainers these changes would need to be largely

conceived and implemented by people who were brought up with a high level of racist and sexist indoctrination. In addition this new perspective would need to promote improved English, but avoid opaque terminology and which would still encourage the retention of multilinguilism. All these complex and challenging objectives and the appropriate strategies for realizing them, which are clearly primarily cultural in essence, would (once again on account of the current status quo) need to be largely conceived and implemented by a group of people which is strongly dominated by individuals with a background in the sciences. Obviously the challenges to achieving "transformation" on any meaningful level are enormous, and possible approaches form the dominant theme of the last chapter of this thesis. It would be fair to say then that not only do the uneducated need education, but the educated will require a fair amount of re-education to encourage and entice them to re-invent both the curriculum and the methodologies of nature guide training.

Even if such a shift in educational strategies and perspectives is conceived and implemented, the concern that the currently high standards of nature guiding will be severely compromised is a very real and reasonable one.

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1 Int. 15, Clive Walker, p.7 L30
2 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
3 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
4 Int. 9, Manzi Spruit, p.10 L3
5 Int. 9, Manzi Spruit, p.13 L6
6 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
7 Int. 7 Lex Hes, p.2 line 7, (see ch.1 ref.82 for long version of quote)
8 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
9 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
10 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
11 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
12 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
13 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
14 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
15 Int.7, Lex Hes, p. 13 L12
16 Int. 11 Rangani Tsanwani, p.14 L14

17 Int. 11 Rangani Tsanwani, p.16 L24
18 Int. 11 Rangani Tsanwani, p.16 L32
19 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
20 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
21 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
22 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
23 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
24 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
25 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
26 E-mail from FGASA CEO Grant Hine responding to questions on FGASA's history
27 Int. 2 Warren Bekker, p.14 L8
28 Int. 3 Dr. Alex Coutts, p.16 L13
29 Int. 6, Jaco Badenhorst, p.11 L17
30 Int. 9, Manzi Spruit, p. 13 L19
31 Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.16 L13
32 Int. 11 Rangani Tsanwani, p.15 L7
33 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.10 L27
34 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.9 L16
35 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.??
36 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.16 L37
37 Int. 11 Rangani Tsanwani, p.16 L12
38 Int. 11 Rangani Tsanwani, p.12 L17
39 Int. 11 Rangani Tsanwani, p.13 L2
40 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.14 L12
41 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.6 L26
42 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p. 5 L29
43 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.18 L20
44 Lex Hes, Int. 7, p.10 L22
45 Lex Hes, Int. 7, p.12 L14
46 Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.11 L2
47 Int. 5 Graham Vercueil p.10 L12
48 Lex Hes, Int. 7, p.12 L22
49 Int. 9, Manzi Spruit, p.12 L22
50 Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.1 L38
51 Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.2 L17
52 Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.2 L38 (see C2R87)
53 Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.3 L32
54 Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.11 L25 (seeC2R31)
55 These statisitics are my personal recollection. They may not be exact but are certainly in the correct order percentage wise.
56 David Bunn, personal comment.
57 Lex Hes, Int. 7, p.3 L17
58 I can vouch for this personally having been the manager and stand-in secretary of Environmental Training group- and having received R4 000-00 per month for this often more than full-time job.
59 Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.13 L31
60 Int. 5 Graham Vercueil p.9 L12
61 Webster, Des Madikwe Game Reserve: An Introduction, unpublished document prepared by Des Webster for Honeyguide Trails cc., p.1
62 *ibid.*, p.1
63 Int. 12 "Dikgang" p.18 L31
64 Int. 14 Moremi Keabetswe p.8 L24
65 Int. 14 Moremi Keabetswe p.2 L4
66 Int. 13 Ignatius Bogatsu p.13 L13
67 Personal comment from Moremi Keabetswe, not recorded in taped interview

[68] David Bunn, personal comment. This suggestion was supported strongly by several other clients who have visited a range of different camps at Madikwe in the past 5 years.

[69] Int. 5 Graham Vercueil, p. 5 L20

[70] Fig, David and Cock, Jacky From Colonial to community based conservation: environmental justice and the National Parks in South Africa, 1999

[71] Table obtained through e-mail correspondence from Dr. Freek Venter

[72] E-mail correspondence from Dr. Freek Venter

[73] Int. 7 Lex Hes p. 9 L.15.

[74] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.11 L.27

[75] Int. 5 Graham Vercueil p.6 L20

[76] Int. 7 Lex Hes p.9 L30

[77] Int. 7 Lex Hes p.9 L38

[78] Int. 10 Moloko Phaho p.16 L19

[79] Int. 8 Mike English p.6 L32

[80] Int. 14 Moremi Keabetswe p.3 L3

[81] Int. 2 Warren Bekker p.10 L21

[82] Int. 5 Graham Vercueil p.7 L35

[83] Int. 7 Lex Hes p.12 L1

[84] George Orwell, Animal Farm, Longmans, London, 1964.

[85] Int. 10 Moloko Phaho p.7 L15

[86] Int.11 Rangani Tsanwani, p.9 L2

[87] Int. 14 Moremi Keabetswe p.20 L12

[88] Int. 14 Moremi Keabetswe p.19 L37

[89] Int. 4 Sicelo Mbatha p.12 L12

[90] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.5 L8

[91] Int. 7 Lex Hes p.11 L25

[92] Int. 7 Lex Hes p.10 L16

[93] Int. 6 Jaco Badenhorst p.8 L27

[94] Int. 6 Jaco Badenhorst p.10 L27

[95] Int. 6 Jaco Badenhorst p.11 L12

[96] Int. 8 Mike English p.6 L21

[97] Walker, Clive, Signs of the Wild, Struik, Cape Town, 1996.

[98] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.4 L18

[99] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.14 L5

[100] Int. 15 Clive Walker, p.17 L12

[101] Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.10 L37

[102] Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.11 L26

[103] Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.16 L3

[104] Int. 3 Alex Coutts, p.16 L16

[105] Int. 12 "Dikgang", p.5 L17

# TRANSFORMATION OF THE MYTH AND THE MYTH OF TRANSFORMATION: OVER 100 YEARS OF GUIDING IN SOUTH AFRICAN GAME RESERVES



unpredictability

## Chapter 5 - The Trail Ahead (from 2007 into the Future)

## CHAPTER 5 - THE TRAIL AHEAD (FROM 2007 INTO THE FUTURE)

The previous four chapters were tied to historical periods, but also expanded some of the themes which emerge from the respective periods over a broader time frame. The fourth chapter concluded with the suggestion that enormous challenges face both learners and trainers in the nature-guiding sector. The fifth chapter is an analysis of effective forces which can influence the guiding industry. In general these forces have an ideological or ethical motivation and result in often competing strategic manipulations of the industry.

### The Limits of Tolerance- Shelford's Law reaches the Lawn of the Lodge

Shelford's Law of Tolerance is one of the fundamental laws of ecology:

> Organisms are subject not only to one variable at a time but to a whole suite of constantly changing environmental variables. In any one place (habitat) the set of conditions that comprise the organism's niche must remain within acceptable limits for the organism to survive. If the intensity of any one of these variables exceeds the limits of tolerance the organism will die…
>
> Organisms have a wide range of tolerance for some factors and a narrow range for others. Organisms with wide ranges of tolerance will be widely distributed, and generalists. When the conditions are sub-optimal for a species with respect to one ecological factor, then the limits of tolerance may be reduced with respect to other factors. Organisms are very often living under conditions that are sub-optimal with respect to some factors and optimal for others.[1]

Most lodge owners would be pleased if one of their guides could explain Shelford's Law of Tolerance as soon as they set out with a group of clients into the bush. Many lodge owners would be displeased if their guides were to turn around and apply Shelford's Law to their employers. The reality is that many lodge owners have an intrinsic grasp of Shelford's principals, and keep their guides in the sub-optimal zone with respect to quite a few of the conditions of their employment and accommodation.

Predictably the primary key variables are space, time and money. The secondary key variables could be lumped together as “perks”.

The spatial parameters of guiding are particularly interesting. Almost without exception, guides have at their disposal far larger tracts of land than they will ever own in their lives. They may easily labour under the delusion that they are free to roam wherever they please. (As an overland guide, and despite the fact that I had to adhere to a strict itinerary, it was hard to resist the fantasy that I could go anywhere in Africa whenever I felt like it). If guides do not trespass on neighbouring properties, lodge owners or managers will be slow to disabuse them of this illusion, as it is part of the illusion of self-deification. When the conduct of the guide with respect to land use is reasonably ethical, costs the lodge owner little, and benefits them much, because the guides positive and “free” state of mind is readily communicated to the clients, management will not wish to burst their bubble. It is this shared illusion for which clients pay the sometimes enormous sums that they do to “go on safari”.

The guide’s physical (rather than imagined) spatial reality is normally a very different story. Almost invariably guides are also tenants of their lodge, and their rooming fees are cleverly disguised from them, being affected in the form of low salaries. The guide’s quarters are usually too small to be really comfortable, and so they are not encouraged to amass possessions, even those, like books, which would contribute to the quality of their service. As they do not own their living spaces, guides will do little to enhance their living quarters, and their level of privacy is severely compromised. They are usually

required not to have a spouse, and if in those rare instances where a spouse is allowed, she will not take effort to improve the living space because she is a co-tenant at best, and hardly ever a co-owner. A female guide being allowed a resident spouse is an even rarer circumstance, but couples who both work in lodge management are relatively common. A state of non-ownership of living space is usually tolerable to individuals in their 20s or early 30s, but is one of the key factors which precipitates the exodus of individuals who are older than this from the guiding industry.

The above generalization accurately describes the conditions of most guides in the Kruger National Park. According to Rangani Tsanwani at Shingwedzi:

> Our living conditions...we do have some houses, but it depends on the camp that you are working on. Some have got better accommodation, some they don't have better accommodation at all. Most of the guides they stay in a tent… you can be a guide and married, but in some camps you can't stay with your wife, because some share the accommodation so you don't have that much private life.[2]

Graham Vercueil stressed this as one of the major factors of attrition of good guides:

> There are quite a few different things. I think one part of it is there's this little microcosm of a society that you end up living in. You can't choose your friends or neighbours. That [is it] in a nutshell. And I think this industry also tends not to really cater to a long term guide. The conditions are such that there's only a handful of guides who override living in a tiny house without much storage space and not a great financial package and still persevere year on year and have their own personal growth agenda that they somehow are turning to. But I think on the whole I feel guides are not well catered for. Their packages and their accommodation situations on the whole are pretty sub-standard. In the long run they're not sustainable. We're expecting mature, competent individuals who come from fairly complex backgrounds to move into tiny communities with tiny accommodations and actually make a life and be content to stay there for years on end, and it's not going to work.[3]

Time is the second bone of contention. Guides who are on duty typically have to wake up at 05h00 or earlier every day to be ready to go on a walk or game drive at 05h30 or 06h00 and this is typically a 3 to 4 hour activity. Most often they are off in the middle of

the day, but this time can get taken up by talking to clients, management or other guides, and they need time to eat lunch. The afternoon activity can typically also take 3-4 hours, and afterwards they need to clean rifles, land-rovers and other equipment. This is borne out by the following example of a typical day (and week) by Ignatius Bogatsu:

> I think they'd probably be talking about the old days of tourism where lodges would have clients on weekends- today it's a completely different subject, you've got a full house from Monday to Monday, and if you are operating every day from Monday to Monday from 5 o'clock in the morning, going to bed at 12 or 1 at night, in three weeks time you definitely do need a break…I'll tell you this for a fact. I am a head guide at Madikwe River Lodge, and I start my day if I have clients to take out from 4-30 in the morning and I am always about 11 to12, or between 11 and 1 in bed, so if I'm not doing anything particular during the day, I really appreciate my lunch-hour nap, and if I don't get that in a weeks time, I promise you, you don't want to be on my wrong side.[4]

Bogatsu went on to describe his mood and possible actions during difficult times:

> …let me start of by saying, first of all you contain your professionalism, and you try to remember what your reason is being at the lodge you're working at. You do get to a point where you just want to hit somebody in the face with your fist, but instead you go and hit a door or a wall, where the guests cannot see that, and you still come out with a smile.[5]

Moremi Keabetswe another one of the promising and relatively young guides at Madikwe expressed a similar sense of guiding being stressful at times due to a shortage of rest time, or time off, or both:

> I always find it so difficult for me, if I arrive from my office I always feel so energetic, I always know that the first clients I am going to have will receive the best of [my attention and service] but once I am nearer to my [due leave period] I am exhausted that I sometimes just do some patch ups, because then it doesn't come out in me, I am so tired, I am trying my level best, but it doesn't come out.[6]

Good guides also spend time researching information, and in some cases they are not allowed to sit in the guest's lounge. Even when they are, this is hardly an advantage for undisturbed study, as it very often leads to clients unscrupulously (or unthinkingly) sucking up the guide's paltry remaining free time by engaging them in conversation, from

which the guide is not really at liberty to disengage. So, many guides study in their rooms, although they do not always have a suitable desk and chair. Often weekends are the busiest time, and time off compensation tends to be for one day a week. So guides get about four days off in a month in the Kruger National Park, and some of the private reserves are not much better. Time off is not necessarily resting time, as many guides travel to often distant destinations to visit families or go shopping for supplies or both, with the common consequence that they do not get enough rest.

The result of this, according to Ian Player is that guides get "burnout":

> …if you are going to be a good guide, and I tell you what, there are not a hell of a lot of good guides, who last. I mean they go like stars in the firmament. They go, because they get burnout…I know, I know it so well…I can walk into a situation, a guiding situation, and I can tell you, you must take that person off or take that one off. They've maybe got a month, or six months.[7]

According to Dr. Player the phenomenon of "burnout" was discussed extensively in a book by John Sanford. It was put to Player that Adriaan Louw (the chairman of FGASA at time of the interview) had examined the figures of "incidents" in the Kruger Park, and had come to the conclusion that almost all the trails rangers who shot animals for client protection on trails had been guiding continuously for longer, and often much longer, than three or four years, and so were suffering from trails "burnout". Player responded:

> I would say he's [Louw is] dead right. Getting rid of some of that frustration. If you probably looked at them, they were probably hoping they could shoot some of the people! [*Laughs*][8]

It should be pointed out that the conditions of guides in terms of time off amongst Kruger Park Trails Company are better than amongst permanent Kruger staff. The reality is that amongst the diligent, and particularly the diligent who are paid by assignment (rather than at a flat rate as permanent Kruger staff are) the temptation to work as much as

possible is great, because more work means more money (even if it does mean more stress).

This leads of course to the million dollar question of filthy lucre. Salaries of game rangers were traditionally modest, and this needs to form the core background discussion, and put the contemporary situation in perspective. Mike English recalls that:

> I know that when I first started, I started at R180-00 a month…we got about a R15-00 a month climatic allowance, which everybody got, but because I wanted this job, I was happy to take it. We were dedicated. There were no fixed hours. We used to be at work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and if a fire breaks out on the weekend, boy, you would go to the fire. If you left your section you had to notify your neighbour and your senior that you weren't going to be there, it's an emergency, otherwise you'd take leave and you'd have to arrange for somebody to come and check on your section. So, to work for that amount of money, we were dedicated. I don't know what the salaries are like these days, but I would still stay that for the responsibility that a ranger has, they're not getting the package that they deserve, and I would say that the responsibility that guys taking people out on trails, the same could possibly apply. It's a big responsibility, [having] eight people's lives are in your hands. If everything goes well- fine enough, but if somebody gets chomped- "ja, he was negligent"- you'll get that. Nobody ever knows…and nobody ever knows the strain somehow you may be put under- you get a difficult group- and you're trying to show them the best, and you may be inclined maybe to do a little something that you shouldn't do, and an animal charges you. But you take responsibility, and I don't [think] the guides are necessarily adequately rewarded. We certainly worked for little, because we were dedicated.
> But then on the other hand, if they're going to up the salary then your work loads going to perhaps increase, your responsibility, your liability must be upped to a certain standard. The one hand washes the other.[9]

In private lodges what goes in the front pocket (salary) is quite often smaller than what goes in the back pocket (tips).[*]

[*] An overland guide in 1997-1999 was being paid (and taxed) on a salary of about R 4 000-00 per month, but quite often was making an additional R6 000-00 per months in tips, which was invariably cash. There is hardly a guide in the country honest enough to declare this income (for tax purposes). At the same time, my living expenses were negligible, so most of this money went into the bank. This was not exceptional and some guides claimed to regularly reap tips much higher than this.

Lex Hes noted the phenomenon of the more extreme back pocket- front pocket ratio is common on the private reserves, and it impacts negatively on the availability of competent guide trainers:

> ...it's a very difficult one to answer, because if you have a look at guides that work in up-market game lodges who might be being paid a mediocre salary, they are actually earning a huge amount of tax free money in the form of tips. And so they end up making a lot of money in that way. I know of guides that are earning ten to twenty thousand rand a month on a salary of two or three thousand rand a month. So they have the potential to make a good living in the right places that are busy. But the problem comes when there are game lodges that are sort of not quite there yet and don't have a lot of clients. And there the guide is being paid a mediocre salary, and because there are not a lot of clients he's not getting the tips, so he's not really able to make headway, and it's not right that a guide who has all this knowledge and qualifications is being paid such a mediocre salary. The employers' actually taking advantage of the situation and making the clients pay the guide's salary, when in fact the employer should be paying the guide's salary, not the clients. And then I see it also now that I'm in my own training business, I see it from another point of view. And that is that when I want to employ a good quality instructor who's had a lot of experience in the guiding industry, I have to go to the game lodges for example, look for experience there and then when I interview the guides, he'll tell me that he's earning twenty thousand rand a month, fifteen of which is tips, and so I have to match that just in terms of salary, because I know that my students are not going to pay him any tips at the end of the course. So it creates a problem for people like myself who's trying to employ quality people to bring, to train people in the industry and to raise the standard of guiding and maintain standards of guiding, and now we can't employ people because we can't afford salaries. So that's a difficult problem.[10]

It is not only guide training companies that are adversely affected by having to compete with a private sector where the tips received by guides are high, but the state run institutions like the Kruger National Park can also be affected through guide attrition. According to Rangani Tsanwani:

> Most of the people go to the private reserves. Some go from there for money. They come to the Kruger Park trying to see what's happening in the Kruger Park, but now they are going back there again…if the salary can become higher. And tips, because people move to the private reserve to get tips. There is a lot of tips in the private sector. [It will help] if they [clients of guides in the Kruger Park] can tip the guides it can be better. [But as the guide] you can't …tell the people to tip you. [But management could take a position encouraging clients to tip guides more]. They do tip us, but it's not like in a private reserve. The salary that are we

> are getting is not that bad. But if we can get increase in January...since I've become a guide we never get increase. Same salary every year.[11]

Guides are aware that reserve owners (especially the private sector, but also to an extent in state reserves) are quite crafty in paying mediocre salaries, in the full knowledge that guides will benefit from tips. Besides Lex Hes, several other guides saw this as a piece of cunning on the part of operators (who benefit by getting their clients to pay most of their guides' salaries) which is bought into by guides (at least in part, if not mainly because for them it represents a golden opportunity for a substantial tax dodge). According to "Dikgang":

> Yes, it's quite a tricky one to say, but what I still do find with the operators is that they will give you a salary that one would say "it's a lousy salary"- maybe that's what they think it should be paid, but we forget that you know they will say "yes, you would get this salary which is not that great, but the tips are good." You know a tip is not a right, it's how the guests feel- they're not forced to tip you, so it's not something that is guaranteed, and I suppose that's where we should be looking at guiding, you know it's a profession, it's not something you do just off the street, overnight, and you say "yes, I'm a guide, I will guide, give me a rifle, give me a vehicle"**…**what I find that in some of the places some guides often wouldn't really treat guests the same- especially if you get somebody from South Africa, that you know, the rand is a little bit weak, that you know that as a South African, someone cannot afford to tip you a thousand rand, whereas you might get somebody from England, or a rich Saudi, that will come and give you six thousand rands worth of tip. Then you know, if you're looking at both parties, you'd rather have a Saudi than having a South African and that's why I think it's unfair, and it's actually the operators that are causing this to happen…ja![12]

Clive Walker thinks it's a disgrace that certain unscrupulous operators seek to take the maximum advantage of people just because they happen to be passionate guides:

> "Oh, he wants to become a trails officer or a field guide, so therefore he'll work for next to nothing." I think the whole system needs to move a step up and realize that this is your front-line troops, they are the ones that actually carry the torch for your organization whether it's a luxury lodge where you do walks or you do guiding.[13]

This message was also strongly emphasized by Grant Hine in the previous chapter (pp.204-205).

Although this thesis does not focus primarily on clients, it is worth noting that tipping formed an integral part of colonialist culture where there was a fine line between patronage and patronization. By and large, Europeans including the British, and to a reasonable extent also Americans, tend to endorse the tipping system, possibly because it allows the tipper to demonstrate their sense of social and economic privilege, and supports the notion that they are contributing to the welfare of those who are not their social equals. Australians and New Zealanders resent the tipping system, because tips are a disguised form of payment which offend their sense of egalitarianism, and their underlying belief in that costs should be "up-front" as is the norm in their home countries.

Besides the three primary factors discussed above (space, time and money) there are also the "perks" (pp.298-301), amounting to tips and other gifts, the opportunity for "no-strings-attached" short-term sexual encounters, and a life where alcohol consumption is the norm, other drugs are sometimes offered or available, and the party never ends.

Tips have already been largely discussed in association with the discussion on salaries above. There may be instances where gratuities taken the form of other types of reward of variable (and in some instances very dubious) ethical levels of acceptability. One of the good perks available to Kruger Park staff is clearly above board and comes from management, and that is that guides have a library of books to which they may add from the camp shop- if they encounter publications which will add to their subject matter knowledge. Rangani Tsanwani indicated that:

> In our camp the camp buy us the book. That's not that much problem if you want to learn further. You can just say I want that book now and you can go to the shop and buy that bird book.[14]

Obviously perks of this kind will be appreciated by diligent guides, although the ethics of using state money to buy guides learning materials may be questioned. From a conservative position, it might be argued that it's a waste of state money to buy guides books when they should be paying for their own. From a progressive position it could be argued that the guides should be given the books to keep, and the money lost on physical materials will be gained through more comprehensive human resource development. Perhaps both of these arguments are a bit extreme, and the Kruger Park management should be commended for taking and appropriate level of care over the intellectual and professional development of the guides.

The reason why perks are mentioned here is that they form that portion of the guide's reward which is usually not formally acknowledged by lodge management, and often not by guides either, but by allowing some amount of "unethical conduct" the industry often bribes the guides into accepting sub-standard packages and conditions.

Should guides accept this deal as a pact with the devil you do know, or should they be working together to claim a better deal?

It would appear that although some black guides think a union would help nature guides, they do not have an active vision of their own role in such an organization. According to Rangani Tsanwani, he would support a guide's union, but:

> It would depend on the union that you're on. I think that's where you can take it from there.[15]

If this seems like a qualified expression of support for a union, "Dikgang" is even less enthusiastic, saying:

> I don't think *toyi-toying* solves anything, but I truly believe that if there's a problem in any field, I don't like talking about a problem, but let's say a challenge, where there's a little bit of a misunderstanding between two parties, that *toyi-toying* doesn't help much- it's all about wasting time. People [especially employers] should be keen to sit down and listen, and I also find guiding a little bit difficult for quite a few people, especially if you look at the hours which we put in behind it. Yes, it's something you love, you know, but at the end of the day, it's a profession, and it's a way of how one is making a living. Looking at the fact that if one is getting ready to get a family, you know, to be a guide, it becomes one of the most difficult things, though it might be something that you love being a passion, but then at some stage it gets in your way of doing some of the things in life, like having a family where you need to have a bit of time with your kids, with your wife and ja! Then I think it's something that we have to re-look at- try to make it work.[16]

It is interesting that the non-union, or even anti-union stance taken by "Dikgang" was even more strongly supported by Ignatius Bogatsu:

> I don't like to talk as such, so being in a union or being in union delegate would definitely not be my piece of bread….That [guides have a range of legitimate grievances] is very true, but since the government has decided to jump on board, I think they are the ones that should be addressing the issues- given the fact that we carry the county's responsibility, image and a whole lot of things when we do take these clients out there, they should really be making an effort of making sure we are looked after by lodge owners, and all these companies that employ field guides….[the THETA / NQF system adequately addresses the current situation]... If you go back 20 years, I am sure you were pretty much aware, if not in the industry then, there's a lot of things that have disappeared, like people coming from the army, perceiving themselves as potential guides, because they have been in the jungle or the bush for three years patrolling the border between Moçambique or whatever, you know your true cowboys then, those things are gone, gone with the days. I think yes, THETA is playing a major in the transformation.[17]

It is difficult to decide whether this level of confidence in the state and the state system should be applauded for its positive tone or grilled for its naivety. What this does suggest is that the disinclination to the formation of a union is obviously not limited to white

guides and appears to be a widespread phenomenon amongst nature guides, and is possibly related to the typical guide's sense of pride, independence and self-sufficiency. I believe that this collective position may become more of a burden and less of an asset to guides as social systems continue to evolve towards favouring either the wealthy or the socially or politically mobilized workers.

Lex Hes is convinced that the lack of mass action is a function of indifference and ultimate acceptance of the status quo:

> Yes, there's not enough cohesion in the whole thing. I believe that those kind of things will happen by means of natural attrition. That is, if everybody feels strongly enough about something they will make it happen. And at the moment I don't think anybody feels that strongly about various issues that we might be discussing…[there are some problems in the guiding industry] but look, I think there *is* a career path. You can develop as a guide. Alright, you might not end up as a guide, but there is a career path that can be followed. You start off as a learner guide, become a guide, become the head guide, become manager of the game lodge, and then maybe go into marketing as you develop and grow, pretty much like other companies where you get moved up into different areas, and you might end up in a different part of the business from where you started. The problem I think that guiding has, is that many guides see it as a temporary thing. In the beginning they'll say this is something I'm definitely not doing as a career. But it's something I love doing and I'd like to do it for five years and then when I've done my five years I'll go back to do accountancy and get a job, become a partner in an accountancy firm or …go back to the family farm or join the family business or whatever.[18]

Lex Hes remains positive that there is a prospective career path for dedicated individuals like himself, but does not go so far as to conclude that the industry is healthy or is acceptable.

> I just think that one of the reasons there is a lot of staff turnover is that the salaries they are paid are small, they may be getting good tips, but the tips are unreliable. It goes up and down, so they can't make long term financial decisions like for example putting money down, and paying off a bond at five grand a month, because they don't know that next month they are going to have that five grand. So a lot of guys are finding this is not a way to make a living and make a long term career of this. I need a reliable salary and if I'm not going to get it guiding

> then I've got to go and do something else…[also] you want a home to settle down to and call your own…you end up building up a name for yourself, and particularly if you are able, like I was lucky enough to publish a few books and so get my name out there. Then you become so well known that you become in demand, and people are happy to pay for the services. And I think that's one of the career paths that one can take.[19]

This is how Lex Hex did it, and clearly he believes that with a similar approach and resolve anyone can have a career in the guiding industry, though it will never be an easy one. Certainly, he is one man who can be commended, because (somewhat against the odds) he managed to move up from the bottom of the food chain. Hex was an exceptionally talented field guide, writer, photographer and trainer but his success owes in no small part to dedication and continuous hard work.

Rangani Tsanawani supports the idea of joining a trade union on principal, but he clearly perceives that a union would be a pre-existent entity and not shaped by his input. He does not imagine that unfair dismissals are a significant threat to guides working in the Kruger National Park, which indicates a generally healthy state of HR Management. He was not unduly dissatisfied with getting four days off per month, despite having a wife and child in Thohoyandou whom he only sees once a month. However, the enforced separation is a cause of anxiety:

> I do worry, but I've got no option. She can't have a job in the Kruger National Park. She's a teacher outside there. So it's not easy for me to live with her. Then I just live like our own fathers who were just staying in Jo'burg, spending the whole year there, coming back once in a month…. So it's not that easy. The salary we are getting you can't support the child and wife. Then you can't stop them working. It's better for her to work so that we can able to raise our child together. So we live separately.[20]

Ultimately relatively low salaries, living separate lives and the concern over the safety of his wife and child, and the resultant anxiety over potential marital infidelity on either side

are matters of greatest concern. For Rangani Tsanawani, and no doubt many guides in a similar predicament, these are typical problems of being a nature guide.

Yet, the idea of belonging to a union that might negotiate to improve these conditions appears surprisingly less appealing to him than an outside observer may have imagined. The success and failure of contemporary South Africa is that despite a fairly radical process of democratization the country has retained an essentially capitalist free-market based economy. Most nature guides are passionate about what they do and have internalized a high service ethic and will usually willingly do most things that managers or clients ask of them. Guides are aware that they are exploited, sometimes seriously. They feel powerless to rectify this, and to some extent, this is justified. They are easily marginalized and retained in isolated social communities, because their area of operation is necessarily one where human population density is low. Although guides have learnt face-to-face inter-personal and radio communication skills, they are weak in networking with each other in a potentially meaningful and socially and politically effective way. Generally, they do not relate well to electronic forms of communication such as e-mail and the internet. In addition they tend to be conservative, and their value systems are often deeply engrained. Most guides are not introverts, yet they often lack critical opposition towards the authoritarian, patriarchal, militaristic and capitalist system which they find themselves in. They do not believe in rocking the boat, and they feel they will lose more by taking on the system than they will gain by co-operating with it, and are generally disinclined to unionize. Some guides believe that the government and the industry will look after their interests, but the reality on the ground is that it is extremely unlikely that this will happen to any meaningful extent. One would imagine that a group

of people who had grasped the lessons of Charles Darwin would be better exemplars of survival of the fittest- but perhaps in their niche in the tourism industry those who co-operate are ultimately fitter than those who struggle against authority.

**Service Standards and Ethics**

Perhaps it is unethical to ask leading questions about ethics. Yet, the whole area of ethics is a fairly abstract one, so interviews with non-English speakers tended to require leading questions. Hopefully, the subjects were nevertheless given a reasonable degree of autonomy in defining the key questions of nature guides' ethics. A general thread seemed to be that there were two areas of ethics which dominated nature guides' thinking, namely environmental ethics and human or inter-personal ethics. The first group of responses included below are those which clearly made this distinction and indicated self-awareness of the distinction. The second group of comments discussed will be those which focused primarily on environmental ethics. The third group focused on human or inter-personal ethics.

Graham Vercueil, one of the very sophisticated and articulate subjects to be included in this study separated consecutive comments (without prompting) to deal with environmental ethics, then with interpersonal ethics, and finally with a consideration of the relationship between environmental and inter-personal issues and their relative values:

> I think in private game reserves, one of the sort of eco ethical problems is that guides are under enormous pressure to deliver and end up putting unnatural pressure on the environment with off road driving.

> And ethical pressures? I think there's a certain weirdness in the service industry, in the guiding industry where young people who have got opinions, and are developing opinions, simply have to be agreeable all the time. And if you're going to be agreeable seven days a week for six or eight weeks in a row every day with people you simply don't agree with, there's an imbalance that a lot of guides really battle to reconcile. As far as ethical dilemmas are concerned I don't know if that addresses that.
>
> And the fact that we spin our heads around about recycling plastic bottles and the odd cans and things that go on here and being ecologically sensitive, but the very airline that brings someone here is doing a thousand times more ecological damage than your recycled cans are doing good. And this anomaly of being eco sensitive lodge design and building when in fact the most eco sensitive thing we can do here is employ people so that they don't come and hunt the land out and turn it to peasant farming. So that's the hugest thing we can do is keep peasants off the land and not get petty about tiny ecological issues which drive people mad and use up so many hours in a day inconsequentially.[21]

The first comment above describes a fairly recurrent theme, and demonstrates how inextricably interpersonal and environmental ethics are tied up to each other. It appears that guides have learnt, or become conditioned to believe, that clients think that the best experiences of animals occur when they have had a very close sighting of the animals, and this will lead to financial reward for the guide in the form of tips. So whilst the guides know that they should not drive a vehicle over sensitive vegetation or habitat, and they should similarly not disturb animals by driving into their comfort zones, they are still capable of over-riding this knowledge for clients who may (but usually do not) know better, because their fear of not satisfying the client is greater than their concern for the environment. It is worth commenting that this is a microcosmic representation of the current world environmental crisis where greed for short-term gain overwhelms concern for long term loss, damage or destruction, elsewhere described as "the tragedy of the commons".[22] Moloko Phaho indicated that this ultimately leads to the conditioning of animals so that their comfort zones were greatly reduced- allowing humans (especially within vehicles) to approach to within very small distances of them:

> In Kruger these are real animals, and in private reserves I think those animals are tame. I don't really enjoy those, because other people they like to see real things, not tamed ones.[23]

When challenged, Phaho immediately conceded that there is a difference between the term "tamed" and the term "habituated". More correctly, he intended to say that the animals in some parts of some of the private reserves are more habituated to human presence than most of the animals in most parts of the Kruger Park. Even this is a crude generalization as it is possible to approach impala, bushbuck, vervet monkeys and tree squirrels within certain Kruger Park camps to within very short distances as they spend more time within the camps than outside them. Spotted hyaena regularly approach the fence at the camping ground at Satara, and this can only be because the majority of campers feed them bones and *braai* left-overs which they routinely deliberately toss through the fence despite signs from management imploring them to desist from this action. The informed minority do not challenge these practices often enough, so humans condone misbehaviour by other humans, who in turn encourage misbehaviour by animals. (The fact that a child's hand has not been bitten off by a spotted hyaena at this camp's fence remains something of a miracle to me!) Nevertheless, the point Moloko Phaho was making was that in the private reserves, where people are guided and off-road driving is conditionally permitted, the limits have been stretched and even animals living far from camps are used to the approach within short distances of vehicles and have lost their natural sense of alarm at these situations. The result is that

> …it's all about professionalism and then you don't do it for money, you do it for the love of it. I think it's good here in Kruger than in private reserves….it's all about money because anything that you do is tips, tips, tips. But here you get a tip, you don't get a tip, it's normal to you. You do it for the love of it.[24]

This phenomenon is wide-spread throughout the country and the region and probably

throughout the country. Moremi Keabetswe said

> Your clients cannot see those animals clearly, and then you think you haven't done your work by not showing them clearly, you end up having to push them out the bush, which is not good to them and to the environment. It's not ethical conduct, yeah. But if we are not money-oriented we could have done it much better. Yeah, and I don't know what to say more on that. It's like everybody is doing it and you are supposed not to….You have to do it, yes. The other thing is, if you do it, if one park guide do it and you think you can't do it, the clients will look at you and say you don't want to do it for them. So you end up having to do it even though you know it's the wrong thing you're doing.[25]

It could be argued that the loss of a few rare plants, some slightly degraded seep-lines and a few leopards whose tails you could almost touch, hardly collectively constitute an environmental disaster, but their knock-on effects to clients' attitudes are much greater. People will think "we met a nature guide and he wasn't too concerned about petty effects on the environment, so why should we care about the environment?" If guides desisted from this behaviour and educated people to the purpose of their restraint, and the global effect of human impact on the environment, then nature guiding could be a field which led to environmental education and change. Instead, it is a field that is coerced and completely compatible with capitalist consumerism, and is participating willingly and knowingly in degrading the environment in a slow but certain fashion, and rubber-stamping the conduct of people whose degradation is far more rapid and effective.

It was quite clear that certain guides are very aware of environmental ethics, almost to the exclusion of interpersonal ethics. A good example of this was Warren Bekker, who said

> The ethics, the values, I think will be instilled upon the management structure of the reserve, and the management philosophy of the reserve. If I go to a reserve, and I see that, they look after their management, and they look after their bush encroachment and they actually make valuable steps and contributions to ensuring that the land itself, and the animals and everything to deal with that piece of land is managed properly, then I will try to add to that as much as I can. If I go to a reserve, and from the top, there are no values and there are no ethics, then it's not

> going to inspire me at all, first of all to work for a place like that. So I think you can to certain degree teach certain values and ethics, but it needs to come down from top management as a buy-in.[26]

"Dikgang" who works at Madikwe had the opportunity to visit a lodge in Limpopo and expressed some concern about his experience as a client

> I actually went to Kruger National Park, the northern sector, at Pafuri, last year at some stage overnight- I won't mention the name of the lodge nor the guide, but what I saw there, was that we went off on a game drive and basically the guide was doing 50 kph on a game drive and wasn't really stopping for general game- he wanted to chase big game. I don't really think it's all about guiding- guiding is about those little things that we're ignoring that makes guiding more special, and more interesting to the people because they can watch television from Europe, people can watch television from wherever in the world, and see what we've got here, but the taste, the smell, the sound, the feeling of being there is not there on television, so that's what we need to implement, and show that to the people that we get as guests.[27]

Clearly, despite facing the same socio-economic pressures described by Moremi Keabetswe above, "Dikgang" remains passionate about trying to display ethical conduct during guided experiences:

> Not being sensitive to the environment, I think that's the main thing. What we are trying to do is that we, us as guides, we are trying to push our pocket- getting too close to the animals, one thinking that you'll be impressing, but we tend to forget that we live here in the bush, this is our life, this is where we live. We see these animals on a daily basis- yes, we do understand their behaviour, but- that's one thing we do wrong and also another thing we do is not being more informative. If I'm not mistaken, chamaeleons are still an endangered species and if you look at their main threat, it's us as guides, because we do not understand their anatomy, and the sort of philosophy, and the behaviour of a chamaeleon…For instance I have seen one of my colleagues, I am sorry to say this, showing clients a chameleon, and he picked it up at night, so we came around the corner and there he was showing his guests a chameleon on his hand. You know and he wanted to give it to me, and I said "No, I am scared of a chamaeleon because of traditional beliefs" of which if one has to look at chamaeleons how they behave, they're not nocturnal, at night they kind of like hibernate it's called *proba*[†], it's the same principal as hibernation, but just overnight. So to touch a chameleon at night- your hands are warm, so you literally confuse the animal because you warm it up and that triggers its metabolism and it starts wanting to hide, because you're using

[†] This is my first and only contact with this term, and I have been unable to confirm its correctness, or otherwise.

> a spotlight that's attracting moths and flies and whatever and the time you leave, then the poor animal can't see anymore, it's confused now it's been warmed, now its getting cold again and we forget there's owls, there's some of the small cats, civet, serval that will pick this chamaeleon, there's also snakes that are active that time of the night and I think there, we're playing the most important role of being wrong…ja! So it's all about sensitivity.[28]

Human or inter-personal ethics are fraught with difficulties because they are so complex and subjective. The failure of young black guides to conduct sophisticated conversations and interactions with international clients was described above (pp.258-267) as an issue related to language and culture, but Mike English feels that there is an ethical component as well:

> To get back to the black guys, they are at a disadvantage, but there again too, there should be facilities where they can get this training. The biggest problem that I find with the black guides is that they become over familiar. You as a guide know that you don't become familiar…friendly, but not familiar, because all of a sudden you find it doesn't work. You've got to keep a pose…[29]

It would be easy to dismiss Mike English as a racist, but from the context of the interview, he is clearly trying to helpful by identifying an area of concern, and the problem described is clearly a question of exposure, rather than an implied innate failure of black people. There are certainly some young black guides such as Ignatius Bogatsu who are aware of the complexity and subtlety required in relating to international clients

> Being unable to tolerate each other's culture, I think, and the failure to try to understand where other people come from, especially once you're in a group on a vehicle, or in a group out there guiding, being able to tolerate another guide with their short-tempered [or] whatever misfortun[ate characteristic]. People do have their own skeletons, but if you do learn to tolerate and understand and help each other, that would be a thing of the past.[30]

A clear understanding of the client's context and level of experience and knowledge of natural history and local culture is a vital skill:

> **…**as a guide, you have to establish your client's need, their expectations, and you work around that. I mean you don't want to have somebody that's been on game drives- 145 game drives and then you still take them through the basics of a first-

> timer, explaining what a wildebeest is and what it does and doesn't do. So, if you have got a guideline of what your clients needs and expectations are, you work around that and you have got that persons needs and expectations met and fulfilled, then…that's what I try and encourage my guides to work around.[31]

Whilst the ability to assess clients as described above, the more sophisticated nature guide should also always have a well-developed level of introspection:

> Once again it goes down to your personal attributes, I think, and I always reflect back to why I am here, and what my role is and whenever I am given a task I make sure that I do it to my fullest ability and I think that's why I am where I am today, and I'm working harder to go much further, making it myself as a manager in the near future and I hope it all works out for me.[32]

Whilst it is understandable that nature guides may feel they deserve a higher salary (see pp.276 & 281-89), they also need to show a mature and balanced attitude to the non-receipt of tips, as these are a bonus and should not be thought of as a right:

> Yes, sometimes you, you, I think I will appreciate it for words say a lot; "thank you a lot, you did a very good job for me" and then I will appreciate that more than getting some money because you find that you got a client who is quite rich, he didn't appreciate what you did but the fact that he can give you money, he just give it out and then you, ya so! I think I appreciate both, even if he gives me something I'll appreciate it, but if he does not give me something, but says it out I will also appreciate the fact that I done something worthwhile.[33]

Similarly, it is commonly felt that, it is expected and often advantageous to the relationship to have the odd drink with clients, but the frequency of alcoholic tendencies especially amongst guides in their twenties is a matter of concern to many (discussed on pp.111 & 112 above). Control over alcohol consumption is thus a huge asset to a guide in the nature guiding industry:

> I would say, to me I'll say, you are welcome to do that but you can only do it when you are hosting a client for dinner and then you must have a limit because once you get drunk, you'll end up saying things you're not supposed to be saying and then you can also get drunk and the next day you're on a hangover and then you're supposed to be sober minded to take a game drive and then it's not going to be looking good.[34]

It does need to be stressed (as Graham Vercueil did on p.278 above) that whilst a mature

and balanced outlook is a prerequisite for a successful nature guide, it is very important that managers in the nature guiding industry recognize the industry's capacity to produce or enhance alcoholism, and take positive steps to try and help guides who show a tendency towards drinking problems.

On the surface, it is bizarre to suggest that ethics are possibly innate, but the majority of more experienced guides began from the premise that components of ethics may not need to be "learned". According to Lex Hes :

> I think there are many aspects you can teach, yes. Certainly, like the sensitivity aspects and using the things as examples, but I think in the end you're right when you ask that question. What you're saying in other words is that many of these aspects are just inbred in a person and you have those kind of people. And I think you're right there, unless you are that type of person open to those ideas of sensitivity you will not end up being a very good guide. But I certainly do think, especially with the young people, we're dealing with a lot of young people in our training programs and they are open to ideas all the time. They're still new and their minds are being molded, so when you're training young people I think you can influence them and especially inspire them. If you take them from the city environment for example and put them in a bush camp for 28 days I think that can change the views of a lot of people. That can definitely inspire them. We've had many examples of that kind of thing where by putting them into the environment and doing the right kind of training you inspire them to become more sensitive and more ethical and so on. So I think it's a bit of both [innate and learned].[35]

The extension of this would be that although ethics must be learned at times a certain amount of unlearning must take place in order to revise or alter the ethics of an older or more established guide. Clive Walker responded that:

> Yes, I do believe that…you know there's that old adage that you can't teach an old dog new tricks…I don't know, I think I've been taught a lot of lessons…and I'm an old dog [*laughs*]…yes, I do believe you can and a wilderness experience can do that- it can bring out the most amazing responses in people, once they're exposed to this. That's what guiding is all about. Guiding is not just about showing people elephants, it's about what is your attitude towards life, your attitude towards responsibility- whether you remain a bank manager for the rest of your life, but once a year you go on a wilderness trail. That wilderness trail teaches you other things, as a result of the example set by that guide.[36]

The conclusion offered by these two veterans- with strong concurrence across all the subjects responding to this question- is that people (guides or clients) are always able to learn, but there is a sense that younger people are more open and impressionable, and that older people are consistently less open. Both agree that people never completely loose their capacity or willingness to receive new information or take on new perspectives.

**Khaki Fever: Invisible Pheromones or a Calculated Formula?**

Perhaps one of the most unique and contentious areas around guiding is the phenomenon called "khaki fever": the evident relatively high occurrence of sexual attraction between guides and their clients, compared to other professions. "Dikgang" felt that women were sensitive to the small and subtle components of nature to a greater extent than men, so the guide's ability to focus on these areas may be attractive to some women

> I wouldn't say that ["khaki fever" is personally a relevant phenomenon], because I am wearing a jean shirt [blue denim][*laughs*], but what I find is, you know, people get very emotional, and they get way deep into nature, depending on how you sell the product as well. I think you find ladies being more interested, not in animals as such, but getting more into plants, looking at the insect life, looking at the flowers, and they get more interested in it and khaki fever...I suppose, yes, a little bit of it, but not that much![37]

Ignatius Bogatsu was convinced that it is a very real phenomenon though he perceived the phenomenon as benign, natural and innocent:

> Well, it's a subject that cannot be argued, it does happen, although on a professional level you cannot let it show, but it does happen. I have known a few guides over the years that are now married to the then clients when they did meet them and they are now husband and wife, and have families and all, that you cannot, you don't know where your future lies, and you cannot really forbid your

> feelings towards someone who you are really convinced is your future soul mate.[38]

Graham Vercueil agreed that "khaki fever" is a very real phenomenon, but felt similarly that in his experience it led to relationships that were sustainable, supportable and sincere:

> Oh boy! Yes, I think that thing exists. I think it's this whole...yes, I think "khaki fever" is a simple thing of a lot of people coming out of environments where they are faced with the mundane and the drab and drudgery of modern life. And then they're faced with outdoor, vibrant, independent people with open land rovers, rifles and a tan. And who are happy to seem to be getting lost at night off roads, and they know the stars, and they're happy to get rained on, and they smile when everything seems to be going bad, and there's something naturally appealing about it. It's not any more complicated than that. But it's evident. Look it worked for me [*laughs and shows his wedding ring*].[39]

So the understanding that "khaki fever" leads to short term attraction between (predominantly male) guides and (predominantly female) clients is not universally conceded by guides, but it is also not completely denied. Peter Mills described guiding as "the soft end of the porn industry"[40] and guides have been described as "the last of the gigolos"[41], but it is quite clear that some women view guides as attractive in the very simple terms described by Graham Vercueil, and guides are often more than willing to engage in short term flings. It is even suggested that certain private game reserves where this form of behaviour is ignored or subtly condoned develop a reputation which attracts wealthy single international clients who are willing or enthusiastic to engage in casual sexual relationships. Ongoing casual sexual contact with clients is condoned by lodges because these arrangements may be seen as "perks" by guides and as "fringe services" by clients. My personal experience is that this behaviour is almost a norm in the over-landing industry, and that it is probably more common in the lodge industry than most of the subjects were aware of, or were prepared to describe. Obviously, there is an extent to

which the circumstances surrounding such conduct influence how acceptable it might be, and clearly to some this conduct is deemed unacceptable to the highest degree. For example Clive Walker stated that:

> I think it depends what you define as ethical…taking liberty with the opposite sex. We were very strict on that…you don't get away with that…you'll be found out. Field guides should be like any profession, that if you're being paid to look after people, you have to absolutely…I won't go into any detail, but I dismissed two of my staff for that type of conduct. It's not anything that I enjoyed doing.[42]

On reflection it is not extraordinary that a leading figure in the Wilderness Leadership School has stronger feelings about this than others in the industry. The overland guide and the lodge guide may conduct their philandering and fornication in the dead of night when the comfort and safety of all their other current clients are fairly assured, but who knows what could happen whilst the wilderness guide and his consort are out of sight and out of earshot of the rest of the group, to either of the sub-groups. Regardless of the situation, the guide's giving favour to one individual ahead of all the others may, and often does, affect the group dynamic unfavourably.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the guide discreetly conducting a fling with a client often appears to go unnoticed amongst other clients, even when they have a clear opportunity to express their dissatisfaction on feed-back forms which will reach management and not the guide. It would be useful to know whether such clients are completely and naively ignorant of such conduct, whether they remain willingly ignorant for the purposes of retaining co-cordial relations with the guide and the client concerned, or whether they are aware that the person concerned has a clandestine relationship with the guide and don't mind at all. My experience suggests that the category of client who most often object to such conduct are individuals in the precise category that the guide is

likely (consciously or not) to target, that is single women in their twenties and thirties- in other words prospective consorts whose advances were ignored by the guide in the favour of another individual. This suggests that the greatest reason for objection is jealousy rather than moral or ethical disapproval, and the greatest cause of finding out the guide's nocturnal activities is by being proximal to his sleeping place when most others have retired, for whatever nefarious reason. It is perhaps worth adding that in my experience that there appears to be a clear ethic even amongst guides who were happy to conduct these relationships that one should never solicit or recruit a client into a sexual relationship, but were implicitly entitled to accept or reject the interests of clients who approached the guide when he had retired to his sleeping place. Similarly, there appeared to be an understanding amongst clients that you should not head directly to the guide's quarters on retiring, and thus a tacit obligation to be discreet. Another interesting question would be to know to what extent clients expected these relationships to be a strategy to initiate a long-term relationship or they were understood to be merely a casual fling. Clients who do succeed in conducting such relationships are usually physically attractive, extrovert, assertive and socially manipulative. One particularly extreme case of most of these characteristics even wrote on her feedback form "Haike [a legendary but very real overland guide] fucks like a king!"[43] Unsurprisingly, he was commended rather than chastised by his management. The acceptance of casual sexual encounters in the workplace is described by Grant Hine as "Guides' ethics rather than guiding ethics!" The whole subject of "khaki fever" would probably be an interesting and complex subject for someone with a background in sociology or psychology. Most guides have had direct exposure to the "khaki fever" phenomenon and, regardless of their degree of complicency, would struggle to examine this subject objectively.

**Pre-emptive Safety**

One of the reasons that the profile of the nature guide deserves to be elevated is the level of responsibility that the guide holds with respect to client safety. This raises both practical and ethical questions and it is worthwhile to try to create some sense of best practice at the time of writing. Guiding ethics should consider human safety to be a primary concern, but the effect that guides have on nature should remain an equally important consideration.

No doubt there are incidents in which a guide is faced with little choice but to kill an animal. In one such example where a guide shot an elephant at Lapalala as described by Clive Walker[44], this certainly appears to be the case. Manzi Spruit is convinced that incident enquiries in the Kruger National Park are meticulous and impartial, whilst Wayne Lotter feels that perhaps Kruger Park management should take more control over these incidents and act to reduce their occurrence (see pp. 173-179).

A guide should first and foremost be a facilitator. It should be remembered that Ian Player believes that a guide needs merely to find out what interests, skills and knowledge exist within the group, and exploit that. Lex Hes says that knowledge of facts is often over-emphasized in training and assessment of guides, whilst communication and human inter-active skills are often under emphasized. A guide needs ultimately to control his group, but it may sometimes be difficult based on the attitudes of clients, especially tour leaders, whose egos may be threatened by a nature guide gaining control over their group. This is not always easy as Rangani Tsanwani illustrates:

> He [the South African tour leader of foreign tourists] wants to walk on a big bush. Then I try to explain why we're doing such things like that. Then we continue walking, we were about to take a break, he said no, there's no way that we can take a break on that open area, it's better to walk back to the vehicle. Then as a head guide, as a leader of that trail, I have to think what to do. Do I have to do what he wanted me to do or do I have to concentrate on my job now? Then I said "Oh!" to my backup, "man, this guy is no more interested, so he asks us to go back, what can we do?" The guy said, "I don't know, it's up to you". Then I take that trail back. On our way back I saw that the guy's now are very tired, because it was a long distance, we're just walking because even though when you interpret, those other guys they were no good in English, but he was the only one who can understand English better. I can see that the other lady she's very tired. And I ask them for the break, then the guy say "No, there's no break on that open area". Then on our way back I saw that the other lady she's very tired. I ask him for the second time, "Can we take a break?" Then the guy looks at me and said, "it's up to you". Then we decided to take a break from that point. We started to communicate to each other, tried to find the side of his story, then by the end of the day we become very close friends. So we meet different people, with different opinions on the walk. Some people want to walk on the thick, thick bush, but some they want to walk on the open area. So you can't ask them before you take the walk whether he wants to walk in the thick bush or to walk on the open areas. So sometimes it's not easy, you...In thick bush, it's very, very dangerous. You can't see the animals. That's the main thing, that's the problem. You can walk past the animal lying in the bush. One day I was doing a walk on the river. The area was thick. And then after our break, we were walking along the river, the area was very, very thick. Very, very close I saw an elephant just sitting next to the tree. It was windy and cold. That elephant was just standing there. I move very close. I didn't see him at first. But those people they just saw me pushing them back because the elephant was very, very, very close. I just saw him, like, this is the elephant tusk. "Oh, let me push them". They didn't see him, but I was the only one who saw him. Then I just push them back. After some distance they said "What's wrong?" I said, "A big elephant was just standing there", and they were going to have a serious problem. That elephant was going to give us a serious charge. That's why in most cases we avoid walking in thick, thick bush.[45]

Avoiding confrontation with animals is certainly an under-promoted skill. In 2005 the FGASA exco recommended that the SKS in Dangerous Animals only be awarded to people after a certain number of encounters with animals in this category. My subsequent recommendation that any incident where dangerous game was detected through tracking or any other indirect means should also count towards this tally was later adopted, as it is an endorsement of the belief that avoidance is better than confrontation.

Animals which become habituated or over-familiarized with humans rapidly become problematic, as clearly demonstrated by the vervet monkeys at Borakalalo (and elsewhere), or the chacma baboons at Cape Point (and elsewhere). As Rangani Tsanwani explained:

> Some animals they get used to the people. That's why we have to avoid walking in one area all the time. You must change your area of walking all the time. Because some animals they are very territorial animals. You appraise the territory every day, they see you there every day, then they become used to you. Some become a problem now then they decide to charge you. It's not preferable to walk in one area every day. It's also not preferable to see you put your footprints every day. I walk today here, tomorrow I come here I will see my footprints then it's also boring. So that's why we keep on changing all the time.[46]

The positioning of the guide and back-up is also a vital skill. Manzi Spruit explained that:

> Then what you do is that while the people are viewing the animal you've got the one guide this side and the one guide this side. The reason for that is should the animal become aware of you and you need to get out fast, who-ever is on that side- downwind- will lead them away and the one at the back will cover, and as soon as it's safe, join at the front again. Now you're going to ask me, why doesn't he stay at the back? When you walk in single file, if something comes from the front (the chances of something coming from behind is less than 1%), but if something comes from the front, you need your assistant to deal with the people, because you as the lead rifle will deal with the animal. That doesn't mean you're just going to shoot him so you've got to make a split second decision, but your second rifle is so important, because [of] people's safety once again. He knows exactly what he is doing and makes sure the people are safe and then he does what his name says, he assists you.[47]

Participation by the back-up guide (second rifle) is very important:

> …I think most of the time it's a good idea [to let the second rifle do some of the interpretation] because remember, your second rifle is a lead rifle in training. It's a good idea to let him interpret every now and then. Usually what I do is I speak to this guy before I start working with him, and I say to him 'I would like you to get that practice of interpreting, so if you find something interesting just click your finger and I will be the lookout and you can interpret'. It's very good practice for them. But you can't just say that the guy at the front does all the interpreting. But you've got to have an agreement, because there must be always one looking out while the other one is interpreting.[48]

Besides the training of the back-up as a trail leader, participation by the back-up allows

the trail leader a change of role and a bit of a break. Adriaan Louw, the previous Chairman of FGASA, is of the opinion that critical trails incidents do not normally occur as a result of inexperience. Rather, he has observed that most incidents involved very experienced guides, and therefore feels that most trails incidents are caused by "burn-out", sometimes with an admixture of a blasé attitude, which would be alleviated by rotation of responsibilities within the guiding team.

"Dikgang" is an example of a guide who always considers the animal's perspective, and other guides would benefit if they chose to display a similar degree of empathy with their subjects, who, after all, help nature guides to earn their living:

> I think each and every single animal is considered to be dangerous. So personally I would say any animal, that if the animal feels threatened, the first instinct is to try and get away from us because we are an enemy, we are intruders into its area… as I said about sensitivity earlier on, we forget that animals also have their personal space, especially animals with young, that they tend to become more protective, the females if they are having babies…but I suppose one should consider the safe aspect of trying to give the animals their safe space, and even us as well, that we also have to have a space that the animals shouldn't really cross…I think by law yes, we have to carry rifles, but I believe a good guide is somebody who will never ever on a single day think a rifle, so long as you follow your ethics, your guiding ethics, you should be alright, you will never have to use your rifle, at all, that's what I'm hoping, but so far the past seven years I've never had to pull my rifle for anything, and I've been walking the past 6 years. I don't know if maybe I've been lucky, or perhaps I had good people that were guiding me, teaching me about guiding…[49]

Developed ethics, strong people skills and a critical mind are vital for guiding. These qualities appear to be more abundant in modern guides than they have ever been before in the history of South African nature guiding. Sensible utilization of qualified guides involves ensuring that they work for reasonable hours, live in comfortable circumstances and receive attractive packages (see pp.281-289).

**The Art of Survival and the Survival of an Art: Is Tracking Thriving or Threatened?**

In the traditional image of the nature guide he is regularly accompanied by a tracker. When on foot the tracker walks with the guide at the front of the group. On a game drive vehicle there is a specially fitted seat on the bonnet of the vehicle which allows the tracker to have a good vantage point for animals, but also to see spoor before the vehicle passes over it. At night the tracker is assigned with scanning either side of the vehicle with a spotlight to look for game. (As a spotlight operator I have had occasion to stop game drives for rodents and even spiders, and the spotting of such animals can elicit very mixed responses- some clients are amazed that you can spot these tiny creatures, whilst others become very annoyed that a game drive has been stopped for such trivial subjects). So the tracker is both figuratively and literally the front line troop for the guide.

At most game lodges it is customary for the most junior tracker to work with the most senior guide, and the most senior tracker to work with the most junior guide. This practice acknowledges both the importance of the tracker to the guide, but also how interdependent the tracker and guide are in terms of both learning and working. It is thus appropriate to include a short discussion of trackers in this thesis, beginning with a short history, followed by a discussion of the current state of this impressive and often highly mystified skill. According to Louis Liebenberg:

> In order to reconstruct how tracking may have evolved, we need to distinguish between three levels of tracking: simple, systematic and speculative. Simple tracking may be regarded as following footprints in ideal tracking conditions where the prints are clear and easy to follow. These conditions are found, for example, in soft barren substrate or snow, where footprints are not obscured by vegetation and where there are not many other animal prints to confuse the tracker. Systematic tracking involves the systematic gathering of information from signs, until a detailed indication is built up of what the animal was doing and

> where it was going…It is a more refined form of simple tracking, and requires an ability to recognize and interpret signs in conditions where footprints are not obvious or easy to follow. Speculative tracking involves the creation of a working hypothesis on the basis of the initial interpretation of signs, a knowledge of animal behaviour and a knowledge of the terrain. Having built a hypothetical reconstruction of the animal's activities in their mind, the trackers then look for signs where they expect to find them…In contrast to simple and systematic tracking, speculative tracking is based on hypothetico-deductive reasoning…and involves a fundamentally new way of thinking.[50]

From the perspective of Mike English, tracking is one of the cornerstones of traditional nature guiding skills, but:

> Tracking is dying out. These new guys are not…they learn quickly, their eye-sight is good, but it is an art that, because of circumstances, only the older field rangers [have] and there's still quite a number of them. I feel that those guys must be used for this training. Taking the guy out in the field for two weeks, three weeks…Well, there are a couple of old retired rangers Philemon…who used to be sergeant at Malelene, Charlie Nkuna, there's present Aaron Nkuna at Pretoriuskop, Willie Nkuna who used to work for me, and all the guys who work in Park. Excellent, they would pass their tracking with flying colours…so would Don (English)…but not Louis [Liebenberg]. Jack Greef, there's another good guide. Louis Liebenberg tried to pull the wool over Jack's eyes, and Jack would have none of it…. He's actually at Makuleke, he's a good guide. He's training people.[51]

English has seen some extraordinarily high standards of tracking during his career

> …there's signs that you see on vegetation, leaves that have fallen off on the ground that will tell you time elapsed and that sort of thing, it's such an involved process…that's why I say if you can get schooled young- these trackers have got they've got to be- to put it plainly I don't know how good they are. There's a certain feel and Don's got that feel. They were tracking a whole lot of poachers the other day in Moçambique- they found the spoor and got picked up by the chopper and then dropped on the ground, and he was in the chopper at one stage and saw these guys were anti-tracking, then they picked up the spoor again- no anti-tracking at all. So they stopped and looked at the ground and said the rifles and the horns must be further back, because now they're walking at ease. These are all things which when you grow up with them in the bush you figure out. And they went back and searched around and they got three rifles and a couple of rhino horns. But until then these guys were anti-tracking- so you've got to know what to look for. And these are all things which can be brought into the training… put it this way, you've got to have a feel for anti-poaching, you can't be anybody necessarily, but if you've got a good anti-poaching unit, that's a good place for a guide to train, to get his practical bush craft sharp, because that is the only part of bush-work that is the equivalent of the old traditional field work.[52]

> [Poachers will] always leave signs, but the black guys- the old black guys, pick most of it up. If there was a doctorate for tracking, all the guys… would all be doctors. And that is dying out. And if you can get those guys to be able to pass it on… and that is what I feel, that they should get special units, you know tracking units, bush-craft units going…[53]

Although clearly tracking may be used in hunting and anti-poaching patrols, it also has superb applications in nature guiding. Rangani Tsanwani recalls how

> ...that guy [Daniel Maluleke] coming to tracking he was very, very good. He was excellent. I remember one day we were doing a walk on the (northern?) side of Shingwedzi, where Shingwedzi side we don't have that much animals anymore, then we were just walking, walking, then we saw a footprint of the honey badger. It was my first time to track a honey badger until we found the honey badger. We track him a long distance. He was very old but very strong. He was 63 that time. Then we track that honey badger until we got him. [It is] interesting to track small things like the honey badger… [Our] clients really enjoyed that….Yes, but now the bush is very thick. If you look around everything is very green, so to walk at this time is not really easy... In winter time you know where you can go and find the animals, but in summer time like this in the rainy season there is water all over in the bush, so you don't know where to find the animal... But the winter one is perfect. You know if I can go to that windmill I'll find something. If I can go to that river, I will find something. But for this one you must be very, very strong man. You will walk.[54]

It is perhaps fair to comment further on Louis Liebenberg. He is regarded by many as being a very good tracker, though evidently Mike English and Zac Greef, and possibly others think his skills are over-rated. It is difficult for anyone to pass judgment on this unless they themselves are very experienced and highly competent trackers and they have spent time with Louis Liebenberg. It must be stated that The Art of Tracking: The Origins of Science (quoted on pp.306-307 above) presents a very plausible, original, and compelling hypothesis which states that scientific thinking has its origins in the type of hypothesis driven reasoning that is a pre-requisite of advanced tracking. It is possible that some of the negative responses to Liebenberg result from the fact that he is, to a greater extent than most trackers, an academic, and therefore his practice is deemed

suspect.

Ultimately, the critical thing that is needed in terms of tracking is that the ancient art is conserved and transmitted to future generations. The guiding industry, and particularly groups which train future guides, can make their contribution by ensuring that the older retired trackers are located and offered employment as training assistants to ensure that the practical art of tracking is kept alive. A trail that is lost is very difficult to ever pick up again.

**Community Participation: Vital for the Future of Conservation and Tourism**

The concept of land ownership with respect to game reserves has been widely studied and the claim by the Makuleke people of the portion of the Kruger Park between the Levubu and the Limpopo has been something of a trial case, and no doubt a difficult one. A verdict too lenient to the Makuleke people would have created panic that most of the Kruger Park was under claim, and if these claims were unsuccessful a sense of panic that the government process of land reform would be called into question, sowing despair amongst the historically dispossessed. The dispossession of the Makuleke was one of the most recent and one of the most unreasonable cases of land appropriation (see pp.39-40). This was summarized briefly by Warren Bekker:

> Look, there certainly are, but northern Pafuri region is a really classic example of how the land went back to the [Makuleke] community, the community then decided "No, no, they would like to get some benefit from conservation, from ecotourism, so Wilderness Safaris and Eco-training went into community projects, whereby they developed a lodge and a training camp, directly involved the community, and the community are now directly benefiting from this partnership, and that is the way that I think a lot more communities are now

> going. Yes, you're always going to get those that will never see the benefits, and would rather have cattle grazing land, but I think there are… fine, you look at the amount of community projects. I take the Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg Park- we are and have been given R60 million to develop partnerships between rural communities and conservation. Zululand- our community projects are escalating on a daily basis, so there is definitely more drive towards a sustainable working relationship between the communities and conservation. I think, and I have seen over the last 13-14 years that I've been in the bush guiding, that there is definitely more positive attitudes from a local people as to the benefits of conservation vs. grazing.[55]

According to Bekker there is clearly a sense in private game reserves and concessions that the owners should justify their possession of pieces of land especially those bordering on a human community- in other words "if you don't use it, you lose it"[56]:

> We certainly are, and I don't think it's becoming easier. I use two classic examples, one in uMfolozi area and one in Sabi Sands. When I started guiding in the Sabi Sands in 1994, there was a specific area Open 45 that we used to have sundowners on, but in 1998 when I left there, the sundowner spot had to be changed, because your horizon was full of lights and houses, whereas in 1994 there was nothing. Now, that is not encouraging, because all that means is that the rural population is getting closer and closer and closer, and we have to find certain justifications and means to staying about. If you cannot justify the existence of a piece of land, it's going to get taken up. And that's why it is so critical to keep and maintain what we have before that all goes to rack and ruin.[57]

The subject of ownership obviously affects the relationship and morale of guides, so a brief survey of the participants was undertaken and is reported here, though the writer is in no way claiming extensive experience or expertise on these.

A sense of the "sacredness" of land is a common feeling expressed by guides, especially those who have had training in the Wilderness Leadership School:

> Yes, that place is very fragile, and then when you are there, you need to behave yourself, and then we need to look after that place because its very important. It's touching, really touching, so then, you know like when you see something, let me say it's made by stone age people, like a slag from a rock, if you want to take it, you have to communicate with the spirit, so that if you want to take a piece of that thing, if you need a permit, or a permission from the guide to take it, if that thing is going to remind you back there, and then the wilderness because it teaches

> people and to change their lives in terms of conserving. You know in terms of if you are out- let me say back to the civilization we are using about 10 liters of water that can serve about 12 people when we are flushing our toilets you know in the bathroom. There, they learn a lot, you know they change their behaviour, you know the way we are doing things because that place is like untouched, you know, it's like blessed, because it's the last one. If we lose it, we're out of Africa![58]

This is a powerful expression of how land is valued and appreciated, and there is the awareness that even removing a rock or a piece of slag is effectively a degrading of the environment.

Yet, the ownership of the wilderness is still disputed, because there are still many people alive who declare that within living memory they were owners of land which has now been declared a wilderness area. People from the Hluhluwe-Mfolozi corridor are still convinced of their ownership- even although they are supposed to believe that their people were historically fairly compensated for this land. Mandla Gumede who is employed by the Wilderness Leadership School doubts that the people whose ancestral lands were in the corridor agree with the existence, purpose and ownership of the corridor area by the state:

> Few of them [people displaced by Hluhluwe-Mfolozi corridor] they do understand, but the rest, they are thinking of money, they are thinking how can they get money from the park, because some of them they are chased away from that place so they are not thinking of making a plans- how can they go there and then negotiate with the people inside, to make things that they are going to give them some money, but they are just destroying nature inside the park. That's why I say a few of them they do understand, but most of them they can't understand what's happening. It's a thing of money.[59]

Sicelo Mbatha expands by saying:

> I think the way I can put it is that you can go in the village and then you can, if you ask an old man, he can tell you exactly that he is worried about his father's grave inside the park, you know, and then at the same time they are worried about places for grazing for their cattle you know, for their livestock, some of them they

> have said that they've moved inside the park and there are places, and now they don't have a place for plowing their maize meal. So sometimes, but now they are coming realize that why they had moved, and why it is important to keep the animals in the park. They are realizing that, and at the same time most of the people in my village, they are working inside the park, so that they know how to put something on top of the table for their families. So they are benefiting from the park as well. So it's much relaxed, but in some areas they complain as Mandla was saying, and then they are complaining they get their places for their lodges… So it's like that.[60]

It is very difficult to know if people have been fairly compensated after they lose land for "wilderness" or conservation purposes, but one suspects that in many cases under the previous government this was not the case, or if land was compensated for in full, it may often be that the compensation was not distributed fairly amongst eligible recipients, so parks are often viewed as projects which dispossessed people of land for which they do not now feel justly compensated. From his experience at Phinda, Graham Vercueil does not believe that dispossession and opposition is inevitable:

> It has been a rather amazing thing to watch, coming in as a skeptical outsider looking for a job, when our financial sponsorship collapsed during the construction of this lot here, right at the beginning of CC Africa. And then the years thereafter thinking cynically and ignorantly or naively that perhaps some of the things we were doing was window dressing to entice the market. But over the years it's become really apparent that there has been an amazing contribution and effort to communicate with the local community, from the very early visits into the community to open the first classroom or the first addition to a school, and seeing the small businesses immediately adjacent to the gate. And you can go into the same community now and see how those small local businesses have grown tremendously. And it's because there are 220 odd salary earners who have been there for fifteen years. And you can measure it by the number of staff...in a lot of small ways, like for example the number of staff who own motor vehicles and who currently own businesses on the other side of the fence. And also by the level of poaching that has reduced, even in the first five years the level of poaching and the reduction in poaching at Phinda was dramatic. And if you compare the poaching that we had to some of the significant reserves in the area that don't have nearly as comprehensive a community development and negotiation program then the figures will just speak for themselves. There's something like sixty or seventy odd classrooms built, three crèches, clinics, adult skills development training programs, bursary programs for students. There's an enormous amount that's gone on, to the extent that if you do...a lot of what goes on in the community is attributed to what Phinda has done. It's significant, and

> it's real, and it's very uplifting because …on the back of a commercially driven eco tourism venture there's really significant community assistance and development that has gone on, which is so way beyond window dressing that it would be a shame to be skeptical of it.[61]

The Makuleke and the Conscor models seem to have had some influence on the way in which ownership was addressed at Madikwe. Although there are many private concessions, some of the concessions are owned by the local communities. Moremi Keabetswe was quite optimistic about the idea being bought into, both by his community and by clients:

> Being a community lodge sells for itself. And then guiding in Buffalo Ridge I'd say we are doing it quite differently from other lodges. We try by all means to guide and then put more of our cultural interpretation into it which makes it different from other guides and then people also like the fact that we are community owned and then we are guides from the community which means they think what we are doing is what we actually understand. And I think it is a selling point itself.[62]

There is also clearly a limit of the capacity of the park to help the community, but even the situation where slightly under 200 people from a community of 7 000 people are employed within Madikwe is sufficient to persuade the local community of the benefits of the reserve:

> There is, I'd say there is but I would say there are quite a lot of opportunities if you get into the park and then you can do something different in the park and there's a lot things to be doing here if we do open our minds. We never thought of, I don't think anyone in our community even might have gone to study ecology or something like that which is something, which we also have put up front. If we got a kid at school, we must, if they must maybe have conservation education in school, teaching them more about conservation, get them to be exposed to the parks, get them to meet the ecologists and find out what it is that ecologists do and from there the people will be able to get the opportunity of becoming ecologists or something like that. I think opportunities, like you said it, is limited. I will agree with you there because we are from a community of +/- 7000 and not all of us will be able to work in the park because we can only maybe hire less than 200 people but the opportunities are there, they just need to take them over by us.[63]

Even if under 200 people work in the park and they're happy with their jobs, they will persuade the rest of their communities not to poach, because they have all got families, and a level of satisfaction circulates down to quite a high percentage of those 7000 people, which results in people supporting the purpose and programme of the game reserve, and opposing and reporting poaching or other activities that indicate opposition to the game reserve.

It is worth noting the land-use report on which Madikwe was based claimed in 1991 that whilst cattle farming in the proposed reserve area would only generate 80 jobs, whilst the establishment of a game reserve would generate 1200 *local* jobs.[64] Is the figure of under 200 jobs suggested by Moremi Keabetswe correct? If they are correct, and if we can assume that the figure of 7 000 people applies to the Lekgopong community only, and that the two other *local* communities (Molatedi and Suping) which were supposed to have an equal stake with his community do in fact have such a stake, does this mean that less than half of the total *local* jobs predicted actually materialized? If this is the case, does it mean that the total resultant employment of Madikwe was less than half of the predicted total, or does it mean that the local stake was half of the predicted percentage? It is probable that both the total number of jobs achieved, and the effective percentage of local jobs, were well below these optimistic predictions. Whilst land-use experts should be entitled to project somewhat optimistically, it should be noted that the total stake projected in 1991 of R 7 300 000 per annum in local income has still not been reached even though this sum projected by an inflationary increment should by now be considerably larger. Nevertheless, it is difficult to know if any alternative land uses such as farming would have produced better benefits for the local community, and certainly

the land use study in question argued strongly to the contrary. Furthermore the environmental value of a conservation area is difficult to assess in hard economic terms.

Despite this, if the statements made by Moremi Keabetswe are even vaguely accurate there is a reasonable to good level of satisfaction amongst local people with the economic benefit of Madikwe Game Reserve. The percentage of local people with a positive perception of the game reserve is probably much higher than in the Kruger National Park, but it is difficult to know whether this is because of historical relationships with reserve management (and in the broader sense government), or whether it has to do with population densities, or if there are other important factors. It is clear though, that having guides and managers drawn from the local communities is an important factor in improving the relationships between local communities and the game reserve management structues and the likelihood of both parties attaining a level of satisfaction with each other is good.

It is equally clear that unless these middle managers are aware of the somewhat insidious way in which their communities are being dispossessed. They stand to be used as pawns by a minority with powerful political connections or economic influence. They would be well advised to network and strategize both amongst themselves and with the groups with whom they interact. Otherwise they could easily lose influence over broader developments in their area, and their communities could end up not getting the stake in Madikwe that they were originally promised. The reality is that even at this stage the failure to attain the intended level of local empowerment through jobs may reasonably be

blamed on the figure quoted being an over-optimistic projections, rather than a failure by Park Management to ensure the empowerment of local communities.

**Old Bull, New Askaris*‡ and the Future of Safaris**

I will now try and summarize the many critical and often insightful suggestions by guides as to where nature guiding in South Africa is going and what should be done to improve guiding in the immediate future. This section of the thesis consists of 35 suggestions as to practical ways in which the guiding industry can improve in the next decade, supported by comments from nature guides in the field when possible. The title of this portion (above) was inspired by the following closing comment by "Dikgang":

> Ja, well I think not really much. It was actually a great pleasure to meet you Anthony after 7 years not seeing you, and you know what amazes me is that you still appreciate nature, and that you're still excited about nature, and that's what I would like to see, having a similar thing, after 10 years of being within the bush still appreciating sunrise, still being able to watch that impala, still being able to watch that male lion sitting there, not doing much underneath the tree, and being able to tell that when he is there, he is doing something. Animals are never there because of nothing, they're doing something. So that appreciation, that love behind our job, and the last thing being sensitive, and I hope that things will get better within tourism, being sensitive to the environment as well with guiding, and the most important thing, safety, and I suppose that comes with training. If you get in the right people who are showing you what to do, which is exactly the same thing- you get elephants- the young boys they get kicked out, and they need those old bulls to teach them what an elephant is all about, and ja, that's all![65]

The points that follow below are a drawn from the visions and suggestions by all fifteen of the subjects interviewed and represent a summary of this input. These points should be noted, criticized, engaged with and applied by all parties who consider themselves

*‡ Askaris are young elephant bulls which apprentice themselves to older bulls. The term comes from the Swahili language.

capable of (or interested in) influencing the future of nature guiding in South Africa. Furthermore, the remainder of this chapter could form the basis of the (practical and academic) platform on which the future study of nature guiding in South Africa (and by extension in southern Africa) should proceed.

1. <u>The following recommendations are considered applicable to all guides:</u>

   1A. Encourage guides to unionize and to take responsibility for their own destiny (see pp.276-289 above for detailed background discussion).

   1B. Encourage guides to study society, history and politics (all industry players). Guides should be trained in being diplomatic in forwarding their opinions, and present their opinions reasonably and rationally. The argument that guides should not engage in politics is fallacious and is generally espoused by people who are benefiting from the current status quo. Having said that, guides should strive to show loyalty towards their companies, and if they do not feel loyalty to seek employment elsewhere, if possible. Management should be sensitive to the opinions and needs of their guides, be tolerant and respectful of their views and earn (rather than enforce or obligate) the loyalty and respect of guides.

   1C. Encourage better client and environmental ethics amongst guides (all guides). (see pp.290-301 above detailed background discussion).

   1D. Encourage guides to transform their hearts and ideally to learn deep love for people and animals alike (all guides).

   1E. Guides should work to attain a higher profile in management structures. They tend to be too passive for people with the level of extroversion and knowledge which many of them display.

> Yup, I think that's a way to go. Our job is not referred to as one of the most risky jobs in the country, but I think it is, in the sense that you know, you're there, you've got dangerous animals around you every day that you're within a game reserve and I believe that when you are in the bush there's always an eye watching you that you're not aware of and yes, one should be using the senses that you've got, but for instance, if you take flying, you will not be in charge of the plane as a captain up until you have done a certain number of hours of flying, and being a co-pilot for a certain amount of time in that airline, and that's how guiding should be. You are responsible for lives, and at the end of the day you want people to come, get the experience, and go home safely, and tell other people about the experience that they had in Africa- and ja, we're ambassadors, why not?[66]

> What I want to see in the future is that the guides in an organization have a much higher profile, where guides are taken far more seriously, and they're more part of the fabric of a business rather than being an add on. And I think that what we also need to get over is this colloquial flavour of guiding in this country. I know it's a big country with lots of issues and lots of areas, but if we could get our heads around regional guiding so that we open up within the SADC countries. We could use the peace parks and the expansion of eco tourism areas. We're heading towards people who are going to come through South Africa, Moçambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, if indeed the politics settles down. And I think it will be fantastic if we can have guides with a more international flavour who don't have to restrict themselves to one province or one site, where it becomes easier to guide regionally.[67]

1F. Guiding should support the principal of conservation of the environment and educate themselves for a high level engagement with practical and ethical issues.

> I'll talk about the wilderness area…my vision is to keep that place, well, we mustn't spoil that place, we have to keep that place…look after this place, because more people will still [be] coming…they are wanting to see that place, they want to learn about nature, because they are still empty…[68]

2. <u>The following recommendation is particularly applicable to guides and researchers or students of guiding</u>

2A. Record and teach traditional values, traditional medicine, tracking and bush craft (guides and researchers / students). Manzi Spruit[69] and others refer to this.

In terms of reading material examples of useful authors on traditional cultures with sample works of each of these referenced include Nyembezi[70] and Nxumalo[71], Krige[72], Koopmans[73], Cole[74] and Mutwa[75]. Probably the most widely experienced and informative author on traditional medicine is Ben-Erik van Wyk[76]. Authors on tracking include Louis Liebenberg[77], Clive Walker[78] and Chris and Tilde Stuart[79],[80].

3. <u>The following recommendations are particularly applicable to providers of guide training:</u>

3A. Employ and record old tracker's knowledge and use them as tutors (training providers).
Mike English[81] and Manzi Spruit were explicit about this point.

Besides Daniel Maluleke, the list of trackers who received endorsement during these interviews (in alphabetical order of surnames) included Jaco Badenhorst, Don English, Jack Greef, Louis Liebenberg, Charlie Nkuna, Aaron Nkuna, Christopher Nthathi, Nick Squires and Philemon Nkuna(from Malelane). From personal experience I believe it is warranted to add to this list the names of Peter Apps and Sakkie van Aswegan. The latter is a somewhat modest man of enormous knowledge who would not venture to attempt to add his name to the list of some of the county's top trackers, but whose high standards and considerable ability in tracking, bush-craft and bush-lore I can strongly vouch for.

3B. Encourage guides to present a broad spectrum of their environment, not just "the big five" or "charismatic mega-fauna" because this implies that guides (and by extension clients) are trapped in the "flagship species" mentality and are not promoting a holistic concept of ecosystems and causes and effects of humans and other creatures. Encourage guides who have the option to try to spend more time walking and less time driving, both for the purposes of devoting more attention to interpreting plants and smaller creatures and as a statement of intent to reduce the environmental damage caused by vehicles.

> I think guiding in the future, you know, it has got to change, and I suppose it will change the mindset of everybody within the industry, looking at the thing that one shouldn't really be expecting a tip when having people on the vehicle, because now we take a tip as a right, not as something that you might get, maybe not anymore. And it pushes us that often we try to chase, and get from one sighting to another, passing that little golden orb-web spider that you could talk about, you know passing that Burchell's coucal feeding a chick of a great spotted cuckoo, so that you know it's mind blowing for the people. Passing that lilac-breasted roller, forgetting to tell people that what you see there are not the true colours of the bird but instead the reflection of white light within the makeup of the melanin or the pigments of the feathers. We tell people about tannin, but it's a theory that they hear everywhere, and they get bored of it. We don't have that time to stop and show people- get them to taste a broad-leaved tree, taste what it tastes like, that bittery taste, tannin, get them to taste a leaf from an acacia tree, get how nice the taste is, show them why the animals prefer eating from those trees than the broad-leaved trees- you know those practical parts of it. Drive and pass those hyaena pastings that you see next to the road, that rhino midden, but you can talk about it for 20 minutes and change people's mindset. And you know, you forget that tracks don't lie, and if you don't see a rhino, you see a midden, you tell them what is happening in the midden. And these people they can [build] up that rhino within their imagination, but you know, because we're chasing a tip, it's a bit of a problem. So, I suppose in the future there should be proper training, that there should be a lot of time being spent in the bush as guides, having internship programmes, and that might I think improve the standard of guiding within the country.[82]

> I would say 60% of the time I would spend walking because there's a lot more that you see on foot that you don't see on a vehicle- you're always rolling at 20-25km/h, whereas on foot you're much slower than that and there's a lot more that shows up or comes out while you're walking, and you're more at a ground level with everything…you don't get a lot of keen walkers, but with good convincing , yes, you can get it right…Yes, that is mostly the case, people that have been on game drives a lot more are more keen to walk and see smaller things, observe smaller things that you don't really get to observe from a vehicle…This year, I would say, a lot of caterpillars that I've never seen, some I remember from a childhood age, butterflies that I've never seen in a long, long time, but have come through this year, because we've had a tremendous lot of rain.[83]
>
> Driving around in a vehicle is one thing, but when you're on foot and you've got your own pace that you can work with, the interaction between you- it becomes philosophical, it becomes spiritual, it becomes political- political not in a negative sense, in that you're discussing what life's all about. I think guiding, my hope and my vision for guiding it creates a sense of saying "Listen this is a rare commodity we've got out there, and thanks to this lady or gentleman over here, they've opened a door for me that I previously was not aware of, and it's ignited something in me, and I may be a bank manager for the rest of my life, but I do understand why we need to care for this." I guess that's how it is for me.[84]

4. <u>The following recommendations are particularly applicable to providers of guide training, but it is also very important that they are noted, practiced and applied by senior guides throughout the industry</u>

   4A. Encourage young guides to learn traditional culture and language (theirs and that of others) engage critically with traditional cultural norms (including, but not limited to understanding of mechanisms and effects of sexism and racism) (see pp. 106-09 & pp. 258-67 for background discussion)

   4B. Encourage young guides to learn traditional religious values and engage critically with issues arising from these such as anthropocentricism, fundamentalism and arrogance. (see pp. 109-12 above for detailed background discussion)

   4C. Add language and cultural teaching to assist black guides to become more eloquent, more "international" and thereby better at "hosting" interactions and interpersonal dynamics.

   Quotes from Jaco Badenhorst[85], Ian Player[86] and Mike English shed light on the need for this requirement (also see pp.258-67 above for detailed background discussion)

   4D. Encourage learner guides to engage critically with local and international culture and the balance between the conventional and the traditional on one hand, and the international and "progressive" on the other. (see pp.258-67 above for detailed

background discussion)

4E. Emphasize the importance of silence and solitude, and the function of the guide as a facilitator, rather than an expert.

> **…**But, in fact I found that it was good on some trails to have no talking at all and they benefit just as much…I believe that talking…if you're going to run a trail with hardly any talking at all, and it will be peaceful and much better for the trailists, because we underestimate our relationship with the natural world, how in that quietness, and silence we truly experience wilderness. If you're talking it makes you lazy- instead of trying to work it out the trailists will just ask the guide for explanations.[87]
>
> People often ask me why don't I do like other guides do, or stop at a sighting and start talking, and I say "I do not believe that's the way you're going to teach people." If I am going to sit around and talk the whole time… with people that have been in the vehicle from Thursday or Friday, they're not going to remember a word of what I said to them for the past 6 game drives, so in a way I try and employ a strategy that was employed on me when I was a trainee, of having to figure things out, because that way they have time to think about it….[88]
>
> Well, the first trick, any time you're guiding anywhere, is to find out in your group what the expertise there is. You just get people to introduce themselves and tell you what their interests are so that if someone's interests are astronomy, you don't talk about astronomy, you've got someone who can do it, or ornithology, or whatever as the case may be. And it opens things up.[89]
>
> You'd be surprised. You get guys that are extremely clued up and they do definitely ask you "What type of grass is that?", and "Can you give me the scientific name of that?" and "I've never seen this bird in this area, what's the reason?" But I think the average foreigner that climbs onto an open vehicle and gets taken for a drive is not going to ask you about grasses. But on a certain level of guiding and specifically where we are you also do get a lot of more basic. But then you definitely do get guys that are entomologists, geologists, ornithologists...[You can't teach an entomologist entomology] But you can teach an ornithologist about entomology.[90]

4F. Aim to produce improvement in the quality rather than the quantity of guiding graduates.

> I really think it's a process where it's a combination of the actions of THETA and the SGBs and putting up proper unit standards. It's a question of getting the training providers delivering really good material. It's got to do with tourism into southern Africa and I think it's a growth of guiding...there's good guiding potential in this country. Guides can earn

well economically. Yes, maybe it's a bit of pie in the sky, but I do wish that guiding was...something somebody could do as a career, rather than as a flirtation. Even if it took a vast plethora, you didn't have such a huge plethora of people coming in and treading water for a year or two, and then bailing out again. If there were fewer people involved more seriously that would be great. That would give guiding and guides a lot of good.[91]

There seemed to be no belief that this was a serious career. It was somebody who had worked in the bank, who had not done too well, who had dropped out of society, who became a guide, so we as guides were not really looked upon as being serious professionals….The whole ethos of wilderness trailing has never changed for me. What it's gone from has been sort of…in a sense…I wouldn't use the word gung-ho, but a little bit rough and sort of not altogether quite structured, and this is where your earlier question about science has come…it's gone from a non-scientific activity to in many respects a scientific activity, in that there is serious learning to be entailed in producing ultimately a good guide. I've seen guiding which was hair-raising, unrecognized, it wasn't regarded as a serious profession. Where it is today, a really top quality guide, in my opinion, is the equivalent to a person in the top of any of the professions, whether it's an architect or a professor at a university.[92]

I think there should be, like the programme we went through, I think it should be brought in again and then people from the community get to be trained to become guides. We had an opportunity of doing this and then it was supposed to have been a pilot project of which I think they should now find out it has been a very effective pilot project because we are now being guides. Fortunately, you have come to interview almost all of us and then, because of that I think we now have to redo it again and then help some other people may be less our number or same number as us and then from there, we will be able to get 8 more guides into Madikwe from the local community and then once you get reach to that you can keep on trying to also in the future.[93]

5. <u>The following recommendations are particularly applicable to individuals and organizations that are able to influence the SAQA / THETA / SGB/ DEAT system, but also relevant to training providers and guides which the THETA / DEAT system affects:</u>

5A Provide a clear definition of a local guide/ site guide and clear definition of (and even possibly a list of registered) sites.
(DEAT to produce document as addendum to current Act)

5B. Provide a clear plan (policy and process) for effective policing of all guides (and particularly local guides / site guides).
(DEAT to produce document as adendum to current Act)

5C. Provide a clear plan (policy and process) for portability between similar (or

dissimilar sites) for all local guides
(DEAT to produce document as addendum to current Act)

6. <u>The following recommendation is particularly applicable to individuals and organizations that are able to influence the SAQA / THETA / SGB system, but also relevant to training providers and guides which the THETA system affects:</u>

6A. Simplify the (THETA) system. Encourage integrated learning areas and outcomes. Encourage transparent outcomes, and encourage learners to understand assessment criteria on their next highest level.

6B. Make THETA devote more attention to promotion of teaching of content and ethics, and less attention on systems.

6C. To the extent that THETA does concentrate on systems, have a means of not only ensuring that training providers do have certain systems, but also of grading these systems according to their quality. This would discourage the degree of "malicious compliance" which exists amongst contemporary training providers.

6D. Make THETA give higher recognition to value of ethical trainers, assessors and moderators.
(see pp.289-98 above for detailed background discussion)

7. <u>The following recommendations are particularly applicable to individuals and organizations that are able to influence the FGASA system, but also relevant to training providers and guides which the FGASA system affects:</u>

7A. Promote concrete suggestions, debate and implementation of higher level standards for guiding. Promote a wide range of specialist skills, not just Special Knowledge Skills (Dangerous Animals) as the apex of the industry, as has the case in the past. This should aim to facilitate broader participation, especially from women and to diffuse the perception that the ultimate goal of the industry is to achieve a militarized and macho status.

> Why should one not take conservation, have doctorates in it? Why should one not have it in sport, fitness or anything? [Or in] anything that's [that] big? Why are there some stereotype perpetual motion machines going through history? This is sanctioned knowledge, that's not- there's huge bodies of knowledge that are wrapped up in some domains that haven't really been explored.[94]

> Shouldn't we have programmes in guiding, where you can have a doctorate in the field of tourism, guiding and that would be your domain? What you need to do for that you need to have an excellent control and understanding of the big field, you need to know the cutting edge problems, you need to know the methodologies for researching them. Then you need to- and that's all core stuff- the fundamentals are your RPL

of your whole history- that's how you meet a fundamental requirement- your core is your knowledge of the field, problems and the terrain, and your elective is a particular project you select- at a doctoral level, this is a translation from level II- same principals. You do your research subject, your study, but you then have an obligation, more than in the past, to take a leadership role in the field, where you promulgate it, you try and get it out, you discuss it with people, and you use your knowledge to the benefit of society. I don't believe our government at that level can afford to fund people's training unless they're going to plow something back into it- a slight tinge of socialism that I have in this whole thing. But my point is what I am saying to you- guiding needs to put on a proper structured level, where all the range of vocations at different levels can be slotted into a level structure, then training actually done to coincide with that. Guiding itself…I hope that the SETAs don't get overrun by the Department of Education, I hope the SETAs survive it, I honestly feel that the Department of Education should lend support, and not impose too much of their ideas, because they're not really experts in the workplace field. Workplaces are too complex. I suppose there's got to be some faith, but the SETAs who control, like THETA who control guiding- until they're given a proper financial base to fund well educated, well qualified, well trained staff, and cross training programmes internally, they're always going to be disadvantaged, they'll always be shrieked at, and they will never have been given the tools to do the job.[95]

I think that's a couple of things. I'll start off with knowledge- you've got to have- and you never stop learning, that's the main thing, so you grow as you go. It doesn't matter what age you are, you still keep on learning, you never stop learning, but it helps, whatever you know so that you can pass that on to the people when they come here, your guests, the tourists that we get here, they want something. …The knowledge part, your attitude towards them, you give yourself, they suck you dry, and you must enjoy it, the whole process. You make it interesting for them, so you've got to have knowledge, you've got to have people skills. [96]

7B. Improve standards of local guide training and local specialist guide training. (specialist trainers such as FGASA, Birdlife SA, etc.)

That's what I'm saying…Special management skills in specific fields, mountaineering or canoeing. You have to keep up with the times. And your average guest or tourist, whether it is a South African or foreigner, they are coming to our activities more educated than ten years ago. So every guide must also upgrade him or herself.[97]

Today you get very, very competent outstanding black people in the field of guiding. Look at the Birdlife South Africa, an incredible job they've done with training. Local guys that have shown some interest, with a pair of binoculars and some good training, and some bird books. Look at the

> Zululand Birding Route today, which has become so successful, so the race side of it has turned around a great deal.[98]

7C. Negotiate with technikon to ensure alignment of FGASA and technikon subject matter content or to present material to technikon learners in preparation for FGASA theory exams. (see p.209).

8. The following recommendations are particularly applicable to individuals and organizations that are able to influence the decisions and policies of national, provincial and private parks boards and management authorities:

8A. Encourage a system of critical investigation of trails incidents, so that guides who are architects of incidents which lead to the death of animals are severely castigated / warned / dismissed.

8B. Encourage improved social integration of communities and wildlife, and improved social equity for marginalized communities living on fringes of conservation areas. (pp.309-16)

9 The following general recommendations are particularly worth noting by the management of the lodges and other corporate businesses which employ guides:

9A. Encourage guides to understand pay and tips and effects that these have on work performance and ethics. Also encourage management to be more generous in pay packages particularly with regard to guides who have already shown commitment to the business. (pp.275-389)

9B. Encourage improved pay and ethics in employing institutions, including raising trainers to level that compensates them for "tips not received". Failure to do this erodes training standards and leads to the erosion of work performance standards.

9C. Ensure that guides and trainers are provided with state of the art (or at least highly serviceable) equipment, so that their level of professionalism is not compromised

> My vision is to see this industry growing up, go more further, like a national director in terms of fundraising, to keep that dream go further is to do his job or her job properly, so that my vision, the way I see this job, of ours that we are doing, it needs more vehicles which are bigger than that we are using now, and the safe one, like new vehicles, you know, or Sprinters yes, which are...and then liase with the company, so that if there is a problem, the car get fixed…without using one car here and there and then we borrow a car you know, we get dumped and pay for other car to pick you…you know like that…so that we don't get stuck.[99]

9D. Encourage guides to understand environmental management principles and ethics. Explaining the method of good environmental practice is reasonable, but it will

never be as effective as taking a longer time to teach the underlying causes of environmental problems and allowing the guide to make their own decision to buy into practices to minimize their own and their client's environmental impacts.

> Yes, it's a function of their hours, but that comes down to being disgruntled with what they earn, and your ability. And it's not always that people are doing this because money's the objective. The problem with many of us who go in to this, we go into it because it's a heart-passion, enthusiasm kind of thing and we're prepared to overlook what our needs are, because that's what we want to do. So people take advantage of that, and I think that that's wrong. Yes, you could get away with taken advantage, but today, grab, look after the guy or the girl, because if they're serious about what they're doing, they are going to make your business very successful.[100]
>
> (see pp.278-80 above detailed background discussion)

9E. Create support systems for guides with substance (most commonly alcohol) abuse tendencies (particularly in private lodges)
(see pp.111-112)

9F. Monitor client satisfaction at services rendered including all of the above areas and also:
- favouritism of guides towards specific clients related to (or unrelated to) "unprofessional" relationships, particularly sexual relationships between (normally male) guides and (normally female) clients. (see pp.298-301)
-racism, sexism and unreasonable biases and prejudices communicated by guides to clients.

> In terms of the vision for guiding, I think for a start we want a multi-racial, multi-gendered guiding fraternity that are sensitive to the needs of clients, sensitive to the environment and the animals, and are doing a really good job in selling wilderness to people that are visiting the country. And making sure that when people leave they've switched on to what's happening here and maybe switched on enough to go back and do stuff to donate money to worthwhile conservation organizations. I think that's maybe the vision if you like. And how we do that can only be through training, and that's the only way it can be done. It has to be done through good quality comprehensive training programs.[101]

9G. Encourage lodges and employers to arrange their structures in a way which encourages "career-pathing" for guides and try to encourage long term guiding by providing more attractive conditions for guides and accommodation facilities that allow guides who want to have families to continue working in the industry.

> I think that's how it's been seen. Things have changed now, guiding is a profession, not something that you can get out of what you are doing and

getting into it for a few years. It's now become a profession and like any profession it should be viewed as being something you can do still being a family man, like being family orientated.[102]

But, unfortunately because of I am also doing the management part of the lodge, I am now busy focusing on doing the management part because maybe in the future, in a years time, to take over the managers of this community lodge.[103]

We think actually being a manager of a lodge with your experience of guiding is a very good thing and then you know what you expect your guides to be doing, if they are doing it wrongly you will be able to advise them how to do it better and then I think it's actually guiding will limit you, you can't go anywhere else. Once you're a guide, you're a guide. You can't leave guiding for… anything else, sorry. And I think if you're a manager, you will be at some other stage wishing to be going out with some clients to have more knowledge then because you think you still can do it. And then I think what you'll be doing is, having tour guides being trained…at some stage, if there is a need for us to have a real guide, it will be opportunity for us to go out again and do it…So, unfortunately I'll have to [also] be [a trainer]. But, you know once you were actually thoroughly trained I think you can also be a good trainer. So you also have to just implement that knowledge that has been implemented on you, to someone else. And then I think I got an opportunity, [and] an advantage of having being a teacher before that, I can also be able to impart knowledge on some other guides effectively. I hope it's happening but I am trying my level best to make sure that my tracker is getting more out of me to be as good as I am…I don't really think it is unfair…We got late on to this thing and we then don't actually blame anyone on *(sic.)* it, I think we are getting there...in the future we will be able to be assessors also.[104]

If your employer, I'll say if, for example, that's why I was saying that I do appreciate a manager to have been a guide before because he has been put through that kind of environment of being a guide. He knows what difficulties that come across and then what actually are the things that pushes a guide to be doing the things that he is doing. And then being a manager and then have guided before, you will be able to know that if your guide says you know what I am tired today, you will understand the situation he is talking about.[105]

Whether it was Dale Parker, and whether it was the key to starting Lapalala, or whether it was Nadine Clark, who is a teacher at the Lapalala Wilderness School and prior to that a school girl pupil, who has gone on to write these incredible books for children about learning about nature, the whole story is endless, in terms of the question you asked about how did I get involved in nature guiding. I don't know if you've asked me directly what benefit it has, but I've added that to it, in any event. So that's how I

> got involved in it and I cease to be active in the Wilderness School, it's been taken over in 2002. Lapalala continued- I'm the patron as I pointed out and this museum is a consequence of all those years of the desire to impart knowledge that's not necessarily my own, but others. I had 22 field guides that worked for me from 1976-1994 and I think all, bar 4 or 5 are still in wild-life or some related field.[106]

(also see Graham Vercueil's comment at p. 240 and Lex Hes' comments at p.287 for further discussion)

If management do not create career paths for guides there is a risk that they will start to create their own paths, and will be lost to the organization. There are considerable incentives for guides to go into the private sector, but quite often they are afraid to take this step because they understand, quite correctly in most cases, that they do not have the international marketing and business skills to make a success of their own businesses, and lack the networking skills to make partnerships with other small business operators who may be able to help them. So they can see the possibilities, but quite often they are unable or unwilling to take the risks.

> Myself, I like guiding. But my goal is to run my own …touring company. If I can see myself having my own twenty ten-seaters, taking guests to Kruger National Park, driving them around, showing them different animals, it's something that I want… I did conservation, I wanted to work as a section ranger, but my goal is to run my own touring company. The problem I can see is because most of the people that comes to Kruger National Park they're from overseas. So, it's not easy for people to get somebody overseas to organize some peoples for them there. So, it's going to be much easier for them when they reach South Africa. Because if you want some guests from France, at least you must have somebody who is able to speak French staying in France, so that person is able to organize some guests for you, so that they can easily come to your company. But that thing is not easy. That's why there's not a lot of that type of business. [In conservation they don't teach you marketing and business skills] *(laughs)* They want to keep you in the bush, yes. So you don't have that skills. But if you can have a tourism diploma maybe you can have the skills. But I think that's a good business.[107]

As is typical in academic discussions, the above is the easy part, and concerns what

should be done. The first stage of action would be to get consensus amongst leaders in the industry that these should indeed be the objectives for the industry. How it should be done, when and by whom is a discussion that could only be held if such a forum does successfully convene. It is difficult to assess whether this is likely, but the most practical and effective avenue will be to run forward this thesis as a proposal to FGASA Exco and the Guiding Standards Generating Body of THETA and see if there are adequate interested parties to pursue such an agenda.

**Possible directions for future academic studies of guiding**

Although all of the above suggested areas of focus for guides or guide training are intended to produce areas of study or enquiry in the practical organization and development of nature guiding and nature guiding training as a hands-on practical endeavor, it is possible that any of them may inspire enquiry in the academic field. My personal (and highly subjective) opinion is that the following are probably the most compelling subjects for future academic studies of nature guiding, or subjects related to nature guiding:

1. A critical (quantitative and factual, rather than qualitative and speculative as is this study) study of trails incidents as a ratio of trailists per annum in the Kruger National Park by comparison to other game reserves where people regularly walk in areas where dangerous game is present, with possible recommendations particularly to the Kruger Park Trails Company or former members of the Kruger Park Trails Company, as well as to Kruger Park Management.

2. Examination of the relationship between the advertising industry, client expectations and the reality of guided nature experiences.

3. A comparative history of the post-apartheid development of culture guiding and nature guiding in South Africa, with particular reference to the rise and fall of the SATOUR system.

4. A critical history and thematic discussion of the rise of overland guiding (in southern Africa and around the world).

5. The growth of "niche" markets in South African nature guiding, such as the birding market.

6. A sociological or psycho-sociological study of "khaki fever"- sexual attraction and relationships between nature guides and their clients.

All of the above proposed subjects are referred to at least peripherally in the course of this thesis.

**Conclusion (Chapter 5)**

It might be argued that nature guides are overworked and underpaid, but they also get a vast range of perks which include a wide range of things which have a variable degree of ethical justification. Guides appear disinclined to unionize partly due to their rugged sense of individualism and perceived self-sufficiency, but also because they are scattered into small isolated social units which make socio-political solidarity particularly difficult to achieve strategically. This state of affairs may continue indefinitely into the future, unless a strong group decides to clean up the industry. This is unlikely to occur because ethical objectives and enthusiasm for achieving these are not uniform amongst guides, owing in part at least to the decline in traditional religious and cultural values.

"Khaki fever" the possibility of sexual encounters between guides and clients is one of the strongest forces which keeps the guides "corrupt", and this phenomenon suites lodge owners because they see it as a "perk" which can bribe guides into accepting sub-optimal

conditions of living space, time off and money received. The tipping system is the other corrupter, where owners and managers know that top guides earn significant gratuities.

The tracker is a vital partner of the nature guide, and ideally trackers and nature guides constantly assist and educate each other. Tracking is functional to culling, cropping and anti-poaching activities, so whilst tracking is indispensable to game-rangers, it is often under-developed in nature guides and tracking and other bush-craft are tending to die out. Nature guides need to learn tracking skills- they have immense interest potential, but also safety potential as well. Tracking and the interpretation of other signs can certainly assist nature guides in anticipating and avoiding encounters with dangerous animals.

Whilst common sense suggests that such encounters should be avoided, there are still some guides who deliberately court danger. Caution, anticipation and respect are probably principals that will avoid most dangerous confrontations in the bush, and will in the end save lives, not only of people, but also of animals. Most people go to the bush to experience nature in all its splendor. Undoubtedly, humans have the means to interfere with and control animals, but a good guide should never have the inclination to do so gratuitously, nor to promote the idea that this is a natural or desirable relationship to have with other sentient beings.

**Conclusion (Thesis)**

I believe that this thesis opens up lines of research and enquiry which have previously not been addressed. Traditionally, there has been confusion between game rangers (who are environmental managers) and nature guides (who are ambassadors of eco-tourism who interpret natural areas for paying clients). To date, there is reasonable consensus around the subject matter to be studied by nature guides, but there has been fairly little substantial or critical work which has examined nature guides themselves as subject matter. This is probably mainly because the field of "Tourism" is relatively new in South Africa, and nature guides have not been viewed as belonging very clearly to one discipline or subject matter. The production of this thesis has drawn on history, philosophy, ethics, religion, literature, sociology, psychology, environmental sciences and education and natural sciences, and has perforce been written by a writer who is an expert in none of these fields. For this reason alone, this thesis is likely to attract highly critical responses from a host of predictable sources, and no doubt from a few unexpected sources, too.

I believe that the time has come when nature guides should be taken seriously, and that they should have a framework for understanding their own profession which should form a platform for criticism and debate, and ultimately lead to a guiding industry which is mature, robust, self-confident and self-critical. Such an industry will be able to transform itself not just at the whim of the government or the ruling party, but because it knows where it is going, who it is serving and why it exists. Nature guides should no longer be content to be mere products of a system over which they have scant control, but should rather aim to take up their well earned places as vital and integral leaders of the tourism

industry. They should be rewarded for their knowledge and energetic contributions, and have more control over their destiny. Tomorrow's nature guides should be aware of the pitfalls of utilitarian, anthropocentric and imperialistic interpretations of nature espoused by late capitalism, and they should become the mouthpieces for a deeper, more balanced and critical industry and society.

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# TRANSFORMATION OF THE MYTH AND THE MYTH OF TRANSFORMATION: OVER 100 YEARS OF GUIDING IN SOUTH AFRICAN GAME RESERVES

**FILE B- INTERVIEWS, APPENDICES AND REFERENCES**



submerged

by Anthony James Paton

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Tourism

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**INTERVIEW WITH DR. IAN PLAYER, 4TH FEBRUARY, 2006**

*(revised telephonically by Dr. Player in October 06 and April 07)*

**AP:** I am sitting before a rather injured Dr. Ian Player. Dr. Player- you're not a medical doctor?

**IP:** No, I'm a doctor by acclamation.

**AP:** And tell us about that.

**IP:** I got an honorary doctorate from Natal University- it was a big surprise, because normally one is not recognized in one's own back yard.

**AP:** And when was that?

**IP:** In 1984. Then I got another one from Rhodes.

**AP:** Someone I work with, Melinda Swift, says that you were prepared to lie in front of the bulldozers at Lake St. Lucia, as long as a young lady helped you up.

**IP:** *(Laughs)*. I certainly did say that I would lie down in front of the bulldozers.

**AP:** I am sure you were joking for the other part.

**IP:** I don't recall saying that.

**AP:** You went to school at St. John's College in Johannesburg. Did that give you a negative view of the Christian religion.

**IP:** No..well…You could say no, but while I was there…Ja, let's just say that when I left school…Did you go to St. John's?

**AP:** No, I went to Pretoria Boys' High.

**IP:** We used to go to chapel regularly and when I left St. Johns, I said "That's that!" I am not going to go back to church. But a couple of things happened while I was at St. John's that I felt were very important, but I'll come to them later. When I joined the army in 1944, I was actually in the physical training battalion, but I managed to work my way into the Transvaal Scottish, which was very important to me because an uncle of mine was in the Transvaal Scottish during World War I and got killed during the Battle of the Somme. *(Dr. Player added later that 60 000 men were dead or wounded in one day on that occasion).* It's amazing how even though these it happened a long time ago these things still permeate one's life. Anyway, there was a church parade one day- it was the very first Sunday at Potchefstroom, and the adjutant said "Dutch Reformed men go there, the Jews go

over there, the Methodists over there, and Christians Scientists over there, and Anglicans over there, and Catholics over there, and non-believers over there." So I went over to the non-believers, and I'd only been in that group for a very short while when a very big burly sergeant came over and said "So you're a non-believer, hey? Well, I've got news for you!" And the whole of Sunday I picked up stompies! The next Sunday, I joined the Anglicans, and as I went past the adjutant he grabbed my arm and he said "Player, I know about the revelation on the road to Damascus for St. Paul, but I doubt whether your revelation on the road to Potchefstroom was as quick!"

**AP:** Sir Laurens van der Post said that "Wilderness is the original cathedral," a view you seem to support. Would you describe yourself as a pantheist?

**IP:** I mean we're all pantheists, really. If you look at it realistically, because Christianity embraced the pantheists beliefs, Christmas being one of them. But the church have made some very serious mistakes in that they have not recognized that it was in the wilderness humans have to face themselves. Christ himself was always going into it, yet the church seems to ignore the wilderness experience. An Indian Christian called Ramachacra wrote a book called Christ in the Wilderness. It's the only book on the subject as far as I know, that mentions Christ's time in the Wilderness. In my first experience of the wilderness I realized the value of this as a religious experience. It's a very, very important Christian experience to spend time in the wilderness, and in fact, I feel that if the church is to be honest to itself, that would be the way to reinvigorate the church. I mean a lot of people aren't going back to church- it hardly surprises me. They're not giving the congregations the numinousity experience of very wild country, where one is not only a part of humanity, but also a part of the landscape. If they want to get people in the churches, they would have to give them the wilderness experience. Laurens van der Post and I had many discussions about it.

**AP:** Can you expand further on in what way are you indebted to him?

**IP:** Indebted to Laurens? My main debt to Laurens was his book C.G. Jung and the Story of Our Time.

**AP:** Did you get to know Jung through van der Post?

IP: Yes. I mean I had heard of Jung, then I read van der Post's book C.G. Jung and the Story of Our Time, and it was a real revelation and this was the man to read. The astronaut of the inner space- the most remarkable man of the 20th century, I have no doubt about that. In fact I used to tell Laurens that that book of his cost me a fortune, because if you look around here in my library you'll see how many books there are on Jungian psychology. I've spent my life buying and reading the books around Jung, as well as Jung himself. That's my debt to van der Post. He made me read Jung because he knew at that stage of my life I was ready for a change. But it has taken me another 30 years to come to the depth of Jung. I

mean Jung- because of the dream- this afternoon I was dozing and we've got a bit of a crisis with the Northern white Rhino at Ngaramba in the Democratic Republic of the Congo…

AP: How do you explain the uncanny dream connection between Magqubu Ntombela and Coyote? Is this one of the most inexplicable events or relationships which you've encountered?

IP: You mean that Native American?

AP: Yes, how they both independently dreamt that they met each other in the dream world.

IP: Well, it's not unusual.

AP: Do you think western people have lost that?

IP: O, yes. This is both the tragedy and a great loss to western civilization. Nowadays no dreams are regarded as important. I mean, you just take one incident out of the bible. I went to see a lady the other day who sells flowers in Howick, and she knows I am interested in dreams. She started to talk about how dreams were the work of the devil and I said "You know the bible is full of dreams." And in fact, had Pontius Pilate listened to his wife, there's a good chance that Christ would have lived another thirty years…what a different world that would have been! What a different world we would have lived in! Because Pontius Pilate's wife had a dream not to crucify Christ. In the room next door to where you're sleeping, if you put your head around the corner in that room you'll see on the floor there are 54 volumes of my dream diary. And I owe that to van der Post because he always said that you've got to honour the dream. You honour the dream and how do you honour it? You write it down.

AP: Do you find that recording your dreams makes you better at remembering them?

IP: Oh. Yes, yes definitely. The dream is a…It's the symbolism in the dream that's so important, and the associations that go with it, I always think of old Morten Kelsey, an Episcopalian priest who came and stayed here, and he told me the story of how he woke up one morning, and the moment he awoke he knew what his dream was saying and he shouted out in ecstasy "God, why don't you make all my dreams so easy to understand?" and a week or so later he had a dream in which he heard a voice, and the voice is important- because it is literal. Images are images- they are symbolic, but the voice said "If I made all your dreams so easy to understand you wouldn't work hard to come close to me". No- this is I suppose the last thing I want to do on this planet- are you familiar with the Temple of Aesculapius?

AP: No.

IP: Aesculapius was the Greek god of healing and what would happen is that people in need of heeling would go with the priest on a pilgrimage and the priest would walk in front and in front of him was a dog, and why the dog? Because the dog is aware of things that we're not aware of- in fact C.G. Jung used to keep a dog in the parlour of his house, because he said that the moment that anyone walked into that house who was psychotic, the dog knew and it warned him. Anyway, they would go, and they would go to the temple and they would lie down in the temple and the priest would then release snakes. Then the priest would interpret their dreams and the healing would begin. Why snakes? Because snakes are symbolic of change because they change their skin…

AP: And religion? And sexuality?

IP: Well, it might be applicable in Freudian terms, but not here… of course, Jung would never be so categorical about the meaning, because in the end the meaning depends upon you. Any way, the dream-I remember a little while back I met a certain lady who worked with lions at Shamwari, and she was saying that she never dreamt. Well, I wanted to find out why, but that's another story. Anyway, I told her of the pilgrimages, how the pilgrims follow the priest, the priest would follow the dog, and they would enter the temple and lie down and the priest would release snakes. These Aesculapian temples are all over Asia Minor, in fact the Romans stole the biggest one, that's one that they built- they built it on the Tiber. She continued to insist that she never dreamed. Well, of course the moment you say that, you are challenging the unconscious. I said to her the dog is the intuitive, and woman are very much more intuitive than men. Well and sure enough she reported having a dream the next night. You have to utilize your intuitive- it's fallow- you've got to give it reign. Since then, she's been dreaming all the time.

AP: Women are much more intuitive than men?

IP: Ja.

AP: And yet we don't have many women leading trails?

IP: Yes, we do. A tiny little woman. Kim Gillings is her name. A little bit taller than this stick. The gun that she carries is bigger than her. And there's also another one…San-Marie Botha… and they're very good…bloody good. And all the men [make out as though they have a problem with shooting]. Nonsense, these women can shoot as well as any man, and they have an added aura. Yes, today there are many women trails officers- in my day there were none! And in fact my wife would get very angry because my game ranger friends would say that the role in Parks Board for woman was either as a typist or a receptionist. No, they make very good guides. San Marie and Kim are both at Umfolozi. And I was looking in my diary today- there's a woman that I met- she's from

Anchorage- she leads horse trails- and they've got bears and other dangers. But they're very interested in dreams too, I might add…I spoken to most of the males who do wilderness trails, but the moment I get amongst the women they want to know a lot more about the inner journey. It's not surprising.

AP: Do you think we're still caught up in a very macho form of wilderness trails?

IP: Yes, but it's undergoing radical change.

AP: What are the precise origins of the term "The Big Five"?

IP: I would say that it's a marketing term of very recent origins, and it's been used as a marketing term by up-market game lodge owners.

AP: Why is there still an emphasis on "the Big Five" on trails?

IP: A really good wilderness trails officer would not go out of his way to show them "The Big Five", in fact the reverse- he would treat them with great respect, because what has happened in the past is that a rhino will be lying down, or a lion will be lying down and the guide will pick up a stick or stone and throw it at the animal to get it on it's feet. In fact it still happens.

AP: The ideal experience of the animal would be the one in which you see the animal and the animal didn't even know you were there?

IP: They always know you're there, but it's the acknowledgement that they give you, I mean they're much more perceptive than we are.

AP: Do you think we're getting past the "must see the Big Five" mentality?

IP: It's marketing. It's a pain, an absolute pain. If that's what people want…a one thousand hectare place where they've virtually got them chained up.

AP: Back to the White Rhino- is it really true that there were only 500 white rhino in 1960. How did this state of affairs come about?

IP: I did the very first aerial count of the White Rhino in 1953, and there were 437. How do I know it was accurate? I know because the pilot who did the flying had been a pilot in the tsetse fly campaign. They had these burners at the back of the Piper Cubs and they had specific targets, so he knew exactly were the rhinos were…somewhere I've got a photograph of him.

AP: Is it true that many of your colleagues were resistant when you tried to introduce the idea of wilderness trails? Why were they resistant and how did you overcome this resistance?

IP: Well, there was definitely resistance. A lot of the senior staff saw it as locking up the country. I tried to explain that in fact it's the reverse- it is unlocking human minds, unlocking the soul, not locking up country. They were afraid that tourism was very much on the rise and that the trails would lock up areas that could be developed. In a way they did lock up the country, of course you can't go in there in a vehicle- but they were against wilderness areas. They didn't understand my purpose or methods. There's a hell of a row going on at the moment because they took a mountain bike race through the wilderness areas- no it's sacrilegious! I mean wilderness is a sacred place, and these have always been sacred places and every nation of the world and every tribe and every sect have places that are sacred, and that's what we did not acknowledge. Perhaps I am- and you are too with your Celtic background- Celts used go on their pilgrimages to the Nemetons, which were the sacred oak groves and they went there why? To experience a soul mood. A soul mood of the landscape. A soul mood of the Nemeton Forest, and it's very, it's very interesting that the original definition, one of the original definitions of wilderness was to experience the soul mood. Now here you've got what 5 000 years ago, 6 000 years ago, our Celtic forefathers- if you look at the book here on wilderness as set aside by the United States Senate- and there you see modern descriptions use the same terms as the ancient Celts. So, it's deep within, deep within. Everybody has their sacred places.[1]

AP: Is it true that Hluhluwe-Umfolozi were set aside as the traditional hunting grounds of the Zulu kings?

IP: Yes, certainly, I mean Umfolozi was the hunting grounds of Shaka - in my office I've got a little paper on them. They had a very, very strict code of ethics. Death was the penalty.

AP: Even in pre-Shakan days.

IP: As far as I know. The ethics revolved around having something to hunt next year. An earlier form of "conservation" if you will.

AP: Did the Zulus always respect this custom respectfully?

IP: Yes, and not only the Zulus, the maShangaan. I do find it different, there's a different attitude in…and of course with the Bushman, the whole life was a sacred trek…

AP: Maybe you want to talk a little bit about wilderness and the person of Aldo Leopold…( I have certainly got my own ideas on why Aldo Leopold was great, but I would like to hear yours…)

IP: You know, I think that Aldo Leopold was great because unlike many scientists, he saw the spiritual value of wilderness like Fraser Darling did- are you aware of Fraser Darling?

AP: No.

IP: Fraser Darling was a Scot, who came out to Africa. He was very fond of Africa. He gave a Reith lecture… have you heard of the Reith lectures? Lord Reith was a chairman of the BBC and for many, many years we used to have every year and Reith lecture and really someone was honoured if they gave the Reith lecture. And Fraser Darling gave it the one year, and he said something which has really stuck in my head. He said "To deprive the world of physical wilderness would be to inflict a grievous wound on mankind."

AP: And that's really what's happening, isn't it?

IP: Yes, this is why I fought so hard for it because I know, I have seen what it can do for people. I know it….

AP: I noticed that Stevenson-Hamilton was also interested in Leopold. Were you aware of that and did Stevenson Hamilton influence you in your interest in Leopold?

IP: No, I only really became interested in Leopold in about 1955- Sand County Almanac then Round River. I would say that Stevenson-Hamilton got interested because Stevenson-Hamilton was a very unusual man, one of the really great men of our country.

AP: Do you think that Vaughan Kirby and Stevenson-Hamilton were similar figures?

IP: Yes, they are similar figures, but look Stevenson-Hamilton had one entity that he had to fight for, and that was the Kruger National Park. Being a soldier, you can see how he worked out his strategy and his tactics all the time. Vaughan Kirby was also a soldier, but he had Hluhluwe, Umfolozi, the Crown Lands, Ndumo, Mkuze, Lake St. Lucia- he had half a dozen places that were separated by farms and villages, but he had to try and get the value of those places across. He was not as articulate as Stevenson-Hamilton, but he was very brave and quite a few people don't know that.
The Zulus called him Umfohloza because he used to wear long khaki trousers and when the dew…when they would get wet in the morning he would go *fohla-fohla* (as he walked along).
Ja, no they were different people- I would say that Vaughan Kirby had a harder battle, and also he was not the diplomat that Stevenson-Hamilton (or Captain H. B. Potter, for that matter) was.

AP: Has the fact that they were military men affected the style of game ranging in their respective game reserves?

IP: Certainly! I mean when I joined the Natal Parks Board, in 1952, within the space of a couple of years, 95% of the European officers were all ex-servicemen, because our leader was a brilliant soldier, in fact the only South African in the second World War to get the PSC.

AP: Do you think we've had over militarized game ranging and trails rangers as a result?

IP: No, I don't! You can do it of course…you can over militarize but…well we've got two things, if we're just talking about trails that's one story, but if you're talking about parks as a whole, that's another story! If you're talking about the parks as a whole, that you have to hang on to, and to increase in size, you have to plan like a battle, and that's what we do.
Do I quote Professor John Phillips in my book? Professor John Phillips was a forester and he started off his life in Knysna, then he gradually went north and he ended up being the chief agricultural advisor to Kwame Nkrumha and then to Julius Nyerere, and then came south again after the war, and I just missed out on the.. they had a scheme going for ex-servicemen. And I thought we produced the finest land conservation corps in Africa. They all went to Rhodesia when the Nats came into power…but Phillips…I'll never forget it…it was 1960 in what was then Salisbury, we had a course of all the young game rangers, and the auditorium was packed…he was an advisor to General Smuts as well..
And suddenly there's a hush. And suddenly I saw this man coming down the stairs, and by the time he got to the podium, you could have heard a pin drop…he just looked at this hall and then he said "I want to tell you, you young game rangers of Africa, that there will never be a waterloo in conservation, only a long drawn out guerilla war.." And I tell you, that was the best lesson that I have ever learned. And that was exactly what was needed so instead of trying to go for an El Alamein *(23 October, 1942)* we had a long drawn out guerilla war… and that's how we won.. I mean a guerilla war using newspapers, radio and ultimately television, I mean it was a lot of dirty tricks too…

AP: The battle of Natal Parks was quite different from Kruger?

IP: A yes, because you were dealing with six and more at a time. The establishment of trails was a major part of winning the guerilla war. I mean nobody ever walks in Africa without being affected by it. I've had people writing to me over 30 years later, saying well now I've worked out what you're talking out- it's taken 30 years to sink in (*laughter)*

AP: Would you comfortable to lead a group without a rifle in your possession.

IP: You can do it, but you've got to very sharp… I mean in Botswana guides go out without a rifle who are one level below Magqubu Ntombela…

AP: Legendary stuff?

IP: Legendary stuff!

AP: I know of another guide up there- his name is Royal and he's only got one leg. He lost his leg in a car accident. One of the few times he ever went in a car he lost his leg, and decided to go back to poling. I have heard from friends how he stood down a lion charge just waving his crutches. Amazing!
Just to go back to the person of Leopold. You were saying that Stevenson-Hamilton was articulate- that's certainly true, but I don't think we've ever had an equivalent of Leopold. Do you agree? And do you think Sir Laurens comes the closest?

IP: Oh, no-no. Laurens is not a scientist- Leopold is a scientist. No, I think Laurens would have been irritated with Leopold and vice versa. They would have got on well in some respect, but they were very different people.
Leopold was very much ahead of his time… it's about the only thing that JDF (Jones) got right in his book.

AP: You don't support JDF (Jones) criticism of Sir Laurens?

IP: No, it was unpleasant and in parts a bit inaccurate. It was also unfeeling. Laurens was very much a feeling type. That's the problem with the world of course- that's why Jung was such a great man. He was saying that if you really wanted to do something, if you really wanted to change the world, you've got to understand what he's teaching us. You can't have a thinking type talking exclusively to feeling types. And this is where Jung was a genius.

AP: Because of his depth of emotion and intellect?

IP: Because he said you had to bring all these things together. But you see, one of the functions would be inferior. I have a very good friend who is very much a thinking sensation type like Stevenson-Hamilton. They always make the best naturalists.

AP: The public in general are quite ignorant of the difference between a game ranger and a field guide, and generally insist on using the term "game ranger" to cover both occupations. Is game ranging a dirty, more gritty and less rewarding job? Do you think your creation of the wilderness Leadership Schools was the origin of this distinction in southern Africa?

IP: It's very hard to answer this shortly. A game ranger is an officer, who you would also use, I mean when I was doing trails in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, I would take rangers out of outposts, and make them take trails because they should know what it was to be with (the trailists), but the functions are different. I mean you can get a good game ranger, you take him off ranging and you put him in charge of trails, but they're not the same tasks, I mean a ranger is just that- he's got to run

an outpost, he's got to maintain standards with his game scout staff, whereas a wilderness trails officer is dealing with the public. Most game rangers become game rangers because they don't want to be with the public- they hate it! No names, but there was once a man who, after he was doing it for about a year or so aiming at the trailists with a rifle! He had had it! *(Chuckles)* I mean I was very fortunate because Magqubu Ntombela loved people, so consequently he took all the… he absorbed all those kind of pressures and all I did was acted as a facilitator…he wanted to- he was doing all the hard work. I mean it's become a science now and John Sanford- are you familiar with him? John Sanford was an Episcupalian priest who used to realized that there were things, there were dynamics in human society of which people knew almost nothing, so he made it his business to study, so if you really want to be a good trails officer, you should read John Sanford, who later became a Jungian analyst. He wrote several books, one of them was a very, very important book. It was a book on stress called Burn-Out. Well, his more famous work is Mystic Christianity and then he wrote Between People. Anybody who is married, better read that book, because what that book tells you is that when you are fighting with your wife, the male part of you is fighting with the male part of your wife…so these things in guiding are very important, very important to know, you must be able to understand what is happening…if you are going to be a good guide, and I tell you what, there are not a hell of a lot of good guides, who last. I mean they go like stars in the firmament. They go, because they get burnout…I know, I know it so well…I can walk into a situation, a guiding situation, and I can tell you, you must take that person off or take that one off. They've maybe got a month, or six months.

AP: I was very aware of it when I was an overland guide. I was very aware of reaching my limit. The chairman of FGASA, Adriaan Louw, has examined the figures of "incidents" in the Kruger Park, and has come to the conclusion that almost all the trails rangers who shot animals for client protection on trails had been doing it continuously for longer, and often much longer than three or four years, and so were suffering from trails "burnout".

IP: I would say he's dead right. Getting rid of some of that frustration. If you probably looked at them, they were probably hoping they could shoot some of the people! *(Laughs)*

AP: Who would you name as the top guides in Natal at the moment?

IP: At the moment. Well, you've got to look at it over a period. I mean one of the outstanding guides was Hugh Dent…why? Hugh Dent *(the son of Raylton Dent)* was Christian who liked people and was very well disciplined, having been in the British South African Police (in Rhodesia). You see what happens is that guides don't like people to question them…these are the signs..if you find people getting irritable, you know. But, in fact I found that it was good on some trails to have no talking at all and the trailists benefit just as much…I believe that talking…if you're going to run a trail with hardly any talking at all, it will be peaceful and

much better for the trailists, because we underestimate our relationship with the natural world, how in that quietness, and silence we truly experience wilderness If you're talking it makes you lazy- instead of trying to work it out the trailists will just ask the guide for explanations.

AP: It's quite difficult keeping up with a range of different subjects, and you don't get asked about them very often, so they're not reinforced. So you have to have that discipline of learning as well.

IP: Well, the first trick, any time you're guiding anywhere, is to find out in your group what expertise there is. You get people to introduce themselves and tell you what their interests are so that if someone's interests are astronomy, you don't talk about astronomy, you've got someone who can do it, or ornithology, or whatever as the case may be. And it opens things up.

AP: So the guide is a facilitator- should the guide just let all the other people do the talking?

IP: You see, you cannot be too dogmatic in your trail either…

AP: Guides are born or made?

IP: Good guides are born.

AP: What are the qualities of an excellent wilderness guide?

IP: Well, you have to be, in my opinion anyway… it depends on where you are…well, it doesn't matter where you are, you should have a sound grasp of history- that's very, very important. When you're walking through a space you must be able to read that landscape, and introduce it in such a way, that you are bringing all the aspects together, and most particularly instilling in the trailists a sense of place.

AP: Before I finish up with wilderness, I'm just trying to back to a few things…I was going to say that I noticed that you were known as Madolo- when I first did a game ranging practical we went to erect a windsock which was damaged, and as we got it up the entire ring snapped off clean and hit me in the right knee, so I became known as Stikinyawo for the rest of my time there…

IP: Where were you?

AP: This was at Alicecot in the Sabie Sands. I remember the pole just bouncing out of my knee and I was rushed off to Skukuza. A traffic policeman lept out to stop us for speeding but when he saw the situation he quickly urged us on. I went on to get five or six internal stitches and five or six on the surface. I still went on to run

a few Comrades after that, but the name Stikinyawo stuck. Did your interest in canoeing relate to your knee injury?

IP: Yes, it had a lot to do with it because when I was at St. Johns, even though I was very young my options in sport became limited because I had a pretty serious accident.

AP: What was the inspiration behind the Duzi Canoe Marathon? Has the race lived up to your original vision? Are there any elements in the race which disappoint you?

IP: The vision (has) materialized in two ways. I mean I realized that canoeing is a spiritual journey, not an ordinary sport

AP: Did you ever see the movie Jim Jarmusch movie Dead Man?

IP: No.

AP: It's a pretty obscure movie, but it had Jonny Depp as the Dead Man. He is in some sense dead from near the beginning of the movie, but in the final scene he is sent out to sea in a canoe as a Native American burial ritual…

IP: Ja,….and consequently a lot of…I'm very proud of the Duzi.

AP: Your brother Gary Player is more widely known than you…

IP: And rightly so…

AP: Have you converted him to be a wilderness enthusiast?

IP: I would not say that he's a wilderness convertee…we're very different…for me I would say that wilderness is a religious quest…(to my brother- he wouldn't even know what the hell I'm talking about)…but this was because I my injury. I had to go in- he went out, I went in. He went out, and still is out, actually…and I pray for him that one day he will start on his inner journey and look at his dreams.

AP: To end up talking about wilderness…what are the special qualities of wilderness?

IP: Well, it's a religious quest…it's an understanding of yourself in relation to the landscape and all the other life, in a wild place…

AP: How has the Wilderness Leadership School changed over time? Are you happy with what it has become? Are there any elements of change which you find disappointing?

IP: Of course I mean, things have changed…there are more people and it's difficult to have the same quality of experience. I mean what is unchanged is that it is a

journey to one's soul and the landscape and all other life. That remains constant. It all depends upon the individual as to how far they are…the sky's the limit.

AP: Does that mean that you're optimistic about the future of wilderness?

IP: It's going to take hard, hard work, and truly dedicated people, to maintain it, to not let it deteriorate, to have that experience…I mean the difference between the Wilderness Leadership School and all other organizations is that right from the beginning I had no hesitation in saying that this is a spiritual quest. I remember senior officers in the Parks Board who were very uneasy and said "What kind of spirit are you talking about? Whiskey? Brandy?" And so many other things, and then again, as I said to you early on…

AP: Does a guide have to carry a rifle?

IP: Where there are wild animals, yes. However, a guide is always enabling people to learn…I mean the world is in a mess, and yet just imagine… I always remember going to London when we were fighting for St. Lucia, and going to one of the big mining companies and telling some of the directors there that they were going to loose this battle…never underestimate the power of the human spirit. The way we won St. Lucia was that so many people had been out on trails and had had a sense of place instilled, that we managed to muster popular support. In these battles, you're fighting with money…it's a paradox- it always is- I mean we live in paradox- on the one hand your fighting money, on the other hand you need to get money in order that people can have the experience. That's a real paradox isn't it?

AP: In part of my Masters I did environmental education, and there seems to be quite a strong grouping of people who are saying "We need money to fight against capitalism!" It's exactly the same thing!

IP: And yet, Christianity, for example is a belief system, but the church needs money, too!

AP: You have reached an age where you deserve not to be disturbed, and I apologize for my intrusion…

IP: You're welcome…

AP: You've done many remarkable things, and met many remarkable people…which of achievements give you the greatest sense of pride, and who was your most remarkable person?

IP: I'll start with the last- the most memorable person Magqubu Ntombela. There he is over there *(points to bust on mantelpiece)*, I greet him every morning, and I say good night to him every night. Until I met with him I believed in "racial

superiority", but not long after meeting him I realized that this man was…you go to the classics- somebody said I was a classicist (which I am, I suppose)…but I had a very limited education in my early days… but Kipling says it in Gunga Din, do you know the poem Gunga Din?

AP: "You are a better man than I, Gunga Din!"

IP: You are a better man than I, Gunga Din, thank you. Well, Magqubu Ntombela was a better man than I. Unashamedly, I'll state it…so I had limited education, but he had none at all!

AP: What are you working on at the moment?

IP: I've done an incredible amount of reading in my life, but as I get older it's getting less…because we know in actual fact what Jung so often said…if I knew twenty years ago what I know now, I would only have read Jung…he's incredible- the shadow, when you understand yourself, when you understand your own shadow, it is pure gold! What a revelation! It's all there…"The wind used to cry, and the hills shout forth praise…"

AP: After your death, what plans do you have for your mortal remains?

IP: Well my mortal remains for what it is worth, are to go into a pine box, nothing too elaborate, a pine box and rope, and go through cremation. As you turn out the drive here on your right hand side, there's quite a big yellowwood tree, where my father's ashes are buried. What is quite interesting is that my father died in 1978. But after that my mother died and her ashes were buried under the yellowwood tree and over the past five years or so it's grown a huge new branch. Perhaps this branch represents my mother. So I would like some scattering to be done at that tree, some scattering to go at the Karkloof Church, because it's a lovely little church. Do you know it?

AP: No.

IP: You should have a look at it on your way out. It's a beautiful little church which tells the story of the people here, so I'd like a little bit there, and then some scattered in Umfolozi, on the Gome Hill, where Nick Steele's ashes are. Well, that's the mortal remains…and in the service I would like certain hymns…I've written them down somewhere- can't remember the words off-hand. Then, I've walked a long way to the tune of Lily Marlane, so I would like it to be played. Also, if you haven't made enemies, you've achieved nothing. Someone said "Your work can be measured by the number of enemies you have made." I have made my fair share. Because you don't honestly know what's going to happen…Regrets? I have no regrets in my work, I mean I've been in conservation and you've got to work hard, very hard for very little financial reward. I am not complaining, far from complaining. Possibly, think that my

biggest regret is that I didn't spend more time writing. Somebody once paid me a very nice compliment and said "I've read what you've written, and I've heard you speak, and I really think you should write more," and I know that it's true.

AP: What are you writing at the moment?

IP: Well, I'm working on a few things different things…

AP: Dr. Ian Player, thank you very, very much.

IP: You are very welcome.

AP: I have gained a huge amount from you. Thank you very much, not only for your kindness in speaking to me, but also for the hospitality which you and Mrs. Ann Player have shown me by letting me stay here.

IP: You are very welcome. Your grandfather I am proud to say was a very good friend of mine, a man I admired very much, he was a great man. I had a lot of time for him. He used to come here stay with us quite often. I liked Alan Paton. He was a poet- he was a rare combination of poet and scientist.

AP: Now he would be another candidate for the local equivalent of Aldo Leopold.

IP: Yes, he would certainly.

*(At this point the tape ended and we adjourned for supper. I left early the next morning, and took a careful look at the yellowwood and its new branch which Dr. Player thought so significant (symbolic of himself joined the ancestors "family tree"), but due to time pressure, I did not go to see the Karkloof Church. I considered this interview quite successful, despite the fact (or paradoxically because of the fact) that I left with more questions than answers. I got excellent answers, but on reflection, excellent answers are always pregnant with fresh questions, so no successful interview can ever be one which is neatly concluded).*

The Three Legs of Wisdom
I met an old sage I could probably name
Player of the daring and dangerous game
And asked him how do you survive the stress
With one leg always in the wilderness.

He said he learnt from a better fellow
Not Gunga Din, but Maqhub' Ntombela.
In his Shadow was where he'd learnt such a lot
That the symbol of Life was a three-legged pot.

For your spirit to soar you ascend on all three-
One leg is a branch in your family tree,
The second leg lives in the wildest place
Connecting all nature to the human race.

And the third leg, though you might find it odd,
Is a pillar that joins you to up to God.
Maqhuba could never be called a fool-
He learnt all he knew in the Wilderness School!

## INTERVIEW 2 : WARREN BEKKER

*Pietermaritzburg, 08h00, 05 Feb, 06*

**AP:** Warren Bekker, you're a guide trainer with (KZ) Natal Parks. Tell us a bit more about what you actually do in your job.

**WB:** The last two years has involved getting the guides registered up with the local tourism authority, which is a mandatory requirement in each province, so I've basically been in charge of getting all the guys registered and assessed against the basic (THETA) Level II standard which allows them to guide in the site, or within the province. The last year we started being involved with the dangerous game weapons handling training for the guides, which involves putting the guys through the basic use of rifle, which is the new SESETA qualification, as set down by the firearms control act, and once that is completed, once they have done the use of rifle, they will then go on to the advanced weapon handling which involves the guide being able to successfully … *(disjuncture in dialogue was caused by Warren finding himself intimidated by the tape and so needing to talk without it for a while to counter "stage-fright").* Botswana where I was for a few years, because I've taken a little bit of everything, so it's interesting because Botswana's totally different from here, because no firearms in certain of your National Parks so the guides have a totally different approach to animals. In the Natal Parks or the old Natal Parks Board, now Kwa-Zulu Natal Wildlife, we tend to have a high concentration of rhino population, so on a walk, inevitably you are going to bump into at least between 10 and 15 Rhino on a walk. Now, the guys inherently knew at one stage that rhino, because they were endangered, the last thing you should ever do, is shoot a rhino. So they've used their bush knowledge and their bush skills to avoid a situation before it happens. So all I'm there to do is to facilitate that whole process, and say look guys, don't stop what you are doing because our incidents have been very, very low considering the amount of trails we have taken out over the number of years we have been running…so we've said "Don't stop what you are doing. All I'm there to do is to try and give you the confidence to be able to manipulate your weapon, and give you some form of stimulus and response, whereby you don't have a static target. You've got a target moving at you, you've got a target at different distances, to try and simulate as best we can, a real life situation." So that's where I am, that's the role I am playing at the moment and we need to get all our guides first of all through that use of rifle which is the minimum qualification that is set down by SESETA, and is seen as the new regulation.

**AP:** When I was last in the picture, there was this POSLEC standard…

**WB:** Ja, POSLEC. They've changed it to SESETA, they've changed their name.

**AP:** So it's still the same?

**WB:** Still exactly the same, with a few minor changes that have taken place, but basically POSLEC has now become SESETA.

**AP:** Okay…

**WB:** So that's now where we are at the moment, so by the end of 2006, as an official institution, which we are, we are required by law, to have all of our guides, any person carrying a firearm, to be put through that unit standard. Now we are very fortunate in that we have developed our own training material that has been accredited and registered. We are all accredited and registered as assessors and moderators, and we deliver our own training. We are not reliant on anyone else.

**AP:** Ja.

**WB:** The dangerous game stuff- I put my programme together, it's been accepted by THETA, and we are accredited and registered to deliver the dangerous game TG16 unit standard. So we are very fortunate in that we are self-sufficient in being able to deliver firearms training, all the way through to dangerous game. And that's my function at the moment- to try and give the guys that bit of confidence, to know that if they have to put the shot, where it's necessary, as an absolute last resort, they've got the confidence to do it. I'd rather have that, than have a guy turn around and say, no, he doesn't want to shoot an animal (yes, and we don't promote the shooting of animals in any way whatsoever) but, if there is no other alternative, rather have a person who knows that he is confident, that he can put the shot where it needs to be placed. And that's our philosophy as far as trails guides…negligent shooting of animals will result in disciplinary action. There's a full investigation that happens after an incident, and if it is found that you have not taken the reasonable steps or were negligent with guests, you will be duly disciplined. So it's not a case of saying "Well, if you get into trouble, just shoot the animal". Not by any means at all. It's never been like that, and that's why we've got such a low incident rate of encounters.

**AP:** Black Rhino are very difficult, aren't they, Warren? By the time you've shouldered your weapon that's almost gone past you…

**WB:** Any animal is potentially dangerous. You look at a Buffalo running at you without any warning. You'll have no chance with a Buffalo, with an Elephant, with any of those larger animals, but it's the Black Rhino, because of its temperament is generally considered to be a little bit more aggressive…having said that, I wouldn't like to come across and angry daga-boy *(old buffalo bull)* at the best of times. Black Rhino, because they are quite elusive, you don't tend to see them as often as you would the rest of the game, and the guides know that if they see Black Rhino tracks they'll avoid it…if there's a thick area, if there's like a reed-bed area, they won't go into it…so they don't take that unnecessary step or risk, just to say "Look guys, there is Black Rhino here, it is fresh, let's go and try and find it". Totally the opposite, they'll say "Guys, there is a Black Rhino track

here. Because of their temperament and because of the thickness of the area, we'd rather skirt around, and rather not risk any potential encounters which would possibly mean that if I needed to I would have to shoot the animal." So, the guys, I must say, that is something that I can really commend them on. They've been pretty good from that side, so we don't go, so they don't go looking for trouble. Same with elephants- breeding herd of *(African)* Elephants- if they see tracks or signs, they will go the other way. Not to say that they're taking the lesser option- they are taking the better option- your guests are still getting a good bush experience, but they don't have that sort of uneasy feeling. Yes, when it comes to animals on foot they tend to pick up little signs of the guide, the guide's not confident or whatever in whatever situation, the guests certainly won't be calm, and if the guide can explain to the guests the reasons why we are not going close, then they will be able to understand. Totally different from a lot of the reserves I've worked at and seen the quality of certain of the guides who will try and push that envelope and try and get closer, because of the money, or the tip, or the adrenalin rush…

**AP:** Ja.

**WB:** …and that's when accidents start to happen.

**AP:** There was an article by Bruce Lawson in the last FGASA newsletter, in which Bruce Lawson went tracking lion, he realized there were cubs and he carried on tracking those lions, then they charged him and his tourists something like 18 times in 12 minutes. And I've just written to FGASA saying "Bruce Lawson has portrayed himself in the absolute wrong way as though he was the hero of the situation and I'm saying he was the architect of his own trouble…and even though he handled it and everything- he called it a day to remember, and I said he should call it 'A Day to Regret'. So the next FGASA newsletter will have a statement by me, the very same thing. Lions have got cubs- you don't track them, if it's black rhino, you don't track them, if elephants have got calves, you don't track them. It's a no-no, and I think it's a macho thing. Where do you think this macho thing comes from?

**WB:** Ever since I started guiding, the old guiding fraternity used to be a lot of old bush veterans, that used to come out, and they enjoyed being out in the bush, and you got that type of khaki fever macho guide image which tended to filter down, and I believe that a lot of the guides that are up and coming are a lot more educated and they have a different philosophy and outlook to nature guiding and animals in general and they are more for the protection and the conservation rather than pushing the envelope. The unfortunate thing is, and this is where I have a problem with certain of those guides that we've mentioned, and also certain television programmes, like Mad Mark & Mike. That is the exact opposite of what I think should be portrayed, because people looking at that think "Well, if they can do it, I can do it." And you'll push that envelope, a little bit more, a little bit more… because animal behaviour is so dynamic. An animal behaving one

way the one day will be totally different the next day, so you cannot predict "O no, fine, I know the animal, I know the animal…" The next day you push the limit, and then something happens.

**AP:** Ja.

**WB:** So I just, I think it's come down from the traditional rugged bush ranger and slowly filtered its roots, but you do have and I have seen two distinct paths of guides, and I'm hoping that the future of guiding will be more on that route where the person is less worried about image, and about money and the ladies, but concentrating on giving his guests a better bush experience that they can remember.

**AP:** We're still marketing "The Big Five" and that's one of the problems.

**WB:** You know what that has been an ingrained problem ever since I started guiding, "The Big Five". People in Africa, and overseas and from all over the world, they come to see "The Big Five". That, you can never get that sort of marketing logo out. It's been here to stay, and it will be here to stay forever. The biggest area where I believe a guide will play the most critical role is breaking down that guest expectation right from the beginning. So, he arrives in a reserve, and he is under the impression that whatever he sees on TV he is going to be able to see when you get out in the bush. Now that is so far from the truth. So it's the guides ability to break that guests expectation down, to say "Look, over the two, or three, or four day period, or however long you are going to be here, yes, you probably will see some really good animal sightings but, what I am going to be doing is I'm going to be facilitating and overall guest experience where I am going to be incorporating the geology of the area, astronomy, I am going to be doing a whole lot of different topics that will give you a better idea of the area that you're in and how everything fits together", not just going from one animal to one animal to one animal- basically just "big-fiving" which does happen in the reserves, and its not just the fault of the guide, but you have these big tour groups that come through. They are pressurized for time, they need to see animals. Now you've got four different groups going out, each of them with a different group from the same bus. They get back that evening, this one has seen Lion, this one's seen that and this one's seen Buffalo, and they're all very upset with everybody because they haven't seen…so it does sometimes get into tricky situations, but I don't think you're going to get away from that "Big Five" marketing ploy that has been ingrained in South Africa.

**AP:** Aren't the guides being set up for failure then?

**WB:** You know, I think that…and this is where it comes down to you having a solid structure within your guiding ranks, is that if you have a head guide, or a head ranger who has got the ability to pass down his ideas and his philosophy, and everybody has a buy-in to that, then I think it will work, and I don't think the guys

will be set up for failure, because, yes, there are, in the majority of all these new reserves there are, there are "The Big Five". They are available, and there's a very good chance that you probably will see the majority of them over a three-four day stay, but it's that guide's ability to make them understand that they're not here just to see "The Big Five".

**AP:** Don't you think the foreign tourist is actually ahead of the game on that one, and South African marketing is where that problem is being created.

**WB:** But…yes, I think it definitely is. The other side of it is you've got to look at it and say "what am I going to put in my marketing ploy that will attract overseas people? Come and see "The Big Five" wine estates? Or come see the tallest mountain climbing areas? So, because the animals- the big the hairy, the ugly- people want to come and see that and you cannot take that out of marketing ploy because its not going to sell, it's one of those things.

**AP:** Ja, it's very hard to compete with. But I think…do you see there's a new consciousness of ecological as a totality, of awareness of human environmental impact and that type of more sensitive tourist is starting to be more common?

**WB:** Definitely, I think if you have a look in the news- global warming, environmental waste management, pollution, all of these new standards that are trying to set up across the world have some sort of impact on the guests that come, because inevitably you have some guests talking and saying "Look, we heard about this new waste management system. How do you guys generate your waste? What do you do with all the waste?" And I definitely think there is far more of an awareness about the importance of environmental management, because at this stage it's not going to be sustainable, the rate at which we are going. And if that can start at ground level, and people from overseas buy into that, and have sort of an interest, then at least we know it's having a wider effect.

**AP:** Can you teach attitudes and values to guides?

**WB:** I think that a guide…okay, there's two sides to guiding in my personal opinion. The first side is- you get the knowledge, you get the experience and you get the persons ability to deal with guests, okay? That ability to deal with guests is impossible to teach- you cannot…you can teach a guide how to take drinks out, how to welcome them on the vehicle, how to do this, but their personality will determine what kind of guide they are. If they are outgoing and they are friendly, and that just portrays confidence, if they enjoy what they do, the guests will be the first to pick it up. The bush knowledge they can learn from books, there's magnificent books out there. Experience- the only way they're going to get experience is by being out in the bush, so there are certain things that you can develop. There are certain things that the guide needs to have in the very beginning. The ethics, the values, I think will be instilled upon the management structure of the reserve, and the management philosophy of the reserve. If I go to

a reserve, and I see that, they look after their management, and they look after their bush encroachment and they actually make valuable steps and contributions to ensuring that the land itself, and the animals and everything to deal with that piece of land is managed properly, then I will try to add to that as much as I can. If I go to a reserve, and from the top, there are no values and there are no ethics, then it's not going to inspire me at all, first of all to work for a place like that. So I think you can to certain degree teach certain values and ethics, but it needs to come down from top management as a buy-in..um, ja!

**AP:** Now, a lot of people, the general public will confuse a game ranger and a field guide, but those are two very different functions and they require different personalities. Would you agree with that?

**WB:** Definitely. A game ranger- and this is where that old I think macho image came from…originally the bush guides of yesteryear were termed game-rangers, then that term disseminated down, okay? And that is where I think you get the true distinction. A lot of these rugged, macho people that are in the bush consider themselves as game-rangers, where a lot of the new up and coming guides are termed "field guides", because basically they're in there to interpret the environment, and to guide the guests safely within that specific area. So, I definitely think that there is a difference. In my terminology, a game ranger is someone who manages a piece of land where animals are free to move around. He has very little, if any interaction with guests whatsoever, and he is there as a pure management function to ensure the law enforcement, or whatever it is that needs to be sorted out on that land. A field guide is working often within a game rangers area, and he is responsible for the interpretation and the guiding of guests through that area.

**AP:** Dr. Player is quite adamant that game rangers should do some time as guides. What do you think on that idea?

**WB:** Look, I think, and in certain of the reserves that I've been to, there is this clash between eco-tourism and conservation, and that clash can sometimes lead to very negative repercussions within the guiding side, and the guest side and the conservation side. So, I definitely think that a person who has some form of guiding background and moves into conservation, will see the perspective of the guide's side of things. When the guide comes and asks the conservation manager "We're looking for a place for a bush breakfast, a bush braai, or a picnic that doesn't impact on the environment, that won't impact on anything," suddenly the conservation manager will turn around and say "No, sorry, we don't do those kind of things in our reserve" not realizing the implications, and the money that's generated that will eventually come back into the park, if everybody works together. So there is a clash, and I think that either people need to be a bit more open, or they need to have a bit of cross-pollination, which will ensure that everybody understands where the other party is coming from.

**AP:** Ja. Let's look at safety for a while. Can you tell me, this "Big Five" expression. I've never been able to find out the real origins of "The Big Five". People say that the nineteenth century hunters coined this term "The Big Five", but I can find no reference before the 20th century to "The Big Five".

**WB:** From my point of view, and from my readings, I understand "The Big Five" as originally the five most dangerous animals to hunt on foot. The White Rhino at that stage was not considered part of "The Big Five", it was the Black Rhino that was considered. Now, through, over the years that term has been used as a draw-card for people to come and view, rather than obviously hunt. Because the Black Rhino is not as frequently seen as the White Rhino, the White Rhino was incorporated into that, and then that is expanded to the magnificent seven and all of these other terms which include the Cheetah and the Wild Dog. People say (I often get questions) "Why is the Hippo not on the list? It's big! Why is the Giraffe not on the list of the Big Five? It's huge!" but that is where the term originally came from, and through the years it's been passed down.

**AP:** I am sure more people have been killed by Hippos than Black Rhinos.

**WB:** Pretty much so, and I tell you what, in a lot of areas, more people are killed by Crocs than by Black Rhinos, and people don't realize it. In Botswana the incidents with Hippo and Crocodile was astronomical, but you won't hear about it…

**AP:** People won't get in their *mokoros (mekoro)* if they… *(laughs)*

**WB:** I tell you if you had to see the amount of incidents that we had with Hippos, it would put you off, it would be worse than what Jaws did for people going to the sea.

**AP:** Anyway, we're taking the position that it's necessary to have a rifle for client protection, whereas they don't have one in Botswana. What's your personal view? Would you feel safe to guide a group of trailists without a rifle?

**WB:** Look, I think, and this is my personal opinion again, I think that a rifle is a false sense of security, and people will tend to take a rifle, and push the boundary because they know that they have got the weapon, and if there is a problem, they will be able to shoot their way out of it. As a result, they will try and get closer and closer and closer. What I have found is that the guides in Botswana, because they weren't allowed to carry rifles, took far less chances, and the guests had a far better understanding and experience because of that. So you would view an animal from quite a distance, but you would feel safe, the guests would feel safe, the animal wouldn't feel threatened in any way. At the end of the day, you go back to the lodge, the guests have had a great experience, and they rave about it. Now, give the guy the rifle, he thinks okay that's fine, I've got a rifle, let me try and see if I can get a bit closer. The animal starts to get a little bit nervous and

jittery, guests react totally unpredictably in these situations, totally unpredictably, and the next minute one thing leads to the other and you have a problem. So, I believe yes, a rifle is necessary purely from the point of if as a last resort there are problems that cannot be solved any other way, the guide needs to be able to put the safety of the guests first and take care of the animal if there is no other alternative. So…but…guiding in areas where you aren't allowed rifles, gives you a reality check and a wake up call, and in the back of your mind is, just remember, you've got to get yourself out of any situation that you get yourself into, that you don't have anything other than your mind and your common sense.

**AP:** We spoke about this macho thing. Do you think the militarization of South African society under the apartheid regime has influenced the way in which we guide and in which game rangers and game reserves are run?

**WB:** You know what? I don't think…I think any form of militaristic or military background is good, because you need to have discipline, and I'm a firm believer, if you don't have discipline within a law enforcement function, then there's anarchy, literally. So, I am a firm believer that, within the conservation areas, especially within KZN Wildlife, there is definitely a need for discipline, which there is. That's good. The guys look smart, they look neat. They all have their ranks, and they are performing a function that is absolutely critical. Now if you, within that function do not have discipline, and the proper training that military- I wouldn't call it a para-military, but there definitely is some form of military discipline that is installed in them, I think that is a very good thing.

**AP:** Do Natal Parks (KZN Wildlife) and say Wilderness Leadership School and say the National Parks all have different styles of guiding that are discernible?

**WB:** To be honest, I would only be able to comment on KZN Wildlife and Wilderness Leadership School, because I've been involved with them a little bit. The Wilderness Leadership School comes from a very more puristic form of guiding where everything you take in, you take out, and they basically live off the land, so to speak. KZN Wildlife, certainly within their wilderness trails try and keep, not to the ultra-puristic form of the Wilderness Leadership School, but certainly to a very acceptable level of nature guiding within the wilderness area. Kruger National Park, I haven't had much experience, so I can't comment. The way they guide…obviously each guide is going to be different, but the values and the principals of wilderness trails, I think is one of the reasons why we have had such a low incident rate of attacks and encounters.

**AP:** Do you think that derives back to Dr. Player?

**WB:** Look, I think it's certainly a factor. If you have had…Well, first of all, if it wasn't for him, there would be no Rhinos. Operation Rhino was fundamental in the saviour or the rhino population, so I think, because that has generated a large number of Rhino, and there is this understanding of the vulnerability of Rhino,

especially in southern Africa, a lot of the guides are far more aware of Rhino behaviour, there's a lot more Rhino monitoring going on, so people are spending a lot of time with Rhino and understanding their behaviour, which will help them when they go into a situation. I think a lot of people in areas where they don't come into contact a lot with Rhino, don't understand Rhino behaviour and if a Rhino does something, they may take that as a threat towards them, whereas because in our reserves, the guys encounter Rhino on a daily basis, they are familiar with the way Rhino interact and behave.

**AP:** White Rhino and Black Rhino are very different animals to each other. The Black Rhino has a reputation for an aggressive temperament. Do you think that's warranted?

**WB:** Do you know what? Personally I…and a classic example, I did a wilderness trail last weekend I was backup guide, we were sitting on top of Momfu (?) which is one of the outlooks on the White Mfolozi, and within the space of about 500 metres there were 11 White Rhino, and two Black Rhino, okay- Black Rhino male and female, and then just various other conglomerations of White Rhinos. There was a mother and calf White Rhino who got up from one of the sandbanks and started to trot along one of the reedbeds. The Black Rhino looked up, looked towards them, and just ran straight towards them, chased them, but for no reason, just chased them. Okay? Now that is quite characteristic of their type of temperament, but on the other hand I've seen situations where White Rhino chased Black Rhino. So I don't think it's…I mean you can catch a White Rhino on a bad day, but generally, the Black Rhino has a reputation for being a lot more aggressive.

**AP:** I believe that when you put Rhino in a *boma* you get a reverse situation where Black Rhino become quite tame in a *boma***,** whilst White Rhino can tend to become aggressive.

**WB:** It's amazing, and I didn't believe it until…there's a lot of things that I need to see to believe in the guiding industry, and it's often until you actually see it for yourself, that you…because I work in the reserves, I get the opportunity quite often to go into the *bomas* and I've been very close to Black Rhino, obviously in the *boma* and they are…it's like absolutely phenomenal. And then the White Rhinos, you'll approach them and they'll start to kick and snort and trumpet. Scientifically, I'm not 100% sure why their behaviour changes, I don't know if Dr. Player or any of the other guys have come up with any solutions but ja, I saw it for myself and it's quite remarkable.

**AP:** Well, I have one hypothesis on that, and that is that Black Rhino is comfortable in a confined and known space, whereas a White Rhino doesn't like being confined, so that's what upsetting them, because of their habitat. *(Black Rhino tend to confine themselves to thickets, reedbeds and other dense vegetation which*

*naturally produces a series of tight spaces, whilst White Rhino are associated with open savannah).*

**WB:** Right, ja, I mean that certainly sounds feasible.

**AP:** I don't know. I can't claim to be the expert on animal behaviour. Humans are also unpredictable.

**WB:** Humans are often more unpredictable than animals.

**AP:** Do you think that the trailists can sometimes- we spoke about unpredictable behaviour on their part- do you think they can sometimes jeopardize the trail?

**WB:** Well, it certainly has happened before, very much so. And I think that once again your guide's ability to be able to communicate what is to done in an emergency situation is critical. If you don't have that communication, then you are probably going to have a problem. Having said that, you can tell people as many times as you want to how to react. When the adrenalin starts to run, and your body alarm reactions takes over, you never know how you are going to react until you have been put into that situation, and that is where a guide needs to be on top of everything to ensure that he is first of all aware of what the animal is doing, and then aware of exactly what happens behind him, and that is where it is critically important to have a back-up on trail, because the back-up will be able to look after the guests if there are any problems that the guide does not pick up.

**AP:** Describe how nature guiding has changed during the course of your experience.

**WB:** I think nature guiding has made me…I think more of a patient person, and the reason why I say that is because I deal with a lot of the local guides, who sometimes have slight English problems, with literacy- it's developed my patience incredibly. So from a guide training point of view, I think that I am a lot more patient than I was, and I am able to see that it's not so easy from a local's perspective to come up and suddenly start guiding people. There's a lot more to understanding human nature and people's overseas behaviour and what they expect, and all of those we sometimes take for granted, but to put yourself into one of the local guide's shoes is very, very different, and that's where I think I've changed my perspective is that it's helped me understand how much needs to be done in order to try and facilitate a lot more local guides within a certain area.

**AP:** Dr. Player says that in his experience, blacks are much more patient than white South Africans. Is that true?

**WB:** There's no question about it. There's no rush, and I'm sure you've heard the saying "there's no rush in Africa" and that is very true, and sometimes that can be a little bit of a sort of negative thing, because I'm a very punctual and *paraat* kind of person and sometimes when your back-up guide or the guide that you're

managing doesn't see it as you see it, it can sometimes cause problems. If the guests sometimes are kept waiting, but that is…those are little teething problems that can be sorted out. The cultural issue is something that needs to be not addressed sensitively, because I think we passed that long ago. We're all there to do a job, and we all know what we have to do. English is the common language spoken by the majority of international guests, so that needs to be taken into consideration.

**AP:** Do you think opportunities in nature guiding are still hampered by the prospective guides race or grender or social status or economic class?

**WB:** Look, I think, especially in today's day and age, there is a lot more opportunity for guides to develop. My problem is I feel that from the beginning a lot of the guides at the local level are getting into it sometimes for the wrong reason, because they think the money's good, or because they think this is good, that's good. You need to love people. If you are guiding and you are taking people- guests into an experience, you need to love people. And that is a perception right from the beginning I think needs to be understood. And because a lot of people think a gee the money's great and the tips are good- nonsense. That is something that should be a bonus. You should love what you do, and whatever happens afterwards is an added bonus. So ja, I think that there are…there's certainly areas that need to be addressed, but there are more and more projects that are becoming available, at no charge whatsoever to the local guides enabling them to get up to the standard and the correct level that is required. So I don't think it's a case of just because they come from a previously disadvantaged background, they can't get into nature guiding, which is not true because we've done pretty much the opposite within our parks.

**AP:** Do you think it's easy to assess the value of attributes which derive from a culture other than your own?

**WB:** Just repeat that question.

**AP:** What I am really saying is- I'm quite often of the opinion, even within the THETA structure, most of your assessors are still white, and they still miss a lot of cultural values or attributes of say Zulus, for example.

**WB:** I would say in my dealings that I've had with certain assessors, they certainly put a lot of emphasis on the cultural traditions, and the Zulu folklore and that kind of stuff, so, yes, I'm sure you are going to get your assessors that are different but I must say that in the dealings I've had with THETA assessors, and especially with assessors in our organization, we take a lot of that into consideration.

**AP:** Does the THETA/ NQF system adequately address the need for transformation and diversification within the industry.

**WB:** Yes, I believe it does. I believe the new outcomes based education is an integral part of taking what a person has experienced over his many years of guiding, and putting that into some form of qualification. I think that to be able to take a person who hasn't had any formal training, or formal education, university or school, take his knowledge, and convert it into a qualification by means of an RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) process, I think is only doing a positive thing for the previously disadvantaged. So I think the current system as it stands is very, very positive, and the only comments that I have received from all of our guides, is that this is great. Finally, they are getting now a certificate to say that they are registered to guide within their area, and that is a certificate on the NQF, which can never ever be taken away from them. They will get credits that they will keep for the rest of their lives, and they can only grow from there. And for me the excitement on their face when finally after all these years, they get the recognition of certificates, that's rewarding for me.

**AP:** Has THETA sorted out the problems of the definitions of local guiding.

**WB:** I think that that will always be a little bit of an open ended subject, because the guiding in itself is…there are a lot of overlaps, and a lot of grey areas, and I think that that is something that needs to be addressed, but currently now, the main distinction is your nature and your culture. Those are the two sort of distinctions. There is a lot of overlap between the two of them, so from a local guide point of view, we've gone either the nature or the culture and we haven't had any problems from that point of view.

**AP:** What are the problems with the THETA/NQF system?

**WB:** Look, besides the slight delays and inefficiencies with generating certificates, and those kind of sort of logistical problems I haven't encountered anything else, but ja, it has been a bit of a long wait for certain certificates and…ja!

**AP:** Do you think the system has been ironed out now?

**WB:** No, we are still having problems with certificates, we're still having problems with this but those are one or two issues that will hopefully be sorted out hopefully in the long run.

**AP:** What do you think needs to be done to sort out those shortcomings?

**WB:** I think the structure in place at the top of THETA needs to be one where there are proper systems right from the beginning. The problem is that there was a lot of change within THETA- you'd have one CEO that would leave- the next one would come in, and there wouldn't be that continuity- there'd be all these gaps and once…I mean this is all a very new system for everybody, so I look at SESETA itself- SESETA are now backlogging, the ETDP SETA in generating assessors and moderators, that is taking- it's taken me two years finally to get my

moderators statement of results. So I think all of these SETAs are in the process of trying to get the most practical and smooth flowing system, I think it will come around with time, but it just ja needs to be…

**AP:** Do you think there is incentive to be a moderator within this system?

**WB:** Well, from my point of view, it is an essential necessity from the organizations point of view.

**AP:** So do you think the organization should be responsible for the costs incurred?

**WB:** From what?...Well, look, our organization KZN Wildlife puts us through the training to attain our assessors and moderators, which only benefits us in the long run because without them we wouldn't be able to put up the training, so I think it is an investment which is worthwhile, and which won't ja- you won't loose that money in the long run.

**AP:** There was a concern…I was in the first group of THETA assessors ever, it was in 2000 that I became an assessor, and there's a real concern in terms of people in the private sector, that an assessor can't really be paid enough money to do the task properly, because you can't charge the guides a ridiculous amount, and where does the onus of spending belong? I think what's happened is private game reserves, private institutions are not paying the money in for their guides to get the proper professional assessment that they need, whereas other organizations that I know- well they've tended to start getting weeded out by THETA, have tried to create short cuts in the system.

**WB:** Look, there's always going to be short-cuts in the system, and people as a natural instinct will try and find in certain areas the shortest way around something, but a lot of the assessors that I am aware of do it as a part time job, and there's a certain fee that can be charged, but yes, people say it's money making, and they're just out there to make money, and they're undercutting this and they're undercutting that, you're always going to get that. Whenever you're in a situation where there are a limited amount of people that do a certain function, you're always going to get that infighting and undercutting and backstabbing. That is a fact of life, and I've seen it wherever I have gone- all over Africa. So I don't think you're going to get away from that, but I think this is why we've gone for our own training, so that we know the standard of our assessment and our training. At the end of the day we can say that we've put our guys through the complete programme and that we are satisfied that our guys have received an adequate amount of training on a certain level. We will not do any external assessments, because I've seen some assessors that are very, very below standard, and I would not want to assess anybody that (went through them?)

**AP:** I am on my way to meet Dr. Alex Coutts. I think he might be an example of somebody who does his job as an assessor.

**WB:** I've heard only good things about Dr. Coutts. He is a very pedantic man and he likes to do things by the book which is good, so I haven't heard any negative things about him, it's just that people who do his assessments compared to other people cannot believe how much more work there is in his. At the end of the day, the person who is assessed by Dr. Coutts is getting a fair and proper assessment. No names mentioned.

**AP:** Do you think there's antagonism within KZN towards the body of FGASA?

**WB:** Look, FGASA has always been, I'm a member of FGASA, I've been for a long, long time. I don't have anything to say about them other than the majority of our guides are not FGASA registered. In fact, let me rephrase that; there are the majority that aren't, but I'd say probably 30-40% of our guides are, the rest of them aren't. Because FGASA is not a minimum requirement to guide within a specific area, the guys haven't gone that route, although the level at FGASA, and their standards are very, very high.

**AP:** Ja.

**WB:** And ja, I think that's a good…I think we need to have a body with a standard that's not unattainable but…

**AP:** To be honest, I'll talk brass tacks with you…the person of Andy Dott got associated with FGASA, and that is what lead to KZN being alienated a bit from FGASA but you know recently Andy Dott has really stepped down from FGASA and I can only say that that has been good for the organization, as much as I respect Andy…*(tape ends)*…the person of Andy Dott was maybe over-associated with FGASA, particularly in *(KZ)* Natal. In Mpumalanga and Limpopo, there's actually a mistrust of the THETA standards, and you still get people advertising for a FGASA registered or standard guide, which you don't get in KZN.

**WB:** I'll tell you why, and this is where I think FGASA is doing a very good job. Because FGASA standards are so high, a lot of service providers that are assessing THETA unit standards, OK, because they're not doing a good job, or their standards are not high enough, FGASA will not recognize them, and as a result, a lot of those service industry lodges and hotels would prefer to have somebody with a FGASA background who is legally registered, rather than somebody who has got their NQF Level IV from THETA from a certain service provider, who does not meet the requirements. So from that point of view, yes, and I would probably rather look for somebody who has a Level III SKS than a Level IV NQF. It's just, me personally, because I know FGASA standard is high.

**AP:** Ja. I think that gap is going to be closed as FGASA have improved their relationship with THETA, because I know…I worked for THETA for a while, I don't know if you recall, but I was a Quality Assurer for guiding for THETA for

about 4 months in 2003. Then Ashwell *(Glasson)* came and went, and I am not even sure if he is there now, but the real thing is to talk about the FGASA-THETA relationship. First there was quite a lot of animosity because THETA was, for various reasons, but because of the local projects they showed quite a lot of favour to an institution called Drumbeat, and Drumbeat and FGASA could not see eye to eye with each other, and FGASA…I have heard Leone Whateley call FGASA "the white boys club", partly on the basis that I came as a FGASA executive member to work for THETA, and I had to resign (from FGASA exec) due to a conflict of interest. But nevertheless, since I've…I'm now no longer on the FGASA exec or working for THETA, but since then, I think they've drawn closer to each other because, because partly they realized that Drumbeat were not all they were cracked up to be, but partly because they've realized that FGASA is really, really a strong organization.

**WB:** Very much so, I couldn't agree more. As I have said, I am still a FGASA member, and the only dealings I have had with FGASA have been positive.

**AP:** Warren, can we talk about wilderness for a while? Tell me, what are the qualities of wilderness that are so attractive? Because Dr. Player has mystical, esoteric and spiritual take on this, but not all of us necessarily share his views. What do you think are the special qualities?

**WB:** Okay, I think first of all, "wilderness" is an overused term. That's my personal opinion. I believe that a lot of people do not understand what a true wilderness is. You go to certain parts of Canada or Alaska- that is true wilderness, where there is no roads, there is no light source, no pollution from vehicle noise, whatever the situation is for miles and miles and miles and miles. Now, there are certain characteristics or certain factors which will put wilderness into certain categories, and I think in today's day and age, because land is becoming less and less available, people are settling with their idea of what a wilderness is, even though it doesn't represent a true wilderness area. Now, you take Botswana, for example. There, in Botswana, where you had 60 000 hectares for 4 vehicles. The Sabi Sands has 60 000 h for 4 million vehicles, okay? Now, in Botswana in the evenings, you could be in the middle of no-where- you wouldn't here a sound, no lights, no noise, nothing! That to me was a form of wilderness, okay, but in the true forms of certain wilderness terminology, it's actually not because of certain sizes and areas and things like that. uMfolozi wilderness- there's no roads, there's no permanent structures- it meets the criteria of what a wilderness should be, but in the evenings there's light pollution, there's noise pollution, so, I think every person needs to see wilderness- no light. For me, I see the uMfolozi wilderness as some- as a place that you can go and walk in and just get…be it a spiritual or um…it's just experience that you can't describe to be out in the middle of nowhere- yes, there is a little bit of light pollution and there is that but that's not- that doesn't impact directly- the purists disagree 100%, but that depends on your level and what you are prepared to go through in terms of wilderness. For me the uMfolozi wilderness area is a unique and special

experience, and not to have any vehicles around you, and direct impact from other vehicles and lodges and all that kind of stuff is a very special experience.

**AP:** We don't have the recommended 10% of nature areas in South Africa- but Botswana's managed to have 14%, but obviously they are lucky with a population of 1.3 million, on an area the size of…

**WB:** 1.3 if you are lucky at this stage…

**AP:** Ja, well it's going down…

**WB:** Rapidly, hey!

**AP:** Ja, whereas South Africa's got about 44 million and probably not going down as rapidly, and if anything probably still managing to maintain itself *(populationwise)*, and will as soon as they find a cure for AIDS naturally grow again, but we're struggling to find sufficient area for nature, aren't we?

**WB:** We certainly are, and I don't think it's becoming easier. I use two classic examples, one in uMfolozi area and one in Sabi Sands. When I started guiding in the Sabi Sands in 1994, there was a specific area Open 45 that we used to have sundowners on, but in 1998 when I left there, the sundowner spot had to be changed, because your horizon was full of lights and houses, whereas in 1994 there was nothing. Now, that is not encouraging, because all that means is that the rural population is getting closer and closer and closer, and we are having to find certain justifications and means to staying about. If you cannot justify the existence of a piece of land, it's going to get taken up. And that's why it is so critical to keep and maintain what we have before that all goes to rack and ruin.

**AP:** One of the problems is getting the local communities to see the benefits of the game reserve- and in that area Stevenson-Hamilton was called Skukuza- "the person who sweeps clear everything in his path", so there's now hordes of land claims on the Kruger Park, aren't there, and very legitimate ones as well..

**WB:** Look, there certainly are, but northern Pafuri region is a really classic example of how the land went back to the *(Makuleke)* community, the community then decided "No, no, they would like to get some benefit from conservation, from ecotourism, so Wilderness Safaris and Ecotraining went into community projects, whereby they developed a lodge and a training camp, directly involved the community, and the community are now directly benefiting from this partnership, and that is the way that I think a lot more communities are now going. Yes, you're always going to get those that will never see the benefits, and would rather have cattle grazing land, but I think there are… fine, you look at the amount of community projects. I take the Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg Park- we are and have been given R60 million to develop partnerships between rural communities and conservation. Zululand- our community projects are esculating on a daily basis,

so there is definitely more drive towards a sustainable working relationship between the communities and conservation. I think, and I have seen over the last 13-14 years that I've been in the bush guiding, that there is definitely more positive attitudes from a local people as to the benefits of conservation vs. grazing.

**AP:** South Africa is more progressive in a way in that respect compared to Botswana.

**WB:** Look, I think that because of the given situation Botswana doesn't have that conflict of people living right within the Delta, a lot of the areas within the Delta are uninhabitable because you can't get there from a logistical point of view. Those communities that are living within certain parts of the Delta- we incorporated them. We incorporated- we had a community village, and our entire camp was built and based upon the communities thought, so in areas where the community are available, they have certainly been brought into the loop, but generally over the Delta, you don't have that problem of encroachment, because you just can't- you can't live out there.

**AP:** What about the central Kalahari?

**WB:** Yes, that is a bit of a problem and… I think ja, that is a different kettle of fish.

**AP:** I mean it's actually sad- if you understand history properly, white people are certainly colonists, and recent colonists, but black people are less recent, but also colonists of the region, and the Khoi-San people were the original occupants. I don't think they have really, really enjoyed the respect of the state either in Botswana or South Africa.

**WB:** No, look it has…there have been some…ja, personally I think that certain of the decisions made are not with their best interests at heart at all, and I think that's something that…ja, I try to steer away from those topics. I don't get involved with the political side of things…I've got my opinions, but ja…

**AP:** Politics is always tricky and it's quite hard to avoid sometimes…

**WB:** It is hard to avoid, but especially with guests and that type of stuff, you have to be very, very sensitive…so I'd rather just steer clear, and talk *(about)* what I love…

**AP:** Warren, let's wrap it up. Let's hear about what it is you love about what you do, and what's your vision about the future and whether you're optimistic about or what's your view on the way forward.

**WB:** I'm very optimistic. I get enjoyment out of teaching people. I love teaching. If I can instill my passion and my love for the bush into up and coming local guides, then that for me is a reward in itself. To see the guides' feedback on their evaluations after the training courses- to say that it's opened up their world, it's

opened up their eyes, it's opened up their values to different concepts and they can see certain things clearer, that for me is reward in itself, and if I can move through KZN Wildlife and try and instill the passion back into guiding, and to try and get them to undertake guiding for the right reasons, teach them how to guide, and certain things that they need to be aware of, implement the training programmes, then that for me would be *(words lost due to wind)* As far as the future goes, who knows? Tomorrow is another day, which I will tackle when it comes, but I believe there is still quite a lot to do within KZN Wildlife, and I will be here for quite a *(few)* number of years.

**AP:** Warren Bekker, I think you've got a great job, I'm very jealous, I'll steal it from you any time that you turn your back on it, but it's also been a very good interview. Thank you very, very much for coming out at a ridiculous hour on a Sunday morning. The background noise on the tape might indicate that it's got much less quiet than it was when we began, but thank you very, very much. I do appreciate your trouble in coming out to speak to me.

**WB:** Absolutely no problem, and I wish you luck in your future ventures.

**AP:** Oh, last thing, sorry, while I've got the tape on and running. Any recommended reading, because Ian Player was full of things that I'm not going to be reading, because he's just got so many of them, but what would you say if you had to be a nature guide in South Africa and you had to read 5 books, what would they be.

**WB:** Okay, once again you see that is a very varied topic because I believe you can't get enough books- you can never read enough, but you can never replace what you read for experience. So my first book to read would be the environment, would be get out there as often as you can, read the signs, learn more, and that way you are going to develop your knowledge, okay. There are numerous other books within uMfolozi, within KZN Wildlife, there are a few books that are in the pipeline- Ian Player's book <u>The Wilderness</u>, I don't know if you have read that book. It gives a nice idea of the area and what used to be. There are- there's a new book about <u>Beating around the Bush</u>, which goes into a lot of nature facts, gives people a lot of insight into certain animal behaviour, Richard Estes is always very good in animal behaviour, but having said that I mean we can go on and on and on because every day you go into CNA or Exclusives and there's a new book about guiding. The books are one side of it. It's being out there, and getting involved with every day on the ground environmental studies. That's where you are going to learn, that is your biggest and knowledgeable book out there.

**AP:** Warren, once again, thanks very much *(Tape ends)*

*(Transcribed & proofread by Anthony Paton).*

## INTERVIEW 3 : DR. ALEX COUTTS

Durban North, 10h00, 05 Feb, 06

**AP:** Dr. Alex Coutts, we're in Durban North here, just after 10h00 on the 5th of February, welcome. I'm hoping to talk to you for long- longer than you're hoping to talk to me- so we'll maybe cut a compromise and we're looking at about an hour…

**AC:** That seems fine.

**AP:** Let's kick off straight away.

**AC:** Don't you want to sit down?

**AP:** I'm only shouting at you for the dictaphone, not because I think you're deaf…

**AC:** I don't mind a little bit of shouting…I've got 14 aids orphans I feed out of the proceeds of my tour guide training and I'm quite accustomed to a fairly rowdy household.

**AP:** You're having a bit of bureaucratic frustration at the moment. Do you want to start off describing that?

**AC:** Do you think that's relevant to your topic at the moment?

**AP:** Yes, absolutely, because I always think that bureaucracy is one of the things that impedes the delivery of guide training…

**AC:** Well, if you really want to look at the NQF (the National Qualifications Framework) as a whole, it was derived from overseas countries…Scotland, New Zealand, Australia. Wales, too, is using it. Canada, as far as I know. It's a First World creation. It's a beautiful, intricate, carefully orchestrated, well linked-together type of structure…but unfortunately, humans have got to use it. That's the only slight disadvantage…in other words for a country like South Africa where there is a disadvantaged community, who have perhaps not got a very good command of the English language, to use high-level jargon and stuff that is relevant to first world countries, I think is quite cruel. Its all terribly bureaucratic. In much of the training that one does, and I would include nature guiding and outdoor recreation, outdoor education and conservation courses, the unconscious tendency is towards negotiating and working one's way through a bureaucratic nightmare, rather than actually focusing on the training.

I've worked on this now for many years. I've tried to do it as ethically as I can, with as much quality as I can muster, and I know of no alternative to doing it like that. I am merely talking about an unconscious tendency towards getting side-

tracked by the bureaucracy until one is more concerned with clerical duties than teaching. Your mind is so devoted to dealing with the structures, the restrictions, the protocols, the processes, the procedures, that you don't want to leave anything out because somewhere you've got an unforgivable gap and will be damned. In the meantime you're actually trying to educate and train intricate human beings in doing a task. But to my mind, sometimes the bureaucracy and meeting the bureaucratic requirements supercedes the actual training of humans and the end product is not as good as you would like…

**AP:** Isn't one of the end products that very, very skilled and valuable people are being turned away from the system?

**AC:** There are people who are very competent both in teaching, but also on the learning side, who feel it's a bureaucratic nightmare. In other words people who want to become a guide or a conservation officer, but who then encounter the bureaucracy and are offended by what they are expected to go through…

Although I can understand the conceptualization behind it all, as I pointed out its over the top. In some ways its not a bad thing for well educated and highly literate people, they can by and large cope with the intricacies. But it's also those very people who usually have a liberal outlook because of their better education. And they feel that instead of being able to climb the rock face without constraints and get up into the sunshine, they're actually being put into little boxes. So those very people who should be able to adapt to it are the very ones who probably find it most difficult to engage with.

The other people who may not be well educated, of course find it difficult for another reason, largely to do with language, because it is still so wrapped up in jargon. So, I suppose that everyone has a difficulty, but for different reasons.

**AP:** Let's go back to the beginning here and say, Dr. Alex Coutts, that you're not a medical doctor. So what is your highest qualification in?

**AC:** It's difficult to know which doctorate is the higher, but I have a doctorate in education and also a doctorate in philosophy, and when I look at the national qualifications framework, in the framework at 8.4, which is the highest categorization, I see they've got D. Phil first. That seems to be a somewhat higher one, perhaps because it is more liberal and more generic than a D.Ed. which is more vocational. I think because of the rather pervasive academic outlook that so many of the people who construct these things have, they've ordered it in such a way. In other words, a philosophy doctorate is more generic perhaps and an education doctorate is devoted to a particular vocation and somewhat more constrained (education) field. The "broader" one then perhaps supercedes.

**AP:** And how did you become focused on nature guiding as your particular aspect of interest?

**AC:** It's not actually my main domain of interest. My particular interest is culture because I've got a doctorate in multi-cultural education. I understand it was the first, and possibly the only one done in South Africa. I think we passed rather quickly through the historical phase of multiculturalism. I am at least partly an historian. I've trained in history to an extent, and I'm very much into cultural philosophy. Regarding nature, I don't have the same grounding in biology for example, as my colleague Roy Cowgill. He has an Honours degree. I came into the nature field because I have a mind that's inquisitive. I like to span the known universe if I can, but also know that humanity never gets there. It's worth trying though, and I felt constrained with only an interest in cultural things. So why not go the whole hog and move to the other? So, it was almost by default.

It's all largely a matter of an intellectual challenge. If anybody would like to compare culture and nature and start arguing that the nature is rather second rate compared to the culture, that it's not very academic, and that culture's far more academic, I would say that that's the biggest load of rubbish. I used to be rather disparaging about the whole nature domain in the early days, until I started grappling with it. Then I came to the conclusion that, for example, any guide who is trained in both culture and nature will find his cultural topics a lot easier to master. And the reason? You do 200 km on a cultural tour, you engage with one cultural site, you learn it, and you study it before you get there. In five years time its by and large there unchanged. It's for example a battlefield, or it's a cultural village. You move on 15km, then you're at your next fixed site, your next, your next…you learn your ten sites very, very well, and you're always pretty competent if you do enough work at it. There's no excuse for not doing a good job.

But nature? Wow! You walk into your nature reserve with your guests. You could be somewhere in southern Africa confronted with a selection from 80 000 insect species, 24 000 plant species, perhaps 982 birds, 967 grasses, 853 butterfly species, 300 mammalian species and even 74 species of bats! And as you walk into the nature reserve, it's somehow the wrong tree, it's one of those you didn't know out of the 24000, it's a patch of grass that you'd never seen before, and dammit it's the nine hundredth and whatever bird it is, and maybe it's one of those you're not too sure of, out of the thousand or so…it can cut you down to size.

What you need in nature guiding is an ability to work and work and work until you're "there"…but you've got to realize that you'll never ever get there, entirely. It's infinity that you're grappling with, and until you are pretty competent, you're almost nothing in nature guiding…you've got to have at least a threshold of ability, then suddenly a lot of it is revealed to you. You get the biological stuff behind you, but it's the wild creatures and the numbers of them you've got to

really handle. Once you know it though, you'll find it quite easy to transfer your knowledge from one region to another region in the country if you move, because you've got the principles behind you and species crop up in very different areas.

With the cultural stuff, by contrast, when you go elsewhere you then re-start almost from scratch, although to a much lesser extent some principles can be learnt and applied. So cultures are easier in a first region, but very hard to go to another region, because you start again from scratch. It's a very different battle, the new museum is nothing like the other one, etc. Nature's very hard to get off the ground, but once you've got it you've got a lot of principles and an awful lot of wild creatures that start cropping up again hundreds of kilometers away from where you qualified first.

**AP:** It's the difference between the piano and the violin?

**AC:** Mr Dictaphone, Anthony says it's the difference between the piano and the violin, and I haven't a clue what Anthony's just said, but I'm sure there's something profound there…but do explain!

**AP:** I mean anyone can make a noise which doesn't sound bad on a piano straight away, whereas people make screeching horrible noises on violins until they're quite accomplished...

**AC:** See, the points I was making about culture are coming through here! That's pretty good stuff!

**AP:** I think this culture-nature interface is a huge one and a neglected one, because people tend to come at it from one side or the other…

**AC:** Absolutely, and I think that the powers that be are responsible for that…for 4 years I have offered both areas as electives. I believe the human mind can have a pretty good go at it if people work hard enough. As I've said, you never absolutely get there, but we try and urge all of our learners to do both culture and nature…and if they fail in either domain…let's say they have no nature background whatsoever, it's going to be a three year task to get there if they've got nothing behind them.

Some people become dedicated cultural guides- others become nature guides, but there's a massive integration in this. If you're a cultural guide why can you not in fact go through a nature reserve and speak about the medicinal use of plants and how indigenous inhabitants would have used the wild creatures? In other words, legally, can someone stop you from going through this terrain which is largely nature when you're actually interpreting it as a cultural phenomenon? I think you'd be well within your rights within the law, if you were a cultural guide, going through a nature reserve. But once you start talking deeply about biological principles, then you're perhaps getting out of your depth. And similarly with

culture, there's quite a lot of nature wrapped up in it, even within cities, though you might be reduced to talking about feral pigeons. Oh dear…

AP: Or *(House)* Crows, here in Durban?

**AC:** *(House)* Crows, yes: Durban, Lourenço Marques *(Maputo)*, Johannesburg, and one or two other coastal areas…

**AP:** There's three birds that I've never ticked- I won't name them, but you can probably guess that I've mentioned one of them…

**AC:** You might find them just south of the Umgeni, and I think you've got some of them along the beachfront there, cleaning up the litter in the restaurants just on the south bank of the Umgeni mouth. That's what was known as Blue Lagoon…

**AP:** I can see right through them, and these other screeching brown birds…

**AC:** You probably wouldn't…

**AP:** Never seen one in my life…

**AC:** So you wouldn't tick off the mynahs as well?

**AP:** No, I refuse…

**AC:** Right, I brand you as a purist…you've passed your test.

**AP:** No, not at all, not at all…Let's go back to speak about the nature guiding. How many people have you qualified so far? (Because I was speaking to Warren Bekker today and he says anyone who qualifies with Dr. Coutts knows their stuff, because he's the most thorough guy around).

**AC:** I don't dispute that, and I don't think many people would. Its sometimes tough, and its the result of a very long career in education where you have to have an integrity, otherwise people simply won't follow you. I was the Deputy Rector of a major college. Now look, every one of us likes to deal with integrity, in one area or another if we're honest enough. I take pride in it. I take pride in integrity and part of the integrity is to do the very best you can for your learners; in fact, to make sure there's no easy route. That also means small course numbers, perhaps six at a time.

One of the worst times of my life was 2002-3 when I started getting rumours (and I mention no names) of trainers literally qualifying people with paper qualifications but little substance. I just hope it wasn't true. Now one can argue that perhaps they were not educationists, didn't know how deep the water was, and that they thought if they did a desk top study and took in some pieces of paper

submitted to them, that would then qualify the person as a nature guide. Well I doubt it!

No person has ever come through my training who has done less than a two-hour practical tour for their assessment; that is, where they are actually leading the tour practically. They have a driver with them, which shows some of their business ability, and a host of other things can be shown by them practically too, like teamwork etc.

We're of course a bit constrained by where we are in our localities, but what we then do is to take three different habitats within what I might call the coastal forest biome. My chosen habitats were a mangrove swamp, which was done as a formal presentation since we didn't go into it. We also dealt practically with the estuarine environment where the geology, biology, birds were done; even what happened in the ice ages 20 000 years ago when in fact our coastline might have been five or 10 kms further out towards the horizon. Those were all dealt with but we also did informal commentary because things were coming and going and you weren't exactly sure what you were going to talk about. The focus would be on the ecological underpinning of life, it would be on the fish species, it would be very much on bird species and the vegetation.

We also put a third component in and that was a walk of a few hundred metres through the Burman Bush Nature Reserve. This also was compulsory. We looked at the mammal species there. That would be the Blue Duiker, the Vervet Monkey, the Banded Mongoose. I think we have the Hottentot Golden Mole there too. Porcupine would be very, very rare in the vicinity, but we included them as well, and we looked at quite a lot of the biological, ecological, trophic pyramid, symbiotic relationships topics; those sorts of things.

So, I would not allow anybody through who could not perform well in the wild environment. One of the reasons for that is this word "currency". In the NQF they want to see a certain demonstration of "current capacity". Now you can come with all your papers and all your testimonials from 10 or 15 years ago, but can you still do the job? And if you're going to be qualified to do the job now, I want to see up-to-date, over-the-top-currency.

So I insisted that all my people should go through a proper practical assessment of two hours with some very tough and perceptive, but thoroughly sensitive assessors who would like to see the person succeed but who would not like to see the person succeed badly. They would never compromise quality for a quick pass. I lost some of my students at first. They went to other people where they could simply put in pieces of paper and be qualified on those grounds...or so I was told. That, I think, is totally wrong.

In my training there are only three main methods for assessment. One is that the assessor observes a performance in the workplace- you do something practical

and relevant; you do a task, and its always a major one like conducting a tour. Number two, the assessor reads certain documents, and he might have between 10 and 20 types of documents that can come through. And the third thing, the assessor hears certain information that's imparted in the workplace during the practical activities. Or it is done through the question and answer sessions that might be part of a formal structured interview afterwards.

**AP:** You seem to be a skeptic from the point of view of what evidence you would respect, and in that way maybe contrasting with Dr. Ian Player who I spoke to last night, who seems to be a mystic. Are you anti-mysticism?

**AC:** No, I think he's probably into Jung, and I think he's also into a bit of Laurens van der Post as far as I know… and Victor Frankel, if I understand Ian Player correctly. I have a great respect for him. After all, last week he broke three ribs and survived it, and a month ago I only cracked one in the bathroom. So he has the drop on me. But I think he's been a very tough and a very principled man, and I think he might have a mind that goes a little bit more into mysticism than I, and I certainly don't regret that. I find it quite fascinating. I know that his relationship with Ntombela was almost a mystical one and a rather beautiful example of people working jointly without any thought of the structured human rights issues- they just did it so naturally! I could never emulate that, and I admire the easy relationship immensely.

Still, I've got 14 AIDS orphans who I feed, with three of the little boys with me at the moment. We're putting them through schooling. We started a small "farm" for them…and all those things. I would rather do that in a fundamental way as an ongoing project than creep out of the woodwork in the New South Africa and claim things as so many opportunists have done. We have experienced historical dishonesty.

And coming back to the mysticism, I am a little bit more scientific now than before, perhaps, but I do have a religious background. I recognize that with a billion plus brain cells I am very badly equipped to understand certain things. I do understand that when one goes beyond certain concrete observable measurable things, one has to take into account whether its not you who is lacking and not the phenomena themselves. In terms of religion, I cannot think back infinitely and then on and on with thought to try and probe to any beginning. I don't know how our "beginning" could have happened. We have 13.6 billion years bandied about as the time span, but then I ask myself in terms of time as I understand it, what was there before then. Or was there no such thing as time, as Steven Hawking presumably says? Just an infinitely dense and hot point in space… but there was no space. But I can't believe that there was no time before the start of time...

I therefore have to say that I don't understand it at all, other than that some creator being must have been there. But then you ask questions about who created the

creator and by definition, and on its own terms, that's a silly question. Its a nonsense question, it leads nowhere.

I also can understand to some extent how you can go down in size to an infinite point and then be inside that point and inside that one. That's tough enough, but when you start going outwards in space, and then you start getting excuses like space is curved, then I find it hard to understand. If space really goes on and on and on then my mind grinds to a halt and I simply have to say that anyone who sets themselves up as God, really needs to examine themselves, because they're mad. And yet there have been people throughout history who have done this. Well, go out and create a universe! I say that we're all incredibly limited, and some of our philosophers and psychologists who said that we live in a blooming buzzing confusion are probably more accurate than most. Thank you, I've been quite off your topic, but it was fun anyhow.

**AP:** Do you think science and religion are compatible with each other?

**AC:** I think that science is a creation of the human mind. Religion talks about a creator. If you have a religious faith (and I have one, although it's not a particularly profound or rugged faith because I have doubts all the time) then it's almost a different mode of thought. If there is a creator, and I think I'm arguing that there is, the creator creates the very minds that create the scientific method. Therefore science is the product of a creative being and is surely not superior to the creator. Where the creator ends off (hopefully the creator never ends off), maybe science arises to help us through a bit. And let's be honest, science is only practiced within the scope of the very fallible human mind as I've pointed out. The whole concept of religion is made difficult because it is still the fallible human mind that's trying to reach God. But that doesn't mean to say that there isn't a perfect mind out there that's way beyond us.

There is a little saying that shows the limitation of the human mind:

"There was a young man who said: God
I find it exceedingly odd
That this tree that I see
Should continue to be
When there's no-one around in the quad!"

(A Big Voice Comes:)

"I find your astonishment odd
The tree that you see
Continues to be
Since its observed by, yours faithfully…God."

It was a bishop, I think who said that three or four hundred years ago.

**AP:** The state of guiding in South Africa at the moment. How do you think it's changed over the time that you've been able to observe guides and guiding?

**AC:** I think I do take a slightly different view of THETA to many people. I have moments of berserk anger, but also a regard for some of the core THETA people, who have actually tried very conscientiously. I would disagree with them on principle on some things that have been done but I have no doubt that several of them have tried very hard to make a go of this. They've got a massive thing to manage, which is far too complex for them. For example, they have had huge waiting lists for the evaluation of programme strategies. Its partly because the whole thing is so intricate- they've now refined that, so they've made it a bit more manageable, but the point is that they are dealing with a massive task and they're also dealing with something that's grounded in a changing society.

A changing society means a changing government, and that means changing interpretations and it means even SAQA is really hotfooting it from one thing to another. It's running around like a chicken with its head off, trying to catch up with a country that's gone wildly democratic. Democracy of course is very fine from certain points of view, but it does mean everyone has a say, everything is stalled, everything is slowed down. I am not criticizing democracy. I'm merely saying it's a phenomenon that slows things. And the point is, these SETAs are now working in a radically and continuously changing playing field.

THETA have nevertheless finally managed to get up their website, they've managed to get their audit programmes established, and all sorts of other things in place, but I think they are having a difficulty with the fact that they are concerned very much with the workplace, and very much with free market stresses.

So, THETA have had two huge disadvantages. They've had a free market situation where in many, many people's minds, making money rather than offering quality for intrinsic reasons is number one. Its just a business. So, with some, if you have to "do" quality to make your money, you begrudgingly do your quality and you make your money. So the quest for quality is forced and not intrinsic. And that has been, I think quite true in South Africa for some time.

That's one problem, and here's another. There's never been the luxury of time for an overall conceptualization of the full range of jobs and their related qualifications in each domain. We need an integrated job and qualification structure for nature guiding, for outdoor recreation, conservation and everything else under the sun. I'm talking about it being structured totally and in an integrated way, from level 2 to 8.4 doctoral level.

The point with THETA is that they never had the luxury of implementing a co-ordinated strategy like this years ago. All of those things should have been done

first on an integrated framework, where all of the articulations were able to be fitted in horizontally, vertically, diagonally.

What happened with THETA, is that they had to unfortunately react to who-ever was shouting loudest, in other words it was a community-led yell-fest. And lets be honest, there's been a huge investment of money there so its very natural of the bigger players to shout loudest. So certain people would call for a certain qualification, drive it through the SGB while other qualifications were neglected with huge gaps, and it was almost like a huge checker board with some chess pieces on some parts and other pieces neglected, but there was never any overall strategy.

So guiding has been piecemeal, its been bits and pieces, its been driven quite often by pure economic matters. Now if you've got a very big business and you're going to run short of turnover, I don't see how you can view it very differently. You have "to have big numbers and a quick turnover" as one trainer told me. I have had the luxury of being a person in retirement, and I enjoy teaching and my motivation was not to become a millionaire, but to present quality and get the satisfaction of helping people to have a good quality of training. And the reason for quality? If you're in the top third, you can make a good living, in the middle third you can make a living, if you're in the bottom third of guides you'll disappear in about 6 months. So you've got to have your quality, because you are competing in a free market.

**AP:** Doesn't the problem hark back to the SAQA system where it was conceived that Outcomes Based Methodology would be used and certain other general assumptions were imposed on THETA and THETA are merely the victims of the system where they are the operatives that have to make what is essentially a very idealistic system into a practical one.

**AC:** I think that picks up what I was saying earlier about the evolving society, government, acts and laws, SAQA, the NQF, THETA as an agent within this whole system, and the brief answer to that is yes, I absolutely agree with what you have said.

**AP:** Now let's take the opposite approach- we've maybe taken a somewhat Platonic perspective up till now, but let's start with the guide on the ground and take what you could call the Aristotlian view. How do you think the guide on the ground has changed in the past decade, say?

**AC:** I find that very, very difficult because I haven't been in the system with guides for more than about ten years. I've also been rather spoilt… this is going to sound like a commercial but I've been involved with people like Graham Vercueil, and the guides at Londolozi. I've seen very, very dedicated people- four hours of intensive work in the morning, four hours in the afternoon. These people are very original characters, by and large. Graham for example is a very genuine, an honest

person. He is a purist. People like that find the whole SETA structure very difficult, I think. My point being that these people learn on the job naturally, and they are assessed every morning and every afternoon practically by their guests and clients. If they were no good, they would have been out of the system immediately.

So its very, very difficult to foist a bureaucratic, and I believe reductionist type of system (and I'll explain that if I need to) on guides who are actually learning well in the workplace. They simply don't need a huge amount of massively structured intervention in their lives. At the end of it they are probably not advantaged by going through any of these NQF courses. The point is they're about as trained as you can get. They are handling the job with clients directly, with vehicles that break down, with wild creatures that can do serious damage to anybody if they make a mistake, with people who can have an uncomfortable experience if the weather conditions are not read well, and they're assessed on a daily basis.

If they're not good enough for the quality of overseas people who could be paying a great deal per night for a room, they're out! And believe me, some superimposition of a structure on them is not going to make them very much better! So I believe that all along there have been massively qualified and quality guides, ten years ago as well as now. I do find though that the recent literature, the resources, the videos for improving knowledge, new books coming out, that whole literary backing, probably largely through the actions of one company STRUIK in Cape Town, has given those guides massive resources for their own self-training, and so I find it very difficult to say the guides have deteriorated.

What I find, or what I suppose and conjecture, is that people who have come through from training four or five years ago and got a piece of paper by RPL, without having really good qualifications and training behind it, could by now be unleashed into the system, and I don't think that's a good thing. I do find that within certain companies you never find a really shockingly bad guide because they'll be out on their ears. I think it depends on the companies and their philosophy, and the nature of the people in charge.

In some other situations, and this is quite true of the more general nature guiding where you go through not on foot, like some of these chaps do, not on a dedicated bush drive with guests, but as part of say a national big-bus tour, some of the guides there might not be up to very high level interpretations. The best they do is to say that big thing with ears outside the bus is an elephant, and that other big hairy thing you see over there is a Lion, and that thing over there, ooh, maybe that's a Buffalo, but it could be a Wildebeest. I can conjecture that some of the interpretations would be at about that level. But of course not all.

It's very hard I find to say it's better now than it was or its worse now than it was. I think we've always had good and bad guides and I think that system still pertains. Therefore, I have to say that I'm not sure that the new structure has really separated the men from the boys or the women from the girls very much.

**AP:** Haven't we just replicated the previous status quo, for the reason that you've described of people with a tertiary education or who are highly qualified are able to wade through the bureaucracy, whereas people on the ground still have a lot of difficulties?

**AC:** I find this true on a number of levels. One is that if one takes a person from a disadvantaged background, with language problems (and remember, Soweto blew up on the 16th of June, 1976 because of a certain subject (biology) taught through a certain language (Afrikaans). Not only did they have the complexity of biology, but they had to learn it through a second language). Now much training throughout South Africa, is with people doing it through their second language. There is a task incumbent on any good trainer to ensure that those gaps are bridged as far as possible. When you have mixed classes, you can't slow down a class to the disadvantage of other people, to any great extent.

I mean we are talking about realities, and I do find with a highly jargonized, and esoteric, and obfuscatory type of structure (I'm especially using some of those words to make the point), it becomes very, very difficult for some of our colleagues from second language backgrounds to cope, and I do think that every trainer in South Africa should try and simplify their language as much as they can. I have difficulty, because I've had a very long academic career, and I fight all the time against using words that are too big, but its unconscious and it's a very hard thing to actually do. Yes, I think that's a disadvantage.

I also feel that people with a very good academic background, by nature do have an advantage. I don't blame them for that, I just say that the system does advantage them. What I like about the system though is that there is a very strong workplace component. It's not that effete theoretical thing of the last 40 or 50 years, where you studied in theory, wrote an exam, and came out bulging with theory, but you didn't know how to apply your practice in the workplace at all. I like the workplace context. Probably because of my youthful background in teaching physical education over many years, I like the practical context. The workplace component is absolutely essential, and perhaps in the workplace context, some of those academics don't do quite so well.

When you get a jolly good tracker, etc. why does he need a massive level of academic literacy? As long as he can be understood well enough by clients in case he needs to give certain directives, why does he need to comply with what is now coming through the National Department of Education. Now, I'm a great proponent of this sort of symbolic underpinning- you do need language and maths, no-one disputes that, but when I read the actual unit standards I am

appalled, because its literary criticism by and large that comes through. You're describing what paragraphs are. You're describing the language structure and grammar here, there and everywhere, in the most esoteric academic vein.

The very language used in the unit standards is academic language, and I just want to know why language isn't done in its applicable communication context. In mathematics you need number, you need money, you need distance, you need time, for a thing like guiding. You don't need mathematical abstracts.

Certainly with language you need to communicate accurately, briefly and clearly in a wide variety of contexts. Why do we not take formal presentations and look at that? In other words, you're doing a formal talk about a battlefield before you get there. Why don't we explore all the avenues of informal communication? Why don't we spend a lot of time on non-racial, multicultural presentations where a multiplicity of viewpoints are brought in? Why don't we do storytelling and so on? Why don't we take a thing like questions and answers, plus written communication, reports and that sort of really relevant language usage?

I do hope that SAQA will interpret and translate this into something useable in courses such as guiding, will bear with us if we shift away from the rather Jane Austin / Chaucer type of orientation to actual communication. And that is where the hidden agenda comes through to me. We actually need to know if people can communicate properly, and we need to accept that the field of application is terribly important. We need SAQA to tolerate applicability within each distinct field, and not quite in the sense that might come through in the actual language units.

**AP:** The problem is that we're talking about SAQA and its an opaque entity- we spoke about democracy earlier. Don't you get the feeling that any feedback is being forwarded to the rubbish bin?

**AC:** I don't know if that's fair. I've never had an objection or a complaint in dealing with SAQA. I have communicated my reservations on occasion with THETA. I must be quite honest, I've actually found the THETA people always courteous, usually prepared to listen, if not always able to act. There hasn't always been a meeting of minds, I acknowledge that. I'm not saying that they've always been wrong. I suppose I've never really had anything coming from them that I find abusive, disparaging or anything like that. SAQA even more so, because I simply have had no relationship with them, and I think I'll be making some wild statements if I try and judge that.

I think SAQA have got an abominably difficult job at the moment. The Department of Education, now that it's got more and more insight into how the NQF works, seems to be backtracking somewhat away from the workplace orientation that we need. They, I have no doubt, see it as protecting the education system. Why? Perhaps some of the workplace stuff, and some of the trainers

who have been working through the SETAs, have probably not been of sufficient quality. The rumours, and rumours of rumours, and also some harsh realities have possibly come through to SAQA, have come through to the Department of Education, and they're reacting very strongly by saying no, we've got to take a hand in this, there's a rot and we've got to stop it.

I think that's actually quite cruel in a way, because I think to have been in the core jobs of a group like THETA must have been abominably difficult, almost impossible, because you never satisfy anyone, you are the ham in the sandwich, you've got trainers and learners on one side of you, SAQA on the other side. SAQA's constantly passing down evolving demands, while you're trying to interpret it and you're on a hiding to nothing.

And by the way, I'm not criticizing SAQA gratuitously. They've got their jobs to do as they see it, they've got change coming through parliament, and they've got requests from the SGB's, but one of the biggest single probable failures of the whole thing is: this was all meant to advantage the disadvantaged, and I don't believe it has done so. I believe the reductionism, confusion, and the complexity has worked against the disadvantaged. We need a much, much, much simpler system.

**AP:** Ja.

**AC:** Do you agree with me? (I'm teasing you).

**AP:** I have got to agree. I voiced my agreement with you on that one: in a way what we're saying is that there's this kind of colossus, this machine, which seems to be unstoppable, which keeps being dictated to from above?

**AC:** Which particular machine is that?

**AP:** I just mean the whole system from politics to SAQA to THETA, and look I think that Leone Whateley is going to prove to be absolutely irreplaceable, she's an absolute genius at her job, I must tell you, but nevertheless, they won't get someone else in like that and if someone that competent is still struggling to turn the ship, then I don't know how THETA's going to manage when she goes.

**AC:** Now that's a difficult question, because you're asking me to comment on a personality. Now with Leone Whateley, I quite like her. I think she's got more guts than a whole army. I think she's got an impossible task. I think she's by and large discharged it to the best of her capacity under very, very difficult circumstances. My only run-in was on my 63rd birthday, when she had a bad hair day and gave me a bit of a rough time, but she apologized afterwards and said she hoped the rest of my life would be pleasant, and I then forgave her immediately. I like her, because I think she's got courage. I like her because she can take a stand. I think that I see a rather interesting figure who is not prepared to be pushed

around- my term is bullet proof. And also, I think there are several other close colleagues doing as well as they can.

I sometimes disagree, I sometimes think that things are not quite the way the decision should go or perhaps how it should be done, but then I've never yet met perfection. I've actually said to her over the phone in the last fortnight, I would hate to see her go, because I do think one needs stability, continuity, and I think she provides a lot of that. But there are also other colleagues who THETA needs to hang onto. I do think she's also lost a lot of very good top staff . I could probably name about six of those who left who had very indispensable roles.

With THETA though, I think there has to be a much bigger in-house training programme, and a much more unified understanding of the system on the part of all staff. In other words, they've all got to be men-and-women-for-all-seasons. You can't have lots of specialists who don't know what the other jobs are. I am sure that that's not quite how it works, but all I'm asking for is that there be an even greater breadth of understanding, so that each person can relate and talk to everybody else in the institution.

Now, I think one of the very biggest problems is a ceiling on staff salaries so THETA is generally under-staffed. Its a stricture that has crippled this institution to some extent. When they do put someone in charge of programme strategy approvals, and you have programme of hundreds of pages filled with complex Bloomian stuff (its got analysis, synthesis, application items, everything in it), then its tough and time-consuming. Everything in the system is at the top level of the intellect. It is evaluation, it is the highest intellectual thought you can have. The entire NQF system is evaluation against criteria. It is the top level of abstract thought. Many people who work on concrete levels are not even capable of working on abstracts. So it all takes much time and they are under-staffed.

But I'm moving away too far from what you said about Leone, but I'd be concerned if she left, despite the fact that every six months she and I allow each other the luxury of a clash. Its all because, as we say, it keeps our adrenaline up and our circulatory systems going. Having said that, I would be upset if she, or any of the remaining top people, left now. I do not think THETA can afford it.

**AP:** Let's cut to guiding on the ground…

**AC:** Can I just mention that Bloomian thing again for a moment?

**AP:** Yes.

**AC:** Bloom's taxonomy is, of course, promoting high level thought. You're evaluating things in terms of certain complex criteria. The entire structure of the NQF revolves around assessing people against criteria. Whether you're doing an RPL *(Recognition of Prior Learning Assessment)* or what, you must always assess

against the criteria. The mind has to take a criterion and apply it to a changing, malleable blooming, buzzing confusion of activity and intellect and come to a conclusion.

Anyone whose mind is not able to work on the abstract level, anyone who isn't working very high on the Bloom taxonomy stuff, has problems. Not many people really get to higher levels of thought until they're into degree, post-degree work etc. Many people are in fact mainly doing knowledge items, application items, they be analyzing something or synthesizing a little bit, but when you get to this evaluation and so on- high level thought, its beyond them. Yet its assumed as a given for trainers and I think that a lot of people come unstuck because they cannot work in the abstract realm, and most of their thought is rather concrete.

**AP:** Now, to the guide's on the ground…

**AC:** You were talking about Grant's orbit. FGASA meet here at my home quite often- they meet under the tree there and have braais. Not recently, but I was National Executive of FGASA and we met often then. I need to say, about the FGASA system, that they've created a most remarkable and demanding system where one goes through level I, 2 and 3.

I went through it all. It took me three hard years, by the way. I did Level 2 and then Level 3 and got 90 % in each case. That seemed good , but I said to myself, "It's not that you know 90% of this, you know the 10%. Its 90% you don't know". Then I realized "no that's arrogant, you don't even know the 10%. This is no disregard for FGASA, just an admission that the scope of nature is so big that you don't ever get on top of it. No human can do it, not even Ian Player, who I think will be honest with you. You hardly scratch the surface of nature. And if one says, "no, I'm really into it, I know exactly what I'm doing", well then they're either stupid or arrogant. Now the point about this is, I went through the whole system, and I want to talk about that system. The system was a good system, it was graded, there were examinations, stringent requirements. It was a logical system, coupled to the fact that you had to do a demanding work place competency assessment.

In fact they had the foundations for meeting the THETA requirements, and I'm rather sorry that in those years, a few years ago I didn't talk more to Grant, because I could have converted the whole thing into…I mean I'm not being funny or anything, I write these programmes as if they're coming out of my ears. I can write a Unit Standard in about an hour, and I could have converted all of that work into THETA congruent material. That could have been done.

Regarding nature guides, if they are not A-type personalities, rugged, outgoing, independent and with original thought, they've probably got no chance of leading people in nature reserves. My point is that guiding as a whole is made up of A-type personalities because its tough. The B-type, the phlegmatic one who is

accustomed to being cosseted and looked after and all that; well they're gone in a few months because guiding's too hard. So when you meet guides, generally they're rugged, outspoken, independent people. If they're not, they will not survive out there.

Trail-guiding in nature is even harder. You're not in a comfortable bus there, you're out in the bush, and if you're not careful, you're going to get nailed, you'll lose a client, somebody will have some horrible experience. So you've got to be in charge, and you've got to think independently. Now when suddenly with that frame of mind, guides have to do formal training with lots of bureaucracy and tick-boxes, they resist it. They're no longer enjoying the freedom to think for themselves, to be their own person, plus a little Rambo. They're put in a box by someone else "In your box, into your box you go!" "But I'm a free thinker, I'm Tom Cruise leaping across the cliff and climbing up the rock faces and standing at the top, and now you say 'Sorry, Tom, back in your box, buster.'"

And to put a guide, who loves the outdoors, who feels at one with nature, to keep shoving them into tick boxes, check boxes, is terribly, terribly hard and almost damaging psychologically. I by the way, I do a lot of oil painting, mainly wild life, and I have found it hard to deny an artistic temperament and bundle it into bureaucratic compartments.

**AP:** Do you think the guiding industry is still biased and still suited towards white males, and if so why?

**AC:** I think partly we've already explored that because again there's a language issue there, and there's an educational background thing. There is a traditional thing where black people are the trackers and a white person is the guide who has the rifle etc. I think that is gradually breaking down, but its breaking down to different extents as far as I can make out. Certainly, at Phinda and Londolozi one is seeing Africans on the courses there who are being brought in to be trained. But again, if someone comes in with an educational level or a capacity that is not quite up to the guiding, you cant simply force the pace to get a more just situation, because of the awful danger that can bring if its rushed.

You always have the fact that behind you this man might make a mistake with a .375 Holland & Holland Magnum in whatever he is doing. And there's a panic, and perhaps a wayward shot, then all hell breaks loose. If that person happened to be someone from a disadvantaged background whose training was rushed, it could be turned into a very serious racial issue.

I have to be honest and say that I'm not in contact on a day to day basis with enough of the companies to be able to give any analysis of what is going on with them, but I think that steadily there is a transition. I think that the avenue (because I've written quite a lot of programmes for Phinda and Londolozi) is from tracker to an ABET programme with a higher level of literacy, then on to guide.

It's no use having a person who can't communicate at all to clients, because people are going to do some terribly silly things, wrong things, if they don't understand. So you need to have a reasonable level of literacy. I think that there is goodwill in the sense that they do want better demographics, but we are starting from a very low base where it was typically one or two in a course.

Now I'm hoping with the development of integrated national structures, that there'll be more opportunities and ramifications for people to slot into a much wider range of capacities- from community conservation officer to doctoral level. Why should one not take conservation, have more access to doctorates in it?

I think in South Africa the whole NQF thing has been a very brave attempt. I'm just sad that I'm now seeing a reaction against the SETA system by some academics from the formal education system. I think I can understand it. The reason for skepticism probably lies, not at the feet of the SETAS as much as some of the trainers with whom they've had to work. And by the way, some of my information has come through hearsay, which is always a bad form of information, but on several occasions has actually come from the principals or staff of institutions themselves. I mean, how can one assess a full unit in a minute and a half!

**AP:** Do you think those bad eggs have been somewhat weeded out?

**AC:** I would say somewhat. I did chat to people in THETA asking if they could please discern between quality and non-quality, but I have been quite surprised to note that one of the ways they look at the quality of submissions for what I call company accreditation, is largely a matter of asking simply: "did they write their policy down?" There's no apparent attempt to assess whether it's a quality policy, a good policy, a sound one. That by the way would be an admittedly massive task. You'd actually need a staff of ten programme strategy assessors to be on top of that approach, otherwise submissions would again be lying there for eight to ten months, or a year. THETA has always needed staff in that field, three times, four times the size of what they've got at the moment. They were always on a hiding to nothing with the few people they had.

Everyone shrieks and shouts. Look, my own stuff once lay there for five or six months. I was very angry, until I started thinking "but how many people have they got working on it for the entire country?" I don't think it was a fair thing that they were having to do with so few staff. They needed much more funding, they needed high quality people with honours degrees, to do it.

My worry though, coming back to your original question, have they seeded out the good quality and the bad quality? If you don't look at the submissions in terms of quality, but you're only looking to see whether there was some sort of answer, you're not giving yourself the tools for seeing who's good and bad. You're just seeing who's got the guts to spend 3 or 4 thousand hours working up

through the system. I don't mind telling you that in the last three or four years I have spent probably close to 5 000 hours of my life on THETA systems, and I've written probably 6 000 pages of curriculum by now. I've had sessions where I've worked through the nights for weeks on end, then had my material lie for months, apparently unopened. But that was admittedly some time ago.

We who are out here do occasionally have some things where we are right, where THETA didn't do us much service, we're not always wrong. So, that was my experience, but you either go and open your guts and eviscerate yourself, or you move on, and on balance after very careful consideration of the two options, I've always chosen the latter…not that I haven't thought of the former quite often…

**AP:** The marketing which we have in our nature areas loves to promote this thing called "The Big Five". Now "The Big Five" is really asking to reinforce the macho hunting history that we have, albeit in a subliminal way. Isn't this also serving the interests of the white male?

**AC:** You're actually seeding my expected answer to me in a very subliminal way, which I quite enjoyed. Thank you for that. And I know you know about Courtney Selous and you know all these Cornwallis Harris…

**AP:** Except you don't find reference to "The Big Five" in either Selous or Cornwallis Harris…

**AC:** No…Selous' freshest memory for me was the Nyala in the 1890s…Now with this, I think you do need a big, flashy marketing brand in South Africa, and in KwaZulu-Natal we have the Kingdom of the Zulu and then everything else is subordinate around that, but I agree with you on the need for far greater diversity…depends on your client target and your client market. I think one has to have a multi-faceted marketing thing. You have a shot at "The Big Five" brand, but you know, it is so overdone at the moment that, I think there are people who with an increasing knowledge of wildlife as it gets more trashed, more eliminated. I mean we're in probably the last of the great world extinctions of wild creatures- we had one…what was it, 205 million years ago? In the Cambrian we had it, 140 million, we had it 64 million ago when there was probably an asteroid on the Yukatan Peninsula, we've had it very recently 60 000 years ago in the Americas, down to about A.D.1 000 with the Moa in New Zealand. You know they had fauna in North America which was almost the equivalent to Africa, that's almost all gone. We're in the last great extinction now, and we might be at the end of it.

I'm getting slightly attached to oxygen, and I wouldn't mind a little more of it before I finally die. Now, the point is, I'm saying our wild life is getting more and more precious because of human pressures. Yet some creatures are proliferating. We have about 13 000 elephant in Kruger…hang on, what do you do with those animals? It can take about 7 000, at perhaps 300 hectare per

animal. So they've got a surplus…they're probably eventually going to have to shoot them. They'll have to take out entire herds, with a massive outcry. But my point is, having said that, that we need greater protection of species. With all the fires down in the fynbos in the last few weeks, they say species have gone. We certainly need a stepped up protection.

Nature is hitting back for what we are doing to nature by an explosion of world diseases. And what we have… and it's a bizarre and rather cruel thing, is that possibly AIDS is about the only hope we have for the survival of our natural environment. Fewer people. Things like bird flu might be another, although the thought is also horrible and it seems to have faded.…in other words we've got too many humans.

Coming back to this point about the "big five" that you've made…people are becoming better informed about the other wild creatures. They are becoming more knowledgeable, with more books, like Attenborough's remarkable stuff . There's greater diversity of knowledge. Just think of what DSTV has done now, where you in fact have Animal Planet and a host of other things like that, there's much more insight into things, and when you come now with "the Big Five" they say "ho-hum".

There's also a definite evolution of interest and ability- you've seen it, I've seen it, most guides know what I am talking about. You go into Kruger Park "Impala! Click-click-click-click-click! Films gone, head for the nearest shop, because all they've done is taken every impala in sight! Now they come to the giraffe – ooargh! The zebra- ooargh! Go for it! Snap! snap!

That quest for "whatever there is" graduates to a taste for "let's see The Big Five" So, once you've seen animals, then you've graduated to collecting your "Big Five". Go in later, again, again, again and now you're into "can I pick up a Serval or can I see a Rooikat *(Caracal)* somewhere, can we go out on night drive, what's that insect, what's that beautiful butterfly, hang on let's have a look at that you-know-what butterfly…with only 853 species, let's see if we can find it".

There's a definite evolution of taste, and I think it's on a micro level with an individual and it's on a macro level with populations. Agencies like DSTV are feeding this. I mentioned Attenborough, but a host of other nature films helps spark wider interests. The fact that biodiversity is disappearing fuels greater concern. I also think people's tastes are steadily becoming far more sophisticated. Allright, marketing follows that. So have your big flagship, don't destroy it because some people are at that marketing level, but go onto the more refined ones too. Watch how peoples' tastes evolve, and even on a national level you might find slight diversities and divergences between one group and another, so you marketing should try and hit at different categories…they're too big to be called niches.

**AP:** Aren't you implying then that the monied person, be they local or foreign who's got DSTV is one step ahead of the game of the guide on the ground and of the local marketing company who are trapped in the early 20th century with this "Big Five" thing?

**AC:** I am not sure that I quite understand. It's the person who gets the good visual knowledge, who can afford DSTV, who's middle class or upper middle class, who can afford to travel, so he's a major person on the scene…

**AP:** But he won't be pulled by "Big Five" anymore, because he's grown out of that.

**AC:** I think so, I think that's my point. Big Five is for the more ingenuous, less sophisticated first time traveler. It's the first thing you want to see. It's my first trip somewhere, its also that serial thing. First, second, third trip, but we hope that eventually you get people returning because they're into far more exotic types of creature. They see the deeper things.

**AP:** The subtle, the endemic, as you say, the insects…

**AC:** Yes, well it's even like birding- you see all the big obvious ones, and as you get past your six and seven hundred you start looking for things that are…and then you're down to…

**AP:** I'm struggling with warblers. I don't know about other people, but I'm in the early 500s and I'm not having trouble with cisticolas any more, and I'm not having trouble with larks any more, but the warblers are killing me…

**AC:** I work with Roy Cowgill and I don't claim to be a birder. I've got Roberts, I've got the little birding PDA type of thing. And I wont let the warblers kill me. Have you seen my monkeys by the way? Cottontop Tamarins and Marmosets. I'll show you a bit later. I've got a whole bunch of them out here from South America. Other questions?

**AP:** No, I think we've maybe exhausted most of the key things that I wanted to talk about. Maybe we can just finish up with how you see the future of nature tourism and nature guiding in the country based on the way things are going at the moment - so the near future.

**AC:** I would like to see guiding put on a proper structured level, but I would first like to see every SETA put its domain of qualifications on a proper structured national level, from Level 2 to Doctoral Level. I see no reason why anybody of reasonable intelligence, lots of dedication and prepared to do lots of hard work going that route, going right through to Doctoral Level. I mean you can't be a fool, but believe me, it's mainly a long distance race, and most people haven't got the guts to endure it, but still…why shouldn't we build this up? Shouldn't we have a full range of excellent programmes in guiding, where you can have a doctorate in the

field of tourist guiding and that would be your esteemed and respected domain. Of course, you would need to have an excellent control and understanding of the big field, you need to know the cutting edge problems. Also, you need to know the methodologies for researching them.

Then you need to do fundamentals, which are your curriculum-vitae-by-RPL of your whole educational / training / work history. That's how you meet a fundamental requirement.

Your core is your knowledge of the whole broad field, the central problems and the terrain. Your study of literature can show this.

And your elective is a particular project you select at a doctoral level as the basis for a thesis.

This is all the playing out of a transition from level 2 to doctoral level. It embodies the same principles. As a doctoral candidate you do your research subject, your study, as your elective. But you then have an obligation, more than in the past, to take a leadership role in the field, where you promulgate your insights, you try and get them out, you discuss them with people, and you use your knowledge to the benefit of society.

I don't believe our government can afford to fund people's training at that level unless they're going to plow something back into society- its a slight tinge of socialism that I have proposed in this whole thing. But my point in what I am saying to you is: guiding needs to be put on a proper structured basis, where all the range of vocations at different levels can be slotted into a graded structure, then training is actually done to coincide with that.

Regarding guiding itself…I hope that the SETAs don't get overrun by the Department of Education. I hope the SETAs survive the intrusion. I honestly feel that the Department of Education should lend support and not impose too much of their ideas, because they're not really experts in the workplace field. Workplaces are too complex.

I suppose there's got to be some faith about the future of the system, but until SETAs like THETA who control guiding are given a proper financial base to fund well educated, well qualified, well trained staff, and cross training programmes internally, they're always going to be disadvantaged, they'll always be shrieked at, and they will never have been given the tools to do the job.

**AP:** Dr. Alex Coutts, thanks very, very much for your time, for taking time off from your trillion hours of work on the rest of the universe to talk to me, and I will be sending you a transcript just to edit if necessary.

**AC:** Thank you very much and it was a pleasure to have done this.

*(Interview ends)*
*(Transcribed by Anthony Paton & proofread & edited by Anthony Paton and Alex Coutts).*

**Summary of points made by Alex Coutts (own interpretation)**

- 1. a background to the NQF and its obsession with systems.
- 2. the repugnance of guides at being put in a box. AC & RC's qualification.
- 3. the differences between culture guiding and nature guiding and a suggestion that nature is an incredibly huge field to assimilate. Support for the attempted integration of culture and nature.
- 5. declaration of AP as birding purist- disgust at some of providers who distributed "instant qualifications".
- 6. the importance of currency. Various methods or strategies for learner training and assessment. The use of at least three diverse habitats and teaching methods.
- 7. mysticism and skeptism. The relationship between science and religion. AC believes there is a creator, but that science is a creation of the human mind, which in turn is a product of a divine creator.
- 9. frustrations of THETA and democracy. Approval of work-based system.
- 10. uneven, patchy and unco-ordinated programme development in the NQF.
- 11. frustrations of reductionist system, improvement of resources
- 12. problems of academic or obtuse language and problems of teaching mixed level learners.
- 13. impossible demands on SAQA, and by SAQA on THETA.
- 14. concern that THETA is not effective, even although in many respects it cannot become any more efficient (and without Leone Whateley stands to become less efficient).
- 15. the Bloomian hierarchy.
- 16. Credit to FGASA- regret at not assisting them to conform to system earlier.
- 17. difficulty of restricting A-type personalities with outdoor, and independent tendencies to the limitations of "check boxes". Rationalization of why many black guides are still not considered sufficiently mature, experienced, competent or qualified on the highest level
- 18. THETA checks providers on whether policy is recorded, but makes not attempt to check quality of policy *(Furthermore THETA devotes an incredible amount of time to policy and process, and a correspondingly scant amount of time to content because-AP)* THETA do not have skills or time to judge quality of learning programmes.
- 18. The (SAQA) requirement for THETA to assess all programmes in the country is not realistic or feasible As it is THETA need more, better paid and better qualified staff *(and a shift in emphasis to less policy and process focus and more content focus-AP.)*
- 19. species are by and large becoming more threatened, while the prospective clients of guides are becoming more sophisticated

- 20. "Big Five" marketing is acceptable because it addresses a market, but it should be de-emphasized as the ingenuous client becomes a smaller segment of the client market.
- 21 ff.The whole SETA structure should be standardized from the perspective of the workplace and not from the perspective of the NDE who are not qualified to understand the complexity of workplace assessments.

**Questions arising out of interview with Alex Coutts (for SAQA, THETA, DEAT, GTA, SATourism)**

What did SAQA intend the SETA system to achieve?
Was it maintaining or improving standards in the workplace?
Was it transformation of the guiding industry?
If so what are the performance indicators?
If the performance indicators are the degree of change in race and gender in the industry, what do the available stats of race and gender transformation in the past 11 years tell us about the success of the process?
If this is an unfair measurement why? When will the stats of this indicator improve?
What other indicator would be a better measure of the success of the SETA system?
Hasn't the SETA system (with specific reference to THETA) resulted in a body which is over-regulatory of policy and process, and under-regulatory of content?
Isn't this position one of the key causes of the lack of support that leading providers have had for thesystem?
If policy and process has to be further simplified, reduced and rarefied what are the most critical and essential components which cannot be omitted or simplified?
Has the audit of policy and process has tangible positive results?
Is it not conceivable that it has produced the negative result of dissuading talented guides and trainers from continuing in the industry because they were confronted by a system which they found excessively bureaucratic and/or was a slap in the face to their integrity?

## INTERVIEW 4- MANDLA BUTHELEZI, MANDLA GUMEDE & SICELO MBHATHA

*12h30 05th February, 2006 Wilderness Leadership School Office, Stainbank Nature Reserve, Durban*

**AP:** I've already been asked who I am and what I am doing. I'm doing a Masters with Wits University in Tourism and the Subject of my Masters is "A Critical History of Nature Guiding in South or Southern Africa" so that's what I'm doing- what I'm doing for work- I'm Education Officer, Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site and I work in Johannesburg, but my Masters has got nothing to do with my work. I formerly was a guide trainer, so that maybe explains who I am- maybe you want to go around and explain who you are- try and speak quite close because it's a small speaker and the speaker is this top bit here.

**MB:** I'm B, Mandla Buthelezi, I'm one of the Wilderness Leadership School guides. We're doing ecotourism so- I've worked for the School for about 8 years.

**MG:** I'm Mandla G. I'm working under Wilderness Leadership School. I'm a guide about 4 years now.

**SM:** My name is Sicelo Mbhatha. I'm working for the Wilderness Leadership School, I've got 3 years, but before I joined the Wilderness School I worked at the Mfolozi Game Reserve as a volunteer…

**AP:** Excellent! So you came involved in the project through your community involvement?

**SM:** Ja,

**AP:** Alright, tell us more about that volunteer programme.

**SM:** First of all I finished my matric in 1998 and during that time I was looking for a work and then I decided to work for Mfolozi as a volunteer. I gained a lot of experience about a wildlife and environment. Then I worked at Mfolozi for about 3 years working as a Field Ranger- doing patrolling and also removing- alien plant control, patrolling the fence-line, just helping on roads, buildings, working under buffalo projects, doing branding, painting- I mean writing the number on their backs and feeding them, and thereafter I started- O, I also worked under the lion collar just to make sure that we caught the lion and then we put the collar on their neck, and then I joined the Wilderness Leadership School as a trainee, then I worked for them for a year. They were just training me just as a guide, backupping them and then in 2003 I worked as a guide, but under probation, and now I'm leading trails.

**AP:** Let's hear from the Mandlas how you guys got to where you are- what you did before?

**MB:** I have passed my Standard 10 at Nehmathi High School, which is situated close to Mfolozi Park- so after that we formed what you call environmental class, and then we used to visit the Park to learn about the animal behaviour, and then after that I was in the Park working as an assistant there, so they took me to work for the wilderness area, like a back-up guide. After that, they introduced me at the School in 1999, and then I joined the School in 1999 as a trainee, and it took me about 3 years for trainee, and then in year 2002 they appointed me to become a manager of Mbeyo- there's a project run by the School, the other one is in Kruger and the other one is in Tsitsikamma, the fourth one is that one situated at Mfolozi. So then after that I joined the School as a full permanent member, or as a guide, and that is how I work for the School, till now.

**MG:** I'm Mandla G. I'm still introducing myself- how did I join the School? It was 2001, it was 1 February. I came at Mfolozi and I met a guy Craig Reed. I introduced myself, then I started working as a volunteer, but it was very very short, and then I was doing patrol, doing fence line and I was working as a Field Ranger as well, and then after a few days he gave me some piece-job, I was removing Chromolene, and after that he gave me some piece-job again, we were fencing Mbeyo Camp, after that he introduced me at Wilderness Leadership School, then I started working as a trainee, and after 3 years they gave me a good, good position, now I'm leading trails now.

**AP:** What kind of special training did Wilderness Leadership School give you guys in order to let you free to go on your own? What skills did you do training in, and who did the training? Tell us about your development, when once you started at Wilderness Leadership.

**MB:** They took me to the University of Pretoria doing Wildlife Management Course. It took me about 10 months, but they paid a lot of money, and then we started in Kruger National Park to see what is the major problems there in terms of ellys- to remove them in terms of culling, you know, and then we moved down to Swaziland to see how things are going there, and then they take the marks when you talk, and then after that, I came back, we sit down with the guides of the school who are more advanced in the field, so they train you, like you do backupping, and then they take down that fear, you know, to encourage and get proud what the job you are doing- you mustn't show.

**AP:** What mustn't you be afraid of?

**MB:** The animals- elephant and buffalo, and the last one is a black rhino- they're a bit grumpy, and then after that they keep training you, and you're doing some courses like basic ecology- those things and then they call other guys, they sent me up in Midmar Training Centre in terms of working with the tourists you know- if they're behaving like this- it's your call- it's you controlling the group you know…like that!

**MG:** If you want to become a guide, the Wilderness Leadership School has sent me to do some course like from THETA- is it THETA or NQF, and then I've done some stuff with a guide, and then I passed that course, and then the other thing…they just give you enough time to learn more in the bush, and you mustn't be a fear man you must be brave, you must trust yourself, so after that they will see you that now you are OK with that thing, so now, that's why we are leading because we did very well in the bush.

**SM:** What they did for us as a training, they sent us to a first aid course, and the other thing is driver's licence, and the other thing is THETA level II- just have to get the permission to take the tourists, and then other thing is as guides, as one of the young guides under the wilderness school, I think we are grateful to have men like Paul Cryer, Ian Reed and Mandla Buthelezi. I'm so proud of him he was- they were just teaching us like they were feeding us with knowledge- they were telling us to do things with your spiritual- when you are leading trails, you're not just going in front of the trailists with your rifle and saying "The elephant is coming. I will take it down!" You go in front of the people with your heart, and with peace, we're coming into the wilderness with peace. You're carrying peace, rather than carrying a rifle, but you're carrying peace, and then they taught us that as well. Also the beautiful of nature- sunset, as a young man, I didn't care about sunset. Sunset, the splashing of water, reeds, all of those things kloofs, and then they told us that as well. Thank you so much!

**AP:** Now do you think people can teach you to have the right attitudes and values?

**SM:** Well, I think yes. Here I can say "I'm young," and as I'm going with the different people from the different countries, or different places, you know that they are coming with a different opinion, they're coming with a different attitude and then you can learn from them, as well you know. The way I think, I think that they can teach you.

**MG:** Yes. I say yes because people they can give you good attitude and good knowledge, because, especially if we are in the bush doing trails, you normally meet different people from different countries, so you learn a lot, because even our cultures are not the same, we do different things and I think, another thing, according to my side, because I have spent my time at school, but I don't want to lie, but I must say that when I finished school I was not good, my English was not good, but now I can see a big, big difference because I'm working with people that are speaking English. I've asked them some questions, some other words that I can't understand, but now it's fine. I'm coming alright now.

**MB:** Yes, we learn a lot from them, and then they learn a lot from us, because we are together. When we are out there, Mother Earth used to teach us. We learn from there. Day by day we are learning something, and then, the other thing, when I was at school, when we finished at school. Sometimes people from overseas when they speak you know in terms of English you know sometimes they speak,

you know accents, sometimes I can't hear them as you say "I beg your pardon?" Then they just speak and I learn from them, now its easy, you can take people from London, England, UK- I can copy them easy. What they are saying…

**AP:** The difficult ones are the Scots.

**MB:** Ja, but I will learn from them.

**AP:** Do you think that white people and black people in South Africa have got different attitudes and values? I spoke to Dr. Player last night, and he said to me, and in fact Warren Bekker, agreed with me this morning, that white people are not very patient, and they need to learn patience. Is this true? And what do you think it is that black people have to learn?

**MB:** What we need to learn, the black people is to calm down, so that other people can understand you, because other people they loose patient, you know, they take easy, quick, quick you know, then the other people are a little bit slower, like the black people you know, so they need to catch faster, to slow down like, in the South Africa the thing, they take it easy, the things are not too fast.

**MG:** I think, what we have to learn: I think that if you are a person, you have to respect yourself and then, if you respect yourself, other people they will respect you. So that's what I want to tell people, that if you respect yourself, people they will respect you, so that's what we have to learn.

**SM:** What can I suggest is this- as people, we need to understand each other. We need to tolerate each other. As I'm working with trailists, actually from overseas, they can fight, just in front of me, and the Zulus, it's really horrible, it's very annoying you know, but I must just tolerate, I must learn their way of living, it's like that. Just to learn each other, and then you need to tolerate each other. I think it's all like that.

**AP:** Why is the wilderness a special place for people to experience?

**MB:** It's to live the normal life, without rushening things. The special thing about wilderness- when you are there, it is good for solitude and then to think about yourself, coming down, and then you come with an idea like, when you are tired of civilization, then you need to learn so that you go out there- even the animals they take it easy when they walk, and that's when you are learning about yourself, to get that release you know of the stress, then take it away, and then your experience is to stay there with dangerous animals, and then you do your night duties that you are given on that time- a certain time and then, it's when it go easy, and then you get relieved, by let me say about- you know when you are crossing the river- it's like people of Israelites, when they are crossing the river. When you are getting back, you have washed yourself, and you get clean, and you

get out. It's like when you are blessed. When you get out, you are clean now, because you left those stress away- you'll get back to your civilization again.

**MG:** That's a wonderful question, why people like to come in a wilderness area. It's just because, more especially, this place is quiet, and it's a good place for them. And I think they get a lot of thing there- what happens- some people are having a stress, and then when they are there they just forget about those things, because many things are happening over there- like we can see animals that you have never seen before, with their naked eye, so its good for them. And another thing, I think they are feeling even the spirit of wilderness from that place. And then another thing, they learn a lot, because it's a wonderful place- it's a clean place with no rush they just do things with whatever you want to do- you can do what you want but eish, I don't know what I'm going to say. It's more than that!

**SM:** I think they want to come in the wilderness, because the wilderness is a healer. It's healing your spirit, it's healing your heart. It's a thing that is cleaning you, it's athing that is touching your spirit. You know you go there while you're full of a lot of different ideas and then when you arrive there you feel like you are a really person. It's washing you, as Mandla was saying, it's washing you. It's cleaning people.

**AP:** Do you feel you have to be on your best behaviour whenever you are in the wilderness?

**SM:** Best behaviour? Yes! *(Laughs)* Yes, you…wilderness is very fragile. You must make sure that each and every thing you do, you must not damage it. You must look after it, so you must behave very well, and you must behave as a visitor, as a really visitor, because it's a home for the animals and then you need to behave very well.

**MG:** Thanks, yes, you have to behave very good because if you don't respect that place you are spoiling this place, so you must look after it this place because always will be fine if you look after this place. You mustn't break anything without reason. You have to look after this place. That's what us all say.

**MB:** Yes, that place is very fragile, and then when you are there, you need to behave yourself, and then we need to look after that place because its very important. It's touching, really touching, so then, you know like when you see something, let me say it's made by stone age people, like a slag from a rock, if you want to take it, you have to communicate with the spirit, so that if you want to take a piece of that thing, if you need a permit, or a permission from the guide to take it, if that thing is going to remind you back there, and then the wilderness because it teaches people and to change their lives in terms of conserving. You know in terms of if you are out- let me say back to the civilization we are using about 10 litres of water that can serve about 12 people when we are flushing our toilets you know in the bathroom. There, they learn a lot, you know they change their behaviour, you

know the way we are doing things because that place is like untouched, you know, it's like blessed, because it's the last one. If we loose it, we're out of Africa!

**AP:** So you are teaching a lot of values of the appreciation of nature to the tourists. What are the tourists teaching you?

**MB:** They teach us to look after these areas, because they get impressed when we are teaching them about these values, you know, about wilderness, so what they do when they get back, when they come back sometimes they phone and say "Look, you changed our lives!" And then they are teaching their friends, and then they used to tell them in terms of organizing another trail again, because it reminds them back, you know, sometimes they come about five times you know, "OK I am coming on this year", get other people you know and then they will teach us other things about like Red Indians, what they are doing, when they are moving, when it's cold, there's a cold front somewhere and then they go away and move to where it's warmer, like that.

**MG:** We teach them, and then they teach us more things like, I normally see them the way they see things, and I can see, sometimes I can see them that no, we need to teach people because they are very, very empty about these things, they don't know anything, so we have to work hard to teach them about wilderness and how it is important, things like that.

**SM:** Anthony, just to answer your question exactly according to my side, you know we are planting something in their hearts, and we strongly believe that we are waiting for a best result, and will enjoy the harvest. And that's all. Simple.

**AP:** Sicelo, you've just said, or you said earlier, that you go with peace in your heart, leading the way. Would you be comfortable guiding people in an area which has dangerous animals without a rifle?

**SM:** As I said, I'm going with peace. Rifle is nothing, rifle is nothing. You can get squashed by the elephant while you are carrying your rifle, with bullets, with rounds in your magazine. It's nothing, it's nothing. I will be happy, I can lead a trail with my naked hands, without carrying anything, with my bare feet, just to feel I mean grass under my feet. You know, I will be very happy, I don't mind it, I don't mind it, I trust myself. Thank you.

**MG:** I never ever tried to lead a trail without a rifle in a danger zone, or in a danger game reserve, but I never ever used, I never ever made a warning shot, because of the way in which I'm using things, I always follow the rules, and I respect the animals- everything. So I'm a guide and I'm carrying a gun, but I know what I'm doing. I have to respect everything, and then, only lead a trail with a good peace *(piece?!)*

**MB:** I won't lead a trail without a rifle, because the problem is that, when it comes to safety, and then people, they will ask you- where was your rifle? Why did you lead a trail without a protection. Other people they misbehave. That's why we are carrying rifles, because of danger games, the rifle is for protection. If, let me say, it's only the guides, who are well trained, they know sometimes, some of them may just lag. They think now we are safe, they just walk. They are putting their heads down so that they are lagging behind. They are forgetting that we are not at home, we are in a danger game, so that's why we carry rifles, but if we walk with them, we can walk there without a rifle, but with the tourists, sorry my friend, I am afraid.

**AP:** Okay, I'm not a tourist, so you are going to take me one day with no rifles through uMfolozi- you'll take me, hey? You won't take responsibility for me?

**MB(?):** No.

**AP:** Tell me what animals do you consider to be the most potentially dangerous.

**MB:** The dangerous one is an elephant, when it is in musth or when you are too close to them, you know, because they need that comfort zone. You mustn't get too close. But the elephant is the dangerous one.

**MG:** I think the first one is an elephant, because elephant, ayi, that animal have a good memory, so once you do a wrong things, next time he will give you a problem. Another animal's black rhino, it's very, very grumpy, so I'm always careful of that animal.

**SM:** They said elephant, yes, elephant, black rhino, I agree with them, and buffalo- old or sick buffalo is really, dangerous as well. Yeh!

**AP:** I see you're not that concerned about hippos. It really depends where you work, doesn't it, because those guys who work near rivers put hippos at number one every time. Do you guys know Douwe van der Zee? No? You've never worked with Douwe. He says a rifle is no use against a black rhino because by the time you see him he's past you already? *(General laughter)* Do you want to comment on that one?

**MB:** The black rhino one? Yes, we don't use rifles there. The black rhino is a little bit skittish and grumpy. When you…let me say you have got enough time you can throw objects on it, and then it turned, but the white rhino, when it's bolting and tilted straight to you, it doesn't turn. That's when people by adrenaline, or for the safety of the group put a warning shot, and if you do that, sometimes it doesn't turn, then they fire him.

**MG:** Anthony, I didn't copy your question. Could you just say it again.

**AP:** No, I was just saying would you like to comment on the particular skittishness of black rhino- the fact that they are very unpredicatable, but Douwe, who has walked uMfolozi quite a few times, says but not dangerous, just in a hurry to go somewhere when they get startled.

**MG:** That type of animal- black rhino- two things happening, it's very quick, and sometimes they can run away from you, sometimes they can come straight, and then they- sometimes if they miss you, they just go straight.

**SM:** Well, they are quick, and they've got a scary noise as well, so I think what he is saying is true- you can blink and then they are already past- they are just very quick, they're very quick.

**AP:** Do you know of anyone who has ever had to shoot an animal in client protection, or do you know of any case where a client or guide has got killed or injured by an animal?

**MB:** At the school it happened once- that's about 14 years *(ago)* now. It was Bruce Dell- he was gored by a white rhino- he was trying to protect the tourist. The trailists were far enough- the female with a calf- a sub-adult calf- then the calf ran behind him, and then he was facing the mother. The mother, she thought that he is killing the baby, then he get gored, then he fired on the ground, to give her a warning, but it didn't work, and she gored him on his leg, and then carried him away, and then the backup, he was making a noise, shouting, and then she dropped him, and then they sent him in the hospital, but the tourists they said "No, he was eaten by a rhino" because they didn't know about these animals- they don't eat you, they gore you, you know, you get stabbed by those animals. So it's only that thing happened- it's about 14 years. After that he couldn't, other guy took over, but the trailists they were nervous.

**AP:** Did he ever go back and do more trails after that?

**MB:** Yes, he did it. He did about 26 years after that, and then he showed me Mandla, be careful of this, with a long horn is that he gored him. And then he left the school, after that he carried on about 16 years and due to his age, he had to retire.

**MG:** I can't remember very well, but I can say ja, Kevin was leading a trail, and then one trailist got injured from a warthog, that's what I do remember.

**SM:** I don't know, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know…

**AP:** Do you know of any incidents where guides or game rangers were injured as a result of either rifles or vehicles? (because I am of the opinion that rifles and vehicles are more dangerous than animals…)

**SM:** I am trying to open the picture in my mind, no, I don't know really…

**MG:** No, I haven't heard anything about rifles and vehicles.

**MB:** No, we are quite certain about that…

**AP:** Do you believe that here in KZN they have the best record for trails safety than any other province in the country that has dangerous animals?

**MB:** Yes, the incident it happened because while ago, it happens once at uMfolozi.

**MG:** In fact, I'm not sure to compare to other provinces.

**SB:** Just coming in my mind right now, we are the best, very safe.

**AP:** Brilliant, because if you do the studying, you'll see that in Kruger they kill animals quite often, and there must be… perhaps there's a reason…there's a difference in attitude…perhaps they don't go with peace in their hearts…perhaps the *ubhejane (black rhino)* is the one with the rifle in his hands…*(laughs).* We talk about influences, people that have influenced you, I have heard a saying which says that "Nothing grows in the shade of great trees," but you people are here in the shadow of Dr. Ian Player, so I think you are going to disagree with me about that…

**MB:** Yes, we are under Dr. Player…we are coming from his path, we are following the light, and he is still backupping us financially. So we are following his path because now he is old, he said "Guys, you carry on, I have showed you the way and then go on with this way, it won't lost you."

**MG:** I am not disagreeing with you…because we are still following Dr. Ian Player and Magquba as well, still doing well, and now we are leading the trail, but nothing happened.

**AP:** My question was, when you are coached by someone so great, (I said "Nothing grows in the shade of great trees"), so when you are coached by someone so great does it hold you back, having such a great influence?

**SM:** I am struggling to understand what you are saying. What you are saying is very complicated. Can you repeat it again.

**AP:** Yes, sure Sicelo. What I am saying is this: There is a saying which says "Nothing grows beneath the shade of great trees." Okay, so I am saying that Dr. Player is like a great tree, but if you are a small tree, or a seed that falls near here, but you're a small seed there, but you can't grow nicely, because that tree is so big. So what I am saying is that if you are following in the footsteps of a great person, it's very difficult to develop a greatness or a character of your own.

**SM:** Thank you so much, Anthony. Well, I was struggling. Well, I can say as guides, we can work hard, but it will be difficult to reach Dr. Players role under the Wilderness School, but we are growing very well studied (?) something from him, and we are growing very well. If you can read his books, you can gain a lot of knowledge from him, I think I can say we are growing, we are following the path, the right path.

**AP:** Do you think that you have got the potential to become the new Maqhuba Ntombela, or someone of that character, because there's another legendary man, and maybe people don't have the cultural background that he had, because things have changed. So do you think you could ever reach that status?

**SM:** That's my dream *(laughs).* Now, because we are living in such a- under a harsh situation, you know, we're dying young, and it's like that and that and that, because of different things happening in this universe, but what can I say is, I am just willing, I am just willing, just to touch where he was standing, do you know. I've read a lot of Dr. Player's books, like the book that I am reading now is *Shadows and Souls- Zululand* and you know, it's really touching me, it's striking me, the way he did things Baba Magquba, the way he did things in the wilderness, it's really- I'm always laughing at those things, so I am just willing, I am just willing to touch his stage you know, to make sure that I reach his stage.

**MG:** I think it's a big, big challenge, because this time it's not like Magquba's time, but I promise you that maybe one day, I will be one of the legends. I like to do things like Magqu.. but I think it's gonna be, it's not like…it's going to be difficult to do, but I'm willing to do things like Magqubu, or Dr. Ian Player, things like that, but it's a big challenge to do that thing.

**MB:** Yes, I would like to…I'm very curious to get there, but now things are changed. But if we look after that thing- the wilderness area, and then work hard for conservation, and study more, maybe we can get there. But we need time to get there.

**AP:** Maybe the reason why Bafana Bafana are not playing too well at the moment is that we just don't have the natural talent. You know so, whether you have got that natural talent- natural talent you are born with, but certain other things you can work for, but- so obviously we've discussed that "Do you think you could become great in this field?" thing, but there's another related question, and that is this: Do you think there is a discontinuity in traditional culture, particularly traditional Zulu culture, which also puts you at a disadvantage in this modern age in terms of the way Ntombela related to the wilderness was quite related to his connectedness to the Zulu culture which is maybe breaking up, because we're all becoming Americans.

**MB:** Yes, the problem is that we are lacking, or we are loosing our culture, because of Coco-cola culture you know, so, like Magquba Ntombela time, he used to connect

with the spirits, and then using his heart, so now we changed, you know, we are getting there because we have got knowledge, and then we keep learning now you know, so in this time, we are like loosing the spirits called *amadlozi*, like or respecting them, you know, some other people they don't respect them, they work, because they do the job, because they are working, not with their heart, with a what-do-you-call-it? With your passion, with passion with your job, what you are doing, with love you know…

**MG:** Well, I will try to say something, as Mandla said- we loose our culture. I think most of the time we normally see a bad result, young people they are doing things- it's just because of we are loosing our culture. So I believe that if you do things you must rely on your spirit, then things will be fine. So that's why we are always not straight- we are doing things in a wrong way.

**SM:** Well, I think we are loosing our culture, yes, I agree, but it's not that bad- we can still pull the tail of our culture, and pull it back to us, and like uBab' uMagqubu the way he grew up, yes, I can say he, even he used to stay with animals, he grew up with animals, crossing the rivers, herding cattle, so it was easy to him as well, but and us as young people of South Africa, we can still try to live together with animals. When I'm saying that, I'm not saying just to go in game reserves and stay with the animals, but we as youth in your area or in your township- you can organize sort of things like that, you can try to contact places like Wilderness Leadership School, and then we can live together by doing that with animals.

**AP:** If I asked you to tell me the Zulu traditional calendar… *(tape ends)* …reconstruct the Zulu calendar, and we decided that culture is changing. Do you think that the Zulu culture is being lost?

**MB:** Yes, slowly going away, because we learn from the English calendar. The Zulu one is- you can't ask me now, because I've lost my culture- I don't know, I used to mix them.

**MG:** Yes, we lost culture, because now we are using things with English, not in Zulu. But sometimes other things with Zulu, but more especially English.

**SM:** I am sad to say, yes. I am very much sad to say yes. But it's a thing which I think we should work on it…we should try to not loose it.

**AP:** Another example is the horn patterns of cows- or the colours of cows. They say that the greatest speaker of Zulu was Shaka, and Shaka knew at least a hundred words for the colours of cows, and he knew at least 40 words for the horns patterns of cows. Can you think of 30 words for horn patterns of cows?

**MB:** As far as I said, we lost our culture, I can't.

**MG:** It's hard, I don't know how, it's hard to even say three of them.

**SM:** Ja, I know some, but I don't think they'll be thirty, or even ten, but I know colours of cows and horn patterns.

**AP:** Can you tell us a few?

**SM:** Um..in English?

**AP:** Tell us the Zulu name.

**SM:** The colours is *emaqanda kaweueni, elijoli, ebafazi bawele,* ah, great, well done.

**AP:** But now days of course, we know the names of hundreds of soccer teams, we know the names of hundreds of cars, we know the names of…so in other words we haven't become more stupid, we've just replaced one area of knowledge with another area of knowledge, so we're being modernized. Do you think we're being Americanized, Sicelo?

**SM:** I can say- the thing is- I can say yes, it's like Americanized, and the other thing is what you suckled at school, what you're absorbing at the school- it's English! And then you are realizing, "I must grab on English" then you have forgotten your route *(root?)* backwards. So it's like that. I can say if they can add- the teachers at the school- if they can try to put more pressure even in Zulu things as well, it can be better.

**MG:** I think now I can say yes. Now we are using American style. It's just because the way they feed us at school. They're encouraging us- like if you finish your matric, you have to go and do your studies, so things like that- they can't tell us that we have to go to collect some cows *(for lobola)* and things like that. Even now people don't know how to play stick-fighting- so things like that- they can't do things like that, that's why we're using another culture, not our own culture. Some people they still do our cultures, but most of them they lost our culture.

**MB:** As far as I am concerned, we are Americanized, because we have grown up under Coca-cola culture, because we are loosing our culture, and then we are learning other culture on the other side.

**AP:** How has guiding changed during the time that you've been exposed to it? Is it changing to become better, or worse, or just different?

**MB:** It changed me better because, when we are starting this job, you're a little bit nervous, you know, you don't trust yourself, you're thinking of the people- now it changed me, because you know, we are always leaving our families away- you plan it you know, then you stay away from your family about two months to three months, and then you get a time off, but they understand what we- the job you are doing. Then this nature guiding, it teach us more, then it brings us back, like

visiting the Drakensberg, like me, we as the *thelezi* clan, we are the Sotho clan- we came from Lesotho, so we, turned to the Zulus, and then now, we are becoming Zulus, but I'm not a proper Zulu.

**MG:** Well, I can say its changed me better, because I've learnt a lot, more especially the way I am doing things, it's easy to plan, and I know how to treat people, not badly but, well, I can say it's changed me better- I'm a good guide now.

**SM:** Ayi, I think it's- to me I don't think it's changing me- I think I am just what I am- maybe there is something that is- but I think I am just what I am.

**AP:** Don't you think your English has improved?

**SM:** *(Laughs)* I can say, I think my English is coming well, but its not because of trails and work. It's because I'm working hard, reading and listening to radio- no, I don't think it's because of trails *(still laughing)*

**MG:** I'd like to add on that, because before I said for doing this job, I don't know how I can say that, but my English now it's coming better, it's just because of the job that I'm doing, because I'm always with the white people, even a black now they're always speaking English, so it's easy to learn. If I can't understand the words, I normally ask from them, or to them- from them, and then they help me on that.

**MB:** Yes, my English has been improved, and then it's easy now, because even the black people you know, sometimes if you are leading a trail it's a mixture of black, Indians and Afrikaans speaking, you know- you just use English in terms of communication, so that when you illustrate, or demonstrate on something, you via English, not Zooloowhyzing *(satirical Zulu accent).*

**AP:** Do you think the opportunities in field guiding are still hampered by the prospective guides race, or gender, or social status, or economic class, or do you think that it's a field that is open to anybody that has got the right attitude?

**MB:** This industry, now it's free, but long time ago it was hampered- because black people were not there, so now because like us, and other people you see them "How are you guys and what are you doing?" "No, I'm taking people there and there, for this organization or this company." And then even the ladies now they are there. They are in- it's open now.

**MG:** I think now it's for anybody now, because you can get a lady leading a trail, doesn't matter, or white lady or black lady. So now I think it's not hard now. It's easy to do this job.

**SM:** I think it's for all of us…just as long as you are following your dream… just following your heart, and then it's for all of us. Thank you.

**AP:** Women are as good as men?

**SM:** Hey-ye-ye, they are good, but there is but…*laughs* just imagine the woman in front of the elephant, just a bit scared here and there, but ja, if they are following their heart, they will be strong, and they will confront those challenges as well. The thing is to come with heart, and then follow your dream, and then you will be strong in front of that situation.

**MG:** I think for the women, it's fine, because what you have to know, if you trust yourself, you can do anything, if you trust yourself, and then but I can say according to…it depends, it depends because some other jobs. Yes, we are doing the same job, but according to this one, I can say it's hard to see a woman doing this type of job, we are doing. It's hard, it's not easy for the woman.

**MB:** Yes, for the ladies, if that lady get a good training to become a guide, and then strong, and trust, and then she can lead the trail. Not because they are undermined, if she get well trained and then, you know like if we are taking a lady, then we train her to become a guide and then we need to ask her why she likes to do this job, because it needs to be coming from her heart, and then strong, and if you see, okay, she's a strong woman, she's very keen to do this job, and then she get a good training and then she what you call well trained and then you see, you know like when you are doing a follow-up, taking the um… sort of like assessing, but not putting the pressure on her, you know…tell her, relax, don't think that I am testing you, and then she will get used into it.

**AP:** Okay, we're going to do the last question of this interview, and it's got two parts to it: the first question is describe your vision of nature guiding in the future, and the second part is who needs to what in order for it to be realized. So, what is your dream or vision, and how is that going to come about- what must you do and what must others do for that dream to happen?

**MB:** My vision is to see this industry growing up, go more further, like a national director in terms of fundraising, to keep that dream go further is to do his job or her job properly, so that my vision, the way I see this job, of ours that we are doing, it needs more vehicles which are bigger than that we are using now, and the safe one, like new vehicles, you know, or Sprinters yes, which are..and then liase with the company, so that if there is a problem, the car get fixed…without using one car here and there and then we borrow a car you know, we get dumped and pay for other car to pick you…you know like that…so that we don't get stuck.

**MG:** My vision it's going to be like…I'll talk about the wilderness area…my vision is to keep that place, well, we mustn't spoil that place, we have to keep that place…look after this place, because more people will still coming…they are wanting to see that place, they want to learn about nature, because they are still

empty, and then I didn't copy your second question, I want to answer your second question.

**AP:** The second question is how do you think that vision of yours is going to become a reality. What must you do, and what must others do, to keep that place as special as it is?

**MG:** Ah, I'm still getting lost. After Sicelo I will give you an answer.

**SM:** I was just thinking to not share with you guys, but fortunately, I will share with you…as Mandla was saying, is to see the wilderness, I can say healthy wilderness, I don't know, but we, we, what is my vision is to see people going in the wilderness without damaging it, so going in a pure indigenous wilderness. That's my vision, you know, and your second question is- the answer is- it's still in my hands to tell people by not doing the horrible things in the wilderness. So I must make sure that as I am taking people right now, I must make sure, as I was saying, we are planting something into people's heart so I must make sure that we…I'm telling them about why the wilderness is important, so that they will not damage it, is my vision, because I don't want it to be extinct.

**MG:** I think we as a guides, we need more information, we need more knowledge to tell people more about nature, and then I think after getting knowledge, we will pass a message to other people, then we will see more people coming, that's what I'd like to say?

**AP:** Sorry, a last question. Do local communities who border on wilderness areas, natural areas, see themselves as having been deprived of land or in a way in competition with the nature reserve.

**MB:** Not yet. Yes, people, they are proclaiming their land, but not in the wilderness. They like wilderness to be kept as it is- what they are proclaiming, they want the community levy paid to them so that they will build like a lodge which belongs to those communities that belong to that area, so they are waiting for the proposal you know, but they said its around there to be paid.

**MG:** Not all of them. Few of them they do understand, but the rest, they are thinking of money, they are thinking how can they get money from the park, because some of them they are chased away from that place so they are not thinking of making a plans- how can they go there and then negotiate with the people inside, to make things that they are going to give them some money, but they are just destroying nature inside the park. That's why I say a few of them they do understand, but most of them they can't understand what's happening. It's a thing of money.

**SM:** I think the way I can put it is that you can go in the village and then you can, if you ask an old man, he can tell you exactly that he is worried about his father's grave inside the park, you know, and then at the same time they are worried about

places for grazing for their cattle you know, for their livestock, some of them they have said that they've moved inside the park and there are places, and now they don't have a place for plowing their maize meal. So sometimes, but now they are coming realize that why they had moved, and why it is important to keep the animals in the park. They are realizing that, and at the same time most of the people in my village, they are working inside the park, so that they know how to put something on top of the table for their families. So they are benefiting from the park as well. So it's much relaxed, but in some areas they complain as Mandla was saying, and then they are complaining they get their places for their lodges, as Mandla was saying. So it's like that.

**AP:** Do you think there is much awareness that Hluhluwe-UMfolozi was the traditional hunting grounds for the Zulu kings?

**MB:** Yes, people there will talk about it, and then there's long time ago like me, my grandfather- I've got a land in the park, but because we were moved, my father is one of those people, he was working in the park. Due to the community, you know land claims, they don't want the park to be removing the fences, what they are looking for is a community levy so that they can use the money to build sort of a lodge, where the tourists, they will spend a night, or some days, when they are in the park. And then that's how they will generate money.

**MG:** I didn't copy the question clearly.

**AP:** The question was- do you think that people who live around the Hluhluwe-uMfolozi area are aware of the history of Shaka in particular, but the other Zulu Kings proclaiming that as the hunting grounds to the king?

**MG:** I can say yes, proclaiming that place as a hunting ground? I can say yes.

**SM:** Yebo, yebo, I can say yebo. iMfolozi Game Reserve is very rich in cultural things and in history, Shaka's history, ja, they are proclaiming that as well.

**AP:** If King Goodwill arrived with his rifle and started shooting nyala would you be grumpy?

**SM:** Big time, hey, big time, no killing, we must conserve, we must conserve. Big time, I will be very grumpy, I am sorry to say *(laughs)*

**MG:** Yes, I will be very, very grumpy, and I do remember one day, I was leading a trail, then one lady saw something, then they said to me, "No, you must kill this thing" and then I said to them "No, we conserve, we are not killing!"

**AP:** What was the thing?

**MG:** It was a big spider. *(laughs)*

**MB:** No, I will be very, very grumpy and upset. Because he's not allowed to kill those animalis *(mock Zulu accent),* in brackets, those animals, it's a child like language, because we are conserving those animals, he knows. Yes, on those days it was a hunting ground for King Shaka and other kings, but now because we are conserving he knows, he as got areas. He is supposed to get a letter. If he needs something, he can make an application, but the tourists they mustn't know about that culling, you know. Like you know when we are culling animals- if the other one is- if the species are growing up higher- we need to cull them, so that we minimize them, to keep them in balance.

**AP:** The last round of questions is by you, and each one of you is going to ask me a question, and I am going to try and answer your questions, because I think that you have spent a lot of time answering my questions, so now we get a last round where you each get to ask me a question about what I think about any aspect of what we have discussed today.

**SM:** Firstly, I can say thank you very much. You touched a strong point where you said are the girls fine in leading trails. According to you, what do you think about that question? Just to hear from you.

**AP:** Ja, I, um I think I have been brought up to believe that all people are equal, and that all people are capable of doing what it is they want to do- there should not be a restriction in society, I mean we know that it was a characteristic of apartheid that if you were a black person you were forbidden to do certain jobs. So if it comes to women, or if it comes to religion, or it comes to any other thing, I don't think people from- and including gender, I don't think that men have got a right to do a particular thing. Let them come, let them learn, and let those people who show themselves worthy and capable, do any job that they want.

**MG:** Anthony, how do you feel if you are asking us about those things. I have to know why are you asking us those questions?

**AP:** Mandla, I am trying to look at the history of guiding in southern Africa, and my purpose is to look at the past, and in looking at the past I read a lot of books, and I speak to older people, but by choosing you guys I am speaking to younger people, and I am trying to imagine the future- the present and the future. So that is why I asked about how you see the future, and that is why I am asking you questions about how your life is today, and what is your vision for the future, because I want to try and predict the way that not only conservation, but specifically that aspect of conservation which is nature guiding is going to go. And in order to predict that I need to speak to a lot of people, and I need to try and collectively imagine what their vision will make the future be like. I might be completely wrong, because this is not a science. I am doing a Tourism Masters, so it is different to a science- a scientist doesn't like being wrong- someone in the arts- you're not marked down for being wrong, but certainly it would be nice if I could

produce a vision of the future. When people read my Masters thesis they will know "Ah, this is where people collectively think we are going."

**MB:** Anthony, in terms of your Masters how do you see about eco-tourism, or the tourism industry, in terms of- forget about the competition- in terms of growing, you know, to going further, like in future how will we look like?

**AP:** I think in terms of our past- we've been shaped by a number of forces, by the history of hunting, by a very male activity, and because of the history of hunting with rifles a very white, male activity, and so that is why our marketing relies so heavily on things like "The Big Five", which is dramatic, and has got a very questionable history to it. Also it's very militaristic, and I hope that in the future we are moving away from just the emphasis on the dramatic, the emphasis on "TheBig Five" because as long as we have got that, the industry is going to geared towards white males, but as soon as we see the eco-systems and ecology as a broader picture, then eventually we will persuade the advertising industry to view the history of ecology as having changed, and to change the emphasis on what people are coming to Africa for, so that people can also look at birds, and also look at insects, so that the guests have got an interest in grasses and geology and astronomy and everything like that- a greater interest than they have today, and that people will walk trails and they don't mind whether they saw a rhino or a lion, or whether they didn't. They'll take that to be just another animal, so democratization of people's expectations, will also lead to a democratization of the guiding process, because you must ask yourself "Why are there more men than women? Why is this industry still suited to white people?" and those are the reasons that I am seeing at the moment, and I think that if we want to democratize the industry we all have got to try to make our visions become realities.

**MB:** Thank you very much, Anthony. That has satisfied me.

**AP:** Thanks all, unless there's any other closing things. Thanks very much, a last round of words from all of you. From me, thank you very, very much for your time, it's been a fabulous interview, it worked doing all three of you at once. It probably saved you a bit of time. When once I have got a draft of this interview I will send it to you, so that if anything you have said appears wrong, you can just change it and correct it before the time that I quote you when I put together my final thesis, which will be in about June, July, August when I am working on that, so I will send you a transcript first, and you can correct anything you want. Any closing words?

**SM:** Thank you so much for your time. Thank you guys as well, I was a little bit nervous, now I am fine, thank you so much, I mean.

**MG:** Anthony, thanks for your good time, and you two guys thanks, we had a good time. I didn't expect that this thing it's gonna be like this so, I am very, very happy, I'm so glad, thanks guys.

**MB:** Thank you very, very much Anthony and other guys, Mandla G and Sicelo Mbhatha, thank you very much Anthony about your time, and then with your relaxed interview, it was very nice, because we were a little bit panicking, we were sort of like freezing- what's happening about, but in terms of grouping, it saves our time, and even your time, because you are still going a long way to uMfolozi. Thank you very, very much Anthony.

**AP:** Thanks all again and cheers! It was a great interview.

*(Interview ends)*

Transcribed and proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 5 : GRAHAM VERCUEIL

*Phinda, 21h00, 06 Feb, 06*

**AP:** Graham, tell us how you got in to the whole thing of nature guiding.

**GV:** It was really good fortune in some ways. I had family who'd put a lot of effort into giving us a good appreciation of the whole natural environment and then heard about the initiation of this CC Africa Phinda project just before it kicked off, and managed to talk myself into an interview. Came down to Phinda as a guide. Got into the original group of guides who started here in '91.

**AP:** So you've been here a good fifteen years now?

**GV:** On and off.

**AP:** What makes you still love the work?

**GV:** I don't know, without just being clichéd about sharing what's inspiring and beautiful. There is something in a commercial world, there is something just fundamentally lucky about not having to do a huge sales pitch to get someone to enjoy what you're doing with them as your job. Therefore they know why they're there, and you're heading out to do the good stuff. I think it's the people, I think it's something very simple, almost sort of child-like abandonment to the simple enjoyment of seeing things around you that are nice to look at, and nice to listen to and see. And the brilliant thing is that people respond to it. And now being involved in the training, I think a large part of the enjoyment is knowing that there's this whole group of people in South Africa who have an inexplicable love of the bush and being able to give them a leg up and the tools to put it into action and turn it into something that wasn't there previously.

**AP:** A lot of people confuse a game ranger and a nature guide. Do you think that it's appropriate that these should go to completely separate people, or do you think people should spend some time in game ranging and some time in nature guiding? The same individuals should be doing some conservation work and some tourist work.

**GV:** I don't know. I don't know if it would be so important to make that distinction, because there's some guys who've got skill on the one side, with a whole lot of black and white in their heads and it's not ? background, and there's other guys that have the balance of people skills in their heads. And then there's a grouping who can manage both.

**AP:** Do you think there are characteristics that are typical of people who become nature guides?

**GV:** I'm trying to think of some that are more than just obvious. You'd have to draw a distinction between nature guides who stick it out for a reasonable tenure, and then at the same time are delivering consistently good safaris, as opposed to nature guides who sometimes come and go and whose abilities and output really vary a huge amount. But I think it takes an enduring passion and interest for some aspect, regardless of what it is, of what gets that person out of bed in the morning, and a good empathy for people, and there are all these things that you would have heard from everyone that you've spoken to so far.

**AP:** The people that go from your staff- when you have an exit interview with them, are they fed up with the situation or the people, or what is it that eventually wears down those people that don't have enduring passion?

**GV:** There are quite a few different things. I think one part of it is there's this little microcosm of a society that you end up living in. You can't choose your friends or neighbours. That in a nutshell. And I think this industry also tends not to really cater to a long term guide. The conditions are such that there's only a handful of guides who override living in a tiny house without much storage space and not a great financial package and still persevere year on year and have their own personal growth agenda that they somehow are turning to. But I think on the whole I feel guides are not well catered for. Their packages and their accommodation situations on the whole are pretty sub standard. In the long run they're not sustainable. We're expecting mature, competent individuals who come from fairly complex backgrounds to move into tiny communities with tiny accommodations and actually make a life and be content to stay there for years on end, and it's not going to work.

**AP:** Do you think it's possible to teach attitudes and values to guides?

**GV:** I think it is possible to teach them. I think the more difficult thing is to maintain them without constant input so that those attitudes and values are latched on to, and paid forward if you like, by that person. That's when you have a real victory. It's a bit of the old dog and new tricks. But I think in the guiding industry if you combine some of the social upliftment and conservation victories that are coming through in...say, for example, some of the stuff that this company is doing. It is easy to adopt pretty strong value changes, because of the reality of what you see going on around you.

**AP:** Describe your philosophy of humans and of nature.

**GV:** I think that we are part of the natural environment with as much right to be here as any other animal. And it's not a question of stepping back and giving right of way. But I think that where we get it wrong is that we misinterpret our place in the whole system and empower ourselves beyond what we really should do. Beyond the power we really should have. I think that's maybe a different conversation. A longer one.

**AP:** Has science been afforded an artificially elevated position in contemporary thinking? Is science the new religion?

**GV:** I think that science began a new religion with the advent of Darwin and evolution. I don't think it's recent. Or maybe that is recent, if that's the time frame that you're looking at. But I think science and evolution became new religion. It is to my mind a religion and not really a science. In a nutshell.

**AP:** Do you see a decline in the value that's attached to traditional, cultural and religious values?

**GV:** Yes. In a lot of people I deal with I think there's more and more individualism rather than established and understood religious or cultural values. It's just what everyone else, I'm sure so many people you've spoken to see around them. It's just all about the individual. I'm number one.

**AP:** In your experience do people see a special value in wilderness or in nature which you could liken to a religious experience?

**GV:** I think that it really depends on the individual. I think there are a lot of people that if you strip away all the facades of first world western, in this case, western thinking and living, that there's very few people who don't respond on some fundamental level to the natural environment. I think it's one of those astonishing things is that the whole natural environment has some sort of...it's almost like it imposes an experience on us which our heads are programmed for. There are very few people that given the right time and place don't respond to a spectacular natural environment on some fundamental level.

**AP:** What role do you think that guides serve apart from the safety and relative comfort of clients?

**GV:** I think it's got a huge amount more to do than safety and relative comfort, because I think that you can employ people who don't have one iota of guiding knowledge or acumen in their bodies to deal with comfort and safety. And I think a guide who has the right ability to empathise with and read people has that unique opportunity to add value to an experience, say for example in this country that nobody else can. To get in there and be that last connection that adds a depth and a value and a special twist to somebody's stay or holiday or experience in an environment that nobody else is adding. That's the aspect that guides should be focusing on and not the mundane and routine safety and comfort issues.

**AP:** Ethics. Do you think that khaki fever produces real problems in relationships between particularly male guides and particularly female clients?

**GV:** Oh boy! Yes, I think that thing exists. I think it's this whole...yes, I think khaki fever is a simple thing of a lot of people coming out of environments where they are faced with the mundane and the drab and drudgery of modern life. And then they're faced with outdoor, vibrant, independent people with open landrovers, rifles and a tan. And who are happy to seem to be getting lost at night off roads, and they know the stars, and they're happy to get rained on, and they smile when everything seems to be going bad, and there's something naturally appealing about it. It's not anymore complicated than that. But it's evident. Look it worked for me.

**AP:** **(***laughs)* Graham shows me his ring. What do you think should be the accepted norm concerning guides drinking alcohol with clients?

**GV:** Accepted role?

**AP:** I mean he shouldn't have a beer in his hand while he's driving the landie.

**GV:** No, I think safety issues are safety issues, in terms of handling weapons and vehicles, then it's not even a question to be debated. But if it's more sedentary social occasions then life is life and people are people and as long as people are mature enough to know where to keep their toes on the right side of the line, then life carries on. And the reality in this country is that we have a lot of young guys who don't always know where to draw the line...I do think that employers and the organisations don't take nearly enough responsibility in helping the guides in their employ understand and manage alcohol consumption in the workplace, because there are not that many workplaces where alcohol is the stock and trade of every outing. And it's an environment where young people are almost encouraged to drink with alarming regularity and it's the norm. And it 's a high pressure environment in that the hours are long and the demands are high, but the ambience and the mood has to be light and relaxing, and relaxed and easygoing. And so after hours late at night, to relieve all that,

people are drinking, because everyone's drinking all the time. I think employers don't take enough responsibility in counselling their staff. I think there are way too many guys drinking way too much, with no-one's input.

**AP:** What about the ethical problems that are typically encountered by nature guides in your experience?

**GV:** I think in private game reserves, on of the sort of eco ethical problems is that guides are under enormous pressure to deliver and end up putting unnatural pressure on the environment with off road driving. And ethical pressures? I think there's a certain weirdness in the service industry, in the guiding industry where young people who have got opinions, and are developing opinions, simply have to be agreeable all the time. And if you're going to be agreeable seven days a week for six or eight weeks in a row every day with people you simply don't agree with, there's an imbalance that a lot of guides really battle to reconcile. As far as ethical dilemmas are concerned I don't know if that addresses that.

**AP:** I think that's certainly one.

**GV:** And the fact that we spin our heads around about recycling plastic bottles and the odd cans and things that go on here and being ecologically sensitive, but the very airline that brings someone here is doing a thousand times more ecological damage than your recycled cans are doing good. And this anomaly of being eco sensitive lodge design and building when in fact the most eco sensitive thing we can do here is employ people so that they don't come and hunt the land out and turn it to peasant farming. So that's the hugest thing we can do is keep peasants off the land and not get petty about tiny ecological issues which drive people mad and use up so many hours in a day inconsequentially.

**AP:** Do you think weapons and vehicles are the two most dangerous things that the guides will encounter in their work? Do you think there pose greater dangers than that?

**GV:** I think weapons and vehicles are, I think just to touch on what we were saying earlier, I think alcohol is another one. It's this idea of entertaining and having a dinner party with strangers every night. It's not a normal lifestyle for a lot of people. But then that's the entertainment industry across the board. I think weapons and vehicles are certainly more threatening than animals on the whole. People are probably more dangerous than ? Well it's the person who operates the weapon and the vehicle, isn't it? And those things can be operated safely or negligently. The same thing with wild animals. It's not necessarily the wild animal that causes the incident either. It's the people.

**AP:** Would you be prepared to take clients around this area here without a rifle?

**GV:** There's certain guests that I definitely would take without a rifle, and there are other guests that I definitely wouldn't.

**AP:** What would be the characteristics? How would you know in advance which are which?

**GV:** I think that because sometimes with people, the more you can predict the people's behaviour the more likely I would be to take them out. If I figure that I could trust people's behaviour and predict their behaviour then animals are often more predictable than the humans anyway. And it's the humans whose behaviour is so much harder to read and predict. That ends up creating a potentially dangerous situation with animals. So yes, there are times,

especially with people who know or whose reactions you can rely on or trust, that going around unarmed would be far more exhilarating, and being armed overpowers you in this environment and it makes people do things and go to places where you probably wouldn't dream of going if you weren't armed. So when you're unarmed you're way more cautious and you're way more circumspect about the things you do and the situations you get yourself into.

**AP:** Can you describe how nature guiding has changed during the course of your experience since between 1991 and now?

**GV:** Whether nature guiding has changed or not I don't know, itself. But certainly the market has become more flooded with venues, and consequently it's more difficult to find committed and competent guides to fill positions. I think too, maybe it's just a question of the saturation of the market and the number of lodges out there, but it's certainly fifteen years ago, there were a lot more people who would guide simply for the love of it and where benefits and salary and all that were a secondary issue. Now you're dealing by and large with a different person who is there for a shorter tenure and they might change careers three or four times before they make a decision and they're much more likely to have other options. Guide for two years and if it's not keeping them actively attracted that they have other options to go to.

**AP:** Do you think that opportunities in guiding are still hampered by the prospective guide's race or gender, social status or economic class?

**GV:** Oh definitely. It would be naive to think that that's all disappeared out of our system. I think it's changed a lot for gender, for white women. I still don't see many black women guiding, particularly in the private sector. In big game areas there's a huge dearth of black or coloured women guiding. I think there are a lot more black guides than there used to be and the opportunities for black guides are opening up. Whether it's a case of the market changing or department of labour just getting their way, I'm not too sure. I think it's a bit of both. But I think the demographics have changed and there are social push and pull factors which are working for and against that process. But I think that the sad reality is that a legacy of not educating people is preventing a lot of people of entering the guiding industry, because guiding by nature, if you're guiding international first world sophisticated international people, it's a tough job to do if you're not a good communicator and you don't have a world view. So there it has a ceiling. And the upper echelon lodgers are by nature dominated by young educated people who at this stage a lot of them are white people. It needs to change and I don't know how fast it will change. I think the guiding industry would do well to implement a process by which black people with potential are given the opportunity over a period of time to improve their language skills more than anything else. I think that would open a lot of doors, if we had more specific English language training programs available to people with prospects in the guiding industry.

**AP:** Aimed at getting them to deal with clients better or aimed at getting them to read up more?

**GV:** Both. But I think that it's got more to do with conversational ability than it has got to do with researchability. Because a lot of people's innate knowledge and cultural and local knowledge has its own intrigue and charm. But it's tough when the conversation extends beyond that, if it just dries up because now you don't have the vocabulary to extend beyond that and so then the guide sits in the shadow of the conversation and can't get involved, that becomes a unbelievably tedious job to do day after day.

**AP:** Does the SETA NQF system adequately address the need for transformation and diversification of the industry?

**GV:** No, I don't think it adequately addresses it. I don't think so.

**AP:** Can you name benefits that are brought by the NQF system?

**GV:** I think that there are benefits in that there are minimum standards that have been introduced, and the bottom end of the guiding industry in this country was not of a high standard at all. And so it's introduced standards and given people some sort of target to pitch at, but I still think there are a lot of barriers to entry...yes, there's a lot to say about all that, but I think that the whole THETA process has overcomplicated certain aspects so that it's created barriers to entry for people who really need it. And in that way favoured those who are already educated and already literate. But by nature if you're going to progress upwards in a system, education and literacy are going to be in your favour so...I think the system is too bureaucratic.

**AP:** Douwe van der Zee has got an interesting take on the word 'transformation', because he suggests the government has an agenda with double standards there. They want to transform things but only, on the one hand transformation is supposed to be seen as an unbiased and objective thing, but on the other hand the people that you want to promote are of a certain race and gender. So transformation is really not about transformation, it's about reverse racial discrimination. What would be your take on that? As per government program anyway.

**GV:** I think Douwe's right. I think there is a lot of reverse racial discrimination and I think that at the expense of operating standards within the industry I don't know that the government as it stands has got a choice if they're to keep the people happy. But I think that as we were discussing earlier, I think there has to come a point where if we're to keep the competent people in this country who as it happens, some of the competent people in this country happen to be white, and if we hope to keep them here as economically active and productive members of society, we have to give them some sort of hope that they'll also be okay in applying for a job, and that they are not going to be reversely discriminated against simply because they are white, and the previous system that discriminated against black people was white. And until there's hope on the horizon that that's going to happen I think we'll keep losing good people out of this society because they don't see a future for themselves. Even now amongst the young people that are coming through into the guiding fraternity, there's an uncertainty and a lack of future and a lack of vision amongst them. Where if you question what they're doing with their time and their guiding, there's only a small percentage who really can give you a coherent answer about the next five or ten years.

**AP:** You expanded on that a bit more earlier, and I wondered if you recalled your expanded thing and the directionlessness of the youth and guiding.

**GV:** Just to add on to that, look I think it's got sort of social cultural or social economic roots but there are a lot of...and there are reasons on both sides. Say for example, some of the black guys that come into guiding, for one they stick around, and maybe because it's the best economic opportunity that exists in their area of domicile, if you like. But at the same time there's security there where these guys seem to get in and make a life of it and make a career of it. And perhaps I would as well, and the next white guy would if he's whole family

lived over the fence and he owned property there and the property was dished out to you by the headman without having to spend a massive amount on a bond to get yourself going. Whereas a lot of the young white guys who we see, and girls, without being selective, who come in, who are guiding they do seem to lack some sort of coherent vision about what they want to do with their guiding and how long they intern guiding, and during that tenure of guiding. There does seem you know, without being hypercritical, seem to be a lack of career focusedness. A minimal amount of young people seem to be sort of really building a future for themselves and getting into some sort of property market or business development or whatever at the same time, and parallel with the money they're making out of guiding. It seems to be on the whole a fairly transient group of young people who have other options.

**AP:** Has it got anything to do with patience? Because Dr Ian Player said, the commendable thing about black South Africans over white South Africans is that they are patient. And interestingly you without knowing this said to me this evening you considered yourself to be impatient as a white person. So do you think one can racially suggest that black people are patient and if so why? And white people are impatient, and maybe expand on that as well.

**GV:** Hmm. I think what we were saying about impatience was sort of how do I feel about the guiding industry, and I was saying that I'm impatient because I think there's a much better place that we could be in, in the guiding industry. I think because guides add such an amazing dimension to a cultural or a country or wildlife experience, the value that they add should be more recognised and rewarded. It should be a job that we can do and keep doing and raise our kids on. And not be something that needs to be transient because you need to get out and make money and be able to settle down. Currently there's too many guides who are treading water and enjoying guiding while they can and then going and looking for a real job. And so my impatience is that I just wish to heaven we could get over that and see guides elevate themselves into a really professional sub-sector of the economy who are recognised and at the same time remunerated. And then the other side of it is let's see that work really well in the business model, because I know that there are business models where remunerating the guiding portion of the staff complement really well just doesn't work. The business model doesn't work anymore. And whether that's a reflection of how busy the tourist industry is in South Africa or not I really don't know. But I do think that the added value that guides bring to the tourist experience is what it's about. There's a better future for guiding in South Africa.

**AP:** That's the impatient part and what about are blacks passive or are they really just patient?

**GV:** Maybe we sort of go into a bit of conjectural sail close to the wind in that...we have to make some very broad cultural assumptions about saying that perhaps there is a certain timelessness about southern African culture. And as certain agitated consumer driven impatience about the white western driven culture in South Africa, we're very materially driven. So yes, I do agree that some of the black people are more patient. There's some strange and maybe non representative observations about perhaps...you know in a reserve you'll get the black trackers and guides, very few of whom travel anywhere, even though they may be earning the same as the white guys. Even though they might buy and own their own cars, very few of them will travel to the cities around the country, whereas it's something that the white youngsters do all the time. It's a social, cultural, economic background that they've had. But if your whole family lives in the community that joins the reserve, and your whole family and community are not inclined to travel and move around and take up opportunities in the far flung corners of the country, then I think the residual effect of that is that you're resigned to being here. And in resigning to being here you have

to take the view that you got to take what comes and you've got to ride out the rough and the smooth. But when your head is filled with hundreds of other places and other options and travel opportunities, when the grass is greener on the other side and things are not going so well here, well then up sticks and move. And that's what they do.

**AP:** What are the unique features of Conscor of nature guiding as expressed within the Conscor ethic or whatever?

**GV:** Now that would be telling.

**AP:** Was the guide that you find here going to be the same as the guide at Hluhluwe and the same as the guide in Kruger and the same as the guide in Botswana and the same as the guide in Zim? Or can you distinguish on a local and national level?

**GV:** It's difficult to answer that realistically and with good perspective from where I sit. And sometimes I find myself having to rely on perspective from people that I know from outside of the industry looking in, who would give perspective. Say, for example, people I know who are in the...your travel agents and tour operators who move around the travel industry and would make favourable comparisons with say the CC Africa guides as a whole in comparison to other sectors of the private guiding industry. In our sector of the market ? and I think it is the same people, and where we are fortunate is that there is quite a strong focus on training. There's a very tangible and positive people driven culture and that we're fortunate to have a company which has very strong ecological and eco development and community development ethics. And we're able to pull those things together. *(tape ends)*

There's a great company culture. There's a tremendous conservation ethic. There's a lot of exciting things going on. The company's growing and developing all the time. And there is a strong focus on people and training. And I think if you pull all those things together there's a good result.

**AP:** Do you think your relationship and the time you've been here with the local communities has improved over these fifteen odd years as a company? The perception outside from outside the fence more positive outside than it was when you first settled here?

**GV:** Have you screened it? Have you checked it out?

**AP:** No, not at all.

**GV:** I think it has. It has been a rather amazing thing to watch, coming in as a sceptical outsider looking for a job, when our financial sponsorship collapsed during the construction of this lot here, right at the beginning of CC Africa. And then the years thereafter thinking cynically and ignorantly or naively that perhaps some of the things we were doing was window dressing to entice the market. But over the years it's become really apparent that there has been an amazing contribution and effort to communicate with the local community. From the very early visits into the community to open the first classroom or the first addition to a school, and seeing the small businesses immediately adjacent to the gate. And you can go into the same community now and see how those small local businesses have grown tremendously. And it's because there are 220 odd salary earners who have been there for fifteen years. And you can measure it by the number of staff...in a lot of small ways, like for example the number of staff who earn motor vehicles and who currently own businesses on the other side of the fence. And also by the level of poaching that has reduced,

even in the first five years the level of poaching and the reduction in poaching at Phinda was dramatic. And if you compare the poaching that we had to some of the significant reserves in the area that don't have nearly as comprehensive a community development and negotiation program then the figures will just speak for themselves. There's something like sixty or seventy odd classrooms built, three crèches, clinics, adult skills development training programs, bursary programs for students. There's an enormous amount that's gone on, to the extent that if you do...a lot of what goes on in the community is attributed to what Phinda has done. It's significant, and it's real, and it's very uplifting because ? that on the back of a commercially driven eco tourism venture there's really significant community assistance and development that has gone on, which is so way beyond window dressing that it would be a shame to be sceptical of it.

**AP:** You said that education and training is one of the hallmarks of what gives you the quality on the inside. What is your strategy for that education and training of guides?

**GV:** I think that the first thing is to get the right guides into the crew. And I think the next thing is to inform them as broadly and specifically as possible about the whole organisation and what it stands for and what it does and doesn't do. And to give people the opportunity to decide as to whether they or not they'd like to take ownership of that. And then during the process they have to decide whether they're in or out, whether they're part of it or they're not. And I think it does make a lot of difference for guys who are going into a guiding job to know that when they do a really hard day's of work, there are really significant conservation initiatives and community development initiatives which are driven successfully by the fact that people get to work every day and do a hard day's work and succeed in the eco tourism industry. If every guest you keep happy, every room that's brilliant, every land-rover that goes out on a successful game drive has got a lot to do with driving those two major projects of conservation development and community development.

**AP:** What is your method of assessment naturally in your capacity and how does that differ with what the THETA SAQA system is expecting you to use as a method of assessment?

**GV:** I've got to think carefully who's going to be listening to the tape. There are a couple of different sides to it, and one was that it was quite reassuring when we did get involved with the whole THETA SAQA OBE process, that there were a whole number of fronts that we'd been working on and wrangling with, when we discovered that we were on right track already. In terms of moving towards a more OBE driven system. And we were doing the right things already. And then on the other hand once we got involved with the whole THETA system we learned a lot about the fact that the guiding job is a very tangibly outcomes based driven job. And that there were better ways of initiating and developing good outputs and better ways of measuring the outputs. There were aspects of the facilitation process and the assessment process which we were doing but we learned a far more comprehensive method of approaching it through the THETA system. However we have found the THETA system to be way more complicated than we'd like it to be. We have found it fairly difficult to integrate, a fairly complicated set of organisational standards into a set of national standards.

**AP:** Do you think the THETA assessment system is culturally or otherwise biased?

**GV:** Yes, I think there are biases but I'm going to hold my council on that now.

**AP:** Can these biases be overcome? Maybe I'll ask you that one even though you've declined to expand on your biases.

**GV:** I think some of the biases are, they select themselves naturally because, I think some of the biases are unfortunate throwbacks from what was imposed on this country for fifty years. If you don't educate people for fifty years the next system is naturally going to bias people that were more fortunate. So yes, there are frustrating biases, and there are attempts for the system to bias it in the opposite direction.

**AP:** Do you think that system is open to abuse?

**GV:** Yes, I think it is open to abuse because there's too much bureaucracy, and I don't think the system is transparent enough. I don't think the system is well controlled, but I also don't think it's transparent enough.

**AP:** Does the system project a fundamental mistrust of the integrity of the assessors and moderators?

**GV:** Yes, I think it does. I think it places completely unrealistic administrative and bureaucratic restraints on assessors and moderators, to the extent that it almost drives them out of the ballpark.

**AP:** What do you think needs to be done to improve the shortcomings of this system?

**GV:** At the risk of stating the obvious, I think so many things in the assessment and moderation sphere have changed so radically over the last four or five years that the best thing that could possibly be done would be to stabilize it and to...is to just stop the change for long enough for people to catch up and gain competence against a set of standards which exist for long enough so that you can blink and they're still there.

**AP:** I'm not going to chew your ear about the THETA SAQA system, but maybe you might have more to add on its history, demographics, the imposition from above by SAQA, and the standards generating bodies, the skills levies, training providers, or the relationship with DEAT and provincial tourism authorities and SA tourism. Or maybe you don't want to comment on any of those things.

**GV:** Standards generating bodies, if you were fairly specific I can maybe comment.

**AP:** How are the SGBs allocated and elected?

**GV:** In principle, they are fairly elected. Your members are put forward from members of industry. In practice I think that there's way more focus on demographic representation than on competency levels. So that you can end up with a grouping who's really not the best grouping to put together what you're needing them to do, but it's got great demographic representation. So we get this conflict of correct politics and...

**AP:** The actual panel of experts.

**GV:** Well the actual panel of non experts. Definitely not the most effective grouping at the end of the day.

**AP:** What are the benefits of participation in SGBs?

**GV:** I think for people who are involved in that sector commercially it's a chance to influence the standards which are set. It's a chance there is a possibility for industry to get in there and make sure that the unit standards that are written actually relate to the job that gets done. And I think the first round of SGB activity was very convoluted and very ineffective, but I think the second round has been a lot better facilitated and a lot more focussed.

**AP:** What are the drawbacks of participation in the SGBs?

**GV:** I think it's very easy to be critical of an SGB and the process, because of the cost involved in getting all those people together and the expertise required to get such a diverse group of people focussed on one issue and get them really productive. And I think sometimes where that's been managed poorly, it's been a hugely frustrating waste of time and resources.

**AP:** What is your vision for nature guiding in the future? Who needs to do what in order for your vision to be realised?

**GV:** What I want to see in the future is that the guides in an organisation have a much higher profile, where guides are taken far more seriously, and they're more part of the fabric of a business rather than being an add on. And I think that what we also need to get over is this colloquial flavour of guiding in this country. I know it's a big country with lots of issues and lots of areas, but if we could get our heads around regional guiding so that we open up within the SADC countries. We could use the peace parks and the expansion of eco tourism areas. We're heading towards people who are going to come through South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, if indeed the politics settles down. And I think it will be fantastic if we can have guides with a more international flavour who don't have to restrict themselves to one province or one site, where it becomes easier to guide regionally.

**AP:** Is that a realistic ask? What needs to be done for that all to get in place? Is it up to the politicians?

**GV:** I really think it's a process where it's a combination of the actions of THETA and the SGBs and putting up proper unit standards. It's a question of getting the training providers delivering really good material. It's got to do with tourism into southern Africa and I think it's a growth of guiding...there's good guiding potential in this country. Guides can earn well economically. Yes, maybe it's a bit of pie in the sky, but I do wish that guiding was a...I'd like to see it as something somebody could do as a career, rather than as a flirtation. Even if it took a vast plethora, you didn't have such a huge plethora of people coming in and treading water for a year or two, and then bailing out again. If there were fewer people involved more seriously that would be great. That would give guiding and guides a lot of good.

*(End of interview)*

Transcribed by Cané Lake.

Proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 6 : JACO BADENHORST

*Malelane, 16h00, 07 Feb, 06*

**AP:** Jaco, tell us your background.

**JB:** I was appointed in the Kruger Park as a trails ranger in '93. Started working in '93 but appointed as a wilderness ranger in '93. Since then until 2001 I've been working as a parks board employee as a wilderness ranger. There were a lot of retrenchments. People got laid off. It's a long story how it was all ? but all the wilderness trails rangers were also retrenched but the trails went on. There was a deal made that we formed a company, a wilderness company here as we are currently called. To manage and guide the trails on behalf of Kruger Park. So it's still their product, wilderness trail. Everything is theirs, we just manage it on their behalf, but we're a private company that's now managing it. Then obviously we still have another year or so left of our contract.

**AP:** How did you get into nature guiding and what did you do prior to becoming a trails ranger in Kruger?

**JB:** After matric I...you know when you're in matric you think you know everything and I was always interested in conservation. A couple of my friends talked me over to come and do law with them. So I did law for three years. And then saw the light, and was not very happy with that. And then I went to the army. In those years it was still compulsory. And then I did nature conservation through the technicon. And immediately after that I was lucky enough to get work in the Kruger Park as a conservation student. And then appointed in '93 as a wilderness ranger, and I'm still doing just that.

**AP:** Do you think there's a distinction between a field guide and a game ranger? And if you see that distinction do you find yourself leaning towards the field guide side?

**JB:** Definitely as a field guide. I was trained as a field ranger. That's what you do at the technicon then and ? That was more a resource manager in conservation. But what I'm doing now, taking people out on walks specifically as more of a guiding aspect. Tour guiding.

**AP:** Do you think they should keep two streams where the people who work in conservation are kept separate to the field guides or do you think in the way that Ian Player thinks that it's quite good for the rangers to actually deal with the public sometimes and take ?

**JB:** They have to intermingle. Otherwise you lose perspective of either side. That's how it used to work in the park. As a trails ranger working for Kruger Park one week you were on trail, the other week it was expected of you to fall in with a section ranger of the area and then do ranger work, getting involved with all kinds of things from anti poaching to ? census and fixing windmills and all that time of thing.

**AP:** Don't you think game ranging and field guiding are two separate skills that different people will be good at?

**JB:** No, definitely. You do get people that's more easier to talk to and deal with people and to explain to people what it's all about. And you would get another guy that's more of a type of an introvert and would find it more difficult to deal with people but good in another

aspect, management aspects. But I still think that a well balanced conservationist should have a bit of everything.

**AP:** And obviously you found your personality suited to working with the public. You didn't have a problem with that?

**JB:** At one stage it could go either way. If I wanted to I could also go into the ranger corps, game rangers or the management side of things. And at the time I just chose to carry on with the wilderness. That's what I am, a wilderness ranger. That's something that lies very close to my heart. I needed at that time just to carry on with that.

**AP:** What are the precise origins of the term Big Five? Everyone says that they evolved from nineteenth century hunters, but no-one can tell me the first person to use this term and when.

**JB:** I'm also a bit in the dark. That's the same thing I've heard. It came out of Africa that they actually should be called the Dangerous Five not the Big Five. They were all the dangerous animals to hunt. But where exactly it got its origin from I don't know.

**AP:** Ian Player is of the opinion that it's certainly a 20th century commercial invention, and that from what I've seen there's no mention of the Big Five in (Selous?) or in any of the early hunters.

**JB:** Our trail is specifically a nature clients in general anxious to encounter the Big Five as part of their experience. You get two types. People that's new into the whole nature thing. And when your new clients they definitely want to see big game. I think the more you get into it and the more you get into this whole specifically nature walking that we're doing, people slowly start looking at the bigger picture. And that is exactly what we're trying to do in wilderness trails. We present our trails from that point of view that big game is just part of the picture not the whole picture. We try to explain to clients that at the end of the day it's just one small aspect. There's so much more to it than just that. But to get back to your question, at first I think yes it is. I think they want to see lions and leopards and things like that, but as they become more nature orientated, more wilderness orientated, they definitely...I won't say they do not want to see big game, but after fourteen years I also like to get a nice elephant, but the emphasis really for us or for me specifically what I'm trying to get across is that whole wilderness feeling. And wilderness for me is something that covers everything.

**AP:** So what you're suggesting then is that individual clients evolve from a fascination of big game to a broader understanding of ecology and the issues that go around it.

**JB:** The more people understand or the more people learn or the more people get exposed to it the deeper level they get for being out there. I think that's why people keep on coming back, because if it's only to do with Big Five, Big Five, you go to a zoo or you go to one of these private places, you still see them. Specifically in a place like Kruger Park with its atmosphere and wilderness atmosphere, that's why people keep on coming back.

**AP:** Not just individual growths but do you see a collective development of the understanding of clients? In other words is your average client a bit more sharper, a bit more aware of the big picture of ecology and all the issues than they used to be when you first started there?

**JB:** Absolutely. That's something that we talk about quite often. Nowadays people are much more through the media and through various other...people are much more educated when they arrive in the Kruger Park, when they come on these trails specifically. So where as at first when I started doing trails, probably at the start of this whole evolution in the early nineties. Prior to that I think being ignorant, obviously there were still people that had the interest, but your average person didn't know too much. There's definitely more exposure. Even at schools nowadays. They do a lot more environmental education in primary schools than I ever did in my whole school career. And I think that's where it comes from. Kids and young parents and older people do get more exposed to it, documentaries on TV, nature magazines and things like that. In the old days it was just ? Nowadays there's half a dozen if not more.

**AP:** Has the profile of your trailists changed over the time that you've been doing it?

**JB:** Yes, definitely. At first it was a lot of all men group, only guys coming. And then now it's definitely closer to fifty fifty, men and women. Also in the past we worked it out that the average age was about 45, and it's definitely younger now as well. Young people are earning bigger salaries nowadays and can afford the experience. Then there's also a change, there used to be a lot of South Africans on the wilderness trails in Kruger Park specifically. 95% of our clients when I started were South Africans and only 5% overseas. Apparently we have 15% foreign clients and 85% South Africans.

**AP:** So the foreign market for South African trails is growing.

**JB:** Definitely growing.

**AP:** Is the local market shrinking?

**JB:** I don't think so. I think it's easier for overseas people to get to know about these trails with internet. I think internet played a very important role in this whole thing. It's easy to go and look up on what you want. I also do think that foreign tourism in the country has increased in the country. But then also specifically with walking, wilderness walks, wilderness trails specifically, I'm not talking about day walks, and day drives, but if you wanted to walk in the Kruger Park, or anywhere there is Big Five country, Kruger Park is your only option. Talking about ten, fifteen years ago. But nowadays there's so many other options so the competition for wilderness trails is getting bigger and bigger. A first comer If you booked overseas he doesn't know really what the wilderness trail is unless he's been on a wilderness trail. You can give a guy a definition but you'd only understand it when you'd been. If he'll grab a book overseas whether he do a day walk or a wilderness trail or a few nights, it's just a walk in the park at the end of the day. Until he's done it and then he sees the difference between just a normal walkover out of a rest camp or a walk where you're within a wilderness area for three or four days.

**AP:** Do your clients usually carry all their stuff, or is there a way of getting the stuff to other points along the way?

**JB:** It's unlike in Natal parks we've got a rustic permanent little camps in the wilderness area. Our wilderness area is roughly about forty, fifty thousand hectares in size. Seven of these wilderness trails in the park. On each of these wilderness trails there is a camp. And then return to the base camp every night. And then you do your walks from there. So it's out and back. It's very rustic, there's no electricity, it's just the basic commodities.

**AP:** In your personal experiences and those of your immediate circle which animals have been involved in life threatening experiences?

**JB:** Apart from tourists? It largely depends on where in the Kruger Park you walk. Three of the seven trails in the Kruger Park is down in the south. And the southern side of the Kruger Park there's been a lot of white rhino. So the most dangerous animals that we meet down in the south is definitely white rhino, because there's so many of them. And then I think followed by elephant definitely.

**AP:** Do you class white rhino as more dangerous than elephant, or just more often encountered?

**JB:** I think more often encountered and therefore it increases the...

**AP:** Odds of something going wrong.

**JB:** It's a bit of a toss up. I can give you the figures. But even on that it shows that white rhinos, a couple of animals with life threatening situations where the animal had to be destroyed, it was mainly white rhino bulls. And then they're followed by elephant bulls. So yes, white rhino bulls in the Kruger Park and the guys in ? will tell you something different. We do not encounter a lot of black rhino here. There is a lot of black rhino but somehow we don't...every now and again but there's not as concentrated as white rhino.

**AP:** I really think it's area of operation because they go on about black rhino at length.

**JB:** Because they've got large concentrations of black rhino which we haven't got. We've had this conversation with the guys before where we usually say to them white rhino, they laugh at us.

**AP:** A trail guide was guiding and he was charged by lions on a number of occasions and he perfectly kept his head and everything but when he turned around his client had had a heart attack and died. Is that a true story?

**JB:** Yes.

**AP:** Can you name the ranger who was concerned?

**JB:** He was Richard Sourey on the Sweni trail. I can give you the date. He's a ranger now at Kingfisher Spruit at Orpen gate.

**AP:** Have you ever had cause to shoot an animal?

**JB:** Unfortunately yes.

**AP:** What was it?

**JB:** I can give you the print out. I can tell you. It's obviously not something that you brag about.

**AP:** But it's interesting to know the circumstances and how did they arise.

**JB:** But I must just make it very clear, the last thing we want to do, we're definitely not cowboys. None of us. None of us that works for wilderness company. And we got rid of the all the cowboys.

**AP:** Circumstances can arise in so many different ways.

**JB:** And it happens. I can show you that print out. It's out the...there's about forty incidents now over the last twenty seven years. I was also involved in quite a few.

**AP:** Have you ever had a client injured or killed by an animal?

**JB:** No, not directly as a result. Injured yes, not killed.

**AP:** Have you ever been injured by an animal?

**JB:** No.

**AP:** Would you lead a trail in an area which contains dangerous game without a rifle?

**JB:** I would, yes.

**AP:** It depends, and what does it depend on?

**JB:** You wouldn't get a lot of clients in the first place if they know that there's not going to be any protection, rifles. I would only if everybody on the trail would be very, very happy, hundred percent exemption if there's anything that do happen. Basically every man for himself. Where you try to control with weapons the situation, but if something then happens then just too bad.

**AP:** Have you or your clients ever been injured or killed in an accident involving vehicles or rifles in the field?

**JB:** No.

**AP:** Have you ever been injured by vehicles or rifles other than a bruised shoulder?

**JB:** No.

**AP:** We'll leave that one over in the meantime because you'll just show me that print out.

**JB:** It's just a number of incidents. I'm a bit worried about this thing because I do not want that to end up in the wrong hands. Because you know what the media is like. If they get hold of that document...they can just turn that whole thing around and make a negative connotation of the Kruger Park trails. Why I say that and just to explain that, one of the incidents that I've had with a white rhino bull, a lady that was with us on a trail was a journalist for the Mail & Guardian. You read the article 'To Shoot or not to Shoot', it may be an interesting include to have as well.

**AP:** (Fiona McLeod?). I think I must interview her later.

**JB:** But anyway she turned around, she was quite happy and content on the trail, she didn't say a word, she was very grateful of the fact that I saved their lives, which I probably did. Because she and her friend, a photographer, they were standing in the open on my left hand side. Myself and the rest of the group were more or less in a safe spot. I was more or less in the open but I could jump out of the way. I said to the group, move behind a bush. Everybody did except the two of them. A rhino was coming and I said to them move the fuck out of here, and they didn't respond to it at all. I don't know why, sometimes people freeze, or whether it was just the reporter in her to be in the thick of things. And the same with him, ? wildlife photographer. And I couldn't let that rhino come past me. But anyway, she turned around and she wrote an article 'To Shoot or not to Shoot'. And her whole reasoning behind it is, because we carry rifles, we take chances, because we know the rifle is going to help us out in a ? situation. And she also went further in saying that just before that, before our walk in the park, she was somewhere in the swamps where they also went on a ? trip.

**AP:** Jaco, we're just talking about maybe the sensitive topic of these record of incidents with animals. Yes, you certainly don't want this stuff to get in the wrong hands, but I also think it's beneficial to the guiding industry that we have a critical history of the incidents that happen and maybe we can start looking critically at those patterns and see if some of those incidents maybe couldn't have been avoided. I mean the one possible explanation of some of the incidents is over familiarity by the guides, so they just become blasé or they maybe also have experienced burnout.

**JB:** I think you know in my case, the longer you walk the more careful you become. Familiarity is not the right word, you think you're bullet proof when you start off doing trails. I remember my first year or two I took chances, and bad chances, and I think back about them now, there were things that I never should have done. Nowadays I just don't take chances. I try to eliminate risk like that. It's always in our favour out of a safety point of view. With burnout, I think burnout is definitely a problem and that is definitely the case of too many trails, and it does put a lot of stress and pressure on you, and people also put that pressure on you. Let's go a bit closer, where's the lion, why don't we see these things. So the guide can if he's burnt out or sick and tired of listening to the same story, just say what the hell, let's go closer, that's what these people want. That side effect of burnout might be an influencing factor. I think the more familiar you get with dangerous animals, if you've got three brain cells you would know to keep away from them. That's my opinion and most of us feel the same way. The longer you walk, the more careful you become.

**AP:** In your guide's newsletter of November there was an article by Bruce Lawson, how he walked into a pride of lions. But in the course of that article he mentioned he realised that there were cubs there. Now surely he was the architect of his own misfortune.

**JB:** If you know that there's a lioness with cubs, turn around and go the other way. If you know you're bumping into a breeding herd with small calves, turn around and go the other way. And that's what Mike ? taught me that when I started doing trails. He said to me just that. See a breeding herd of elephants, turn around and go the other way. So in a situation like that if you know that there's a breed ahead, if you know that there's cubs and you still go close, then you're looking for trouble. And to talk your way out of that if something happens that's going to be quite difficult. But totally unexpectedly, neither you or your client or your tracker knows what's going on, then obviously, but things happen.

**AP:** I want to talk about transformation. Douwe van der Zee got very ? when he saw this word transformation. And he said it's one of the most hypocritical things of the current

government that on the one hand they speak non racism and everything like that, but then they have black economic empowerment and those type of things, which he says are racist agenda. Describe how nature guiding has changed during the course of your experience in terms of the profile of who the people guiding are. More women, more blacks?

**JB:** At ? we were only white males when I started off '93. And then I think about '95 the first black guide was appointed, Lungeni Thokela, he's still in the park, a ranger at Skukuza. Those were the days we were still working for parks board. For a couple of years they were looking for candidates to fill the ? trails. But in those days also, maybe just prior to '95, elephant culling was still on and then that third phase of our training involved you had to shoot an elephant bull with a (child?), if they went down you were a ? And I know there was some of the black candidates that could not pass that phase, and obviously subsequently they were not appointed as ? rangers. And then the things changed a bit.

**AP:** From inaccurate shooting or just from not coping with the situation at all?

**JB:** From inaccurate shooting and not coping. And then did away with that and the training changed a bit that your third phase became a bush lane that we take you down a riverbed with a couple of targets and see how your weapon handling skills, your shooting skills were. Because of that stress factor there was not ? more black people could pass that. And then we are sitting at the moment out of about twelve people that's doing wilderness trails in the Kruger Park, we've got three black guys working for us. All three of them are very capable and competent to lead the trail that we've appointed them, with all the necessary hard and soft skills to do that. In other words not only telling people about, identifying and interpreting but also sitting around the fire and talking to people and communicating with people, because I think that's a very important aspect of that as we mentioned before. And they've all passed their shooting evaluations. And the Kruger Park in general, there's more activities that got added on as time went by. And of all the day walks and the night drives there's a lot of black guys, people involved in leading trails, taking walks and drives.

**AP:** And what about women?

**JB:** Yes, ladies as well. We've got a white lady working for us. Again, on walks from the camps and the night drives there's chop and change all the time. There's been quite a few women.

**AP:** Do you think opportunities in nature guiding are still hampered by the prospective guide's race, gender, social status or economic class?

**JB:** Yes and no. It's definitely changing.

**AP:** What are the black guides not making it in? Is it the communication thing, is that the number one area of weakness, or is it the shooting thing? What area would you say the current guides are not happy about the standard of the prospective guides?

**JB:** I must tell you in our situation in the wilderness trails in the park we actually want a guide that's got FGASA level 3 and SKS guide). That's what we require from all our guides. And we've already got a step down from SKS, that's something that they will pick up through time while being an assistant. The guys that have been appointed, they've already been exposed to it over a period of time. So we felt that they've already got that experience factor, with SKS, dealing with dangerous game specifically. They needed that FGASA 3 qualification, and I think that's just a very difficult qualification to get. It's a high standard,

it's a professional level. It's maybe not easy, but there's more and more black people that's getting that qualification. But five years ago I don't think there was any. Nowadays I think there's quite a few.

**AP:** Do you think there's a greater fit between the THETA system and the FGASA system. My impression here in the lowveld they still preferentially call for a FGASA qualification than the THETA equivalent.

**JB:** Why I say that, because we know that if a guy's got the FGASA 3 or 2 or SKS we know that he's definitely up to a certain standard of knowledge.

**AP:** And also work place experience.

**JB:** Yes.

**AP:** You can't write level 3 no matter how bright you are until you've worked in the industry for two years.

**JB:** That's very important that you've just mentioned. Although going the THETA route is definitely a good system to give guys a chance that have got a hell of a lot of experience and knowledge but he cannot read and write. Or he's got no formal education. And a lot of our guys are like that. Our assistants. They're absolutely phenomenal. But they will never be a leading rifle. Because of lack of communication and that type of thing. Not to say that they cannot be assessed on a certain level.

**AP:** Are there any programs in place to work on their language skills or the language skills of prospective trails guide, because that seems to be a common area? In Natal they're saying the very same thing. They're saying the guides are fine in many ways but it's their language skills, mainly in terms of client communication but secondary in terms of keeping up with self study.

**JB:** It's a problem here as well.

**AP:** So in other words the backlog of the apartheid system depriving people of proper education is still being felt in this society.

**JB:** Not as much as it used to be. Of the fourteen guys that we've got at the moment, all of them can speak Afrikaans and English except one. Whereas five years ago it was quite a few. I had to learn Fanigalo very, very quickly when I started in '92, '93, because half the assistants couldn't speak Afrikaans. The old ? communicated in Fanigalo, Shangaan, Fanigalo. Apparently most of our assistants got matric and also another half of them are busy with their nature conservation or something similar in the field guiding.

**AP:** Do you think the THETA NQF system adequately addresses the need for transformation and diversification of the industry?

**JB:** I think so yes. It gives everybody an opportunity to be assessed on a specific level.

**AP:** What are the problems with that THETA NQF system?

**JB:** I must say I don't work with that on a daily basis. I don't know.

**AP:** Tell me what are the unique features of your group of guides who work in Kruger. What's your group called?

**JB:** It's the KNP wilderness company.

**AP:** What would you say are the special traits or special features of your style of guiding?

**JB:** That's quite simple. We're all wilderness lovers. We have a passion for wilderness. And that's also how we appoint people and also why we try to let the guys grow on trail, become more involved in wilderness philosophy and ethics and that type of thing.

**AP:** Tell me how the individual character of the guides affects the guided experience that comes out at the end.

**JB:** We've all got a different style obviously. We're different people. Some are introverts in their quiet way and they do their thing and get the message across, and some are more extrovert, loud mouth...

**AP:** Where do you place yourself?

**JB:** ? excluding myself. These days there's a common goal and that's what everybody strives for on the trail, is to make people more wilderness conscious and more wilderness aware. And obviously whether you approach it from an introvert or an extrovert or in the middle, how you do it, you must just do it at the end of the day and achieve your goal.

**AP:** What are the special qualities about wilderness that you see in wilderness that people experience when they go into the wilderness?

**JB:** No other people.

**AP:** I'm trying to pick our really here...Ian Player talks about it as though it's a kind of quasi religious experience.

**JB:** It's definitely a religious experience.

**AP:** So you share that with Ian Player.

**JB:** Yes.

**AP:** You feel closer to God in the bush than in the church?

**JB:** Almost. That type of thing. I'm getting goose bumps just thinking of it. A lot of people it's not religious but it's definitely a spiritual experience. To go out in a wilderness area and just to sit there on a kopje, and again you have to experience it to really know what the word remoteness, solitary, peace of mind, tranquillity, and all those nice buzz words that you hear around you every day. You really only understand it when you experience it and you sit there and you feel it. So I think all those things, the atmosphere, and the ambience and being in all that wild space, and wild area, and wild animals. And for me ? there's no other people and I think that says it all. You cannot have a wilderness experience when there's a vehicle doing other things and there's a airplane flying across. So no other people for me is ? Obviously must be in a wild, unspoiled, untouched, untravelled area where you do not

see windmills and roads and rest camps and that type of thing. There is no other people. You don't want to see human infrastructure.

**AP:** Do you think it reminds people that they're actually animals and they're actually still a part of nature?

**JB:** Definitely brings you back to grass level, back to your roots. I always say to people that if you're sharing space you become one of them.

**AP:** What is your vision of nature guiding in the future in South and southern Africa? And what needs to be done by you and others to make this vision a reality?

**JB:** At this point in time I'm very optimistic. I think the country is becoming more and more...all these peace parks, and there's definitely a need to expand and the people, or the authorities, or the powers that be fortunately are expanding ? Frontier Park ? every other national park popping up. So the whole idea of endangered spaces, if you can get away with that and no longer ? endangered species, but endangered spaces, and the more spaces you create, the more national parks and wild wilderness areas ? important ? a lot of people keep on doing that, and I'm very optimistic that things will go. In the crazy world that we live in there's also more and more people that's realized that life in Joburg, you can only take so much of it, you need to get out. As long as that happens there will be a need for more wildlife wilderness ? a nature experience. Whether it's driving around in a 4X4 on a ? or sleeping naked under a Baobab tree. There will be a need for it. With the guiding I think IGASA in my opinion is actually on the right track with what they've tried to achieve. They've tried to standardise guiding in the country and the standards that they've set, I think that's important. The fly-by-nights can do the industry a hell of a lot of damage. Like any profession whether you're a medical doctor or an attorney or an accountant you have to know what you're doing. If you're not going to do it right people are either going to have something bad to say or they're just going to go on to the next guy, or the next reserve, or the next national park. Obviously training is a very important thing and that's something that's not happening enough. Especially ? I think people want to do it but it's just the people that's driving it, I'm not going to point fingers at anybody but there's not enough oomph behind the whole training and the language thing. Tomorrow morning out of our own pocket we're going to take our guys ? beg borrow and steal and we're going to take them outside the Kruger Park on a farm to go and shoot, because inside it's just too much red tape. Nothing illegal, it's a shooting range, but it's that type of thing, so we must show our own initiative to train out of our own expense where that should come out of Kruger Park's budget. But there isn't enough money for bullets or not enough time to organise courses and training sessions, evaluations. Evaluations is really important. Even if you've been doing it for fourteen years like myself I would also like to be evaluated every other year also to keep me on my toes. ? or not it doesn't matter. There's one point two, one point three million visitors to the Kruger Park every year so that number is increasing. Space is getting limited but the expansion in Mozambique, we've got that contract there to ? So I think once that kicks off the rest of Mozambique is open.

**AP:** You think the guides are going to have to change some of their ways, develop some new skills to cope with this new trans frontier thing, the internationalism, maybe learn a new language, all those things? We're used to English and Afrikaans here, is it going to work in Mozambique?

**JB:** I think every guide must be able to speak English. And Portuguese would be a nice language to learn, not that I think there will be a lot of Portuguese clients necessarily.

**AP:** There's maybe two aspects to this, the one is that we're involving our neighbouring countries in this trans frontier parks, but the other is that that might increase the pool of international European, American, or Asian tourists that come into the country, so those kind of international skills might have to improve, because if you're dealing with five percent foreigners you don't have to have any special skills. When you've got fifteen... *(tape ends)*

**JB:** ...I think definitely with their beliefs and customs and traditions and that type of thing. But also that whole saying, when in Rome do as the Romans do, and I think that's why a lot of these people visit foreign countries to experience the local way of life and the way of thinking. You get to Paris you don't insist on having a braai and pap. You fall in with whatever is going on there. And I think it's the same for them. But obviously you have to know with whom you're dealing and to make it easier for yourself at the end of the day, and obviously to increase tourism and to make people happy. As far as our language concern I think if you can speak English nowadays that's fine. I know that there's some companies that do offer guides that can speak Portuguese or French or German. Another thing, I think guides like myself and yourself, we need to upgrade ourselves every now and again. Because FGASA 3 was maybe good enough five years ago but not necessarily good enough five years later or with the current time. So that's where FGASA also maybe need to upgrade or to add onto their...level 4.

**AP:** There's SKSs now which started off only having dangerous animals, now we've also added birding and I know that they're working on Paleo, which will suit me fine because that's what I work in at the moment. And I'm looking forward to being a key learner in wild flowers. So those things are all in the pipeline.

**JB:** That's what I'm saying, and ? Special management skills in specific fields, mountaineering or canoeing. You have to keep up with the times. And your average guest or tourist, whether it is a South African or foreigner, they are coming to our activities more educated than ten years ago. So every guide must also upgrade him or herself.

**AP:** That's a tough part because you never get a guy saying, what grass is that and what grass is that over there, so you've got to go down, trees, grasses, insects, small brown birds, and it's much harder work than remembering the gestation period of lions and elephants or their weight or those kind of things, because those are the sort of questions you asked, so your tourist reinforces your knowledge. Whereas to tell the ? apart no-one's ever going to ask you unless you tell them.

**JB:** You'd be surprised. You get guys that are extremely clued up and they do definitely ask you, what type of grass is that, and can you give me the scientific name of that, and I've never seen this bird in this area, what's the reason? But I think the average foreigner that climbs onto an open vehicle and gets taken for a drive is not going to ask you about grasses. But on a certain level of guiding and specifically where we are you also do get a lot of more basic. But then you definitely do get guys that are entomologists, geologists, ornithologists...

**AP:** You can't teach an entomologist entomology and a geologist geology, a guide is a facilitator really.

**JB:** But you can teach an ornithologist about entomology.

**AP:** Yes. There's always that but I also think that guides need to realise that you're a facilitator and if you have someone who's a specialist, make use of them and learn from them.

**JB:** Definitely. But what's nice, and I've had it so many times, is you get a specialist on one field, say for instance an entomologist, and he can tell you all about entomology, the different insects and things like that, and as soon as you start to talk about geology, so a specialist guide must be a jack of all trades and a master of none, but on a very high level so that he can talk sense with an ornithologist and with a geologist that comes on trail. In other words knows what he's talking about in all aspects, even if it's astronomy, the best restaurants to visit in White River and Hazyview, what's the best movie you've seen recently. And you get a lot of foreigners who ? And they not only want to know about the bush, they also want to know about the country, and where should we go next, and what's there to see at Rourke's Drift and where can they go after that if they go down the Garden Route, what's in Transkei, and that type of thing. So you have to know your country also. Jack of all trades.

**AP:** In terms of the system I'm actually a national culture guide and a national nature guide and I think I'm one of the very few in the whole country. But I've never seen the distinction. As soon as you go to the bush you start looking at trees and then you want to know what's the medicinal value of these trees, and as soon as you start examining that it's a cultural thing isn't it? Where does culture start and nature end? I think one of the failings of nature guides in my experience is that they don't feel a need to develop themselves ? But as I say where do those things start and stop. So you need to be a whole rounded person.

**JB:** Isn't that the most important thing in life just to give you balance in every aspect.

**AP:** What do you think you see in nature that tells you...there's one example, the balance of nature. How can we apply the balance of nature to making humans better?

**JB:** I think that's a personal thing. My personal life I definitely try to keep the balance. Not only going one way, expose myself to as many things as possible. It's a philosophical thing you're asking me. To lead a balanced life, what's that? To make sure everything works and functions at the end of the day. Can you survive at the end of the day? Are you a better person at the end of the day? Talking about human life specifically. Make ends meet. Be nice to everybody.

*(Interview ends)*

Transcribed by Cané Lake.

Proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 7 : LEX HES

*Nelspruit, 09h00, 08 Feb, 06*

**AP:** Do guides need to be sensitive and do they need to be tough?

**LH:** There's no question about the sensitivity. Guides have to be very sensitive in lots of different ways. In two aspects, one is sensitive to the environment and what lives in the environment. So when they go out into the field whether it be in a vehicle or on foot, the way they handle the environment or treat the environment is very important. They must actually leave that area without animals, plants, and the environment having been detrimentally affected by them. So that's a very important part of it. And then the second aspect of sensitivity is, sensitivity towards their guests. They must be very aware of what their guest's needs are, and requirements are, and comforts and so on are, being cared for and looked after and are their needs being met. So you have to be very aware of what's going on in your guest's minds all the time. And then probably a third aspect of sensitivity is sensitivity towards your peers, the people who you work with, whether it be labourers in the game lodge that you are at, or the management staff, or your fellow guides, or whatever, must be very aware of how you relate to them. So I think sensitivity is actually probably the most important part of guiding. More important in fact than knowledge and what you know about rifles and the eco system and so on. It's much more important to be sensitive.

**AP:** You mentioned eco systems. I see when you filled in your response here, you said after thirty years of work, you're trying to understand how eco systems work. Are eco systems really that intricate and complicated?

**LH:** Yes, I think they are. There's no doubt eco systems are extremely intricate and complicated. There are so many different living things in the eco system and non living things that all inter-relate with one another that if you were to start drawing lines between from one component of the eco system to the next and then draw lines onto the next one, you would end up with a massive spider web that would be very, very difficult to analyse in great detail and work out exactly how everything is related to everything else. I think that eco systems are extremely complex and we'll never ever stop learning about eco systems and how the elements of eco systems are relating to one another.

**AP:** Knowing what it is is only the beginning, it's not the end. Then you have to know what it does and then the real tricky question is why it does that.

**LH:** Yes, why things are doing what they are doing and there can be relationships that we're not even aware of. And that's why sensitivity to the environment is so important. You could be killing a little bee somewhere that might have a role to play in the pollination of a rare plant, for example, and we don't even know about it. There's a lot that we don't know about and that's why we just need to look after everything that is there because of actions that we may take that might end up having detrimental affects that we're not even aware of.

**AP:** A field guides' really got to know much more than he says hasn't he?

**LH:** That's probably true. I think to turn it the other way around I think if you are providing information for your guests, that it's best not to tell a guest everything you know all in one go, preferably. So hold information back all the time. And don't bombard your guests with information that they eventually end up with their brains being befuddled.

**AP:** The problem is that for you as the guide trying to develop yourself no-one ever asks you about grasses, so then ten years later someone asks you about grasses and unless you've been quite disciplined and learned about it yourself you're going to have forgotten everything that you previously learned. So don't you have to be quite disciplined in reinforcing certain areas, especially if your interaction with plants is not reinforced in those areas?

**LH:** That can be true to some extent but I think the important thing, and this is actually one of the areas where I feel a lot of training and standards setting in the guide industry falls down a little bit is that to me there is far too much emphasis actually on the gathering of knowledge. Do we really need to know about rhizomes and different types of grasses when a guest generally speaking is not ever really going to ask that question. Sure if there's certain grasses that play an important role in an eco system and provide a great food source for the millions of wildebeest that go across the Serengeti plains then that's something of interest and importance for a guest. But some obscure grass...I feel that there's too much emphasis on incredible detailed knowledge, where there should be more emphasis on how are you passing what knowledge you have across to your guests and are you making your experience interesting and exciting for your guests? So I don't think you necessarily need to know everything, you just have to make sure that you are maintaining the interest of your guests. So if they are interested in grasses, use that as something to maintain interest.

**AP:** Do you think you can teach prospective guides ethics, values, human relationships and all these areas?

**LH:** I think there are many aspects you can teach, yes. Certainly like the sensitivity aspects and using the things as examples, but I think in the end you're right when you ask that question. What you're saying in other words is that many of these aspects are just inbred in a person and you have those kind of people. And I think you're right there, unless you are that type of person open to those ideas of sensitivity you will not end up being a very good guide. But I certainly do think, especially with the young people, we're dealing with a lot of young people in our training programs and they are open to ideas all the time. They're still new and their minds are being moulded, so when you're training young people I think you can influence them and especially inspire them. If you take them from the city environment for example and put them in a bush camp for 28 days I think that can change the views of a lot of people. That can definitely inspire them. We've had many examples of that kind of thing where by putting them into the environment and doing the right kind of training you inspire them to become more sensitive and more ethical and so on. So I think it's a bit of both.

**AP:** I had the honour of meeting Dr Ian Player, and he said that he, let me come across to the point that I'm trying to make, in the eyes of the general public, a game ranger and a field guide are the same thing. Now Ian Player said it's actually good for the rangers to do time with the public and it's good for those people who are guiding to do work in conservation as rangers. Do you think those are two completely separate personalities and should be kept as separate streams, or do you share Dr Player's quote that people should do both lines of work?

**LH:** I don't think people should necessarily do both lines of work but I do think there should be some understanding of what each person does. If you're a guide in a wildlife area you're a guide and your role is almost more of an entertainer than a conservationist. You're a communicator and your conservation role really is to communicate to people the importance of environment and wilderness. So that's from a conservation point of view that would be the role you're playing. You're not necessarily playing a management or wildlife or

environmental management role. But I think you do have to have an understanding of it. So you want to be able to when you are driving around and showing your guests around a reserve be able to talk fairly knowledgeably about the way a wildlife area is being managed. And then I think on the other hand game rangers should also be very aware of the important role that tourists play in wildlife areas and not look at them as intruders in the environment which I think has been a fault in many conservation areas previously, I think maybe it's changing a bit now. They should be aware of the importance of eco tourists and the role they are playing and they can feel more welcome and maybe even play a role in helping to educate them. There should be something to change but I don't think they necessarily both of them have to be doing those same jobs.

**AP:** How do you get people to have the right attributes? We've agreed that there's a matter of selection and people are to an extent born guides rather than made guides, but what is it that you do for them in training? What does your program consist of and what skills and attributes are you hoping to pass on to your learners in that 28 days, which is a very short time?

**LH:** In the 28 day program that we do there are two main focuses. The one is techniques of guiding and the other is gathering knowledge. The first part of the course a lot of the emphasis is on gathering knowledge and getting some basic understanding of the eco system and how it works. And then the latter part of the course, once the student has the knowledge then he's got some knowledge that he can start communicating. And then we spend a lot more time and effort on the actual guiding techniques. And there a lot of emphasis is placed on things like sensitivity and how you drive your vehicle sensitively, and how you conduct your walk sensitively, how you communicate with your guests in a sensitive way, how you ensure the comfort and safety of your guests. So in a nutshell that's what we are covering. How we actually cover it or how you get people to become more sensitive and ethical and better guides is more of an inspirational thing. What we try and do is you take them out to beautiful spots. You take them out and spend nights under the stars and you do things like Solitaire where you take people and leave them. For example give them an emotional lecture on conservation problems that we have in South Africa or southern African and how we need to look after our environment and then you take them out and you leave them by themselves in the bush for a few hours so that they can think about things and just have nothing but their own thoughts and the wilderness around them. So a lot of our training is based on trying to inspire people with wilderness and the peace and quiet and beauty and excitement and drama, etc. of the wilderness.

**AP:** Dr Ian Player sees that wilderness as a religious experience. To what extent do you think people see it that way?

**LH:** I think that is what we're trying to do when I say we're trying to inspire people. You could call it a religious experience and many, many people come away from our courses saying that these courses have changed our lives, and I think in that sense it is a religious experience. Wilderness has that affect, certainly for me, and I know for many other people, when you go into wilderness and you are taken away from these sounds that we're surrounded with now, traffic noises and music and people talking, and you're surrounded by wilderness and nature, it changes the way you think. Definitely so.

**AP:** Over our breakfast break we had a bit of a discussion about incidents on trails. Do you think that 41 incidents over the amount of time that Kruger's been offering wilderness trails is possibly excessive?

**LH:** Look I think at first glance I would say yes. I think that if any animal is killed that's one too many. So at first glance I would say yes. If I think about it that I've been guiding for thirty odd years, I've never had to shoot an animal. Although I think what you need to look at with those statistics if there's 41 animals that have been killed you need to look at how many times animals are encountered on foot in a place like Kruger. How many trails have been conducted there and just have a look at it from a statistical point of view. In other words how many animals per number of tourists going through there. I mean that might be a more realistic way of looking at it. Because there's no doubt if you spending more time on foot in wilderness areas you're more likely too bump into or get into dangerous situations, whereas my career mostly has been vehicles. So there's less chance that I would end up getting into trouble.

**AP:** Many of our wilderness areas now use the marketing term of the Big Five. Can you throw any light on the origins of this expression?

**LH:** *laughter* As far as I know it's an old hunting term which referred to the five most sought after trophy animals in Africa. That's as far as I know. I don't know whether it might have originated from somebody like I think Teddy Roosevelt was a big hunter, so possibly somebody like him, but I know the first time it was used in a commercial sense for safari operations was by Mala Mala when they were issuing Big Five certificates in the mid seventies when I was just starting out in the industry. That's the first time I heard the term being used. On safari operations.

**AP:** Would you offer a comment as to which of those animals, or any others for that matter you consider to be the most potentially dangerous?

**LH:** I think that's always a difficult question to answer because it depends on the situations you're getting yourself into. Any animal is dangerous at the wrong time. So I don't think one can say that one is more dangerous than the other. But if I was to have a look at my own personal experiences from where I've been living in wilderness areas, and most incidents where I've had some indirect contact has been actually with Cape Buffalo, where we've had staff members, plus on one occasion a guest knocked down by a Cape Buffalo, and gored by a Cape Buffalo. And I think it's something like four or five incidents in the fifteen years I was working at (Mamelozi?). So possibly Cape Buffalo but I don't think one can generalize. It depends on the situations.

**AP:** I notice on the Kruger lists there's never been an incident with a leopard. Do you think leopards if unharmed are less aggressive?

**LH:** Yes, I do think so. I think leopards prefer to avoid a confrontation with anything that's potentially dangerous. Which I think they see man as potentially dangerous so yes, I think a leopard would rather avoid a confrontation than cause trouble. I wouldn't rate a leopard as being exceptionally dangerous. Also they're relatively small animals. I've seen video footage of somebody kicking a leopard off themselves to protect themselves.

**AP:** Do you know who that person was and when and where that was?

**LH:** No I don't know the details, it's just a video clip that I've seen of somebody actually sitting in a vehicle and the leopard jumped into the vehicle. It was a leopard that was being translocated and they were trying to get it out of its cage and in its anger when it did get out

it jumped into the front of the vehicle and attacked the person that was trying to get it out of the cage.

**AP:** You've got quite a soft spot for leopards haven't you?

**LH:** It's funny that that's the impression that a lot of people have simply because one publishes a book about leopards. And people often say well leopards are obviously your favourite animal and this kind of thing. But I think that's a very wrong perception. I think that if I look at when I go into wilderness areas I just love what goes on around me. It's not just a particular animal that I'm always looking for. I just love trying to see what's going on around me and it can be a little group of Dwarf Mongoose sunning themselves on a termite mound, it can be some of the amazingly, brilliantly coloured insects that we have. It all just turns me on and there's definitely not one particular animal that I prefer above any other.

**AP:** Would you give some advice on how to take good wildlife photographs or what are the circumstances that have allowed you to.

**LH:** Advice, obviously that could be a long conversation, but I would say generally speaking to summarise, to take good wildlife photographs, one of the first things you need to do is know your subject. I think that's a very, very important part of it and the more you know about what you're photographing the better your chances are of taking good pictures. You need a huge amount of patience. You need to be very environmentally aware. Aware of what's going on around you. Have an eye for seeing things that perhaps an ordinary person wouldn't see. So I think those are the aspects you need to look at when taking photographs.

**AP:** Have you considered running courses for learners in wildlife photography?

**LH:** Look I have done photographic workshops and if people requested and I had groups of people that want to do it, yes, then I do workshops, take people into the bush and give them talks on photography and composition and things like that. So yes, so I do that to a certain extent.

**AP:** Do you take your best shots from in a vehicle or on foot or is it hard to say?

**LH:** It depends on what you're photographing. If you're photographing wild animals, big game, the larger mammals, definitely better from a vehicle. But if you're doing landscapes and some of the smaller stuff like insects, flowers, obviously much better when you're on foot. But from a large mammal point of view a vehicle is definitely the best way to do it. It allows you to get closer.

**AP:** Who discovered that you could approach most dangerous animals in an open vehicle with relative safety.

**LH:** I think it started probably in the 1920s in South Africa, I don't know if it happened elsewhere in Africa, but certainly in South Africa when the Kruger National Park was proclaimed and the first people started driving their cars into the Kruger Park. I think that's when it was first realized that you could. I'm just guessing now but I'm assuming that that's when one first realized.

**AP:** There's a famous picture of Mrs Stevenson Hamilton in the twenties leaning out with an old box camera that she looks down on a lioness right in front of her.

**LH:** So I think that's possibly where it started. And then the very first private game reserves as far as I know were, I remember when I was growing up in Johannesburg picking up a thing called the Transvaal Weekender which had places you could go and visit. And there was a private game reserve called (So?) in the Timbavati, where you were able to do game drives in open vehicles and night drives, and that was the first place that I'm aware of that anybody was doing that kind of thing. And then of course Mala Mala was the other pioneer. It started with hunting. There used to be big game hunting there. Take people out in open landrovers to go and look for the animals that they were going to hunt. And I think that's how the sort of private game lodge open landrover safaris developed.

**AP:** I'm just trying to imagine the perception of an intelligent animal, something like a lion, at what point does the lion become aware of the human as a separate entity to the vehicle?

**LH:** I have a lot of debate about this with various people and I'm not really a scientist or a veterinary person or a doctor or anything like that, but my own personal theory about it is that in actual fact many of these animals, their eyesight actually isn't that fantastic. And I always use the example that if I'm playing with my dog in the garden and I throw a little piece of stick up into the air he actually loses sight of it quite quickly and he uses his hearing to hear where it lands and then runs to where the stick is. And that leads me to think that most of these animals, their eyesight actually isn't that great and all they see is this single shape of one object being the vehicle with all the people in it. And it's only once a person separates himself from the vehicle that they then see a different shape moving around and might react to that.

**AP:** I've noticed that you can sit on the tracker's seat and the lion virtually wags its tail on your foot, but as long as you're seated on that trackers seat the lion seems to behave relatively naturally as you drive a few metres behind it. I've even heard of an incident, perhaps you can confirm this, I think it was Malcolm Douglas who told me this story, of a lion actually sniffing the guide's feet.

**LH:** Look I haven't experienced that with big predators like that, although I have with hyena who are very inquisitive all the time, so they always come sniff things. That's always possible and I don't think that's necessarily that unusual when animals become accustomed to the vehicles and presence of the vehicles.

**AP:** Nevertheless you've mentioned all animals are potentially dangerous, you certainly need a rifle with you when you walk with guests in the bush.

**LH:** Yes, I think that is the attitude that we need to have when we are taking clients out into the bush. I think we do have to not take anything for granted. But having said that I do think that if you are careful enough and aware enough you don't need a rifle probably in the bush. You can actually look after yourself well enough. But the rider to that is that you really have to be very aware of what's going on in your environment, and I think that situation awareness is something very, very important above anything else. So I think that carrying a rifle shouldn't make you less, and this may be a mistake that people make is that carrying a rifle they end up being less aware of what's going on around them because they know they've got that rifle as back up and if something happens I can just kill something. So it's perhaps even a good idea to train oneself by going into the bush on your own without a weapon and spending time in the wilderness surrounded by big game animals without a weapon, and that will teach you to become much more aware.

**AP:** Don't you find that makes you a little bit nervous, to be on your own where there's big game?

**LH:** Not for me really. I don't get nervous about those kind of things. No, I enjoy it.

**AP:** Tell us the things that you love about the bush that are not the big game. Tell us whatever stuff we should be encouraging tourists to look at. I think there's a big game stage when tourists are new. But I think when people have got past that experience, there's another stage and that's when people become more environmentally aware of other details. Maybe you want to describe what sort of things people graduate from after they're not only interested in the large and hairys.

**LH:** I deal with a lot of tourists that come out for extended periods of time and many of them are first time visitors to Africa. And so obviously the draw card is the big game animals, and when you take them on safari and obviously you are trained in the big game animals, but I'm always making them aware of what else is going on around them all the time. I think once you've got the people with you it's important to make them aware of everything that's going on around them. So when you leave camp on a game drive for example, you're not going to bump into a big game animal straight away. It's most unlikely or you will end up driving for minutes or even maybe an hour or half an hour without seeing a big game animal, and you need to be able to talk about other things that are going around in the environment around them. So I think the things that really turn people on and make them really interested is how different things interact with one another in the environment. That's really a big turn on. Stop at the termite mound and talk about...the Okavango Delta is a classic example of how termites have been able to shape the environment, and when you start explaining that to people it completely opens their eyes to a whole different world. That it's not just about seeing an animal and taking a photograph of it. It's getting to understand everything that's going on in the eco system. Things like termites and the insects and the interactions that go on between wasps and figs and those kind of things, that's the kind of thing that really turns people on.

**AP:** The trick is how do you market that because Big Five marketing is very powerful and it seems to have shaped the marketing over the past couple of decades in this country or this region particularly. How do you market sort of an ecology as though it competes with the Big Five?

**LH:** Yes, you're right, I think it's a very difficult thing to market because people are not...it sounds a lot more pedantic to talk about ecology and interactions and things. And I almost think that one doesn't necessarily have to market it. What you do is you use the Big Five as your draw card and when your people are there you change their attitudes and perceptions by revealing what else is going on around you. I think that's the only way to do it. It's not an easy thing to market. You can't specifically market that. You can try and you're going to attract a certain small percentage of people who are deeply interested in that kind of thing, but then you're kind of preaching to the converted.

**AP:** One example is birding. Birding is a known activity and it certainly appeals to a particular group, and it's a growing group internationally and locally. And it's more sophisticated than the Big Five group. So I think the marketing is a key issue because the marketing creates the expectation and the expectation creates the experience and the guide becomes obligated to produce the experience that's been sold to the client. So I would like to imagine that there is going to be a new sort of marketing to encourage the type of activities that we're talking about.

**LH:** And there already is. I've seen a few game lodges sort of talking about their deep ecology experiences and so on, and I think they can try and market those things and you will, but like I say, I think from a business point of view it's a very small percentage of the market and whether it's big enough to sustain businesses on a long term basis I don't know. I love the idea of changing people's perceptions. I think that's a very, very important thing. Like I say, you're marketing deep ecology, you're basically going to get people that are interested in that kind of thing already. Whereas if you're marketing the Big Five, you're getting people who are superficially interested and are going to come to your area, and then when you get them there you're going to open up a whole new world to them and you're going to change their perceptions and you're going to have a whole lot of people that maybe ultimately would go away and say, oh now I'm interested in deep ecology. So I like the idea of trying to change people's perceptions but without being like a missionary about it.

**AP:** What skills do you think guides in general, the guides that you know, the guides that you've trained, what skills do you think they need to develop further in the industry at the moment? What are the skills that we're going to need to engage the future?

**LH:** I think times are changing in the sense first of all there are many, many more operations out there, so it's become highly competitive and there are a lot more interactions going on between animals and people. And so if I was to give it some thought I would say that first of all they must be...this whole situational awareness thing is a very important thing that must be developed more. And I think it's already changed a lot but I think a lot more emphasis must be placed on meeting the needs of clients and less emphasis on, for example safety. I know safety is important but to me if you knowing the various grain sizes of bullets and the ballistics of different weapons and all that kind of thing, to me actually isn't as important as making sure that your guests are happy and are enjoying the experience and are going away having their needs met. I think that those are the two aspects I would say probably one should look at.

**AP:** Do you think the people who are attracted to guiding, particularly the young people, don't really have the sophistication that is equal to the task, and particularly learners from local, quite parochial areas, may not have the sophistication required to deal with international guests?

**LH:** Yes, I think that's true and you've touched on a thing that I hadn't thought of and that is in South Africa we have a unique situation in that we're going through a period of transition, and we do need to make sure that previously disadvantaged people are being brought in to the system more. And yes, we do need to ensure that these people become well trained. But unfortunately I think that it's related to the whole basis of our education system. Until the kids that are getting a better education now come through the system we probably are not going to get a high number of reasonably sophisticated local people who are able to relate on the same level with sophisticated clients from the United States and Europe and so on. I think it's going to need time. We can accelerate it by means of training and education.

**AP:** We spoke about race but what about gender? What about the transformation as far as women are concerned? Are there any barriers that impede women from doing this job or do you think women are quite as capable as men on average of being field guides?

**LH:** I think women are quite as capable and in fact the beginning of our discussion was sensitivity and I think women are far more sensitive. They're better with understanding people and they are better with understanding or being sensitive to the environment. And

therefore I think sensitivity being such an important part of guiding, generally speaking, women probably will make better guides than men. There's also less of this macho attitude, which a lot of men have about, let's see how close we can get to this elephant bull that's in ? and let's see if we can throw a stone at this buffalo and see whether it will charge and stuff like that. You're not going to get that kind of thing from women. And I think there are some barriers. I think there is still a perception on the part of some employers that women are not capable of doing the job, but I think that that is changing.

**AP:** And in terms of your learners, have you seen an increase in the percentage of female learners over the time that you've been running your course?

**LH:** I actually don't know the actual statistics but at first glance I would say that there hasn't been an increase, but there has always been a fairly high percentage of women on our courses, so I would say probably around about 40% of the people that attend our courses are women. And that to me is quite a high percentage when you compare who's working in the industry.

**AP:** Do you track their careers after they leave you?

**LH:** We don't actually have a formal sort of system of tracking careers but we do try where possible to stay in contact with certain people and get some idea of where they are and where they're going. And we do often bump into people in the field who are working as guides whom we found out they were with us sometime in the past.

**AP:** Douwe van der Zee raised quite an interesting issue when he said that 'transformation' as viewed by the government at the moment has got a hypocritical agenda because they're trying to view the society in a non-racial way, yet they've created terms where a specific race groups are deemed more employable than others. Do you want to comment on that?

**LH:** I think the government has to do it that way. I don't think they have a choice really because if you think about it the majority of the people in this country are blacks and the majority of the people in this country were disadvantaged by the apartheid era, and for the government to bring transformation about, they have to place the emphasis on the those people that were disadvantaged by apartheid, and that's the black population. So there's really no choice as far as I see it.

**AP:** Isn't there a threat or a concern that there will be no place in the system for the most experienced people in the system?

**LH:** There is that threat and certainly I think that's what's happening. I have my own children that are now reaching an age where they're starting to think about their careers. We all know that it's much more difficult for a young white male South African to get a job because there is affirmative action all over the place. So there's no doubt that young whites will have it more difficult. And then in terms of the experience that you're talking about, I personally don't think, if you have a look at the guiding industry certainly at the moment, there's no danger of that happening right now. I don't know what the statistics are, but if I was to go and visit all the various game reserves now, you would still find the majority of guides are whites. So I don't think there's a problem immediately. I do maybe ultimately there could be a situation where that's happening, and now the government I believe now is sending word out to civil servants that had lost their jobs because of affirmative action and asking previous white civil servants to come back to assist the people that have been put in their

place, because they've realised there's a level of incompetency which needs to be redressed by bringing the experience back. So I think that the government is realising that, that you can't just get rid of all that experience. So hopefully that will change. But like you say there are perceptions and maybe there are threats to that skill being lost.

**AP:** Interestingly Lex, you said that the majority of people who are employed as guides are still white despite this affirmative action being in place. Are the employers in the industry very reactionary or are there natural reasons why blacks are still not making it as guides in the industry?

**LH:** Look I think there's maybe two things. One is that many black guides still...I still think that the main problem with black guides, many of them are very good at showing and giving their people a good bush experience, but when it comes to sitting down at a breakfast table like you and I and communicating on a level with sophisticated European and American and western people, that's where they fall down. And I think that the more upmarket sort of game lodges are looking for a guide that can be a host as well, and so that's what they will be employing. And then the other thing that I think is, I don't know if you can call it a problem, because some people might look at it as an advantage, is that the government at the moment is not implementing the legalities of guiding, for example, I think there are still many guides out there working in game lodges all over southern Africa who don't have the so called legal qualification for whatever reason. And there's no sort of law enforcement regarding that kind of thing. And then in the same vein I don't think the government is making an effort to, for example, go to a private game lodge and have a look at their guides quota and say look you haven't got enough black guides here, we're fining you or whatever. There's none of that kind of law enforcement or enforcement of the laws and views of the government. So at the moment my feeling is that particularly the private eco tourism industry is cut off a little bit from government and how government are trying to implement these things. *(Tape ends)* ...the fact that the government is not enforcing the laws and the affirmative action and so on at the moment. I think that maybe eventually it will come. But I think a lot of the private game lodge employers would maybe see that as a positive thing because it means they are maintaining, keeping their competent guides and not being forced to bring in incompetent guides because of affirmative action.

**AP:** Do you think the prospective employers, the lodges and so on, are giving the guides a fair deal that people who are required to be have extensive nature knowledge, rifle safety and first aid, and a number of other skills to boot, which we won't list endlessly, are being paid fairly mediocre salaries and often having to live in conditions that most notably are very small and don't allow them much space and don't allow them much of a private life?

**LH:** Yes, you've almost answered the question yourself there, but I do think that...it's a very difficult one to answer because if you have a look at guides that work in upmarket game lodges who might be being paid a mediocre salary, they are actually earning a huge amount of tax free money in the form of tips. And so they end up making a lot of money in that way. I know of guides that are earning ten to twenty thousand rand a month on a salary of two or three thousand rand a month. So they have the potential to make a good living in the right places that are busy. But the problem comes when there are game lodges that are sort of not quite there yet and don't have a lot of clients. And there the guide is being paid a mediocre salary, and because there are not a lot of clients he's not getting the tips, so he's not really able to make headway, and it's not right that a guide who has all this knowledge and qualifications is being paid such a mediocre salary. The employers' actually taking advantage of the situation and making the clients pay the guide's salary, when in fact the employer should be paying the guide's salary, not the clients. And then I see it also now that

I'm in my own training business, I see it from another point of view. And that is that when I want to employ a good quality instructor who's had a lot of experience in the guiding industry, I have to go to the game lodges for example, look for experience there and then when I interview the guides, he'll tell me that he's earning twenty thousand rand a month, fifteen of which is tips, and so I have to match that just in terms of salary, because I know that my students are not going to pay him any tips at the end of the course. So it creates a problem for people like myself who's trying to employ quality people to bring, to train people in the industry and to raise the standard of guiding and maintain standards of guiding, and now we can't employ people because we can't afford salaries. So that's a difficult problem.

**AP:** You're not alone in that, Lex, the same problem occurred with Drifters for example when Douwe van der Zee was there as the trainer. He said to Andy *(Dott)* he doesn't want to be the trainer because he's earning less as the trainer than the people who are the guides. The hosting skills, which you think is the thing that the black guide is probably behind in. Are these language skills? Are they other skills and do you think we can put the necessary training in place to address the missing things?

**LH:** I think it's a very difficult thing to put the necessary training in place, because first of all it is language skills. There's a certain amount of language barrier. Their English isn't nearly as good as it should be. So if one can set up programs like English bridging classes for these young guys that might be one way of doing it. But the other thing is, for example you and I will go home and we'll put DSTV on and catch the BBC world news and we'll go and buy the newspaper and read about Mohammed's cartoons and the outrage of the Moslems around the world, and when we sit down at breakfast with our guests we can talk on a level with our guests about those kind of things. But a young guide living in a village in northern Botswana who comes to work in a game lodge doesn't have that kind of contact with the outside world and so he's not able to talk to his guests about sort of general day to day things like that. And I think that is a very difficult thing to try and instil in those guys. And perhaps the way it can be alleviated and I know it does work in various lodges is that you maybe have a management team who are responsible for more of that hosting part of it, and you let your guide concentrate on the bush aspects. So that might be a way of overcoming that problem, and perhaps as the guide picks up experience and maybe gets a chance to go to the United States or to Europe he'll start being able to develop more of those hosting skills.

**AP:** I was speaking to Graham Verceuil and he said he sees a great difference in guides within a private lodge. The white guides will tend to accumulate that international experience but they won't make any plan for their life. They won't care whether they've bought a car or not. They won't care whether they've made a long term plan for their life. Whereas black guides don't spend money on international experience at all. They will buy a car, they will maintain that car. They will buy a house. So they'll make plans about their long term life. So there seems to be a difference, and both of those types of young people maybe need to learn some skills from the other.

**LH:** Look maybe that's true but I think that what I read into what you've just said is that a young black guide is coming from a low economic base, and so therefore his first goals in life are to get himself a car and a roof over his head, and to borrow money so that he can buy a lounge suite for his house. Whereas a young white guide is coming from a very privileged background. He already has all of those things really, if you were to look at it.

**AP:** He can always fall back on dad.

**LH:** Yes, so there's less need for him to be concerned about that. He's rather going to go and travel overseas because he knows that when he's gatvol of guiding he can go and start working on the family farm or whatever. So I think that is maybe the difference, these young blacks are trying to uplift themselves economically.

**AP:** Part of the reason why there doesn't seem to be pressure in enforcement is there's been a lot of technical difficulties in enforcing compliance, so the whole THETA system has been slow and generally quite ineffective, hasn't it?

**LH:** Yes, I think definitely. I think that the whole THETA system is so cumbersome and so difficult for people to understand and difficult for people to follow up on all the paper work that is required, and so the result is...I hear stories, I don't have personal experience and I haven't looked at it closely but I hear stories that people have been waiting two years for their THETA certificate for example. So until the guy has got his THETA certificate he's operating illegally. So it's impossible to enforce something when the government with themselves are falling down.

**AP:** Do you have suggestions for improving the...when you say cumbersome I think the word that you're looking for is bureaucratic isn't it? Do you see ways of reducing the bureaucracy within the THETA system?

**LH:** I haven't really given that that much thought, but I would say they need to simplify the whole process. I think that's what it comes down to. 'Keep it simple stupid.' You've got to make things as simple as possible for everybody so that we can understand it. The starting point for me with THETA is that the whole language that they use just for a start is so unknown to all of us that it has taken us such a long time to try and understand what they're talking about.

**AP:** And it's resulted in the same people coming up privileged again. People with a tertiary education...

**LH:** As well. There's definitely that. Actually it looks to me you need to be actually highly academic to understand this whole THETA system and how it works. It has by no means simplified the process at all. And when you look at the reason that SETAs were set up in the first place was to try and improve training for previously disadvantaged people. But it's actually certainly within THETA made it much more difficult. They've got to start off by changing the language so that we understand what they're talking about. I pick up a thing that explains to me the process I have to go through and I read the first paragraph and I don't understand a single word they've said. And so then I have to go and employ consultants to help me try and understand this thing. So now I'm spending money. Now if I was a previously disadvantaged person wanting to start my own training business I wouldn't get anywhere.

**AP:** Do you think that the THETA system conveys actually a mistrust of the people who are assessors and moderators?

**LH:** Yes, I think it does. I mean if you look at...and I'm maybe wearing my eco training cap now, if we have a look at the mistrust that we have is we look around us and we say how did that training organisation get all its THETA accreditation so quickly and is now doing all the stuff when we are still struggling to understand this thing and we're still struggling to get THETA to listen to us and help us. But that training organisation within months of THETA

set up they're there. And so we distrust the system. We say but there's something wrong with that system.

**AP:** But Leone Whateley always called FGASA the white boys club. Do you think she's being unfair when she says that?

**LH:** No, I don't actually. At one point I thought that I might get involved with FGASA more deeply because we felt that the private game lodge industry and the views of the private game lodge industry were not being carried through in FGASA enough. There was too much emphasis on the trails guide and the rifle and walking and not enough on what they derogatorily call jeep jockeys. And you would sit in FGASA and they would talk about jeep jockeys in this very negative way and we felt that actually FGASA should be looking at a different view that these so called jeep jockeys are probably the most important guides in the country. They are the people that are probably dealing with more people, more sophisticated people, the people that are bringing the most money into the country and so they need to be looked after and cared for and standards have to be maintained with those people. So I thought well it's time for me to try and get involved and so I stood for the committee and it was elected to the committee. And I remember at that AGM when I was elected to the committee there were 150 people in the meeting, there was one black person, and that was ? Ngumani who had been invited there by FGASA. And that was the only black face in the whole meeting. And that's when I thought to myself there's a problem here in terms of race and FGASA is perhaps not being inclusive enough, and certainly in the early days, and maybe they're trying to change it a little bit but they're whole system of testing and assessing and so on is based on written exams and studying very academic material. And that is a barrier to a lot of the local people, but I see with the whole new local guide standards and so on that's maybe a way of bringing more of the locals in.

**AP:** I still see the industry, particularly here in Mpumalanga, who advertise for a FGASA qualification ahead of even a THETA qualification.

**LH:** Yes, it is that way. I think the impression I get is that the perception in the industry is that the FGASA qualification is a better standard then a THETA qualification, so that's why people would be going for the FGASA qualification. Now whether that is race based or not I don't know but certainly I think the perception is that the standard is better.

**AP:** I think the good news for the industry is that FGASA and THETA are really learning to talk to each other now. And that one of the big flaws in the THETA system is the difficulty in applying things consistently. Because it says the guide must know his grasses. So I ask him three grasses and he knows them correctly and then I tick that he knows his grasses. But someone else asks him twenty grasses and on the eighth one he stumbles, about the thirteenth one it's clear that he knows some grasses, and then does he know his grasses according to that thing.

**LH:** It's not objective enough.

**AP:** And I encountered this thing when I had to set the standards for the birding thing. What was the requirement? And I actually said the prospective learner needs to have correctly named something like eight of the first ten birds encountered, or whatever the standard is. And then so the standard on questioning is different because obviously if you deliberately ask questions that could be harder or difficult, so I tried to get quite explicit about those things. I think that's one of the very difficult things in the THETA system, is getting consensus on

what the standards actually are. You can write it down but until you actually get the role-players communicating with each other the standards are going to be ?

**LH:** That's true. Because if you look at the standard generating body it's made up of a whole variety of people from field guide background to a museum tour guide background kind of stuff. So where does it all meet?

**AP:** At least Grant Hine the CEO of FGASA is now on the SGB and that's the thing that's causing...and FGASA has spent a lot of work, FGASA and Drumbeat sat down together and said well let's settle our differences, and at that stage Drumbeat was still in favour with THETA, but I think THETA eventually lost it with them. Because they actually realised that their standards are different to the expected standards and in fact FGASA came close to that. So despite the fact that FGASA were the white boys club you had ? come in full circle and saying actually...

**LH:** They are setting the standards.

**AP:** One of the problems with the THETA system is it focuses too much on the systems of training providers and it doesn't focus enough on the content.

**LH:** I agree with you, definitely. There's a huge amount on system for the training provider and the problem that FGASA had highlighted is that because of all the systems that need to be in place, a one man training provider, like ? for example, is not able to become THETA accredited because he's a one man show. If you have a look at all the systems that have to be put in place, he has to have an administrator for this, a moderator for that, etc. and can't afford to do that because his business isn't big enough.

**AP:** FGASA initially had the idea that they didn't want to become FGASA registered in the standard way because then they would be setting themselves up in competition with their own membership. But I think they've negotiated a way now that FGASA is going to become THETA accredited and that that will benefit people in the FGASA membership. So ? a negotiated settlement been reached with that one. One of the few pieces of good news.

**LH:** It is. It's a very good system. It's something that's certainly working for us.

**AP:** Grant Hine said that white boys don't toyi-toyi. Do you think that guides need a union?

**LH:** *laughs* That's a difficult one to answer. Look I certainly do think that in many ways guides are treated unfairly and there's certain aspects of it where, for example let's take a guide that is doing a good job and has good experience and is a sought after guide, and he decides that he wants to get a little bit ambitious for example by taking videos of the things that he sees on his game drives and putting them together in a film that he then tries to sell for example to a TV station. Now there are many employers that will say that all of that stuff belongs to the company and the guide gets nothing out of it. Whereas the guide is doing that off his own bat, it's his own initiative, it's maybe his own video at his own cost and so on. I think that there, there needs to be a certain element of fairness on the part of the employers. That you need to allow your guides some room for growth. They're not just there to be a guide. Because eventually, and I think it becomes a negative for both the guide and the employer, because eventually that experienced guide will leave because he wants to grow himself, and then the employer ends up having to employ a less experienced guide. So from that point of view I think maybe you do need some kind of a forum where guides can

get together and maybe lobby and do things to improve themselves, and maybe things like insurance policies and that kind of thing where they get beneficial rates. I think the problem is that guides love doing what they do so much that they're not really that interested in these kind of little issues like could my salary be better or whatever. I suspect that that's the case. So you won't have a militant enough or a strong enough organisation that's going to be able to lobby strong enough.

**AP:** Grant and I were in agreement that we know what the guides are going to toyi- toyi against, but we don't necessarily know what they're going to toyi-toyi for. And I think that is a problem with toyi-toying. Is you can get enough people to rally around who hate the THETA system. You can get enough people to rally around who think that guides are exploited. But when it came to forwarding a plan that there was consensus amongst guides about, you find that guides actually come quite individualistic and different from each other.

**LH:** Yes, there's not enough cohesion in the whole thing. I believe that those kind of things will happen by means of natural attrition. That is if everybody feels strongly enough about something they will make it happen. And at the moment I don't think anybody feels that strongly about various issues that we might be discussing.

**AP:** So we're going to have a half day guiding industry for a long time.

**LH:** *laughs* I don't know about that. I don't think that's the case.

**AP:** If you think there's career pathing for guides, especially there's limited opportunity for you if you're married. There's limited opportunity for you if you've got a life. You don't get enough leave time, you don't get enough time to have hobbies and other habits that are not directly related to your work place, so don't you think the industry needs to be a bit forward thinking and start looking at those things? If not the industry, the guides themselves.

**LH:** That I would say you're right in many aspects there, but look I think there is a career path. You can develop as a guide, alright you might not end up as a guide, but there is a career path that can be followed. You start off as a learner guide, become a guide, become the head guide, become manager of the game lodge, and then maybe go into marketing as you develop and grow, pretty much like other companies where you get moved up into different areas, and you might end up in a different part of the business from where you started. The problem I think that guiding has is that many guides see it as a temporary thing. In the beginning they'll say this is something I'm definitely not doing as a career. But it's something I love doing and I'd like to do it for five years and then when I've done my five years I'll go back to do accountancy and get a job, become a partner in an accountancy firm or whatever. Or go back to the family farm or join the family business or whatever. I think that is maybe a little bit of an issue, is that many people just see it as a temporary thing.

**AP:** Graham Verceuil is of the opinion that that leads to lowering standards.

**LH:** Yes, it would lead to lower standards because every time you got a guy up to a standard of five years experience and so on he's going to leave and he has to be replaced with somebody less experienced. And so you haven't got that long term experience in the industry. But I don't know. It would be interesting to go, and maybe you can do it, is when you visit different game lodges and employers of guides, have a look at how many long term experienced people are still within that organisation. Like for example I just think of a guy called Leon van Wyk at Mala Mala. He's been there fifteen years or something like that. He's head guide or whatever, so there's that pool of experience that is being passed on to

the younger guys. CC Africa have ? Marshall who's in charge of the whole guiding thing. He's been there twenty years or whatever it is and started as a guide. Wilderness Safaris have long term guys who are in management positions who have the experience. So I don't think experience is being lost, me personally. I think it's there. And I think that any industry is the same. You're going to have long term experience guys up there at the top who are going to be playing their role in passing on their experience, and you're going to have young guys coming through the system who are learning the ropes and picking up, so I think that's natural. You can't have every single person experienced.

**AP:** One of the points I wanted to make is, as soon as you become a manager you're not really a guide anymore.

**LH:** That's right.

**AP:** And certainly the experience of the guide teaches them very little about marketing, so that career path that you've described seems to me an unlikely one.

**LH:** Well I don't know so much. I see it at a place like Indaba where you can go and sure it depends on the person, you've got to be the right kind of person, but you can go to one stand and there are these lovely, pretty young ladies who all have probably some marketing qualification and they are selling safaris in Africa. You can go to another stand and there's a whole lot of experienced guides who are selling safaris in Africa. And to me if it was me and I was the client, I would be going to that experienced safari guide and finding out about it, because he knows and understands the business. He knows what it's all about. He's going to do in my opinion a better selling job than some fancy, larney marketing lady. To me a lot of marketing is about honesty and passion and a feel for what you're selling, rather than this fancy sort of lingo that you learn from your marketing degree. So I don't know that that's entirely correct.

**AP:** Do you think the guiding industry are self analytic and self critical? Certainly I never thought about a lot of the questions that I've been asking people recently until recently.

**LH:** I think if you talk to the majority of young guides that are operating now, I don't think that they're that self critical and self analytical. I think it's the experienced guides like myself and you and Graham and Hugh and all those that are looking at it and saying, but hell, we must improve this, we must be doing this, and it's the experienced guys that are looking back and saying...but I think the youngsters today, they've got a job, they're enjoying what they're doing and they're not that self critical. That's my overall sort of impression.

**AP:** What is your vision for guiding in the future? And who needs to be what for that to be achieved?

**LH:** I think I didn't answer that question in your survey, your questionnaire, because it was a complex one. In terms of the vision for guiding, I think for a start we want a multi racial, multi gendered guiding fraternity that are sensitive to the needs of clients, sensitive to the environment and the animals, and are doing a really good job in selling wilderness to people that are visiting the country. And making sure that when people leave they've switched on to what's happening here and maybe switched on enough to go back and do stuff to donate money to worthwhile conservation organisations. I think that's maybe the vision if you like. And how we do that can only be through training, and that's the only way it can be done. It has to be done through good quality comprehensive training programs.

**AP:** ***(missing question)***

**LH:** I just think that one of the reasons there is a lot of staff turnover is that the salaries they are paid is small, they may be getting good tips but the tips are unreliable. It goes up and down, so they can't make long term financial decisions like for example putting money down, and paying off a bond at five grand a month, because they don't know that next month they are going to have that five grand. So a lot of guys are finding this is not a way to make a living and make a long term career of this. I need a reliable salary and if I'm not going to get it guiding then I've got to go and do something else.

**AP:** I also find that another thing that weeds people out is when you want a wife and kids and dogs.

**LH:** Yes, you want a home to settle down to and call your own.

**AP:** How did you manage to stay in the industry and become middle aged and middle class?

**LH:** *laughs* That is part of the career path is that once you become an experienced guide, you end up building up a name for yourself, and particularly if you are able like I was lucky enough to publish a few books and so get my name out there. Then you become so well known that you become in demand and people are happy to pay for the services. And I think that's one of the career paths that one can take.

**AP:** So you managed to move up from the bottom of the food chain.

*(interview ends)*

Transcribed by Cané Lake.

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## INTERVIEW 8: MIKE ENGLISH

*White River, 11h45, 08 Feb, 06*

**AP:** Tell us about your early times in conservation. How did you become a game ranger?

**ME:** I was born in what was then known as Northern Rhodesia and I spent the first twelve years of my life up there.
My father was the pathologist (and bacteriologist) for the hospital and there were a lot of medical staff who had farms. We often used to go out to the farms and that's where my love of the bush began. My father was a great bush man and he got us out into the bush very often. He unfortunately died when I was…and I always wanted to go out in the bush, but didn't know how to go about it. When I left school a friend of mine at schools father said to me "What are you going to do when you leave school?" and I said "I don't know, I'd like to go farming" because I thought this would bring me closer to the bush so he said "Well, come and work for me" and went up to his place there and I was a learner farmer and he taught me all that I know about farming. He had a number of farms- they were cattle farms…and then we bought a farm at the Limpopo River confluence and I was left there without a vehicle and I had to go and collect the post by donkey-cart…. I went to collect the post on a Monday and a Wednesday and a Friday…

**AP:** That's quite close to Mapungubwe…

**ME:** That's right, ja, and he had quite a big farm there, and I obviously was in my element in the bush there and on the weekends when I was up on the farm- we used to go up to the main farm and meet everyone there about once a month or once every two months, other than that I had a rifle, and I used to just wander around and I could enjoy what I had always wanted to do all my life. After I worked for him for about ten years (but I was only two years on the Limpopo farm) I came down to White River and I managed a citrus farm but I put in various applications for a government post in the Park (and I got married when I was down in White River), then eventually I was successful I got a post up at Shangami, that's about 32 miles west of Shingwedzi on the western boundary and we there for years.

**AP:** What year was that that you started?

**ME:** That was in 1963. And after that a post at …was announced and I put in an application if I could be the ranger there and it was built, and I moved up there in 1972 for about 4 years the bush wars on either side of us in Zimbabwe and in Mocambique were reckoned as a threat to a family living out in the sticks, where we were, and they said that I should put a transfer in down Stolt's Nek and that they would put a single guy up there. But when I had gone up to Shangami

when the whole exchange scheme was agreed upon I was allocated to research the area on the western boundary and I had been on previous occasions up into that area, into the Makuleke, when I was still farming from Louis Trichardt and I just had a feel for it, and riverine bush on the Limpopo and the Levubu was to me an ideal place to conduct day trails for guys from ornothological societies and dendrological societies, because its one of the choice vegetation areas and as a result of the vegetation you have a variety of different birds, but you can also climb up and there's a series of pans along the Limpopo River which used to draw all sorts of birds in season and I saw the potential of trails- day trails that I had first in mind, and that's where my fixation on trails I would say was initiated. And I had to deal with people on the demarcation of the boundaries and I found a whole series of pans along the Limpopo that we would be able to utilize and unfortunately we were not able to include the Newadi Pan, but we managed to get the Sopinyo Pan, and the Newadi is a massive pan and it would have completed the system, but unfortunately we weren't able to get it… and then I heard about the trails going on at Umfolozi…and at that stage there was an anthrax research station there that was becoming sort of not utilized, as such, and I thought that we could perhaps use that as a base camp- start out from there and do walking trails back-packing and sleep out in the bush- in the winter months- and having a group come in the afternoon late, sleep over, take off the next morning, early in the morning, take off from there on two, three day trail, whatever it may be along the Levubu, I thought perhaps of doing a bit of fishing- beautiful birds there along the river, …is very, very interesting…perhaps on the second day have a group come in and we could perhaps have three or four groups going at the same time. I heard that they had trails going on now and then in…I had now and then something to do with parks rangers and we discussed this amongst various other things.

**AP:** …and maybe setting the foundation for trails in the park…

**ME:** Well, you could say that, but I don't think you can say that. It was in the relationship between…getting trails started, so I said come up…I said you must…introduction to for free accommodation and start for a certain period for a week or what ever it was and we went up as a family and he took us out for a night or two nights enjoy the scenery and they stepped out under the stars and when I came back I wrote to Ian Player and I asked him…and I got a basic idea of how he ran trails then in Zimbabwe. And then Trevor Dearlove came up…and I went with him but before that I ….Dr. Robert Filmer who was then head of parks up to Lanner Gorge and I said to him Dr. …and I pointed out to him the idea was setting good trails and how I envisaged trails going out along the Lebvubu …and walking back and being picked up at a certain point through the areas we were looking at … elephant, and doing trails we had one elephant and one snake…and then I took Trevor Dearlove up and I told him of my ideas and he was pretty enthusiastic, and he motivated for the trails, and I said to him you work on your side and I'll work on mine, and I would visit him when I went down and he would visit me when he came up. Then it went to the board for discussion and approval, and as far as I can make out the voting- I think it was eight for it and eight against

it and the Administrator of the Transvaal (Cruywagen) had the casting voting and he voted in favour of it and that's how it all began.

**AP:** And what year was that?

**ME:** Can't remember exactly, it was in the 70s. I'll have a look for you just now.

**AP:** Something like the mid-70s?

**AE:** Think it was the early 70s Mike because…

**ME:** Ja, it was something around '74 or '75, and Trevor was the first trails ranger there and I said to them look you know, I feel that trails are something we can offer the public of South Africa. We have this opportunity and to have the experience of walking in the wild to me was a privilege that belonged to game rangers.are entitled to do and for me you know …and shown everything that we familiar with.

**AP:** Were people resistant to this?

**ME:** I don't think there was resistance as such that it wasn't a good idea, I think it was the danger aspect, because let's face it at that stage people weren't allowed out of their cars- this was the perception that it was a dangerous thing to get out on foot, but I don't quite know. I wouldn't say it was a resistance but people were a little bit wet behind the ears, they didn't think it was possible. I'm not sure why they had these fears, but there were specific wilderness areas set aside
But I would say it was regarded as dangerous. The opportunity of getting out into the bush and that also was the utilization of areas that were normally closed to tourists. There's pressure upon conservation areas, if you don't use it you loose it. Within reason- don't over-utilize it then you kill the very thing you're taking the people out to..and we learnt from the …and from the trails point of view, and from the day trails that they're doing up there, if you over-utilize the commodity you'll kill the atmosphere, and I think we must remember that. It mustn't be a question of making money, and it was my suggestion to Parks Board that rest camps, in fact normal tourism and rest camps are making enough money to support the wilderness trails and we mustn't make this financially out of reach of the normal South African citizen. And I'm afraid at some stages a lot of these Private Reserves are far out-pricing themselves and have placed themselves far out of range of the normal South African citizen, and it would be a sad day if we did the same. It's part of our South African Heritage, and we mustn't out-price the local guy. People here are bush-lovers, but because of the fact that they haven't got the finance We must never deprive someone of that opportunity and must be prepared to carry the cost of the trails, without relying on that fee, and that was my suggestion to Parks Board.

**AP:** And now they've landed up restructuring the Park so that the rangers who do the trails have been out-sourced. Won't that contribute to the expense of these trails?

**ME:** Well, I don't think it…well, it could be, I'm not sure what the prices are of these guys, but Parks Board obviously are making money out of it…it could be that these guys are better paid-I'm not sure what these guys get paid, but even before it was outsourced…//…but anyway I believe that the outsourcing will be stopped and they'll be re-absorbed into the park- I'm not sure, but that is what I heard. Well Parks Board approved the trails then Wilderness Leadership School said they'd like to do it as a concession and in fact they held a meeting with Jim Feely Don Richards was there and Johan Schoppers and we met them and Johan wanted it down at the pumphouse where there was water and that sort of thing and they said it was too close to the edge of the wilderness, so Johan said "Well that's the only place we can easily get water". Anyway they went and they thought about it and we said "Why can't we do it ourselves?" And then Trevor and I went and looked for the ideal trail and we started the trail and called it the Bushman Trail because of the all the bushman paintings found there, but we found that most people weren't so interested in the paintings
I don't know who started it, but most people come to South Africa and they want to see the Big 5, they're not interested in the little nunus, they just want the Big 5. I think that that's the worst phrase that anyone's ever thought of, to my mind its…..that's basically how it started decided, so loveman came in. And in fact certain guys can't work with people- I spoke to Ian Player, and he said they had a certain guy once…and when we started Trevor…I encouraged these trails then Mike Lagman started….I helped Trevor out every now and again, and then they got a couple of the other section rangers in the area, and then we went from strength to strength. But as I said earlier, budget was a real constraint…

**AP:** Do you think the field guide should have different attributes to the average personality of a game ranger? Do you think that those two streams should be kept separate, or do you agree with Ian Player that the rangers should sometimes have to do guiding, and the best guides are in fact the rangers?

**ME:** I'm inclined to agree with Ian (Player) on that but its not every ranger who is a trails ranger…and its not every trails ranger who is a section ranger. You have to judge from the merits of each individual…we've had a lot of trails rangers who have aspired to become section rangers. You've got to have a fantastic knowledge of the bush and picked up quite a lot of bushcraft, and bush knowledge and develops his botanical, ornithological and other sides depending on the individual that you get, but it isn't necessarily that you get…we've had one or two section rangers that weren't good trails rangers…so you've got to judge each individual according to what post you set him to. Now there are guys who have been trails rangers and have been very successful ...you can't force anybody to one or the other. As soon as you start pushing a guy into a position he's not suited for, you either loose him or …and that you can only do by being out in the bush with him. That's what I've said a long time…we had an ideal fellow- how it came about- he

had been a hunter in Zimbabwe- he knew the bush like the back of his hand…but he should take a fellow out into the bush to able to assess a prospective candidate and see what his feel, his reactions are in certain circumstances, and when you can judge- brush a fellow up, you know where he's good or not. So if there was a method of assessing people of taking people into the bush… that's what I feel should be the method- you can go and you can do as many deployments as you like…but somehow training of guides, selection of guides…you can go and you can put him through anything you like but his reaction to crises in the bush you can only get from pressure situations…there were those that felt that they should be put through that test in culling situations where they had to shoot a charging elephant coming at them…I wasn't always sure that that was the best way to do it, but it was a good way of seeing how they would perform under stress… and we we were shooting those that didn't come towards them from the helicopter…I have my views on the cruelty of this, I won't go into in detail…but that is a way to test a guy that works, that we were discussing earlier on with someone who is experienced to avoid getting yourself into a situation like that, but somewhere there should be somewhere where these guys are measured. The guys come from school, they go to tech, they do their diploma…

**AP:** Don't you think there are people (I think of myself as an example) who are quite good field guides, but wouldn't necessarily make it as game rangers?

**ME:** Ja, I think you're right on that point- I don't know about you personally. I don't know what your feel would be for being on the section. But a lot of guys break their hearts…there's that- I don't know what it is… a lot of guys are there for the macho image, or who'd like to be there for the image, and then there's a lot of guys who are genuinely into the bush, I mean they want to be a game ranger, and they want to help with conservation, and they may not, they see a trails ranger in a setting and the longer he goes…I mean like my son Don, he can get on with people, but its not everybody he can get on with. He's got to have a temperament to be able to absorb and handle that.

**AP:** I was an overland guide and I lasted about two years and could feel myself becoming edgy towards the end, and its not the people that you love- the good tour is easy- it's the difficult tour which they gave me as my going away present- I had a particularly difficult tour because I had three deaf German clients. Now I wasn't trained to work with deaf people, and I was now at a burnout stage, so I was a bit ratty and I got some negative feedback- not from the deaf Germans, but from others on the tour who saw me loosing my patience with them. So I think there's a limit. So how should we do it so that burnout is not a factor?

**ME:** Well, I was never really involved, but Ian Player said "Six months on, six months off." What we used to do would be a week on, a week off and that was it, but then the section ranger in the region where this guy was working would offer his services it was at that stage that he could collect firewood, drive the bakkie with his squad, or to go out and see to roadworks where he could pick up erosion, give

him odd jobs so that he can get out and also start getting the feel of how a section works, but there were a lot of the section rangers who didn't want those guys, they felt that they were being cruel, which to me was wrong because a lot of these fellows were so willing to work and never had any objection to them, because in those days there were a number of guys who were good candidates for a section, but there just wasn't a post. So I think that is away that you can alleviate that problem, in a place like Kruger Park. Outside, it's going to be more difficult.

**AP:** What kind of training would you suggest for those trails rangers? You have suggested a workplace component, more time as an apprentice, second rifle and so on…

**ME:** Second rifle would be a good place, but normally you are putting one of the field rangers out of a job. These days too its not all trails rangers who are white. But second rifle is a very good place to learn…

**AP:** The common thing that I'm hearing now is that the new black guides are assimilating the bush knowledge they have, maybe the shooting skills, they have these type of things, but what they lack is the social skills to interact with foreign tourists- and what does that comprise of? It comprises of, one very deep thing that's hard to acquire and that's just an internationalism or a non-parochialism, but the other one is language skills, so I think these are the areas that are under-emphasized in training. I don't know what your take is on that.

**ME:** Ja, no I'll agree with you on that. Most of these black guys haven't had the social exposure because their way of life and standards have not always been the same as ours. I would say that the guys who are coming up through high school now will be far better, but then again, not all of them will be suited to the bush life. I think where the difference between a black field guide and a white field guide is bush experience with the older guys, but they're dying out. The newer guides who have never been exposed to the bush, may have heard things from their fathers, but are not able to put it into practice, so I think you're sitting now with the expertise- because let's face it, all I know about the bush I learnt from a black man. And you don't pick it up in a month, you don't pick it up in a year, you pick it up over thirty, fourty years. You don't know everything. That I believe. Now Don, my son, was in a position from what age? He got out with field rangers, he used to go fishing with them, he spoke their language, he asked them questions, and he had even over me, that experience. I thought I was reasonable. I thought a couple of colleagues of mine were reasonable. But done is far, far, far ahead of us. So there it comes again, practical experience, the environment in which you grew up, and your social environment. To get back to the black guys, they are at a disadvantage, but there again too, there should be facilities where they can get this training. The biggest problem that I find with the black guides is that they become over familiar. You as a guide know that you don't become familiar…friendly, but not familiar, because all of a sudden you find it doesn't work. You've got to keep a pose…

**AP:** A bit of distance?

**ME:** A bit of distance. Friendly, yes. Helpful, yes. But don't sit and get familiar with the guy. Keep yourself above them. And that's difficult for a lot of white people, and even harder for the black guys.

**AP:** Any youngsters?

**ME:** You don't have confidence. The more confidence you have got in the way you conduct yourself, the more respect you can get from people, that you can keep your distance without being aloof. So those are sort of…

**AP:** Another angle is, if you take people like Magqubu Ntombela as an example. You don't get people that have got that old world grasp on the very traditional concepts?

**ME:** No, no that unfortunately has gone out the window. I know that my field rangers, even some of the younger ones, have lost that. The older guys, it's just something that they've grown up with, the tradition, all sorts of belief and that sort of thing you quite often see. Well I remember when we used to go and camp, before put your tent up, you take a bit of salt, or dried vegetables even, you put that down there and you ask the ancestors to look after you in that place. And that was part of the custom. Part of the thing, it wasn't a show, it was a genuine belief, and that too also has its place because that's the way that they survived…and we don't see that these days…animal habits…how you can judge how old a spoor is, in other words bush craft…

**AP:** Tracking is dying out?

**ME:** Tracking is dying out. These new guys are not…they learn quickly, their eye-sight is good, but it is an art that, because of circumstances, only the older field rangers and there's still quite a number of them. I feel that those guys must be used for this training. Taking the guy out in the field for two weeks, three weeks.

**AP:** Can you name suitable trainers? People who are still there in the Park?

**ME:** Well, there are a couple of old retired rangers Philemon…who used to be sergeant at Malelene, Charlie Makuna, there's present Aaron Makuna at Pretoriuskop, Willie Makuna who used to work for me, and all the guys who work in Park. Excellent, they would pass their tracking with flying colours…so would Don (English).

**AP:** Louis Liebenberg?

**ME:** No, not Louis. Zac Greef, there's another good guide. Louis Liebenberg tried to pull the wool over Zac's eyes, and Zac would have none of it…. He's actually at Makuleke, he's a good guide. He's training people.

**AP:** No, I'd love to go and do a tracking course myself. I know the basics of tracking…

**ME:** Ja, and there too, its only tracking. And there's signs that you see on vegetation, leaves that have fallen off on the ground that will tell you time elapsed and that sort of thing, it's such an involved process…that's why I say if you can get schooled young- these trackers have got they've got to be- to put it plainly I don't know how good they are. There's a certain feel and Don's got that feel. They were tracking a whole lot of poachers the other day in Mocambique- they found the spoor and got picked up by the chopper and then dropped on the ground, and he was in the chopper at one stage and saw these guys were anti-tracking, then they picked up the spoor again- no anti-tracking at all. So they stopped and looked at the ground and said the rifles and the horns must be further back, because now they're walking at ease. These are all things which when you grow up with them in the bush you figure out. And they went back and searched around and they got three rifles and a couple of rhino horns. But until then these guys were anti-tracking- so you've got to know what to look for. And these are all things which can be brought into the training.

**AP:** So anti-poaching is good for trails guides.

**ME:** Ja, put it this way, you've got to have a feel for anti-poaching, you can't be anybody necessarily, but if you've got a good anti-poaching unit, that's a good place for a guide to train, to get his practical bush craft sharp, because that is the only part of bush-work that is the equivalent of the old traditional field work.

**AP:** Being a professional trails guide is a bit like getting your driver's license isn't it? Because you do most of your learning after you reach the minimum standard.

**ME:** Unfortunately, it can either make or break a guy, if he goes and he's not successful- that's another thing too, is that to have a wider knowledge than just…to be able to, especially bushcraft, animal habits, things like that, when you're not seeing animals that you can transfer the interest of the group,to signs of the bush and you keep them interested. "Stop here, the lions have now killed me, and they've killed the second rifle. How do you get home?" You're in the middle of no-where, you're lost. How are you going to look for water? Then you take them to the footpath and say "footpaths lead down to the water, but which end of the footpath goes to the water?" You don't tell them, then you start looking for signs, signs of animals. The group that go down to the water go down as a herd- buffalo or elephant for instance go as a herd, but see by the way they move when they've had their water leave they spread out and graze and that sort

of a thing. They always leave signs, but the black guys- the old black guys, pick most of it up. If there was a doctorate for tracking, all the guys…

**AP:** The Nkunas would be doctors…

**ME:** They would all be doctors. And that is dying out. And if you can get those guys to be able to pass it on… and that is what I feel, that they should get special units, you know tracking units, bushcraft units going…

**AP:** As part of Parks Board?

**ME:** Part of Parks Board. Part of the private guy…you can do it on a private farm. But you get these guys going to keep the tradition going, because it's something that we've got to use. Anybody in the bush could be using it, and if you could keep that going…

**AP:** We spoke about dangerous animals. Do you think its possible to walk trails without a rifle?

**ME:** No, if you are walking trails without a rifle in an area with dangerous animals, you are exposing the lives of eight or ten people (however many you have with you). No, there's no way you can go into the bush with a group of people. We had one or two section rangers who never carried a rifle, but then they're out there on their own. It makes you more alert, if you've got a rifle you're not as alert as if you haven't got a rifle. I never went without a rifle.

**AP:** There have been about 41 incidents in the trails history of Kruger. Do you think that this is a poor reflection on these trails, or do you think that that is an acceptable number of incidents?

**ME:** I can't comment on what would be acceptable…you would have to look at the man hours spent on trails and there are various other factors…but I don't think that one can point a finger at any specific person or any specific group who are working in a specific area. I don't think that one can be judgmental on this thing until we've summed up all the circumstances, and until you can determine the gravity or the seriousness of the charge that came from whatever it may be. I don't know…

**AP:** The first incident was in '83.

**ME:** But we started Wolhuter in? And I moved down in?

**AP:** '78…so you have 78- 0, 79-0, 80-0, 81-0, 82-0

**ME:** Ja, and then there was only one trail going. Now you've got them all over the place…you're sitting with a problem, especially in the central and northern area,

of these refugees coming in from Mocambique who are encouraging lions- lions are getting used to approaching people and every time they see a trail they think it's a group of meat and they come and you've got to protect- there's no stopping a lion. And he'll soon meet a person he's going to eat.

**AP:** Lions are not really the problem I see here (trails incident statistics)…

**ME:** No, you can frighten a lion off, but if you've got a charging elephant, or something like that you shoot to kill. But rhino are a problem because you're in a thickish bush and you're on the only game path in an area, and here this guy comes charging along. The guy at first rifle is the first guy in line, and he can jump out of the way, but what about these guys (the trailists)? So he's got to make a decision in a split second must I shoot it or not?? And the Natal guys say that they've had how many rhino there and they've only had to shoot one or two. I know that there was one ranger…the GRA and he was here at Sabie Sands- I forget what his name is. But he got an award for bravery, he lured the rhino away and it gored him and saved the lives of the other people, but the other thing that could have happened is that that rhino could have killed him and then come back for the clients. So where do you draw the line?

**AP:** Was that incident in Natal?

**ME:** Ja.

**AP:** Because the Wilderness Leadership guys told me his name.

**ME:** Bryan…? I can look it up. But then again one can't compare apples to carrots.

**AP:** I am of the opinion that it is worth doing the research where you kind of make a measure of these things, just for future safety.

**ME:** I don't think you can draw up a set of rules…I always went from the viewpoint that if you are in an area and you detect one or other of the dangerous animals, don't go looking for trouble, and don't go after the specific animal unless you know that you are completely safe. I mean, I always used to say to the guys if you pick up a lioness or a hippo cub (*track?*) and it disappears into a thicket, don't go into the thicket- go around and see where they come out, and if they haven't come out, you can either sit and wait for them, to see if they come out or whatever it is. But then you know, you've got a group of people, so you leave that and go elsewhere, but don't try and impress the group by showing them a lion because nine out of ten you'll be in trouble.

**AP:** We spoke (about this) earlier before the tape- what lures the guide to make an irresponsible decision like that? We spoke about adrenalin tips or adrenalin money- is that a reality?

**ME:** Well, it's just something- I don't know whether it's a reality, but its something that one's got to just look out for. I've never really come into contact, but it's something I've heard from various people that some of the guides take chances, to get the adrenalin pumping and if it comes off you know, the clients give them better tips when they go. But I don't think it's a question specifically in trails and think in vehicle terms people do absolutely stupid things with wild animals, with elephants and things that can hammer the car- to get the feeling of Africa from a charging buffalo. I've never personally (except one guy I wouldn't like to mention who), I've never really come across that with our guys in Kruger. Really, I don't think so. Ignorance, perhaps, at some stages, but not to get the adrenalin pumping, but I've heard it said that a couple of the guys in trails may do it…

**AP:** Do you think rangers and guides are getting the conditions and packages that they deserve?

**ME:** Depends on which way you look at it. I know that when I first started, I started at R180-00 a month…we got about a R15-00 a month climatic allowance, which everybody got but because I wanted this job, I was happy to take it. We were dedicated. There were no fixed hours. We used to be at work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and if a fire breaks out on the weekend, boy, you would go to the fire. If you left your section you had to notify your neighbour and your senior that you weren't going to be there, it's an emergency, otherwise you'd take leave and you'd have to arrange for somebody to come and check on your section. So to work for that amount of money, we were dedicated. I don't know what the salaries are like these days, but I would still stay that for the responsibility that a ranger has, they're not getting the package that they deserve, and I would say that the responsibility that guys taking people out on trails, the same could possibly apply. It's a big responsibility, eight people's lives are in your hands. If everything goes well- fine enough, but if somebody get's chomped- "ja, he was negligent"- you'll get that. Nobody ever knows…and nobody ever knows the strain somehow you may be put under- you get a difficult group- and you're trying to show them the best, and you may be inclined maybe to do a little something that you shouldn't do and an animal charges you. But you take responsibility and I don't the guides are necessarily adequately rewarded. We certainly worked for little, because we were dedicated.
But then on the other hand, if they're going to up the salary then your work loads going to perhaps increase, your responsibility, your liability must be upped to a certain standard. The one hand washes the other.

**AP:** Tell us about your experience of the Wilderness. Dr. Player is convinced that it's a type of spiritual experience that people have when they go into the Wilderness. No one in guiding has failed to use superlatives for it certainly. Do you think it's a spiritual experience for everybody, and if its not a spiritual experience, what is the thing that makes the experience of Wilderness so special?

**ME:** Well, if you're talking about a spiritual experience it certainly is, I mean if you believe in your Creator and you see Creation in the raw…you see it all around you, you see it in the trees, you see it in the birds, and everything is inter-linked and it works like clockwork. No human being could…that certainly comes to the fore, the closer and the more often you get into nature. How wonderful, how amazing is God's Creation. And I think that's all I can say, I don't think words are enough to (match this).

**AP:** Now we are humans- we are a very special animal, but we also are still an animal. Do you think that that consciousness also comes to people when they go into the bush?

**ME:** Well, I think you relies then that you may have all your where-with-alls to shoot tsotsis when they come- you've got burglar bars and you've got new motor cars and all the rest of it, but when you get down to the basics of being in the bush you're in the same playing field…now exposed to- how can one put it?

**AE:** Fragile, compared to most other beings.

**ME:** You are a puny human being, and you're not a s great as you think you are. But only if you're out in the bush and you haven't got a weapon, and your out at night and you haven't got visuals, then you realize how puny you are. We're been out in the bush sometimes after fires and you've put the fire out and you're in the middle of no-where and you don't know where you are and you have an idea that your vehicle may be down there and you've got to walk back. I got stuck with a bakkie and we had to walk 12 km to one of the trails camps- everything just went dead- we didn't have a torch- I had a rifle- but that doesn't help you see.
I've often been- our horses were at one stage chased by lions, something had frightened them off and that was just after sunset, we got there and we knew they'd been attacked by lions just as they were coming to the house and they were skittish and off they went, and as we got close to them the further they went and eventually we landed up against this fence and this is all with the aid of torches, and we managed to get hold of them against the boundary fence about three and half kilometers from home, and you know these lions are there.

**AE:** You could hear them on either side.

**ME:** And the horses were snorting and they knew the lions were there. Then you realize that you can't see.

**AE:** Then we had a herd of buffalo. And then there was our cook-boy Elias. He was still in the Park for three years after we retired. He was trailing along behind us and he ran into a herd of buffalo. Luckily, he fell into a ditch and they ran over him and he survived.

**ME:** The ran over him- only then are you cut down to size. I've got, I find that I could have various categories of why I wanted trails.

**AE:** How far are we from lunch?

**AP:** We have a few minutes, but maybe we should just wind up now. Do you think people show sufficient gratitude and do you think wilderness is going to be there for ever?

**ME:** Do you mean people who have been on trails?

**AP:** Perhaps everybody?

**ME:** It's a difficult question, because you can't judge everybody by the actions of the few.

**AP:** But the convicted need to persuade the unconvicted?

**ME:** Ja, I think certainly, with areas like the Kruger Park, Natal Parks and any game reserve whether it be national or private, or whatever it may be is certainly helping but the whole thing of people trying to boost tourism and tourism numbers by quoting the Big 5, and "we've got the Big 5" and a lot of people are just coming to see the sensational things. And there are far more interesting and far more important things other than the Big 5, and I think with Wilderness Trails you are able to bring that out, but it is only a certain type of person who goes on a wilderness trail. Those guys who are looking for the Big 5…

**AP:** Don't you think they need to get past that? Don't you think that that's the first stage?

**ME:** Yes, well they've got to get past that. If you are only arriving from Italy or from Germany and you've got three days and you go to Sabi-Sabi or the Sabi Sands and you get taken out and all you want to see is the Big 5- you've heard about it- it's the first time you've been to Africa. Now you've heard about the Big 5 "I want to see the Big 5- and there they can do it for you, but in the Kruger Park it's a totally different thing. The area is vast. There's a lot of areas where there is no game. And there you've got use your own hunting, your eyes, you've got to be able to see. And that's what makes the private reserves where the animals are tame- no they aren't tame, they're used to human beings, they're used to vehicles, they don't get up and run. You don't have to look for them, they're there on a plate, but if you go to the Park you've got to look for them, and that's why if you get a bigger tourist group coming into the Park, you've got to have facilities, upmnarket facilities. These concessions have got fancy camps- the one I believe at Nwanedzi has got all glass and all these modcons…

**AE:** Glass and chrome…

**ME:** Ja, you've got to supply these things to accommodate the tastes of people who are not used to the bush. Whereas in the old days you went to the Kruger Park and they hunted for their things, and you would meet and say what did you see today around the campfire. Now you get there, your air-conditioning is making a noise for the next neighbour who doesn't hear the lion roaring. All the modcons are spoiling that atmosphere, so you're drawing, no the old keen people and they want to see the Big 5, and they want to know where it is, so, if you get the gist of what I'm trying to say. Wilderness will always be there, but Wilderness will be visited by people who want to be in the Wilderness. Now we, as you said, have got to educate these people who want air-conditioning and all that sort of thing, to be able to appreciate the other side of things.

**AP:** Mike and Andre English, thank you very much for your time talking to me, thank you for your hospitality which I see I'm about to receive, and thanks for all the help.

**ME:** It's a pleasure, and you know there's so much else which one can include on this…

*(Interview ends)*

Transcribed and proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 9- MANZI SPRUIT

*10h30 09th February, 2006 Orpen Gate, Kruger National Park*

**AP:** Manzi, tell us about your background and how you got interested in nature guiding.

**MS:** Anthony, it all started with the fact that I was born at Tshokwane in the Kruger Park- it's between Satara and Skukuza, and my father had a very big impact on my life- he was a section ranger there. And I tried after that- he asked me to go and study music, but the bush was no place for a female because your real Afrikaans people believed that a woman's place was barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen, so I did go and study music, and after that I asked him if I am now allowed to go and study nature conservation, and then he gave up and said, "Okay, go for it!" and the rest is history.

**AP:** So tell us about the rest. Where did you go to from then?

**MS:** I was in the army- the first year I was with the military police, because there were no positions open at nature conservation, then after a year a position went open, and about 6 months later I was chief conservationist of the army, with 58 berets under my command which was magic…the areas where they play their war games- you have to do an impact study before they can go in for war games because the idea is to give the area back to the government in a better condition, so that was a fantastic job.

**AP:** Where was that exactly?

**MS:** Initially I was at a place in Pietersburg called Korwesdraai Roodewalt Shooting Range, but then after I was at army headquarters in Pretoria, but I have to confess that I rarely visited other areas- my favourite area was the Nshakathini strip which is from Mesina and Pafuri Gate in the Kruger Park, going all the way down to Vembe, and most of that has been given back to the government, and that Makuleke area has also been given back, and then I came back to the Kruger Park in 2000. I started off as a night drive guide, and slowly worked my way up as walk back-up on day walks, then lead rifle, and then I was very fortunate to become a trails ranger, which was the ultimate. And then after that I went to Eco-Training and I worked for them for about seven months as an instructor, and now I'm back in the Park. Unfortunately, I can't stay away from the Park.

**AP:** Tell us about your life as a trails ranger, particularly being a woman.

**MS:** That's an interesting one, Anthony. I think the good thing was that I became a trails ranger when I was more mature. In my youth it used to bother me a lot being a female because your male colleagues, especially the Afrikaans speaking ones couldn't forget the fact that you're a female, and you were just not

competent to do anything in their eyes and consequently you had to prove yourself, which is very tiring. But in the period that I was trails ranger, I had none of that- I was treated as one of them, and I think that that was the highlight of my life. I was born to work- I love working, I love people and the combination of being in the Kruger Park and working with people all the time is having your bread buttered on both sides- absolutely loved it. The experience that you get with trails, you can't compare that to anything else, not even day walks. I think that is about the best you can have if you like this kind of thing.

**AP:** Isn't it quite tough in terms of burn-out and that sort of thing?

**MS:** Nah! I think that if you're young, and especially the young guys- they need a female in their life- it's only natural, but I didn't have that problem. My husband died many years ago so I'm a loner and I don't need other any thing than strictly the bush. I am at an age where you don't give a damn. We did get a lot of breaks in between- it's not always busy, and they do rotate- every second week somebody else would walk, but a couple of times I worked for six weeks in a row- no burnout- how can you?

**AP:** And tell us how you became a trainer.

**MS:** I was approached by Lex and Anton from Eco-Training- actually I did a bit of training while I was in the Park with the junior guides, and because of my training and my background, Eco-Training decided that they could use me as a trainer for their senior course at Makuleke. That was also amazing. Totally different to tourism- here you are sitting with students and you have got to train them to work with people and also to know what they're doing and what it's about. It was fantastic! They're in your hands and you know that one day they are going to say that we were with Eco-Training, and your instructor was Manzi, and you put your mark on them. But it's beautiful young people, and they do it because they want to, so it's an absolute pleasure working with them.

**AP:** Do you think you can teach attitudes and values?

**MS:** In a certain respect, yes. Some of your people that come there discover different ideas about what it's about- being an example as well is very important. They look at you and see a guide, they see a person that works with people, and the ethics around tourism here in the Kruger Park is very important, I've got to bring that up, and also pleasing the people, a lot of times you get people that have seen videos of The Big Five "okay now we want to see The Big Five now"- you can't loose your temper with them, you can't get impatient. It's an effort, you must really be interested, and most of the students that I worked with was really interested. Within two weeks, those that realize it's not what they thought it was would say to you that "I don't think that I'm not going to do this"- they would say that to you, but like I said, most of them were really, really interested.

**AP:** Did you find amongst the Makuleke people a higher level of honesty then than you might find amongst white people?

**MS:** No, I wouldn't say that. Definitely not. Some people are just being diplomatic, I wouldn't say they are dishonest, but you have to get together, and understand each other, the different cultures, and to quite honest with you, the Makuleke people doesn't want us to be like them- they want us to us, because then they know what you're dealing with. If you're trying to be like them, they don't like it. You just respect the different cultures.

**AP:** Ian Player suggested that black people are much more patient than white people, they have that as a natural attribute. Do you agree with that in your experience?

**MS:** In my experience definitely yes, that is true. I have to agree with that, they are very patient. I don't know if it's part of their culture and their upbringing but I think in the previous years the rush, the rat-race, it's become part of our culture as well. That's why we're so impatient.

**AP:** But on the other hand you do have to be timeous when you are dealing with foreign clients.

**MS:** You have to, absolutely, but like I said, sometimes you're diplomatical, but being honest in the end is the only way it works. So with experience, Anthony, I believe you get to understand how to work with people, especially foreigners, but it takes experience, you can't just walk into the industry and say "I know exactly how to work with people!" It doesn't work like that- it comes with experience.

**AP:** Do you think that women are naturally more inclined to have people skills than men?

**MS:** Oh-no-no-no! I wouldn't say that. It's not about being male or female, definitely not. It's about your attitude, what kind of person you are- some men are absolutely incredible and patient and good with people, and some are not, and the same with females- some of them are good with people and some of them are not so it's not about being male or female.

**AP:** People vary, regardless of their race or gender.

**MS:** I agree with that, but that part that you say that they are more patient, ja, it's true.

**AP:** So that's maybe part of their cultural or social background.

**MS:** I believe that, ja, I do.

**AP:** And what are the good attributes that you need to have in order to be a good field guide?

**MS:** I think that's a couple of things. I'll start off with knowledge- you've got to have- and you never stop learning, that's the main thing, so you grow as you go. It doesn't matter what age you are, you still keep on learning, you never stop learning, but it helps, whatever you know so that you can pass that on to the people when they come here, your guests, the tourists that we get here, they want something. They want something special and it's in your hands. So first of all you must be able to put yourself into their shoes when the guests arrive here. They planned, they are really looking forward to this and wow, here's the day, and here's the guide! Now that guide can make it or break it for them. If he does everything right- there's a whole lecture I can give you about right and wrong, but I think you know what it's about. The knowledge part, your attitude towards them, you give yourself, they suck you dry, and you must enjoy it, the whole process. You make it interesting for them, so you've got to have knowledge, you've got to have people skills. That's very, very important. And then you as a guide- what you look like- be proud of what you do. I mean I'm really proud of what I'm doing- I love what I am doing- that is also very important. It shows if you love what you are doing. And you must like people, that's very important.

**AP:** Do you think your ability to shoot is an important part of this thing?

**MS:** Yes, Anthony, yes. If you take people for walks, I'm not talking drives now, specifically on walks. It's not about you're going to go out there thinking "If anything charges I will shoot it!" It's a lot of training that you have to do. A lot of courses that you have to attend through the years, and walking with other people- that's why the hierarchy that they work with in the Park is that you're first a night drive guide, then you walk as a back-up, second rifle, then you observe what the guy at the front does as well, that's part of your training. In the meantime you have got to attend shooting courses, you've got to familiarize yourself with the rifle, you've got to know that rifle in and out and you've got to pass certain tests- rifle proficiency tests. And it's not just about being accurate, you've got to be fast. There's a lot of things- rifle proficiency is extremely important for safety because at the end of the day, yes, you are there to give the people a fantastic time, but safety always comes first, so yes, you've got to know what you are doing with a rifle.

**AP:** Is the standard pattern that the second rifle walks immediately behind the lead guide, or does the second rifle sometimes walk at the back behind all the people.

**MS:** It depends on the circumstances. Most of the time your second rifle will be behind the guide- I'll explain to you just now. There are situations when you split up, that is in the case when you bump into a dangerous animal and your viewing it and the animal is not aware of you, otherwise you don't go and look for trouble. Then what you do is that while the people are viewing the animal you've got the one guide this side and the one guide this side. The reason for that is should the animal become aware of you and you need to get out fast, who-ever is on that

side- downwind- will lead them away and the one at the back will cover, and as soon as it's safe, join at the front again. Now you're going to ask me, why doesn't he stay at the back? When you walk in single file, if something comes from the front (the chances of something coming from behind is less than 1%), but if something comes from the front, you need your assistant to deal with the people, because you as the lead rifle will deal with the animal. That doesn't mean you're just going to shoot him so you've got to make a split second decision, but your second rifle is so important, because people's safety once again. He knows exactly what he is doing and makes sure the people are safe and then he does what his name says, he assists you.

**AP:** Does the second rifle typically share some amount of the interpretation or is that left up to the lead guide?

**MS:** No, no. It depends from guide to guide, but I think most of the time it's a good idea because remember, your second rifle is a lead rifle in training. It's a good idea to let him interpret every now and then. Usually what I do is I speak to this guy before I start working with him, and I say to him "I would like you to get that practice of interpreting, so if you find something interesting just click your finger and I will be the lookout and you can interpret. It's very good practice for them. But you can't just say that the guy at the front does all the interpreting. But you've got to have an agreement, because there must be always one looking out while the other one is interpreting.

**AP:** Do you think some of the interpretation skills, like tracking are dying out?

**MS:** No. If you take your average guide's- I am talking now specifically Kruger National Park, the whole idea is to get to know as much as you can. Tracking is part of that. I sincerely believe that tracking you can't learn from a book. You've got to learn that from a master. Then once again, we've got FGASA that comes and evaluates you in certain courses right up to master tracker. It is a huge challenge, because their standard is extremely high. If you're lucky and you get a person who knows what he is doing, he can teach you. Also, tracking you never stop learning- there's always new things- it's a amazing field! And it's true that the Shangane people has got a natural ability to track, but it doesn't mean that all of them can do it. You do get the masters, and you get the ones who just start learning, but they are good at that. But there's a lot of white people also that is absolutely amazing on tracking, you can't believe it, and to walk with them is an absolute experience.

**AP:** Can you name some of such people who you have had experience of walking with?

**MS:** Anthony, there's a lot. The few that I have had the privilege of walking with are some of my colleagues in trails, also assistants that I had on trails. Actually the one guy is now a trails ranger. He used to my assistant, but he was so brilliant

that I just said to the bosses that this guy is trails ranger material. I actually wish you could speak to him- he's from Punda Maria.

**AP:** So can you name him for me for the record.

**MS:** Ja, he's Christopher Nthathi. He's based at Nyalaland. He's now the trails ranger there. He's absolutely amazing. Another guy who really is great with a lot of things, not just tracking, is Daniel Maluleke. He's an old man now. I think he retired already. That also, the time that I spent with him, I think it was my best school ever. Then you get other people like Nick Squires- he's still walking trails. He is absolutely amazing- so is Jaco Badenhorst. People that know what they're talking about. There's a lot! Ag, and I can't neglect to say my father as well. He was also brilliant.

**AP:** Is he still alive?

**MS:** Unfortunately not.

**AP:** Well, that's great, I suppose as a child you started to assimilate some of the skills going out with your dad sometimes.

**MS:** Yes, I called it my bush school. You see my dad didn't have a son, and being a staunch boere Afrikaaner, he believed that a little girl's place is there, but because he didn't have a son, I was fortunate, I was the youngest, and I sort of landed in that part of being the "son" in the house. I was lucky. It was a fantastic school. Between him and his tracker as he called him then, Petrus (?) Ndlovu. Actually, I blame them that I do this, because they just made it my full world. It was great.

**AP:** Let's talk a bit more on the safety aspect. What are the precise origins of the term "The Big Five"? (because everyone describes it as evolving from 19th century hunters, but no-one can tell me exactly when the term was first used, and by whom).

**MS:** Anthony, I believe the hunters saw them as animals that can actually fight back and were dangerous. Big animals, that is you can't just go in and shoot them, they can actually turn around and attack you. Very fast, very unpredictable, so it was a big challenge for them to go out and shoot them, but I do differ a little bit, I don't think it's Big Five, I think it should be the Big Six, because they neglected to name the Hippo as well.

**AP:** Ja.

**MS:** But probably being hunters it was easy for them if they want to shoot a Hippo just to go to the water. But a Hippo outside the water is extremely dangerous- he should have been part of it. But I think the term "Big Five" comes from the fact

that those are, as they see them, when you're hunting, very difficult animals to actually shoot because they're so dangerous.

**AP:** I notice Jaco Badenhorst gave me the record of trails incidents, and the White Rhino which is described as like a cow by some of the people in Natal leads the incidents list with 12 incidents, then there's 11 to Elephant and I think that Hippo are at 7, Lion at 2 *(3)* and Leopard doesn't feature. So the trails have run so far without any incident from a so-called "Big Five" animal the Leopard. Leopards are very retiring animals?

**MS:** I don't agree with you, if you go a bit back in history here in the Park, we haven't lost any tourists due to a Leopard attack but staff in the Park- a lot of people have been killed by Leopard. But that's from his side not us…but Leopard attacks are frequent, and it's usually staff people that becomes blasé, and then they get attacked, or the type of work they do- going out into the bush and…

**AP:** There was a child taken out in Satara *(Skukuza)* Camp not long ago…

**MS:** That was in Skukuza.

**AP:** Skukuza, sorry.

**MS:** One of the section ranger's son…

**AP:** Was he just very unlucky?

**MS:** Ja, you see, um, the staff village doesn't have a fence around it. It's almost like a suburb. It's extremely big, but there's no fence around it, so one tends to get a false sense of security with the roads and the houses there, but it was close to the river that he actually got attacked by the Leopard.

**AP:** Are the trailists specifically, and nature clients in general, anxious to encounter "The Big Five" as part of their experience?

**MS:** No. I won't say anxious. It's always nice to have a close up in a dangerous situation, but you as a professional guide should not go and look for trouble. When you see a animal, view it and get out of there. I am not very pro that you go close and go "Let's see how close we can get." That is stupid, you don't do that, but sometimes you bump into a animal and you have to be professional…maybe you should put the tape recorder off now because I actually like it, it's the child inside me. It's not that I go looking for the trouble, but it does something for me, I learn again, it keeps me on my toes. So if that does happen, I find it quite enjoyable, especially if it goes well…I shouldn't say that. *(Both laugh)* If I am honest, yes, it is nice but you know there is such a world out there, that you shouldn't concentrate on just "The Big Five." If people come here just to see five animals, you know how much they are missing out- there's so

much more, you know, especially on trails. You see people coming back that's been on trails before totally different. They arrive there as one group, and they leave as a second group. It's totally different people, because you open a new world to them. You must do that, otherwise you are not doing your job. But if your whole attitude is "Okay let's go and pick a fight with an animal" you shouldn't be doing that. There's a difference.

**AP:** Where do you think that that attitude derives from?

**MS:** Which attitude?

**AP:** The attitude of "well, we have to see the Big Five, if we do nothing else"?

**MS:** I think it's people that's uninformed. They haven't done it before. They see these beautiful videos and it's amazing, sometimes you get people that actually think you can walk right up to the animals and pat them, that's true! Because they are not informed, they don't know what it's about, but if you do your job properly, they understand that respect that you've got to have for the situation, and the real wild-life- it's not a zoo, this is a real, and the privilege when you walk and can actually view it and get back safely, than they understand, and it's a new world to them. That's what it's about. It's how you pass this information on about "Sorry, you can't walk up to the Lion and pat it! You'll end up as a meal!"

**AP:** In your personal experience and those of your immediate circle, which animal species have been involved in life-threatening experiences?

**MS:** Okay, well, a lot of animals can be dangerous, not just your "Big Five". In my experience, I would definitely say lone buffalo, the one's walking alone, and second I would say Hippo, outside the water, especially when you do an early morning walk. They graze during the night, and you might just land between them and the water, but you shouldn't be there. It depends, anything is possible, and then ja, Elephant in musth. But it's a difficult one to answer, because there's different situations- I mean a Lioness with cubs also is very, very very dangerous, or an injured animal. But basically, those three, ja.

**AP:** Would you lead a trail in an area which contained dangerous game without a rifle?

**MS:** If I've got paying guests with me, and I am responsible for their safety, no, I will not do it.

**AP:** What happens if you were with a couple of your friends?

**MS:** Well, the situation in the Kruger Park is such that you won't be with a couple of friends. You might be with colleagues. If you are going out with colleagues, not all of you are going to carry rifles. It depends on the situation. If I go out with

the state vet, then the section ranger will be there with a rifle. That's something totally different. I'll just add something. I went out with the field rangers a couple of times. Working with the section ranger at (?) and it was on a bicycle. In that instance I was with three other guys, sorry, two other guys- I was in the three, and I had no rifle with me, and it was quite a unique experience, because we were happily pedaling away, and we had an Elephant situation, and it was amazing how those guys looked after me. I was quite capable to look after myself, but once again, in their culture, looking after a lady…I enjoyed that. *(Laughs)*

**AP:** No, that's great to know that there's camaraderie amongst the colleagues.

**MS:** No, absolutely, it's a brotherhood.

**AP:** Now, what about rifles themselves, and vehicles. Have you ever had an injury as the result of a rifle, or as the result of a vehicle? You, or your immediate circle?

**MS:** Anthony, vehicle, if you do drives the only reason why you take the rifle is the very big in capital letters maybe something goes wrong because then you can look after the people, but once again, it's about safety, but on a drive you don't really need a rifle. I mean you're not going to stop the vehicle, get out and walk. I mean in private game reserves they do that, but once again, talking about the Kruger, that rifle is there for maybe they do a night drive, maybe there's no radio communication and the vehicle breaks down and he's got to look after the people, or maybe the vehicle gets attacked by an elephant. You don't know. Anything can happen and he's got to look after the people, that's the reason why he takes the rifle, but normally during, I mean morning drives as well, you don't really need that rifle, it's for that big maybe, just once again safety.

**AP:** But you haven't heard of major vehicle or weapons accidents involving guides.

**MS:** That's a difficult one- let's start with the vehicle. One incident that I know about, and I know there's a couple, but the one that I know about was people returning from patrol at Metse-Metse, they had the trailer behind the 8 seater, and this elephant appeared from no-where, and just overturned the vehicle. That was quite a scary experience, but he did have a rifle with him with his assistant sitting next to him (?). With rifles, I think that only happens if the guide is not properly trained. I mean it's possible that it could happen, I mean it's not a toy, and you've got to know what you are doing, but I don't know about any accidents with rifles. They won't issue a rifle to a guide if he is not competent.

**AP:** How long have you been in the field for all together?

**MS:** About 20 years.

**AP:** And how would you say that nature guiding has changed during the course of your experience?

**MS:** The standard got a lot higher, which is beautiful to see. If you take a institution like FGASA- since FGASA started off being there and you had to work through them, they actually created a standard that's fantastic. That's the second time I talk about FGASA- I've got a lot of respect for what they do- and I would advise any guide to go through FGASA, and they do set a standard, and you don't just get your qualifications, you really have to work for them, and you have to do certain practical years as well before you can go to the next phase, which is super. So the standard, ja, it's there, now you've got in the Kruger Park as well, there's certain courses that you have to pass before you can go onto the next level. They don't just put you there because you want to be there or…you really have to work for it, so the standard is high. I was saying to somebody yesterday that I actually love being in the Kruger Park, because I know that the standard is high. You work here with pride, because you know what you've got.

**AP:** Did you read the article A Day to Remember by Bruce Lawson in the recent FGASA newsletter?

**MS:** Unfortunately no- the reaon for that is that I've been moving around so much that I haven't received any of those FGASA newsletters for such a long time, because there's no permanent address.

**AP:** The incident concerned a description by Bruce Lawson of how he went out with clients and tracked lions and in the course of tracking them realized that they had cubs with them and insisted on tracking them and then had a close encounter in which both a male and a female continuously revved them for about 18 charges in 12 minutes. And Bruce Lawson never once said that he was a fool to do this nor apologized in the description in the article, so I wrote in now to the FGASA newsletter reprimanding him.

**MS:** I don't want to talk too much about that, I'll just comment that normally we don't track lions when we do walks. You walk your route. You have to be careful with lions, but it is not advisable to track them because you might land into a situation as I said earlier- maybe it's a lioness with cubs, maybe it's mating lions. You are responsible for the people behind you. If you're working with colleagues, you're on your own, you can track all you like, but you do not take people's lives into your hands. That's not right. The fact that he's still alive, he can be very happy about that.

**AP:** Ja. No, I don't want to pick on him specifically but I think it's indicative of a certain attitude, and he did say- in the course of the article he said "We realized that there were cubs there" and then he says "Ignorance is bliss". When I wrote into the FGASA newsletter, I said "Ignorance on whose part?" because if it's ignorance on the clients part that's fine, but ignorance on the part of someone who

is supposed to be an SKS person…If I was the examiner, and someone was doing SKS and they realized that lions had cubs with them and continued to track them, I would fail that person on the spot, and I said so in the letter as well.

**MS:** Anthony, I couldn't agree with you more, but let's just leave it at that.

**AP:** Ja, I mean I think we've got to…we also are voices within FGASA, and I would be happy if Bruce Lawson found himself in the minority here, or if at least he said, what he failed to convey in his letter is that he committed an error and he's sorry for that, because that's all he needs to say. He just needs to indicate that he's learnt from it, and the tone of his letter didn't indicate that.

**MS:** Ja, it's sad if somebody takes something like that and be like the hero in it because the fact is he was wrong, he was wrong, I agree.

**AP:** Do you think opportunities in nature guiding are still hampered by the prospective guides race, gender, social status or economic class?

**MS:** No. You have to work. It's hard work. You have to prove yourself. If you are a hard worker and you really want to do this…look, this is not the highest paid profession on earth, we all know that. If you do this, you do it because you really want to. If you really want to do it, you're going to work for it because it becomes a way of life. The wealth that you get is not money-wise, it's something totally different, so it doesn't matter what colour you are or what you are, it's actually beautiful- you've got that opportunity to prove yourself and say "I'm a good guide." Then you have to prove it. If you prove yourself, you're in. You're part of a brotherhood.

**AP:** You're also using male terms, I see, similar to Lex Hes, but can you name some of the other women who have made it to an advanced stage in guiding, particularly the trails guiding profession?

**MS:** Gladly. The very first trails ranger was Annelle- she then met the man of her dreams Peter Scott, and they got married, so she was in trails for 6 months. The next lady was Janet Webb- she was in trails for one year, and then she resigned and joined the private sector. Both ladies very competent, also never shot an animal on trail. I want to mention that to you, by the way, that in the time that I've been doing trails, I haven't shot an animal in the Park. I'm not talking about earlier. Since I joined the Park I've not shot an animal.

**AP:** Right, we'll talk about earlier then…

**MS:** I'd prefer not to…it's really embarrassing. If we have to I'll talk about it, but ja, those two ladies are the ones I want to talk about. They were very professional. You know if you're in guiding, Anthony, if you're a female, it doesn't mean that you'll have to able to pick up Buffaloes and drag them around. It's a different

kind of strength. It's not in your arms, it's in your head. You have to be a strong person, you have to be focused, and if you have that love for what you're doing, and you're focused and you're strong inside, then you're one very happy person. And those two ladies, there's a lot more, I can mention a lot more, that just get in there and just fight, if I mean fight I mean not with your fists, to get into the position were in. They were very, very focused and they made very, very good guides.

**AP:** Do you think women are in some way better guides than men? Or would you once again say that you can't generalize?

**MS:** Ja. No, I wouldn't say that, I would put us on the same level. I won't say men is better, I won't say women is better. You're a guide, whether you're male or female. Depends once again on your insights, how strong you are mentally, whether you're a good guide or bad guide but no I wouldn't say females are better guides or males are better guides.

**AP:** That came from Dr. Ian Player, by the way, he said that he thought that women were better guides because they had a greater sensitivity for people, they had a greater awareness of if the people were unhappy, and didn't say so directly, that women had a better sense for that than what men generally tend to have, so that was Dr. Ian Player's take on it.

Does the THETA / NQF system adequately address the need for transformation and diversification in the industry?

**MS:** This whole thing of THETA and NQF is relatively new- there's still a lot of loopholes, but yes, I think they do, and in the end it will work out, but there's a lot of loopholes so they're very fresh still, like when they issue certificates, there's a whole thing about it- people that's been waiting 5 years for their certificates that hasn't come yet. So the one says it's THETA, the other one says it's NQF no really it's- it'll get there- you've got to realize that they're new, it's a new thing, but what they stand for, yes, I agree with it.

**AP:** What are the benefits brought by the THETA / NQF system?

**MS:** It's also part of creating a standard, and also creating opportunities, the whole system they have got is amazing. One of the black guides actually told me that last night he totally agrees with that, he's so fortunate that they actually have that, that they recognize prior learning, not having the papers, but having the knowledge. They just basically do an assessment and say wow, look at this guys knowledge. It's a good thing.

**AP:** And what are the problems of the THETA /NQF system?

**MS:** They are slow. They are really slow, but they're getting there. It's getting better every time.

**AP:** I notice you were filled with praise for FGASA. I have noticed particularly private sector employers from Mpumalanga like to still look for FGASA qualifications rather than THETA qualifications.

**MS:** Ja, well FGASA proved themselves. How many years have they been there? And they know that those guys have really got to work hard to get their qualifications. Bruce Bryden who used to work here in the Park, said it very well, he said "Level I is the pedal, level II is the bicycle and level III is sheer hell"- he didn't even get to the SKS bit, because he did it as well. And being the Chief Ranger over all the rangers in the Park, that says a lot about the standard of FGASA.

**AP:** Ja, and I don't think that the FGASA standard is getting any lower…

**MS:** No, no never.

**AP:** But FGASA- well, they don't have a level IV, so those people who have a level III have maybe the SKS's to aspire to, and certainly Dangerous Animals is only one of them, they now have one in Birding…

**MS:** That's right…

**AP:** **…**what other areas do you think they should make SKS's in the future?

**MS:** Ah, there's a lot…you can't just have the Dangerous Animals and the birds, there's so much more. What about Tracking? What about Butterflies? Butterflies is a whole field on its own as well…Plants- there's a whole lot of places that you can specialize in…

**AP:** But it seems now that THETA…Leone Whateley from THETA has called FGASA "The White Boys Club". What do you think about that?

**MS:** I think the problem there was this…before the RPL system came into use, a lot of the black people didn't have the means to pay for the different levels, they didn't have the support, they didn't really know what it's about but there was a lot more white people, but I wouldn't say it was just white people…there was a lot of black as well, since the beginning. Of course, there's more now…

**AP:** Ja, I've noticed that THETA and FGASA have got more friendly with each other across time, rather than less friendly. Do you think that's a tribute to the standards in FGASA?

**MS:** Absolutely, I think it was a very intelligent move from THETA to actually recognize FGASA. They really need FGASA if they want this to work.

**AP:** What do you think are the unique features of nature guiding within… here at Kruger? What's special about the way that they do it here that's not exactly the same in the private parks, or in Natal, or…?

**MS:** *(Laughs)* Well, I'll start off by saying, this is the Kruger…being in the Kruger itself is a very, very big privilege. To me, this is it. I am sorry, I wouldn't like to work anywhere else. Like I said…it's not that I say the other places are not as good, there's just something…if you talk about "the Park" you immediately know it's the Kruger. Everybody says "I'm going to the Park" you know exactly where it is, so any guide operating here should see himself as extremely lucky. There's just something so special here, and I think amongst the guides as well, it's not easy to get into the different…I mean up to being a lead rifle, you really have to work hard. So it's…once again I talk about the brotherhood in the Kruger Park, the guides. There's something very special between them. I don't know if you find that in other places as well…It's like, really like being family.

**AP:** I think there's a brotherhood right across the industry. I see an immense reluctance of people in the guiding industry to criticize other institutions, other provinces and so on…and maybe you want to talk more about what is that brotherhood? Why are guides so extremely loyal towards each other, ahead of almost anything else?

**MS:** I think because we all travel the same road. We all work hard for what we have to do and why we do it. The reason why we do it is because we've got something in common, something very big- a passion for nature, and then obviously we like people as well…if you don't like people ah, you shouldn't be doing this, then you must *maar* try to find another position where you don't have to work with people, but I think the bonus is letting people see nature through your eyes, it's a very special thing to do. So now I won't criticize other guides. If I had to criticize them, I would take them one side, where no-body can here us and I will really give it to him or her, but not in this interview, no. We do it privately.

**AP:** In the eyes of the general public, a game ranger is mos a game ranger, and they don't make a distinction between a game ranger and a field guide. Do you think that game ranging and field guiding are two separate paths, or do you think, as Ian Player does that you should spend some time doing ordinary rangers tasks and other time doing trails?

**MS:** I do agree with that because a lot of the field guides, which is the right term, talk about a guide, not a ranger. If you work with people, if you do tours, or day walks, you are a field guide, however, if you are permanently into ecological management, if you are a section ranger, or whatever, then you are a ranger. The border line is being a trails ranger, because in the past in the park what happened is if you worked yourself up to becoming a section ranger, you had to pass- I think it's a couple of years that you had to be a trails ranger as well, before you

could become a section ranger. Nowadays it doesn't work like that anymore, but a lot of the field guides has got the same qualifications, as the section rangers, or rangers as we call them, and some of them has got higher qualifications, so I think it would be fantastic if they use the field guides out with ecological management and surveys- that would be just- it's part of the training process, part of growing. They've got the knowledge, all they want is the opportunity to also do their input. That would be really nice.

**AP:** There is a perception of course that game ranging is quite a grizzly task- you have to shoot animals and butcher them and maybe deal with animals that have been snared, whereas field guiding is sometimes seen as quite a romantic task. Do you think that that's a false perception?

**MS:** Ja, I do think it's a false perception. Sometimes it can be the other way around, that whoever is the guide out there has got to deal with the situation, like you know about the people who had to shoot animals before. I am sure they don't want to do it. But being a ranger- a section ranger doesn't mean you go around and just shoot animals- definitely not, and if you get into a situation where an animal has been snared, it's not a natural process so the best would be to help the animal by putting him down. In normal situations I will not interfere when an animal is injured, in whatever way- amongst each-other or by a predator, but if it's a snare yes, but that isn't something that is gory, you are actually helping the animal, it's a difficult thing to do…

**AP:** Ja, provided you find the animal still alive…

**MS:** Ja *(tape ends)*

**AP:** I realize I've got to drive back, to meet someone at 2 o'clock at Satara, but a couple of things- are they a bit trigger happy here in Kruger?

**MS:** Definitely not. You see it's, if you do shoot something, there's a board of inquiry. Now it's not just that, when you go out with people the idea is not to shoot an animal. That is not why you do this. If you look at statistics now in the Park- I'm not talking about trails now because that's privatized, sort of, I'm talking specifically about day walks, very , very few incidents, very few, which proves the point.

**AP:** Manzi, you dodged me a bit earlier about you having to shoot an animal in other circumstances. What were they?

**MS:** Oh my! Okay, I was in the Klaserie and stupid and young, and my boss was there with some guests. Maybe, I wanted to impress him, I don't know, but I tracked a lion and it was a young male, and it was extremely hungry and I tracked him right into the Klaserie River, and he charged us, and I had to shoot him. I learned a lot that day. The first thing I remember was that they were so fast- you've no idea

how fast it happens, and my mental state afterwards…I actually took two weeks leave. I am still very disgusted with myself about that, it didn't need to die, it was my stupidity, I shouldn't have followed it, full stop. When we talked about this guy earlier- I promised myself there and then, I was still young and I hate talking about this, and I learned a lot through the years. It's typical the mistakes that you make when you put people out too soon.

**AP:** Isn't it important to talk about our mistakes?

**MS:** It is important, but the only problem with this mistake is that I feel so terribly embarrassed about it, because why a lion- you know it could have been anything else- it was a young lion, I can still distinctly remember, he still had spots on his back legs, and the mane just started coming out, probably just kicked out of the pride- very, very young. It was just stupidity in capital letters, I shouldn't have done it. Absolutely no point. There's nothing positive about the incident. Perhaps that I learnt some very, very cruel lesson there. That's not something that I'm proud about, everything but. In fact, I didn't want to talk about it, but now you forced me to talk about it, so there, okay?!

**AP:** No, I'm…look, I think if one thing can come out of it is to just warn people that you should have caution before incidents happen and not skill when once the incident is there. When once the incident is there, you've got very little choice but to pull the trigger, but obviously, if it can lead me in some way when writing up my thesis to strongly stress the importance of avoiding things rather than a crack shot in the incident.

**MS:** I absolutely agree with that. That's why I am very pro-FGASA. If you go through the channels- you start at the bottom, you work yourself up, and you walk as much as possible with other people and learn from the masters, then this wouldn't happen, because you know what is your limits, what you shouldn't do. Never try to impress people.

**AP:** Manzi, we're talking about teaching people a lesson, and you are quite enthusiastic about your training, you were just phoned by one of your former learners and obviously you've got a passion for training. Where does this come from and how did you realize that you were a trainer?

**MS:** It actually- when you work with people you get a lot of information, and you learn in the process, and you grow in the process, so in yourself you build a basic idea of what's important for guides to know. There's certain mistakes that you don't want them to make. So if I am in a position where I can talk to youngsters and show them the different sides of guiding, the good sides and the bad sides and they can work on that, then they actually have an advantage when they go into the industry. Somebody told them those things that are so important, that I didn't know when I started. They learn a lot, and I love doing it, because it's my product.

**AP:** What is your vision for guiding in the future, and who needs to do what to make your vision into a reality?

**MS:** Pretty much, how things are going now. In tourism there is ample opportunities for guiding, absolutely ample. There's places like Mapungubwe that just opened. People don't even know about Mapungubwe. Like I said earlier, Kruger Park is my life. I won't leave here. But the way that things are going now. People get older, and they resign. Now, those older people that eventually have to put down the rifle and go and sit somewhere and die slowly because they can't do it anymore should train, because they have got the knowledge. They should be used as trainers, the older people. People like Daniel Maluleke, I was talking about, the old master. He can hardly see anymore, but I tell you, that man is knowledge. So I would like to see those people that's got the knowledge, that's been in the industry for a long time to pass their knowledge to the new generation of guides moving in, that they should be part of that.

**AP:** Manzi Spruit, we've been talking here in the very nice atmosphere of Orpen. Regrettably, I've got to go, but thank you very, very much for your time. Is there any closing thing that you might like to say to add to any of the discussions that we've had?

**MS:** I hope that out of the questions that you've asked me I actually could make a positive contribution to what you are doing.

**AP:** Manzi Spruit, thank you very much.

*(Interview ends).*

Transcribed and proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 10 : MOLOKO ("THEO") PHAHO

*Satara, Kruger National Park, 19h00, 09 Feb, 06*

**AP:** Moloko, how did you into nature guiding?

**MP:** During my high school times we were in involved in conservation class. So we were visiting nature reserves, private reserves, and national zoos. So that's why I was involved in conservation. When I started being interested in conservation then I end up enrolling for national diploma in nature conservation, which is my career until today. During my high school times we were in involved in conservation class. So we were visiting nature reserves, private reserves, and national zoos. So that's why I was involved in conservation. When I started being interested in conservation then I end up enrolling for national diploma in nature conservation, which is my career until today.

**AP:** How long ago did you complete that diploma?

**MP:** I went for two years theory and one year practical at Skukuza.

**AP:** And that was when?

**MP:** That was 2002 for my practicals.

**AP:** So from 2003 on you've been here at Satara.

**MP:** Yes, I've been at Orpen and then Satara.

**AP:** Are you still loving the work? Do you still think it's the right choice for you?

**MP:** Yes, I love the work, but I'm looking forward for something challenging because I'm still developing my career. I'm on my B.Tech honours degree now.

**AP:** So has the studying taken a lot of your time?

**MP:** No, I can adapt on that. It's not so tough, I'm doing well.

**AP:** Just time consuming.

**MP:** Time consuming, yes.

**AP:** Tell me what qualities you think are necessary and typical in nature guides.

**MP:** The qualities is bush knowledge. You have to be knowledgeable. And then punctuality and commitment. And you have to be professional. You don't have to overdo your job. Always you have to make sure you are ready for the job. Even if there is something troubling you, if you've got family problems, when you are on duty you forget, so you have to be normal.

**AP:** That's difficult.

**MP:** Yes, that's difficult but you have to do it.

**AP:** Have you had family problems during the course of your work up to now?

**MP:** Yes, I did but when I'm on duty I forget about them.

**AP:** And how do you find living here in this isolated place? No movies, no clubs.

**MP:** Social life it's out. But as long as we can adapt I think you can make, because you are far away from cities, I think it's a safe place and you'll enjoy it if you love the bush.

**AP:** Tell us about your philosophy of humans and nature.

**MP:** That one I tried to look at it, but I didn't understand it, because I think it's ambiguous when it's coming to philosophy, or maybe I don't understand it.

**AP:** Maybe the question is, do you regard human beings as an animal, and if so are they are special animal and what way?

**MP:** Yes, I regard human beings as animals as well, it's just that our minds are well developed than animals. For example, us and baboons I think we've got the same minds, so that's why I regard us as animals. But we have to use our minds, because we are like intruders in this bush, so we are animals as well.

**AP:** I wonder if you have an expression which I know certainly comes from Zulu cultural tradition, which says that baboons laugh at each other's foreheads. Have you heard that one?

**MP:** No, I never heard that one.

**AP:** The meaning of the allegory is that people most easily see in others the faults that exist in themselves.

**MP:** Yes, that one is true.

**AP:** And of course I think baboons actually embarrass people don't they because they're quite human like.

**MP:** Yes, they're human, their behaviour, the way they communicate, the groomings and all these kind of things, they are the same.

**AP:** So do you accept Darwinian evolution?

**MP:** Yes, I do. But you have to support it why...

**AP:** Tell us what evidence you see of evolution here.

**MP:** It takes us to history, I forgot the name of that law in ecology...it's about that skeleton that was found somewhere in the bush. That skeleton developed some feathers...

**AP:** Are you talking about the evolution of birds from dinosaurs?

**MP:** Yes.

**AP:** Do you think humans evolved from ape like creatures?

**MP:** I do.

**AP:** So you think that humans are just one very, very clever animal.

**MP:** Yes, really because our mind the way it developed, so we are clever.

**AP:** Are we special, are we chosen by god the way some people believe?

**MP:** Yes, we are chosen by god, yes.

**AP:** To what? Have a higher awareness.

**MP:** Yes, like awareness and intelligence and all these things.

**AP:** And what about the bible where it says that the world is only six thousand years old and god put the first people on Earth.

**MP:** That one is so Christians...no I don't know about it...

**AP:** What are your beliefs influenced by? Are you interested in traditional African beliefs?

**MP:** I do. A hundred percent.

**AP:** And so you think your ancestors are important.

**MP:** Yes, they are important. Even when I'm in the bush I do believe in them, because my belief is these Leadwood Trees, the dead ones, they come as our ancestors. That's why they stand for a long time. Our belief is if maybe you are looking for something you don't find it. If you ? roots, sometimes it happens. Eight out of ten.

**AP:** Who taught you that belief?

**MP:** My grandfather.

**AP:** So you're still in a line of traditional African culture.

**MP:** Exactly.

**AP:** And you don't put up with stuff that the whiteys have told you?

**MP:** No, I don't put up with that.

**AP:** That's excellent to find someone who is a modern traditionalist.

**MP:** Yes, I'm a modern traditionalist.

**AP:** So what kind of form do you believe the Creator has?

**MP:** You mean...?

**AP:** Do you believe in a Creator?

**MP:** Yes, I believe in a Creator and I believe in ancestors.

**AP:** Is science the new religion of people?

**MP:** Yes, science because lots of things they are scientific nowadays. So it's taking part, yes.

**AP:** So people only want to believe something if they can prove it.

**MP:** Yes.

**AP:** And do you think that's a good thing?

**MP:** Yes, that's a good thing. You don't have just to believe, and then it's not proving that it works.

**AP:** What are the special values which attract people to wilderness or to natural areas?

**MP:** Points like when we are talking about wild animals, that's where there is limited human interference. Like there are wilderness areas in Kruger, that's why people are now more interested in Kruger National Park. There are certain areas which people are not allowed to drive in. You just leave it for nature to take its place like that. So I think those kind of things are very attractive.

**AP:** Nowadays the guiding in wilderness areas is outsourced, isn't it?

**MP:** Yes.

**AP:** But in the long term they want it to become a function of Kruger Park again, don't they?

**MP:** Ye.

**AP:** Tell us about the typical evolution of people, the career path of someone who wants to work in trails.

**MP:** Presently what you should do is go for assessment through THETA, you become registered as a nature guide through FGASA and Mpumalanga registries. And then you do those THETA stages, TTSPS and all these things, advanced weapon handling, and the proficiency weapon handling. You do those kinds of things then you become a trails ranger.

**AP:** But in the work place you start off as a night driver.

**MP:** That's it. That's the steps. You become a night driver guard, then you become confident and you attend some short courses like first aid and other courses, then you become a backup guide and through that experience you'll go for first rifle and go for trails.

**AP:** Do you think when the current concessionaires contract lapses there will be enough people internally to continue running trails the way they have in the past?

**MP:** In the past I think it was good, because the requirement is you have to go higher, nature conservation diploma or a BSC. I think that was good because it helps you a lot for promotion and development as well. But for now it's all about you go for a week, you just get the qualifications just to go through. Also it's limiting even our present nature guides. It limits them to go for school because they're not that...it's useless to go for three years qualification. Instead you just go for a week and you become a first rifle and that's it. So for me I think we lost lots of and lots of qualified guides in the past years.

**AP:** And what about FGASA? Do people still hold the FGASA qualifications in high esteem?

**MP:** Yes, they do, but these things are cheap. Even if you are a security officer you can just do a FGASA because you just do assignments then you can do copy and paste as well. Then you get FGASA level one. Then you are through to guiding...

**AP:** What about the high levels of FGASA, are they not more difficult?

**MP:** SKS I think is the most difficult one, but others they are simple.

**AP:** I'll give you a fright. I've written SKS and I've written level 3 and level 3 was far more difficult than SKS.

**MP:** I don't know about level 3. I know about level 1 and 2.

**AP:** But that's my experience, maybe you'll experience differently, I don't know. But I didn't find the theory of SKS to be difficult at all. What I think is good about FGASA is you can't write the high levels until you've got the work place experience. And that obviously ties in well with the THETA system. Because THETA also has those requirements. Do you think that you can teach attitudes, values and ethics to learner guides?

**MP:** Some they are, some are not. Things like attitude, I don't think it's possible.

**AP:** So do you think you just select for attitude. Some people have got good knowledge and bad attitude.

**MP:** Yes.

**AP:** Have you encountered such people?

**MP:** Yes. In my career I've encountered such people.

**AP:** And do you think that people will go further with good attitude and bad knowledge?

**MP:** *(laughs)* It depends. Sometimes you take them together, the groups, and sometimes you take one group and ?

**AP:** But I'm saying, if you have to have a bad side, the person with good attitude will go further than the person with good knowledge.

**MP:** That's it. Attitude works.

**AP:** Do you think that guides should be allowed to drink alcohol with clients?

**MP:** No, I don't. I don't think it's good. But sometimes the clients they do offer some drinks to you, but as you know as a nature guide, alcohol must be away from you, because those people are there for your safety and then they want to learn more from you, so if you are under the influence of alcohol I don't think you are a qualified nature guide.

**AP:** What about after your drive or after your walk?

**MP:** I think that's good.

**AP:** You'll crack a beer with them. Be friendly.

**MP:** Yes. Be friendly because they do invite you to come with them. Maybe they enjoyed you a lot so they want you to have a chat with them afterwards.

**AP:** Are you still a night driver or are have you graduated beyond that?

**MP:** No I'm a first rifle. I'm a backup and first rifle.

**AP:** And how are you enjoying that?

**MP:** It's cool but I'm looking more forwards to have other opportunities. It's not good to be in one step for a long time. Guiding you have to be there for some time and then you have to go further up because it becomes boring when it goes long and long. I think after five years it's enough.

**AP:** So now the way that they progress you, you then become something like a section ranger?

**MP:** Yes, that's how it goes. It depends on your skills and qualifications.

**AP:** And is that the direction you're hoping to go in?

**MP:** Yes, I'm hoping to jump in on that.

**AP:** But do you think opportunities are sufficiently available at the moment?

**MP:** For now they are not available but we keep on trying our luck. If there is an open space we keep on applying.

**AP:** And when you're a section ranger will you miss walking at first rifle?

**MP:** Yes, I think I'll miss it, because I really enjoy it by now to meet different people each and every day, get some different questions from different people. I think I'll miss it.

**AP:** And have you found it easy to adapt to all the different cultures that you meet?

**MP:** It's easy, very easy. Because it helps me a lot because during this period of my career as a nature guide, I've learned all eleven languages, plus French as well. It's good to meet different people.

**AP:** Do you think language is one of the things that seriously inhibits some people's progress as a trails ranger.

**MP:** Yes, sometimes you find, for example, people from France. They don't even know a word in English, so if you don't know the basics of it, I think it is difficult for you to educate them, because as a nature guide you are like an educator.

**AP:** German is next for you.

**MP:** Yes, German is next.

**AP:** So you're a linguist.

**MP:** Yes, I'm a linguist.

**AP:** Are you just a natural?

**MP:** Yes, it's like I'm not shy to try any other languages, because like here the dominance is Shangaan so you don't have the choice, you have to cope in because other people they don't understand what you're saying and others don't even know English. So you have to lower your ground and understand everything.

**AP:** What's your home language?

**MP:** Tswana. From Pretoria side.

**AP:** So you've assimilated all those languages. When did you start realising that you're good at languages?

**MP:** When I first went to KwaZulu Natal for my studies. The dominance was Zulu and I have to cope. In conservation there was mixture of languages, like Shangaan, Vendas, Tswanas, then you have to cope with that. So that's when I realised I'm getting there. So then I came here I just take it easy with Shangaan and then I was alright.

**AP:** That's quite a skill. Don't you think that people are held back by not being good linguists?

**MP:** That's what they ask me here, how do you know all these languages? I said, I'm not shy, I try, I make mistakes, they laugh at me and that's when I rectify myself.

**AP:** Are you aware of the precise origins of the term Big Five?

**MP:** Those Big Five are the ones which are aggressive, not easy to be hunted, and dangerous animals.

**AP:** Dr Ian Player says it's a 20th century invention for marketing purposes. Could you believe that?

**MP:** I think it works for marketing, because if your area doesn't have Big Five then people don't want to come.

**AP:** Why do you think people have got this fascination with these Big Five animals?

**MP:** They are beautiful.

**AP:** But no more beautiful than a butterfly.

**MP:** They don't go for that, especially international clients.

**AP:** So they've been fed some kind of a market and you've got to deliver that.

**MP:** Yes, you've got to deliver.

**AP:** In your personal experience which animals have been involved in life threatening experiences?

**MP:** A lonely buffalo.

**AP:** That's your number one.

**MP:** Yes, that's my number one.

**AP:** Number two?

**MP:** Elephant on musth and a breeding herd.

**AP:** What is a safe distance to observe Elephants from?

**MP:** A breeding herd I would say a hundred and fifty metres is fine. Because those animals they don't have to be aware that you are there, because like I told you we are intruders in this bush, we have to keep a distance. We have to view animals and then leave the place without noticing we were there.

**AP:** Have you ever had to fire a warning shot or have you ever been charged by any animal?

**MP:** I've been charged by I think by all animals including a Blue Wildebeest, but I never shot any animal, but I was ready just to cock a round to be ready to fire for White Rhino with a baby, Leopards, and a Black Rhino. For Elephants I never did it.

**AP:** Because you kept your safe distance. Seeing a Leopard on foot is quite a nice experience.

**MP:** Yes, it's a nice experience, but sometimes because as you're walking in the bush you're walking single file, that Leopard thinks you're on your own and then that's when the Leopard sees you as a prey. And then that's what happened for me because I was a backup at that time and my colleague was right up front, so we were standing far away and then it was drizzling as well and the leopard was about twelve metres away from us. So when I stamp on the ground I saw that leopard ready to jump then I couldn't even have time to inform my colleague that there is danger, just cocked the rifle, that's when he realised something's wrong. Then that leopard saw us as a big group and decided to move away.

**AP:** I look at the statistics of the concessionaires who do wilderness trails, they'd shot 41 animals and none of them have been Leopards by the way.

**MP:** Leopards, they just try to avoid us at any time.

**AP:** And only two Lion incidents. And you'll be surprised to know that the most dangerous animal according to those records is the White Rhino with twelve incidents. Eleven to the Elephant and seven to the Hippo. And I think Buffalo is in there somewhere, something like eight.

**MP:** Other people are saying the Black Rhino is the dangerous one but...

**AP:** ...they have a denser population of Black Rhino. I think the thing it always depends on your experience and your area and the habitat, because certainly I know in Zimbabwe they say Hippo and Botswana I'm sure they would say Hippo as well. And maybe Crocs. You don't encounter crocodiles because you don't often have to wade or go at the edge of a river.

**MP:** No. Sometimes you have to cross the river systems and you can spot Crocodiles maybe on the river banks and they immediately just go to the water.

**AP:** So then you're nervous when you have to cross.

**MP:** You have to be very careful. You have to keep your people a distance away and your backup needs to be a distance away for safety. And even yourself when you're crossing there, you have to stand, wait, listen and open the eyes.

**AP:** Do you think nature guiding has changed in the past couple of years in your experience?

**MP:** Yes, it's changed.

**AP:** How is it changing and in what way?

**MP:** Some people they don't even stand at one position for a long time to gain experience in that position is just like Cuckoo.

**AP:** Why do you think that is?

**MP:** Advance in certificate. Immediately you receive that advance certificate then you have to push yourself in. You want to walk. There's no longer a hierarchy. Because previously if you are a night drive guide, you have to have respect on your senior guides. Now everyone is pushing things, I've got this I want to walk as well. They don't wait for a while in certain positions. They try and get experiences and wait until there is another chance and get experience as well as a first rifle. It doesn't go like that. A person just get in this year and this year ends up being a first rifle. I think they don't gain much experience.

**AP:** And you think that's bad.

**MP:** Yes, I think it's bad.

**AP:** Why are they pushing people through too fast?

**MP:** It's all about competition. Like I stated, previously there was like a BSC qualification or a nature conservation diploma, so if a person is having that and he was just coming in you have to go those certain steps. If you don't have it you have to correspond. At least you have got some few subjects or you are studying towards it then it's easy to let you know the way forward.

**AP:** Do you think opportunities in guiding are still hampered by the prospective guide's race, or gender, or social status, or economic class?

**MP:** Not at all.

**AP:** Have they levelled the playing fields now?

**MP:** Yes, I think they're levelled, but we have got a limitation of white guides.

**AP:** It's like a quota.

**MP:** Yes, it's not good, because it has to be a quota so that everything can be normal. That's why I'm saying previously I think it was alright.

**AP:** So you think there's a type of reverse discrimination which is taking place now?

**MP:** That one I'm not sure much on that but yes, I say so.

**AP:** Because you don't want to wipe away all the experience you had in the past. What is your thoughts about this having subcontracted the trails guiding to an independent company?

**MP:** I don't really know what happened about that one, but it's not a good idea, I think it has to come back to the park.

**AP:** Do you think when it comes back to the park all the people who belong to that company will be lost to the park?

**MP:** I think they have to re-employ them.

**AP:** It seems to be a common opinion that that was a strategic error, do you know what management were thinking when they made that decision?

**MP:** It's all about privatisation, because they wanted also to privatise the nature guides.

**AP:** And you think privatisation has been a failure?

**MP:** Yes, I think it's a failure. It's not a good thing, because they came up with certain systems which are not functional, like paying per activity came for example fifty rand per activity. It's all about competition, people who compete and cause a lot of trouble.

**AP:** Does the THETA NQF system adequately address the need for transformation and diversification of the industry?

**MP:** Yes, I would say transformation is happening.

**AP:** And what about diversification? Maybe it's the very point you were making. You don't want to chase away all the white guides because then you'll lose experience.

**MP:** Yes. Because they are well experienced guides. The system was better before, like if they're looking for guides sometimes they don't find a qualified guide, it's better they take an experienced field ranger. The person has been in the bush for some years. Because experience plays an important role, because these days people they just do it just for money, to impress their clients and it's not a good thing because you are endangering the animal's life at the same time. So through experience, like for myself during that period from 2003 I learned a lot from experienced guides and they are gone now to different national parks.

**AP:** Do you want to name some of the people who you thought were good mentors who you miss.

**MP:** Yes, I'll name them because they taught me a job and I'm following their steps. The likes of Jan Kriel, Mark Magill. Mark Magill I was working with him here *(Satara)* and Jan Kriel we were working together at Orpen.

**AP:** You don't think it's going to be easy to replace that calibre of people?

**MP:** Yes, we lost them and really there is an open space.

**AP:** What do you think are the unique features of nature guiding as in the Kruger Park model?

**MP:** I think nature guiding in Kruger National Park is unique because you have got a life term carrier on that rather than private. Private I think you are working more harder. Here I think it's more like it's having professionalism in it. Because you work, you rest, you work, you rest. They give you time, because they say nature guides you have to have time to rest so that you can be active in your activity.

**AP:** Do you think nature guides and game rangers should be kept as two separate streams or do you think it's a good idea to work sometimes doing nature guiding and trails and sometime doing other activities? Alternating?

**MP:** I think alternating is good.

**AP:** Why do you support the alternation?

**MP:** Because you'll become experienced in other fields of study, like game ranging this time and then this time you're on nature guiding.

**AP:** Don't you think some people are good game rangers who are not good guides and the other way around?

**MP:** They will learn from it. That's when you bring up THETA and those assessment things. We have to be assessed and trained and then you go the same level. Nothing is impossible.

**AP:** Don't you think guiding takes a certain personality and game ranging takes a certain personality and they're not exactly the same type of person?

**MP:** That one depends on the personality of the person. If you are interested you go for it alternating this ?

**AP:** What are the differences that you see in the way that nature guiding is done here in Kruger compared to in other parts of the country or even compared to in the private reserves outside of Kruger?

**MP:** In Kruger these are real animals, and in private reserves I think those animals are tame. I don't really enjoy those, because other people they like to see real things, not tamed ones.

**AP:** Isn't there a difference between the word tamed and habituated?

**MP:** Yes. And then another thing is like in Kruger, like I said, it's all about professionalism and then you don't do it for money, you do it for the love of it. I think it's good here in Kruger than in private reserves.

**AP:** Do you think the private reserves are producing greed?

**MP:** Yes, it's all about money because anything that you do is tips, tips, tips. But here you get a tip, you don't get a tip, it's normal to you. You do it for the love of it.

**AP:** Don't you think guides deserve more recognition?

**MP:** Yes, they deserve it.

**AP:** Don't you think they deserve tips? Or don't you think they deserve better salaries? Don't you think they deserve better accommodation?

**MP:** For tips I'll isolate that one, but for accommodation, better accommodation and a better salary and also to be on permanent position, I think that one is real, because that's why some of the guys are just going out like that because of this permanent ? Because you work for five years but you don't have any pension fund and all these things. If you lose the job you go out with your own salary.

**AP:** On tips you had a separate comment.

**MP:** On tips even when the people can say thanks to you it gives you a moral then you know that you are doing a good job, or they just say thanks and then you shake hands with them, you can see that you are doing a good job rather than to expect money and all these kind of things.

**AP:** Do you think guides need to form a union?

**MP:** Yes, we need a union.

**AP:** And what would the key areas of attention for that union be?

**MP:** It's all about to have safety in the work place, because to work without the union, sometimes for example you can just walk past my bungalow and then in that bungalow they lost something, and then it's not you, and then they said we saw this guy passing by, and you are a nature guide, so when he comes here you are not innocent because they saw you. You are passing there even the same navy plastic bag, the same as their plastic bag, then without the union you lose the job for nothing. Then you'll hate the place only to find that you were innocent. If you had a union then maybe something could have happened.

**AP:** Are there incidents of guides losing their jobs in unreasonable circumstances that you know of during the time that you've worked?

**MP:** Yes, I know some.

**AP:** So it's a very real concern of yours. And do you think that you're going to get a lot of white guides to join the union?

**MP:** It will depend on the type of union. If it's beneficial then everyone will jump in.

**AP:** Grant Hine from FGASA, he says the problem with white boys is they don't toyi-toyi. I think you could get guides to toyi-toyi and they would all toyi-toyi against the same things, but I don't know if they would toyi-toyi for the same things. I think that's the problem. I think guides often know what they don't want but it's not so often that they know what they do want.

**MP:** Yes.

**AP:** What would they be toy toying against? We mentioned unfair dismissals, we mentioned living conditions, and we mentioned salaries. Are there any other unsatisfactory things that you can think of?

**MP:** That's all…

**AP:** So you would think that part of the function of the union would be to have some kind of legal representation for guides. Guides are sometimes naughty though aren't they?

**MP:** I know. I'm a nature guide, I know they're naughty.

**AP:** So they're not always innocent.

**MP:** Like the naughtiness I'll say is sometimes you don't get enough time to be off. Like here we have only four days off in month and you work Monday to Sunday.

**AP:** What part of the conditions here do you find particularly tough?

**MP:** Like?

**AP:** Bloody hot. You can't get anything at the shops or whatever.

**MP:** It's hot and then you don't have time to go out to buy things like groceries. Even when it's month end you don't have this kind of time. Unless you're off then that's when it's easier. And to go to town, the nearest town is Hoedspruit and it's far.

**AP:** Have many of the guides here got their own cars?

**MP:** We are doing fine, these guys. The problem these days is we are looking forward for these permanent positions, so our contract they fluctuate like this, maybe they give you three months contracts and things like that. But as a guide you can buy your own car.

**AP:** And many of them have their own car?

**MP:** Yes, many of them.

**AP:** And what about their own businesses on the outside? Have any of them started businesses on the outside?

**MP:** I don't know.

**AP:** Are you of the impression that guides plan their future well these days?

**MP:** Yes, they do. Like any sort of income ? is to be involved with things like Lebombo trails because you get something from there. And also to be trained towards to become an assessor. Some of the guides are assessors. And others they are ? instructors, so you can start your own business from there.

**AP:** Do you think the assessment system is culturally or otherwise biased?

**MP:** No, it's fair.

**AP:** Do you think the THETA SAQA system is open to abuse?

**MP:** Abuse in which manner?

**AP:** Do you think that despite the fact that there is all this paper work you can still pass your friend and fail the guy who is not your friend?

**MP:** It depends whether the assessor is your friend because I think some of the guys they know the assessors so I don't think your friend will fail you.

**AP:** Does the system project a fundamental mistrust of the integrity of assessors and moderators?

**MP:** I don't think so.

**AP:** Have you worked as an assessor or moderator?

**MP:** Not yet. I had a friend who was an assessor.

**AP:** What are the merits of this system compared to assessment methods of the past? What are he good points of the THETA system compared to the old system, what they used before?

**MP:** Before the THETA system it was just to get your qualifications and just to be assessed for rifle. So I think the THETA system is fine.

**AP:** Do you think it's making things more fair?

**MP:** Yes, it's making things more fair.

**AP:** What are the disadvantages of this system?

**MP:** The disadvantage I'll say is that requirements are still to become field guide or a nature guide, I think it is to go back and require at least a national qualification, rather than to require a learnership qualification.

**AP:** Yes, rescoped.

**MP:** They have to require all those things plus at least the national qualification, because I can see lots and lots of guys presently they don't even correspond, they don't like the future end at being a guide because ? I become a first rifle and that's it. So if they can put it just to take that one line of higher qualification from the park, like a BSC degree or a national diploma, or things like that, like the reception is doing, always a diploma in hospitality

services and ? so it becomes more professional because you know things scientifically. Because a normal nature guide from THETA and a nature guide from higher qualification with THETA it makes a nice combination, so you become more scientific. You can easily point out lots of grasses scientifically and common names as well. And you know if they ask you about maybe the bovine tuberculosis, how is the process, why is it there, and things like that, why the large numbers, you can easily answer these kind of questions. Sometimes we have scientists on a walking trail or on a drive, so they ask you scientifical questions. You don't even know that and then you just answer like a bit, so the guy keeps... *(tape ends)* ...an occasion where you've walked with professionals.

**MP:** Many times.

**AP:** And are those professionals usually respectful of your level of knowledge?

**MP:** Yes, they are respectful. Very respectful, and they ask nicely common questions, like not those highly scientific ones but things that you are supposed to be knowing, like the geology, and the landscapes, and the combination of soil, the grasses. I had a guy who's just finished his PHD and he's doing that research here. He came on a walk and it was the first time to meet that guy and he was asking lots of questions of grasses and all these kind of things, the scientific, the competition between species, and then I realised this guy might be a botanist, and that's when he told me that he's on research. Fortunately on my B.Tech I was busy doing a research project on solar cookers, drying grasses, and I easily coped in. So you have to know lots of things.

**AP:** So he left very impressed.

**MP:** Yes, he was impressed. Even now we are close friends. He is still here.

**AP:** That's great. I can see that you've obtained a true level of competence. Is that true of many of your peers? Or do you think standards are dropping or maintained?

**MP:** Yes, standards are maintained, but like I said we need to study more further as guides, because you are building your own future as a nature guide.

**AP:** Do you think the FGASA system and or the THETA system need to build in higher levels? You know the THETA system goes up to level 8. But it's very hard to do a qualification above level 4 at the moment. Even the equivalent of FGASA level 3 is still on level 4 with two level 6 subjects, which I think is TG 16 and TG18, which are both level 6 subjects but you still can't do a whole...so I think the problem is the higher up you get, the smaller are the group you get into, and the THETA system is not accommodating the top end.

**MP:** I don't know about the other levels as much but yes, if they can be open for nature guides to go through them. The point of you go through or you fail, but I think it's going to bring a lot of change in nature guiding.

**AP:** FGASA has also got the SKS system. An SKS in dangerous animals is considered one of the top FGASA qualifications. Do people use that as an avenue? Do people ever go for FGASA SKS assessment.

**MP:** A limited number of nature guides request SKS. I only know about three or four.

**AP:** And what about FGASA membership? Are many of the guides here FGASA members?

**MP:** Like going through FGASA?

**AP:** Yes.

**MP:** Yes, we've got lots and lots of guys.

**AP:** So do they read their newsletters from FGASA?

**MP:** Yes, they do.

**AP:** And do they aspire to those SKS levels?

**MP:** I don't think they will aspire to these...

**AP:** That's because of the THETA system.

**MP:** Yes, just because of the THETA system. Now FGASA is like it has been kicked out a little bit, because of this THETA system. And now that's why the system changed. You are no longer writing exams through FGASA. I think it's level one. People they're just jumping. Like I told you. Everyone just jump and jump and goes through to private reserves for nature guiding. If there is an open space through the park and then he just goes in. That's when the hierarchy is broken down because everyone wants to walk first rifle. There's no hierarchy like it used before. If I'm your head guide, so you have to respect, like in a hierarchy, you respect this one, this one respects this one up until to field guide.

**AP:** What percentage of the people are in favour of retaining that kind of hierarchical structure?

**MP:** A couple of them. Especially those who were involved in that hierarchy system of field guide respecting your field guide respecting your head guide and things like that.

**AP:** But some people are very against that?

**MP:** Yes, very against it.

**AP:** What are their reasons?

**MP:** Competition. You go for these assessments like I told you, and you get the advanced qualifications TG 18 and TG 16, then you think you are on the same level as your head guide, then you want to compete with him. So that's why everyone wants to go in there. So the managers and they say, but I've got this qualification, why I cannot walk. I have to walk first rifle as well. Then that's when the problem comes.

**AP:** Promotion should be earned and not automatic.

**MP:** Yes, not automatic.

**AP:** That's why your qualification has to go through with your experience.

**MP:** But I think that the THETA SAQA system is a work based thing and experience does count. As with the FGASA system. You couldn't write level 3 unless you had been a guide for 2 years.

**AP:** That's it. The same should apply in the THETA system but do you think there's assessors that easier o get through than other assessors?

**MP:** Yes.

**AP:** Have you ever met Sakkie van Aswegen?

**MP:** I know him. He was the one who orientated us as we came in as students here in Kruger National Park. He took us for some drives, for some bird calls and things like that. Even now presently we're going to attend some courses, I think from the 17th, and he's also involved. And ? as well.

**AP:** Sakkie is considered to be a tough assessor, hey?

**MP:** It's nice to have a tough assessor because once you learn it, you learn it for good.

**AP:** When I did my level 3 practical, the first time I went with Sakkie and I was failed, the second time I passed. That's Sakkie, he doesn't like to pass people first time.

**MP:** *laughs* I'm also afraid to go through him, but I have to. Because once you learn it, you learn it for good.

**AP:** If you pass with Sakkie no-one will ever tell you you don't know your shit. If you say to people, I was assessed by Sakkie...even on the birding SKS now, similar thing. Apparently one of the guys on the birding SKS got grilled for three hours on geology. *Laughs* So it's not open to any Mickey Mouse. Describe your vision of nature guiding in the future.

**MP:** I'll say if it doesn't bring standards up I think we'll lose lots and lots of guides, and then we'll have inexperienced guides all over. So the standard has to go a little bit up.

**AP:** And what needs to be done for that raising standards to take place? Are you going to bring back old systems? Because that's quite reactionary, isn't it?

**MP:** Just to include like some of those skills that I was talking about like qualification levels and also that hierarchy. I think that's good.

*(Interview ends)*

Transcribed and proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 11 : RANGANI TSANWANI

*Shingwedzi, Kruger National Park, 09h00, 11 Feb, 06*

**AP:** Can you tell us about how you became a nature guide. Tell us about your background, your childhood, and how you got interested.

**RT:** I grew up in a village around the Kruger National Park. My father was working in the Kruger National Park so I was interested in the way he was working. He was working as a field ranger dealing with anti poaching. Then after my matriculation I went to technicon to study nature conservation because I was interested in the wildlife. Then that's where I became a guide. I joined Kruger National Park as a conservation student where they trained me as a nature guide by Mark ? and Vanessa Strijdom. And they make me to be a better guide by that time. So in 2002 that's when I started to work as a full time guide. Then I was appointed at Shingwedzi as a backup guide. And then promoted as a head guide. Now I'm running Shingwedzi.

**AP:** Right. So it's about three years that you've been here.

**RT:** It's about three years now.

**AP:** And do you still love this work?

**RT:** Very much. I meet different people. That's why I like guiding better than other jobs.

**AP:** Do you find people more interesting than the nature or both?

**RT:** Yes, they are more interesting in nature. Especially after integrating the bush on them, then they feel interesting. It's not all about Big Five when we do our daily walks or our night drives. But the way we integrate the bush to the people it makes them to understand and to feel more interested.

**AP:** What is the difference between a yellow White Eye and a Cape White Eye?

**RT:** I don't get it.

**AP:** Two birds that are very, very similar. But I believe you get both of them here.

**RT:** Around Shingwedzi, I don't think. We don't have them.

**AP:** You only have Cape White Eye?

**RT:** Cape White Eye, yes.

**AP:** Anyway my point is that you never stop learning do you?

**RT:** I learn every day because we have got these people from THETA whom they assess us each and every time. So every time you must keep on learning if you want to be a better guide.

**AP:** Can you remember who assessed you from THETA?

**RT:** I do remember him. That was Jan Kruger.

**AP:** Is Jan Kruger internal staff?

**RT:** He was from THETA, from the government.

**AP:** But the way that THETA works he must be from a certain provider.

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** And have you ever met Sakkie van Aswegen?

**RT:** No. I never met.

**AP:** He's an assessor from another provider. Tell me about the characteristics that you think a nature should have. What kind of personality and attitudes must a nature guide have?

**RT:** You must be a very strong man. Don't be shy. You must know your stories. You must be very healthy, especially when you do walks. Because you have to walk every morning, every afternoon. So you must be very fit. And you must like what you are doing. And you must know your stories.

**AP:** And how do you get to know those stories?

**RT:** Through conservation that I did. And a lot of experience I got here in the park. When I first come to Shingwedzi I was working with an old man, he didn't even go to school but he was a very experienced guide. His name was Daniel Malaleki.

**AP:** I've heard him ? by other people.

**RT:** Yes, he's a very, very good guy but unfortunately now he's on pension. So that's why you can't get hold of him.

**AP:** Is he the guy who is going blind now?

**RT:** No, not now. He's still ok because last year he was still with us. But because of ? then he decided to move out. He was working here as a trails ranger, then when he got the pension, the Shingwedzi people called him back, then he come to work as a nature guide. I worked with him and learned a lot of things from him. The small trees, lots of stuff, I got it from him. That's the man who makes me.

**AP:** And of course there's lots of languages. There's English names for these things, scientific names, and probably around here you've got the Venda and Tsonga names as well. So it's lots to learn.

**RT:** Lots of things to learn.

**AP:** And traditional, medicinal uses of things?

**RT:** Yes, more especially coming to the trees. You must know the ? traditional things. But some people are interested in the scientific names but most of the people they are not.

Especially when you interpret the bush because they don't even understand what it's all about. But mostly when we interpret we prefer common names.

**AP:** Now you do day walk from Shingwedzi don't you?

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** Describe what your clients are typically like. Are they South Africans or foreigners? Are they old or young? What's the normal age that you find?

**RT:** In Shingwedzi we are both. We are ? we have got a lot of South Africans dependent of seasons, and school holidays the guests that we have are South African and they also book for a walk. Especially Afrikaans people, they do come for a walk. Afrikaans people, most of the people who come for a walk they are not that much old. They are in between. But the Germans that we have they also like to go on the walk. Most of them they are very old people. We also have guests from France who also participated on the walk. And from different countries but the most people who are doing our walk are Germans and South Africans.

**AP:** Do the trailists sometimes find the walk tougher than they expected?

**RT:** Yes, sometimes they find the walk tougher than they expected. I can give an example, one day we were doing a walk where we found a giraffe killed. Then we tried to walk close. Those lions who were there, there were almost twelve of them, and I was having four guests with me. The other lady she was very old, and we moved that close, they were interested in seeing those lions, we moved closer and closer, and then about twenty to thirty metres away from that lion, those lions decided now to see us. Then all of them they run away. But they just run in different directions. Some run that direction, some that direction. So the little cats run towards us. Then the male have to come and look for those young ones. The big male come very close to us. The lady who was very close to me, she just jump on my body, and remember I was carrying my rifle. Then she just jump on my body screaming. Then luckily that male lion just turn away. Then the young ones follow him. We were lucky because it wasn't a female one who followed them. If it was a female one...So people want to see lions, but once the lions come close to them they get nervous.

**AP:** So there's the toughness of they didn't expect to have the dramatic experience that they had. Did they ever just say I'm very tired or very hot?

**RT:** No, most clients they like to walk far. Most of the people, even old people, they like to prove themselves that they can walk. Even though when we do walk it's not a matter of fitness or something. If you walk a short distance, I think we cover only four kilometres. That's what we count on our daily walks. But in summer time that's when we experience a lot of problems. Because we have to come back early because it's very hot. But in winter time that's when the walk is enjoyable, because we can walk far.

**AP:** So how far do you walk on the furthest, if you see your people are really fit, what distance do you do?

**RT:** If they are really fit you can even cover fifteen kilometres. I like walking. And I can walk very far. But it depends on the people that I have on my trail.

**AP:** And obviously you need to learn to read those people from the beginning.

**RT:** Yes. You give them introduction, that's when you can see their interest. That's when you can read them.

**AP:** Do you ever find you take people out who know more about some of the subject than you?

**RT:** Yes. Sometimes it's very tough. You can have some expert. I remember one day I was having an expert on insects on my walk. When I interpret he was just adding everything. He was from overseas but he was specifically concentrating on the insects. These tiny little things that I don't even know, then he was telling me everything, and I end up liking that because I was getting more information from that guy. Because in walking, if you want to learn a lot of things, it's not through books, it's through other people.

**AP:** Tell us about tracking. Would you say that old man...

**RT:** Yes, that guy coming to tracking he was very, very good. He was excellent. I remember one day we were doing a walk on the (northern?) side of Shingwedzi, where Shingwedzi side we don't have that much animals anymore ? then we were just walking, walking, then we saw a footprint of the honey badger. It was my first time to track a honey badger until we found the honey badger. We track him a long distance. He was very old but very strong. He was 63 that time. Then we track that honey badger until we got him. Interesting to track small things like the honey badger.

**AP:** Did you have clients with you at the time?

**RT:** Yes, we had clients.

**AP:** How did they enjoy that?

**RT:** They really enjoyed that.

**AP:** Now you won't walk past honey badger spoor.

**RT:** No, I won't.

**AP:** And this time of year tracking is a bit easier.

**RT:** Yes, but now the bush is very thick. If you look around everything is very green, so to walk at this time is not really easy. It's not like in summer time where you know where to find the animals. In winter time you know where you can go and find the animals, but in summer time like this in the rainy season there is water all over in the bush, so you don't know where to find the animal. You just guess where you can find the animal. So working in summer time where there is a lot of water in the bush it's not really easy. But the winter one is perfect. You know if I can go to that windmill I'll find something. If I can go to that river, I will find something. But for this one you must be very, very strong man. You will walk.

**AP:** Now what about attitudes? Do you think that you can learn attitudes from people or do you think guides are just people, if you haven't got the right attitude you will leave guiding.

**RT:** Yes, attitude can determine you as a guide. Your attitude can let you leave the guiding.

**AP:** Have you met people who just said that this is not for them along the way?

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** Many people?

**RT:** Many people. Many people just leave guiding because they say, no this is not the type of job I can continue with.

**AP:** Is it different to how some people expect?

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** What do some people expect?

**RT:** Each and every people who come in the Kruger National Park they want to see better things. They pay their money for you to show them Big Five, so if you don't show them Big Five some people they become angry with you. I remember one day I was doing a walk, then I choose to walk where I think I will see something. It was in an open area where I know there is a windmill there, there is no water around, most of the animals around they concentrate on that windmill. Then I just drive there with my backup, then we jump off from the vehicle. I give them a nice introduction, but those people they were from outside, they were not South African, but the other guide who was their tour leader, he was a South African. I didn't know that he was a tour leader, he don't do walks, he don't do drives, but he travel with these people. It was their first time to walk. It wasn't his first time to walk. But for those other three it was their first time. Then we walk, we walk, the area wasn't (fit?), relatively speaking, it was an open area. We walk on that area, maybe after we cover five kilometres, that guy ask me why I chose to walk on that open area. I said, the main reason I choose here is because there is water down there. I know by this time early in the morning most of the animals will come and drink water. Maybe we'll be lucky to see some of the animals. He said, no, he's no more interested in that walk because the area is too open. He wants to walk on a big bush. Then I try to explain why we're doing such things like that. Then we continue walking, we were about to take a break, he said no, there's no way that we can take a break on that open area, it's better to walk back to the vehicle. Then as a head guide, as a leader of that trail, I have to think what to do. Do I have to do what he wanted me to do or do I have to concentrate on my job now? Then I said oh to my backup, man, this guy is no more interested, so he asks us to go back, what can we do? The guy said, I don't know, it's up to you. Then I take that trail back. On our way back I saw that the guy's now are very tired, because it was a long distance, we're just walking because even though when you interpret, those other guys they were no good in English, but he was the only one who can understand English better. I can see that the other lady she's very tired. And I ask them for the break, then the guy say no there's no break on that open area. Then on our way back I saw that the other lady she's very tired. I ask him for the second time, can we take a break? Then the guy look at me and said, it's up to you. Then we decided to take a break from that point. We started to communicate to each other, tried to find the side of his story, then by the end of the day we become very close friends. So we meet different people, with different opinions on the walk. Some people want to walk on the thick, thick bush, but some they want to walk on the open area. So you can't ask them before you take the walk whether he wants to walk in the thick bush or to walk on the open areas. So sometimes it's not easy, you...

**AP:** As a guide why are you reluctant to walk in thick bush?

**RT:** In thick bush, it's very, very dangerous. You can't see the animals. That's the main thing, that's the problem. You can walk past the animal lying in the bush. One day I was doing a walk on the river. The area was thick. And then after our break, we were walking along the river, the area was very, very thick. Very, very close I saw an elephant just sitting next to the tree. It was windy and cold. That elephant was just standing there. I move very close. I didn't see him at first. But those people they just saw me pushing them back because the elephant was very, very, very close. I just saw him, like, this is the elephant tusk. Oh, let me push them. They didn't see him but I was the only one who saw him. Then I just push them back. After some distance they said what's wrong? I said, a big elephant was just standing there, and they were going to have a serious problem. That elephant was going to give us a serious charge. That's why in most cases we avoid walking in thick, thick bush.

**AP:** What about leopard? Do you encounter them often?

**RT:** Leopard, not often. Sometimes you can be lucky to find them most especially when there is a kill around. But if there is no kill you can walk and you pass a lot of leopard.

**AP:** How many times have you seen a leopard on foot?

**RT:** In a year I can say maybe five times. It's not easy to see a leopard on foot. Because that leopard they are very, very clever. Once they see you they don't run away but they will go down. That's why a leopard is a very dangerous animal. So they just hide, because they are very, very shy animal, then you can walk past them.

**AP:** And what about lions?

**RT:** Lions, we see them often. Especially in Shingwedzi. We have got a big pride of lions who are lingering around here. So on our walk we saw them daily.

**AP:** Are they alright with people in their...

**RT:** Yes, we never experience any problem with a lion. Especially around here. Sometimes we walk very, very close to the lion. Depending on the situation. In 2003 there was a big elephant who died along Shingwedzi river, not far away from here, maybe five kilometres away. Those lions they stayed there almost two weeks feeding with that elephant. Every day we were doing a walk on that specific area because each and everybody was booking for that activity because they want to see lions on foot. And we knew that there was some lions. So those lions they get used to us. They know that every morning there will be some people coming here. We just go out there finding them enjoying there. Then most of them they didn't run away.

**AP:** So what distance were you getting to the lions then with the clients behind you.

**RT:** In most case we surprise the lions. We find them very close. Because lions they're not like elephants. You can't see them in the distance. Even if there is no sign around, you can see them twenty metres. But if there's some sign around, that's where you will need some techniques to approach them. You'll know that there is some lions. When I talk about signs I talk about vultures and some smells of a dead animal. Then that's where you can tell yourself maybe there's some lions there, when you approach that area you know that you can see the lions. Lions they are very, very good in hearing than in eyesight. So once they

hear you they move away. But the lion that is surprised...we were doing a walk on the southern side of Shingwedzi, those lions they were feeding on a buffalo. We didn't smell anything. I think those lions there were lots of them, so they were able to eat by the buffalo very fast. We were just walking on an elephant path. So suddenly we just saw the lion jumping. Just next to us, ten metres. Jumping, jumping. But in most case lions they run away and forget the young ones. I experienced a lot. Several times I saw such things happen.

**AP:** But that's a dangerous situation anyway.

**RT:** A very dangerous situation. When they come back for the young ones, especially the female one, she can give you trouble. That's why in most trails, people kill females than the males.

**AP:** What animals do you consider to be the most dangerous when walking in the bush?

**RT:** I respect buffalo. The ? bulls. Those ones who had a big fight with the family then they started to live their own life. I respect those animals. In most case we meet them in the bush. And they don't just move away that easily. They are not like other animals. You'll see these ones they are counting on you. Every step you are taking, you must know what you are doing. They are watching you. Dangerous animals.

**AP:** Most dangerous is buffalo for you.

**RT:** Is the buffalo. The breeding herd it's ok, you can have a breakfast with them. You can just go by and sit. The whole group will come close to you trying to see who are those because they are not that good in eyesight. They will just come and lifting their nose up trying to look into you. But those single ones, you see them, you give them the space. But the breeding one you can go close to them.

**AP:** And working along the river here aren't you troubled by hippo?

**RT:** No, hippo, they can give you any problem if they're outside of the water. But if they're inside of the water we can go very close. Especially when you appraise them when they're in the river, they come close to you, and they can just keep a distance of five metres while they're in the water while they're sitting on the bank. As long as you position yourself in a good position so that when they come you can able to move away. But in most case they don't move from water to you. So they can become dangerous if you come between the hippo and the water.

**AP:** Usually very early in the morning.

**RT:** Early in the morning, yes. What we normally do when we walk, we don't go straight on the river bank early in the morning. We first go on the other side then when the sun, then we come down to the water. Then we have a break, then all the hippos there in the water by that time.

**AP:** Are there any other animals that you consider to be dangerous?

**RT:** Yes, I also respect elephant. Especially the breeding herd of elephant, I respect them. I appraise them...the Shingwedzi area as you know there is a lot of elephant around, so the breeding herd is a serious problem. Especially coming to water they can give you serious

problem. We have got one breeding herd along the river that we know. That one they give us a problem even now when we are driving. They want to charge us. So on foot also give us a problem. The main one there is not that problem.

**AP:** Even in musth?

**RT:** Even in musth, as long as you know his behaviour. ? When I do drives I just look into him and doing his stories, trying to judge you but I know that this guy is just playing with us, he's not charging. ? this guy is just playing with us, this is not a serious charge. As long as you know that now this animal is angry then that's when you can move away. But if he's trying to show you that no man I don't like you, you don't have to run all the time. Because most especially elephants if you show them that I'm afraid of you then that's when the elephant will take advantage of you. But if you can show I'm not afraid of you, you can move away.

**AP:** Is driving better than walking for seeing large animals?

**RT:** Yes, driving is better than walking coming to see the animals. So in walk it's not all about seeing the Big Five. It's about the bush. Because when we walk we pick up lots of things, some big leaves, some small insects, some small flowers, different things. Yes, you see a lot of things when you walk. So on drive that's when ? Big Five.

**AP:** It's easier to learn to be a driver than a walker.

**RT:** When you do walks that's when you learn, than when you are driving. Because when you are driving, you're driving that big car. I just drive and stop when there's something interesting. If we saw animals then we stop. But when we do walks I've only got eight people. Then I come very close to those people. They're like my school children. I'm their lecturer. I just give them information. That's when you see how people are interested in nature when you do walks. Because that's when they ask you questions. On drives it's not easy for people at the back there ask you a question. You'll find that you have got different people on that truck. Some they are not that good in English and they are afraid to ask. Because I remember one day I was doing a drive then there was this other guy, he wanted to ask me something, I said something along the way, and he wanted to ask me what I was talking about, but he was from France and his English was not that good. Then he decided not to ask me that time because there was some people there, he thought they would laugh at him. When we come back to the camp and he ask me, I wanted to ask you something you said down there but I was afraid because my English wasn't that good, so that's why I decided to come now and ask you that thing. Then he ask me then I give him an explanation.

**AP:** What was his question?

**RT:** I don't remember but I was talking about the lala palm that we have around here. I like to make jokes when that tree is around, so he wanted to know what I was talking about. Then that's when he come and ask me what I was talking about on that tree.

**AP:** Do you find when you make jokes with some of these foreign tourists they don't understand that you're joking?

**RT:** Yes, some they don't understand that now this guy's joking, they just see some other people laughing. But in most case I try to speak slowly so that everybody can able to understand my language.

**AP:** And how many languages do you speak?

**RT:** I can speak English, a little bit of Afrikaans, I speak my language which is Venda, I'm fluent also in Tsonga, I can speak Swazi, Zulu also I can speak, Sotho and Xhosa. So I can speak a lot of languages. Last year I went to the course to learn French, then I can speak a little bit of French. But even though that time was very, very short. It was only a two week course.

**AP:** Why are they teaching you French and not German?

**RT:** The other group they are learning German. The other group they are learning French. But the thing is the government who introduced that learnership, it was French. Then the organisation said that we can't take all the first group who went to French, so they had to learn the Germany. Some people go to the Germany and some people to the French.

**AP:** Would you walk in the bush around here on your own without a rifle?

**RT:** No. In most case I carry my rifle. Even now when I walk, because most of the time we prefer to walk by ourselves into the dam wall, just the guides, we just sit there.

**AP:** But you still take a rifle even when you're just with guides.

**RT:** Unless we're going to sit on the ? bridge, that's where we don't take rifles, but when we go deeply into the bush we carry rifle all the time. Because you never know what is hiding behind.

**AP:** Do you know of any cases of someone having an accident with a rifle or any accidents with vehicles that you've encountered in your time as a guide?

**RT:** Yes, we do have accidents with a vehicle and with a rifle, but it's just a minor extent not a serious extent.

**AP:** What happened?

**RT:** He wasn't driving the guests, he was just driving around from the camp to where we stay. Then when he approached the gate it was very windy. I wondered what happened but the guy said he was talking to the gate guard and the gate guard released that gate, then that gate hit the vehicle. It becomes a serious accident.

**AP:** But no-one was injured?

**RT:** No-one was injured, no. Just the vehicle. But sometimes because we drive big car in the bush then we can sometimes hit some branches of the trees onto the vehicle. But serious accident with a rifle, no we never experienced that. Most of the time we practice the rifle.

**AP:** And have you ever had to fire a warning shot to keep an animal away from you?

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** What animal was that?

**RT:** I once do that, but not here in Shingwedzi, I was down in Pretorius Kop and a rhino was about to charge us.

**AP:** White rhino?

**RT:** White rhino, yes. Because the problem with guides, we respect a lot of black rhino than a white rhino, so we took an advantage of a white rhino then we decided to go that close, but they started to charge us. If you notice, most of the people they shoot white rhino than a black rhino, but the dangerous one is a black rhino than a white rhino. I always giver it as a joke to my guests that once you see the black rhino you don't have to ask which tree you have to climb, they just automatically climb the tree. But if you see the white rhino, you can ask yourself, oh I will climb this one if it's coming. Because you know that one they are very good animal. So in that case I was walking with this other guy ? we just walking along the kopjies at Pretorius Kop. There were two rhino there. They was just looking into us. We decided to go a bit close, a bit close. That rhino decided to come to us now. Then ? was leading the walk, then he decided to pick up some rocks throwing to that rhino, but he wasn't listening. We tried to tell him ? but he didn't listen to our ? Then by the end we put a warning shot, I also put a warning shot, then he turned back and go.

**AP:** Why do you think some individual animals become troublesome like that? Do they get used to people or what is it?

**RT:** Some animals they get used to the people. That's why we have to avoid walking in one area all the time. You must change your area of walking all the time. Because some animals they are very territorial animals. You appraise the territory every day, they see you there every day, then they become used to you. Some become a problem now then they decide to charge you. It's not preferable to walk in one area every day. It's also not preferable to see you put your footprints every day. I walk today here, tomorrow I come here I will see my footprints then it's also boring. So that's why we keep on changing all the time.

**AP:** How long does it take before your footprints are gone?

**RT:** It can take three days. It depends on the weather. If it's raining...

**AP:** No wind and no rain, how long will your footprints stay?

**RT:** It can take three to four days to disappear. That's why you must have a lot of space where you will walk. Lots of areas.

**AP:** Have you got trackers here that can track three or four day old spoor?

**RT:** Yes, people like Congo. He can able to do that.

**AP:** Have you said to him, three or four days ago I started my walk here, follow where I went, he'll find it?

**RT:** Yes. He can try but it's not that easy.

**AP:** Has he worked in anti poaching.

**RT:** Yes, most especially the people who work in anti poaching. I also work with anti poaching in Pretoriuskop.

**AP:** How was it?

**RT:** It was very good, but it's a tough job. Because every day when you walk you are looking for something on the ground, looking for spoors. Human spoors and animal spoors at the same time. It's not easy, it's a tough job to do anti poaching.

**AP:** And walking with people, you're trying to do that tracking and you're trying to look up in front of you.

**RT:** Yes, that's the problem. You have to look on a footprint. You have to look what is in front. So that when we stop that's where your backup will have to move forward and try to see if there is something around. That's why we walk two-two all the time. Because if you walk by yourself it's not going to be easy. Looking for the animal while something is coming down. I remember one day we walking at Pretorius Kop, we're having a group of eight people. The last person he was the official, our staff, it was his first time to join us on a walk. Then I walk fast, then the rest of the people walk fast. Then there was a big, big python. A very big python, I never saw that python before and that was my last time to see a big python like that. Then when I turned that guy was standing shivering. I said, man what is wrong? He just pointed on that python. That python he saw us then he put his head down. Then we walk past. We were walking on the elephant path. All of us we walk past that. But he thought maybe everybody pass and decided to lift up his head, he wanted to cross. Yo! That snake was very, very big. I think he was four metres long. Then he climbed a tree. We were having guests from...they said they were from Mozambique. They were Portuguese. They were publishers. ? I think they working for some newspaper in that area. Journalists, yes. They were taking some nice pictures on that python who was moving. Said oh, this is interesting.

**AP:** Do you think that snakes are a problem when you walk in the bush?

**RT:** Yes, they are a problem. Sometimes we walk over them.

**AP:** Do you see lots of snakes?

**RT:** Yes. Lots of snakes. Some people like to go on the walk but they are afraid of snakes.

**AP:** What snakes are common around here?

**RT:** The most common one that we have, we've got a lot of pythons. Black mambas we have. We have got egg eaters also. And Mozambican Spitting Cobras. Also the most common one that we have. But egg eaters you can see a lot of them around the camp. But pythons we've got a lot of them.

**AP:** If I take you now will you find me a snake?

**RT:** Even inside the camp you can have a chance to see the snakes.

**AP:** After rain, the snakes are worse.

**RT:** Yes. Then you see lots of them moving around.

**AP:** Do you think nature guiding has changed during the course of your experience? Not your own guiding but do you see changes in the industry?

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** What are these changes and how do they come about?

**RT:** A lot of changes and more especially when the government introduced this thing of a THETA. There were a lot of changes when they introduced this thing. Because some people were having some qualification, different qualifications. Some people do nature conservation, some people do wildlife management, some game ranging. But when you come to this guiding, they wanted us to have the same qualifications, so then they introduced it. Some people they just do FGASA in order to become a guide. Then you give them your qualification, they come and assess you, then they can see how better you are. That's why I said lots of things changed because it keeps us learning all the time because they keep on assessing us. They wanted to see how better you become.

**AP:** So do you like the THETA system?

**RT:** Yes, I like the system. It's a very easy and a quick way.

**AP:** And what do you like about it?

**RT:** The way they assess us. They want to know what you know. Then they will coach you where you are lacking. Because in THETA you don't have to pass matric to have THETA qualification. Like I said, I was working with Daniel Congo, he didn't even go to school, but the time they were assessing us I was with Congo. The guy who was assessing us, Ian Kruger, he understand that Congo is not good in writing, but he can interpret, he can speak English. Then he ask me to write for him. Congo was interpreting, then I was writing everything down. He knew that this guy is a very experienced guide. So he knows a lot of stories. But he can't write that thing. So before THETA, a guide like Congo, they were getting no credit. But THETA thing they give him now even though he's at home, he have got THETA qualification because they know that he can able to do that job, but he can't write those things down.

**AP:** The THETA system has helped the illiterate guides to get at the proper qualification.

**RT:** The proper qualifications. Because it wasn't easy for the people to register with DET without the qualifications. But this THETA thing, it helps us a lot. You can have your diploma, but if you don't have this qualifications it's the same story. Because you can go to the technicon but if you can't interpret the bush that's where it becomes a problem. Because in guiding they want somebody who can interpret, who can make guests happy.

**AP:** So it's action based, work place based, and you like that.

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** And you like the fact that it helps people who are illiterate.

**RT:** Yes. It helps them a lot.

**AP:** And is there anything you don't like about the THETA system?

**RT:** A lot of the stuff I like, but some I don't like. I don't like the way they put their qualifications, because there is a lot of qualifications that you must have. NQ what what, NQ what what, lots of lessons. So if they can try to shorten this lessons I think it can be much better.

**AP:** How do you mean by shorten them?

**RT:** There is a lot of lessons in the THETA. Some people the NQF4 the TGS9, what what, lots of stories. So if they can try to...

**AP:** Simplify.

**RT:** ...to simplify the system I think it's going to be much better for each and everybody.

**AP:** If we put you in charge of THETA now, tell us your basic structure. How would you simplify the system?

**RT:** Even though it's not that easy, but I can try to place the guys in one area. In THETA, if you are in Mpumalanga, your qualification will only work in Mpumalanga, if you're ? in Mpumalanga you will work only in here, if you are in Gauteng your qualification will be only in Gauteng.

**AP:** But that's if you're a local guide.

**RT:** Yes, if you're a local guide. But if they can cancel that, because the only difference is the vegetation, but the animals is the same thing. But I can try to stop that process. Try to stop these things of a local guide and the what what guide.

**AP:** Regional guide.

**RT:** Yes, regional guide. Some other people they are from Gauteng, but they are working now in Kruger National Park. If they wanted to go back home they don't have qualifications...*(tape ends)*… ...to continue with their job. So you must struggle a little bit in order to be in Gauteng.

**AP:** So it's just a hassle to get your qualification...if you're a local guide and you move then you have to get a local guide qualification in the next place and that's a hassle.

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** Why aren't people looking at regional and national qualifications because higher up on the THETA scale you do get regional and national qualifications.

**RT:** I think the problem is time. We don't have enough time because we concentrate on different things. So that's why it's not easy. Most especially I'm working down in here. Then for that

short period I will be concentrating on in here and concentrating on the other stuff. So that's why maybe that's the reason why we don't do regional things.

**AP:** I know the regional has got a lot of other work involved in it.

**RT:** And as a nature guide, I think if they can assess a nature guide and if you can have a qualification as a nature guide and a cultural guide, all these guides they can assess you at the same time. Because if they assess you as a nature guide then they will have to come back again and assess you as a cultural guide, come back again, so it's a tough job, wasting a lot of money.

**AP:** Yes, it does waste money and it wastes time and it's quite hard for them to get the assessors. Sometimes you are quite sure that you know more than your assessor about certain areas. So the broader you make the assessors, the more different things they need to know. You lower their level. You can't know DET and ? Do you agree with that?

**RT:** I agree a hundred percent.

**AP:** Are you intending to become an assessor yourself?

**RT:** Yes, I went for the course as an assessor. Unfortunately our qualification they are not yet back. They took us to the course, then they were learners and assessor. Then they assess us, they give us some different...we were having some group of students from THETA which were working under me. Then they were giving me a chance of assessing them, seeing how they work. Then sending them my portfolio of evidence to the THETA. Unfortunately the lady who was in charge with those she resigned. She moved to somewhere I think in Gauteng. So the whole process stopped. So I don't know what will happen, whether we are still going to continue with those things or not I don't know. So that's another disadvantage of THETA.

**AP:** Was it internally in parks.

**RT:** It was in the park. The lady she was from outside, I just forget her name, but she first do that at Wildlife college then she moved from Wildlife college and she worked for (Moleetha?), now she resigned, then that process stopped.

**AP:** But eventually Kruger's going to have its own assessors and moderators.

**RT:** Yes. So that was their main reason of taking us to do different courses, so that we can have our own assessors.

**AP:** What is FGASA in your experience and what do you think of their qualifications?

**RT:** FGASA's qualification was also good, because in FGASA you also keep on learning. You want to go to the next level each and every time. So if you've got FGASA level 1 you've got a problem that no, if I can have FGASA level 2, if I can have FGASA level 3, if I can have SKSS. So it was also good. But in the park they stopped FGASA but I think they're going to introduce it again.

**AP:** FGASA has got closer to THETA recently so those two systems will eventually merge.

**RT:** Because FGASA and THETA is the same thing I think.

**AP:** Yes, what they have in common is they have different levels that you've got to graduate through, and maybe the nice thing about FGASA was you understood it, it was 1, 2, 3, and then SKS. How far did you progress with FGASA?

**RT:** Only level 1 that I got.

**AP:** Then you converted that to a THETA qualification. So maybe what you're thinking is where you should write FGASA level 2, and then 3, and then SKS. And all of those can be converted into THETA equivalent.

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** But you liked the language of FGASA, that it was in clear levels that you understand.

**RT:** That was very, very clear because all those levels, if I pass this level I move to this level, and this level to this level.

**AP:** And also the good thing about FGASA was you couldn't write the next level unless you had done another year of working.

**RT:** Yes. That was the other good thing in FGASA. You must have experience to do this other level.

**AP:** Did you get the impression that FGASA was mainly white people.

**RT:** Yes, at first it was like that, because I first wrote my FGASA when I was in technicon. And that was only white people who pass FGASA, and all of us, the African people were failing FGASA. Then that thing was in our mind that this thing is meant to help white people to be in conservation than us. Because if you can look, white people they can do that things than Afrikaans, and they do it much easier for them to understand that language. If they ask you something about FGASA, if you're not an experienced guide, it is not easy to pass FGASA. And most of the Afrikaans people they grow up on farms so they know a lot of things. So it was a for them to be in guiding.

**AP:** You're suggesting that the examination method of FGASA was culturally biased in favour of white people?

**RT:** Yes, it was.

**AP:** Is that because they had a better school education and they can read and write better?

**RT:** The advantage was that they were having all those things. So for us it was a disadvantage. For us to pass FGASA it wasn't easy. To see a black person with FGASA qualification it wasn't totally easy. At technicon we used to fail this every time. There is a FGASA test, we'd go and write FGASA, we'd keep on failing all the time, then we started to hate FGASA. So if you can interview lots of African people they were hating FGASA. But at least now they understand the different. Because they thought this was an easy way for them, because most of the people would go to the technicon, study three years trying to learn nature conservation. But FGASA can cover some of the stuff in conservation in three months. Do you get my point? So that's why most of the people were thinking this is made for whites. To make it quicker and easier for them to be in the industry.

**AP:** You had that thought but now you don't think so any more.

**RT:** No, now I don't think so anymore. I can see that everybody now can do this. Most especially when you are ? FGASA is not that difficult when you are doing this job every day. They will ask you the things that you see in the bush every day.

**AP:** So you should apply to write level 3 now.

**RT:** Yes, I will go for this.

**AP:** Because you can skip level 2.

**RT:** Yes, I can jump level 2 and go for 3.

**AP:** What part of level 3 are you going to find difficult?

**RT:** I'm not sure. I will see when it gets there.

**AP:** Do you find the THETA system there's also a similar type of cultural bias against black people?

**RT:** No, the THETA is not against. The THETA I think is a hundred percent. Because in THETA like what I said, if you can't write somebody can do it for you, you just interpret. Then that other person can write it for you then you can able to have qualification. So if you notice in some of the guides in the Kruger National Park, they can't write but they speak very well. We've got some very older guys in the Kruger Park. When they assess them they can see that these people know something. So that's why it's easier for them to get qualifications. But through FGASA it wasn't easy for them because they have to go into the class, sit down, and read the questions by themselves and write it down.

**AP:** But now you're talking about people who are at technicon and are passing at technicon and they struggle to pass FGASA.

**RT:** Struggle to pass FGASA.

**AP:** Really? Does that mean that FGASA is more difficult than technicon?

**RT:** Yes, it wasn't that easy. Because ? they will ask a different type of a mouse, mouth of a bird, stuff like that. They just show you a beak, which type of a bird is this? That's the stuff we don't do in the technicon. In a technicon you don't do even astronomy, but in FGASA you have to do astronomy. It's a little bit different. That's why it's not easy for the technicon guys to pass FGASA.

**AP:** So the problem with FGASA is that it's also self study.

**RT:** Also self study, you don't get training.

**AP:** Maybe the technicons and FGASA should try and co-ordinate their...

**RT:** If they can co-ordinate, yes. If they can introduce FGASA in schools as a one year course, then it can be easy for people to pass FGASA because they will give you lectures. Because on that FGASA they just give you manuals. Then you have to go down and look for books by yourself, and start to compile your own notes. Then if it's your first time it wasn't easy to pass FGASA level 1.

**AP:** Are you happy with your salary and your living conditions?

**RT:** Yes, so far I'm happy but where it's not easy for guides to cope with these things, because guides we are contract. We are not permanent. So you don't know your future. So everytime you have to think for your future. So that's why you keep on applying for a better future.

**AP:** Are you wanting to become like a section ranger in your future?

**RT:** That's each and every guide's goal. Because in guiding you can see that you go to this level, you go to this level, then you stop. No more further stop on the guiding. That's why people want to take some other branches. Being a section ranger and all this stuff. Because the same qualification you have is the same qualification the section ranger needed to have. That's the other problem with guiding. You will be a ? guide, then you become a backup guide, you become a first rifle as I am. Then that's the end of guiding. But if they can introduce some other steps.

**AP:** Well there's now assessor. Moderator after that.

**RT:** Yes, because they were introducing some co-ordinators. That was interesting. But it's just stopped. If there could be some co-ordinator. But now there is a park activities manager which makes some things better for us. Now you can see that maybe you can have a future in guiding. And if you are a permanent guide, I think it's much better because then you know that you have got a future on that thing. But if you're a contract you don't know what will happen. If your manager doesn't like you, at the end of your contract you have to see what else to do. So that's why you keep on looking for the other jobs. Going to private, coming back. If you notice guides in the park, they keep on moving. Going to this, coming back. Because everybody look for a better home to stay. To secure themselves.

**AP:** Do a lot of them go to the private reserves?

**RT:** Most of the people go to the private reserves. Some go from there for money. They come to the Kruger Park trying to see what's happening in the Kruger Park, but now they are going back there again.

**AP:** Do you think the Kruger Park salaries must become higher?

**RT:** The salary, yes, if the salary can become higher. And tips. Because people move to the private reserve to get tips. There is a lot of tips in the private sector.

**AP:** Maybe the guests in Kruger must be more actively encouraged to tip the guides?

**RT:** Yes, if they can tip the guides it can be better.

**AP:** Because the guide can't say at the beginning of the walk, now look here I expect you to tip me.

**RT:** You can't say to them.

**AP:** But at the office they can certainly say it's customary to tip the guide. It will help you.

**RT:** It will help. Because you can't tell the people to tip you. They do tip us but it's not like in a private reserve. The salary that are we are getting is not that bad. But if we can get increase in January...since I've become a guide we never get increase. Same salary every year.

**AP:** What about your living conditions?

**RT:** Our living conditions...we do have some houses, but it depends on the camp that you are working on. Some have got better accommodation, some they don't have better accommodation at all. Most of the guides they stay in a tent.

**AP:** Can you be a guide and married?

**RT:** Yes, you can be a guide and married, but in some camps you can't stay with your wife, because some share the accommodation so you don't have that much private life.

**AP:** What about enough space? If you're expected to learn all this stuff from books, you need to gradually buy all these books, and the books must live there and eventually your space becomes small.

**RT:** In our camp the camp buy us the book. That's not that much problem if you want to learn further. You can just say I want that book now and you can go to the shop and buy that bird book.

**AP:** Have you seen the new Roberts?

**RT:** Yes. I've seen it.

**AP:** It's costing R800 in the shop. R650 from FGASA.

**RT:** It's too much that book. I do have it but I didn't buy it. Some ? gave it to me when we were doing birding. I said, I'd like this book can you send it to me. In guiding that's when you get stuff like that. Some tourists they can just give you things. Some they just give you books.

**AP:** Do you think guides need to be unionised?

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** What would your plan be for a union?

**RT:** It would depend on the union that you're on. I think that's where you can take it from there.

**AP:** Do you think unfair dismissals are a problem with guides?

**RT:** Yes, but most of the guides here they don't just get dismissal that easy. Most of the guides that I find in the Kruger Park they are still in the Kruger Park.

**AP:** They go by resigning.

**RT:** Most of them they go by resigning. So no dismissals for the guides.

**AP:** What about the working hours? Four days off a month is a little?

**RT:** Four days a month is not that little, it's in between.

**AP:** It's ok?

**RT:** It's ok, yes.

**AP:** Maybe five or six days would be better.

**RT:** Yes, because most of the guides don't live with our families. You stay here for the whole month, you go home for 4 days, you stay in Joburg, it's not easy for you. Two days in and back, then you just stay for two days.

**AP:** Have you got a wife and children?

**RT:** Yes, I've got a wife and one child.

**AP:** Where do they stay?

**RT:** They stay at home in Thohoyandou.

**AP:** Are you not worried about your wife with a child just living there on her own?

**RT:** I do worry, but I've got no option. She can't have a job in the Kruger National Park. She's a teacher outside there. So it's not easy for me to live with her. Then I just live like our own fathers who were just staying in Joburg, spending the whole year there, coming back once in a month.

**AP:** A migrant worker.

**RT:** So it's not that easy. The salary we are getting you can't support the child and wife. Then you can't stop them working. It's better for her to work so that we can able to raise our child together. So we live separately.

**AP:** And you're not worried that one of you might see someone else that you like at the place that you work?

**RT:** Sometimes I worry. I think she's also worried. Oh this man he comes once in a month, maybe I've got a girlfriend. It happens.

**AP:** Obviously in this day and age it's also a very dangerous thing.

**RT:** It's a very dangerous thing. So that unfortunately we are living in a bush, they're living there, so it's different.

**AP:** Do you ever get offers from foreign women?

**RT:** *laughs* No, no, not really.
**AP:** Tell us how you see the future of nature guiding.

**RT:** There is a big future. More especially in our organisation because now they try to change a lot of things. Then I can see the future in guiding. I can prefer the guides to stay until they see what the organisation will offer us.

**AP:** There seems to be some uncertainty about the organisation that does your trails. Because the natural progress after being a first rifle day walking guide is to go and do trails.

**RT:** Yes.

**AP:** And have you thought of joining that organisation?

**RT:** That one it's also a good organisation because they ? good. Some people they move from our organisation to join that trails organisation. But the disadvantage of them they are contract in the organisation. So you can move from our organisation to that organisation, but that contract ends, then you will end up nowhere. That's the problem with that organisation. But the way they do their job, I like it. I like doing trails.

**AP:** There's a rumour that they're going to reabsorb that structure into the park. Do you think that's true?

**RT:** Yes, I think that's true.

**AP:** Do you support that idea?

**RT:** I support that idea, so that the nature guides can able to have some branches to go. Like what I said, we've got only three steps to move on. Game drive, backup, and the first rifle. But if they can take back those trails I know that now I can apply to be a trails ranger and lead the trails. It's another opportunity for us as a guide to explore.

**AP:** So do you think your management made a mistake by privatising the trails?

**RT:** Yes, I think they made a very big mistake by privatising those things.

**AP:** And their argument was that guiding is not a core function of the Kruger Park.

**RT:** Yes, that's the problem, because I remember, I think it was 2003 where they said guides would get a salary according to the activities. You do these activities you get this amount. So that was something that was discouraging the guides.

**AP:** When it rained you cried.

**RT:** Yes, when it rained there was no food on your table. That is the problem. Some camps they are very, very busy camps. Some camps they are not busy at all. We have got bush camps in the Kruger Park, we have got big rest camps like Skukuza, Satara and Letaba. It means the guides in that area they will have to earn a lot of money than the guides in a bush camp, because they can't expect you to do a hundred activities in a bush camp where only a few

people come. So that was something that was discouraging the guides to keep on doing their job.

**AP:** Why do you think management thought guiding is not a core function?

**RT:** I don't know why they think that way because the money that we put in this organisation it just comes straight. You can see this is money from the game drives, this is money from the day walk. You can easily tell how much the day walks made for this month. So that I wonder why they said this. Maybe because it was something that was just introduced. And the men who were on top maybe was not marketing it very well. Maybe that's why guides since, they are contract.

**AP:** Do you think game ranging should be kept separate to guiding, or do you think it's good for guides to spend some time guiding, and some time doing other conservation work.

**RT:** I think it's much better if you can guide and the field ranger working hand in hand. Because in other ways we are doing the same things. When I do my walks I'm doing anti poaching on the other side. I'm doing patrols the other side. So if I don't have any other activities now, I can go on patrols. Then I will see lots of area where I can walk. If I can move from tourism to conservation I think that will be much better.

**AP:** But some people are good at working with the public and other people are a game ranger because they don't want to...

**RT:** Yes, then ? situation, the guides will remain the guides, and the game ranger will remain the game ranger. It's only that the guides, when they are off, when they don't have activities to do, they can join these people dealing with game ranging. But if there is activities to do, then we'll do our work activities.

**AP:** Guiding comes first because it generates the money.

**RT:** Yes, so guiding must come first.

**AP:** So where do you see yourself in ten years time? Will you still be a guide, or if you get the opportunity to be a section ranger will you just leave guiding behind forever?

**RT:** Myself, I like guiding. But my goal is to run my own company.

**AP:** What are you going to do with your company?

**RT:** Touring company. If I can see myself having my own twenty ten seaters, taking guests to Kruger National Park, driving them around, showing them different animals, it's something that I want.

**AP:** Well maybe you and I will be speaking to each other in the future to see what we can do.

**RT:** Yes, it's something that I want. I did conservation, I wanted to work as a section ranger but my goal is to run my own touring company.

**AP:** What is the difficulty of running a business in tourism? Why do you think more people don't do it?

**RT:** The problem I can see is because most of the people that comes to Kruger National Park they're from overseas. So it's not easy for people to get somebody overseas to organise some peoples for them there. So it's going to be much easier for them when they reach South Africa. Because if you want some guests from France, at least you must have somebody who is able to speak French staying in France, so that person is able to organise some guests for you, so that they can easily come to your company. But that thing is not easy. That's why there's not a lot of that type of business.

**AP:** So the trick is marketing and business skills. In conservation they don't teach you marketing and business skills.

**RT:** No.

**AP:** Because they want to keep you ignorant, because they want to keep you in the bush.

**RT:** *laughs* They want to keep you in the bush, yes. So you don't have that skills. But if you can have a tourism diploma maybe you can have the skills. But I think that's a good business.

*(End of interview)*

Transcribed by Cané Lake.

Proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 12- "DIKGANG"

*("Dikgang" is a pseudonym given by the author to a real guide at Madikwe who has requested that his identity is concealed in the printed version, lest his criticisms of the industry affect his career prospects)*

*10h30 20th March, 2006 Another Lodge, Madikwe*

**AP:** "Dikgang", good morning.

**D:** Hi, morning, Anthony.

**AP:** Tell us for a start, and actually I know some of the story, "Dikgang", but how did you get involved in nature guiding.

**D:** We had a course that was funded by the British Council and the whole idea was to create employment for the local people of Madikwe Game Reserve and so one of the reasons that they were running courses was to try to provide education which should help that we might get employed within the game reserve itself, and the lodges, which was quite interesting- we were probably about 140 people that came through for interviews from the three local villages being Molatedi, Lekgopong and Suping and the interviews went on for the whole week and luckily I was one of the eight that got selected, and had an opportunity to be involved within the internship programme, which lasted for two years.

**AP:** Obviously you're still here, so it was a good career move for you. Do you still love it, and tell us what makes you still love it?

**D:** Definitely, I do love it, and I do admire each and every single second I'm out there in the bush- it's quite a different life style in a sense in that it reminds me of maybe 15-20 years back when I was still about 7 or 8 years old herding cattle, herding goats with my grandfather, and it's not really like a job in a sense that I do enjoy it, because you go out there, you show people from across the world that are coming to see these impalas wanting to know what we do with the plants, what we eat, what not to eat…ja, nature!

**AP:** Do you think it's maybe thanks to your grandfather that made you the sort of person who got chosen amongst so many other people?

**D:** Yes, definitely I think so. I still remember when we did animal behaviour, a course, with Chris Lucas, making a scenario saying should you be charged by a lion, what do you do, and everybody said, ja, we'll climb a tree, or run away, and he said "No, no, no, stand your ground!" and it was something I thought challenging to stand your ground against a predator coming at you, though something that I should be thankful to my grandfather about is that he always told us that when we were going into the bush the main threat would be a leopard,

maybe a snake, so he said "Whenever you see anything that would cause a threat to your life, just stand still, and cross your legs" because basically when you're doing that you can't move because when you try to move you'll fall down. So when we ran the course, especially with animal behaviour, and they told us this advice, I thought "Hang on, I think I've been taught this" and, ja, it's like a reminder.

**AP:** It's interesting the ways in which traditional teacher and scientific teaching maybe sometimes overlap.

**D:** Definitely, they do. You're looking at medicinal uses- even the western world now are starting to get what we do with our plants and put that into western medicine- it could be pills or whatever, antibiotics or some other medication. You look at African Potato *(Hypoxis spp.)* for instance with us, if your immune system is down, or you're sick they'll give you that and it'll help you build up your immune system which is exactly the same that you'll get in the chemist, you know.

**AP:** African traditions have been somewhat underrated in the past, don't you think, but now people are learning that *sangomas* are not absolutely crazy, but that there was some method behind their madness.

**D:** As we see now, Anthony, within our hospitals, they're now starting to get the *sangomas* or the traditional healers to come and work hand in hand with the doctors to promote health, to help up people who were sick…

**AP:** I remember in the '80s there was a very interesting situation at Jane Furse, where the local *sangoma*, if she couldn't fix any of her clients, she referred them to the local hospital at her expense, and the hospital returned the same favour, and if there was any client that they couldn't fix, they referred them to the *sangoma* at their own expense, and this arrangement worked very, very well because quite often, there are things that western medicine can't fix that traditional medicine might fix, and the other way around…

**D:** Absolutely, that's how it should go. It's quite a learning curve about helping with the health of the people- still you talk to people that are coming from abroad, people from Holland- they are still also using herbs, or roots or bark on the trees that they still prepare, and take that as a medication. Definitely it works.

**AP:** Do you find that foreign tourists are particularly interested in the cultural aspects of nature guiding, for example the traditional medicinal use of trees and that type of thing or do you find that the guests get bored with that kind of information?

**D:** Quite a good question…I think it depends on how one sells the story to the people, but I think quite a lot of international people that I've met, so far the past 7 years, I find them getting more interested in knowing how people live. It's not

just about coming to see an elephant or coming to see a giraffe, or whatever animals they can see but they also want to know how we are living, how we are doing things, customs, traditions, and ja!

**AP:** To return to the subject of guides- do you think guides are unusually egotistical?

**D:** What do you mean by that?

**AP:** I mean do you they think themselves very smart and cleverer than their guests, and that type of thing?

**D:** Ja, I suppose it wouldn't really be a question of generalizing, but what I find, some of the guides would often think that they might know, or are better than an average guest when they get on the vehicle, but one shouldn't forget that some of these people have been guides before. Some guests that we get on the vehicle have been going out on safaris for 20-30 years, so they've been guided by quite a lot of people…I suppose one should be careful with what you say, and don't make up stories…

**AP:** What qualities and characteristics do you think are necessary and typical in nature guides?

**D:** I think the most important thing is to try and be professional, listening to what somebody says, and try to grow from there, and appreciate the bush as such.

**AP:** What qualities do you think are undesirable and bad for a nature guide, that you've maybe seen examples of? An example of bad guiding?

**D:** I actually went to Kruger National Park, the northern sector, at Pafuri, last year at some stage overnight- I won't mention the name of the lodge nor the guide, but what I saw there, was that we went off on a game drive and basically the guide was doing 50 kph on a game drive and wasn't really stopping for general game- he wanted to chase big game. I don't really think it's all about guiding- guiding is about those little things that we're ignoring that makes guiding more special, and more interesting to the people because they can watch television from Europe, people can watch television from wherever in the world, and see what we've got here, but the taste, the smell, the sound, the feeling of being there is not there on television, so that's what we need to implement, and show that to the people that we get as guests.

**AP:** Absolutely. Do you want to describe your philosophy on humans and nature?

**D:** I suppose it's more or less one and the same thing that you're looking at nature, Mother Nature as such, that everything should work hand in hand, thus referring to ecology, being the interaction and interrelationship we get between organisms to each other and their habitat, and at the end of the day, you know, when one is

looking at nature- it's something that we really have to look after. In the process of course making a living out of it, and then trying to save it, for the future generation, which is exactly the same thing as us humans. One wants to be in charge of their lives, one wants to make a good thing out of living, live a better life and hopefully, be someone in the future, and look after your grandchildren.

**AP:** Do you think that you can teach attitudes and values, or do you think that the people who have the right attitudes and values are just weeded out in the course of time as guides?

**D:** I think that everyone has got good values in life being how you were brought up.

**AP:** Tsotsis?

**D:** Like you see the movie "Tsotsi". It's all about us as humans not really taking little things into consideration, and what we tend to forget as guides is that if you're a guide you have to live the dreams of your guests, which is the most important thing as coming to attitude.

**AP:** Do you think assessors can come along, and they can fairly judge attitudes and values, for example do you think a white assessor can really judge attitudes and values of traditional Se*(Ba)*tswana culture?

**D:** I suppose that is a difficult one because…I'm Tswana, and with our culture, we don't look elderly people direct into the eye. If you're older than me, I'm not going to call you direct with the names- it will be *Mma* or *Rra* which is a formal way of "Sir" or "Mam", and now coming into tourism, that is completely wrong, or opposite, but that is something that one has to work over. But when you speak to somebody, especially being responsible for lives of how many people you'll take in a vehicle doing a game drive, or perhaps maybe going for a walk, you know, one has got to look into people's eyes, so that they can believe what you are saying. Then they will put their lives into your hands, thinking that you should be responsible, or capable, or competent in doing whatever you are doing. Also coming to the fact that people don't like to be called "Sir" or "Mam". They would like to be called by their names- that I find them getting more impressed. But they shouldn't be impressed, actually, but ja, I find them doing that…

**AP:** Do you think that science has been afforded an elevated position in contemporary thinking? Do you think that science is the new religion?

**D:** Absolutely, no, it is. You look at cooking, you look at driving, everything that we do in life, it's all about science.

**AP:** Do you think there's a decline in the value attached to traditional cultural and religious values?

**D:** Yes, definitely, well, that's my opinion, though, but something like that has happened, looking at the way we used to live in the past. We would stay within the villages and live with our grandparents- that our parents didn't really have much time, but those who were looking at areas where they would go and seek employment to make a living which were areas like Johannesburg in the mines, Rustenburg in the mines, Sun City and so forth, and what I find now is that, now moving out of a rural village, and going to live around towns, or urban settlements, and now what we're doing is that we're taking away the values and the customs, our tradition, away from our kids, because now we're not exposing them to that, in a sense that the kids don't really get the time, even in holidays, to go and visit the grannies, that might tell them good stories about how we used to live, a way of living. Our holiday now has become more Westernized- we're going to the beach, going to game reserves- which is still fairly good to do that, but yes, it has definitely declined.

**AP:** What is the "special value" which you think attracts people to wilderness, the bush, or whatever you call it?

**D:** I suppose it's about seeing how things have progressed with conservation, how the opportunities have opened to every body. It's actually quite interesting to see how guiding has changed the past 15 years, with FGASA coming in which is the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa, because guiding in the olden days used to be something you used to do if you were bored and you didn't know what career to follow- more into the Afrikaans culture (perhaps I'm being a bit racist there). It was more into people that has been in the army and didn't know what to do, because you could use a rifle, and you have a little bit of survival skills, then it was something you could do, not really being informative as such. But the past 15 years, I find guiding getting more professional, and a little bit more technical as well- getting into the scientific researches that has been done now, looking at how animals interact with each other, into their habitat, and how us people can benefit out of it, and live together within conservation areas as well, so ja! Definitely.

**AP:** "Dikgang", that was a very rich answer, and there's a lot of those subjects I am going to take up with you in a while, but perhaps to just stay on the thread of the wild, or the wilderness, or the bushveld. Is there commonly a sense of the primitive origins of humans which attracts people to the wilderness?

**D:** I think so, because if we look at how animals live, I suppose it's more or less the same way how we used to live as the first *Homo* species. We don't really exercise any more. We don't think of our health as we used to because of the…I suppose technology. We don't have outdoor sports facilities that the kids have to do, and kids don't walk to school anymore. Literally, exercise has been taken off and now, if one is looking at, for instance if you take lions lying down more or less the whole day, not doing much, pretending to be lazy- they're not lazy, because it's all about energy saving for the next activity, it could be hunting, it

could be doing what, but the most important thing is, that you'll find them doing is that the moment they're about to get active, they'll become slightly restless and they will then stretch because when you're stretching you're trying to soften your muscles so that you can have more power, that you can put from those muscles, which is now something that we have to look at, and try to get our kids involved in what they used to do- you know, playing out there…yup!

**AP:** Do you think there's commonly a sense of a higher power that attracts people to the wilderness?

**D:** Ja, I suppose that comes to the beliefs of the individuals, I mean one would look at nature and Christianity would say "look at what God has created"…whereas some would say that's what happened in nature, so I suppose with that I wouldn't really have a specific answer, but supposingly there should be a grey area somewhere as well…

**AP:** What role does the guide serve apart from the safety and relative comfort of the clients?

**D:** The most important thing is to have an awareness of nature and us as guides, I think we're the link between guests, or I can say humans as such, and to nature, because what we do as our job is to try and interpret what we see there, and that other people aren't aware of, and definitely what it does is that it changes the lives and the way of thinking that the other people have.

**AP:** Do you think that the "khaki fever" produces problems between (particularly male) guides and (particularly female) clients?

**D:** I wouldn't say that, because I am wearing a jean shirt *(blue denim )(laughs)*, but what I find is, you know, people get very emotional, and they get way deep into nature, depending on how you sell the product as well. I think you find ladies being more interested, not in animals as such, but getting more into plants, looking at the insect life, looking at the flowers, and they get more interested in it and khaki fever...I suppose, yes, a little bit of it, but not that much!

**AP:** What do you think should be the accepted norm concerning guides drinking alcohol with clients?

**D:** Ja, well, I don't drink myself, I don't take alcohol at all but looking at how us guides operate or work- we do early morning shift, he might have a bit of work to do midday, maybe, checking guests out, doing pickups from the airstrip or from the gate, as the clients don't drive directly to the lodge, so it gets a little bit more unprofessional in a sense that one should drink, and then should something happen, you know they will turn around and say, yes, but we saw you drinking, and alcohol might get a little bit involved there with negligence, so personally I think as a guide you work from the time your guests arrive up until they leave so

you don't really have spare time in between, so I suppose one shouldn't really be drinking as a guide.

**AP:** What do you think are other ethical problems commonly encountered by nature guides? Besides the women and the booze thing, are there any others you can think of?

**D:** Not being sensitive to the environment, I think that's the main thing. What we are trying to do is that we, us as guides, we are trying to push our pocket- getting too close to the animals, one thinking that you'll be impressing, but we tend to forget that we live here in the bush, this is our life, this is where we live. We see these animals on a daily basis- yes, we do understand their behaviour, but- that's one thing we do wrong and also another thing we do is not being more informative. If I'm not mistaken, chameleons are still an endangered species and if you look at their main threat, its us as guides, because we do not understand their anatomy, and the sort of philosophy, and the behaviour of a chamaeleon…For instance I have seen one of my colleagues, I am sorry to say this, showing clients a chameleon, and he picked it up at night, so we came around the corner and there he was showing his guests a chameleon on his hand. You know and he wanted to give it to me, and I said "No, I am scared of a chamaeleon because of traditional beliefs" of which if one has to look at chamaeleons how they behave, they're not nocturnal, at night they kind of like hibernate it's called *proba (?)*, it's the same principal as hibernation, but just overnight. So to touch a chameleon at night- your hands are warm, so you literally confuse the animal because you warm it up and that triggers its metabolism and it starts wanting to hide, because you're using a spotlight that's attracting moths and flies and whatever and the time you leave, then the poor animal can't see anymore, it's confused now it's been warmed, now its getting cold again and we forget there's owls, there's some of the small cats, civet, serval that will pick this chameleon, there's also snakes that are active that time of the night and I think there, we're playing the most important role of being wrong…ja! So it's all about sensitivity.

**AP:** Ja, the temptation to interfere is quite a big one, especially with reptiles as you mentioned- it seems that in the case of larger mammals, people are obviously cautious, and in the case of birds, they tend to look after themselves, but reptiles and amphibians seem to be a target for interfering guides. Let's talk about those big and hairy animals now. Can you tell me something about the origin of the term "The Big Five"?

**D:** I think "The Big Five" comes from the good old days of hunting where everybody was coming down to Africa to come and shoot the elephant, and put that skull as a trophy on the wall and say "Yes, I've shot this animal personally." Now with ecotourism I think we have to change our mindset of trying to get rid of this "Big Five" thing, starting to think of something else, not selling "Big Five" because we're not hunters, selling something else, trying to maybe say we've got the "Magnificent Seven" or maybe "Top Ten". We're talking about "Big Five" and

we forget that when somebody comes to Africa, they would like to see a giraffe- because, where do you get it? You know it's an icon of Africa, and you look at the African Wild Dogs *Lycaon pictus* which are the second most endangered species in Africa, that people are also wanting to come for, that should be also part of the "Magnificent Seven" or top 10. One should be looking at hyaenas- they play a most important role in ecology. Other things that one should be looking at- one should be a hippo. Therefore, I am not supporting that.

**AP:** Do you think the guests that come here, and nature guides in general are anxious to encounter the "Big Five" as part of their experience?

**D:** Well , I suppose that also depends on how one sells the product. But I believe if one comes into the bush, one is not really into seeing "Big Five". Now of course, people will travel half-way across the globe wanting to come and see lions and you know that at the end of the day you have to produce, but if we can try to change people's mind set, and not get more into big game (which, yes, that should be part of the package) but one should get into the whole aspect of guiding. Guiding is all about getting into everything that is around you. We are looking at the stars at night and we forget that these people from Europe, or from overseas, they've got the problem of light pollution, they don't see the stars. You know one wants to come to Africa to see the Southern Cross, and know how you can get direction with that. One wants to come and see the Magellanic cloud, which is a galaxy that doesn't get seen overseas or north. The insect life, the whole interaction that you've got with everything that is around you…yup!

**AP:** How do you think clients come to have the "Big Five" expectation, and if it's not generated by clients, where does this pre-occupation derive from?

**D:** I think the main problem, or the main challenging thing with this "Big Five" thing is more with marketing, with the agents, of which yes, it's business. Some of them will tell the people, yes, if you go there, you will see "Big Five" and we forget that when you come into the game reserve or wilderness area these animals are not in a cage. You know, they're free to roam wherever they want, so ja, you might not, you may.

**AP:** In your personal experience and that of your immediate circle which animals have been involved in life threatening experiences?

**D:** I think each and every single animal is considered to be dangerous, so personally I would say any animal, that if the animal feels threatened, the first instinct is to try and get away from us because we are an enemy, we are intruders into its area, and like as I said about sensitivity earlier on, we forget that animals also have their personal space, especially animals with young, that they tend to become more protective, the females if they are having babies…but I suppose one should consider the safe aspect of trying to give the animals their safe space, and even us as well, that we also have to have a space that the animals shouldn't really cross.

**AP:** Have you, or do you no of any incident at Madikwe where an animal has been shot for client protection?

**D:** Not what I know of so far, but I think by law yes, we have to carry rifles, but I believe a good guide is somebody who will never ever on a single day think a rifle, so long as you follow your ethics, your guiding ethics, you should be alright, you will never have to use your rifle, at all, that's what I'm hoping, but so far the past seven years I've never had to pull my rifle for anything, and I've been walking the past 6 years. I don't know if maybe I've been lucky, or perhaps I had good people that were guiding me, teaching me about guiding, like Anthony, Chris Lucas, and you know the other guys…

**AP:** Would you be prepared to take clients out in this area without a rifle?

**D:** Personally, I don't believe in a rifle, so I don't see a reason why I should take a rifle, so my answer is yes, but by law I have to. So, it's quite a tricky one but…

**AP:** Can you site the law?

**D:** I suppose no, because if something goes wrong there will be court legal actions against that…

**AP:** So it's not a law, it's an insurance fear?

**D:** I think it's an insurance fear like you're saying. In most of the cases where you get people getting into trouble or using a rifle, that's where one lost respect of nature and are trying to work for a bigger tip, you're getting people too close to the animals that at the end of the day you'll feel threatened and they'll either run away or come for you, and that's where you need a rifle, so I think if one didn't have a rifle, I don't think one would have pushed and get too close to the animals, because then there you would think of your safety.

**AP:** This may come as a surprise to you, but do you know that in the Kruger Park, since they started trails in 1978, they've shot 41 animals.

**D:** Yes, I believe so. I don't know, you know I suppose it might be sometimes being, not being in a good area, that it might be that the terrain wasn't good, or often that the terrain might be good and that you walk into the animals sleeping, and that you get too close and that they might feel threatened, that's understandable. I suppose if you follow the rules and regulations and ethics, I don't think one would have to shoot an animal.

**AP:** Another thing I'd never considered, which was an interesting learning experience for me, but a lot of the animals in northern Kruger have either come from

Moçambique or Zimbabwe where they've been shot at before. You're lucky that none of your animals have had that experience here.

**D:** That is true, but our elephants within Madikwe, some of them came from Gonarezhou, north of Kruger, south of Zimbabwe where there's been a bit of a problem with poaching, but that also depends on how one treats the animals, how you approach the animals and also that's what we did, so I suppose that we should pay a penalty for our wrongdoing within these animals. But I would say that over time they will learn, and they would know that we're not bothering them anymore, and we will live in harmony as we used to live 300, 400 years back. One should look at Botswana- they don't operate with weapons, you would hardly hear of somebody being killed. They do trails, they do game drives and you know…what is wrong with us in South Africa?

**AP:** Let's move on from that subject, "Dikgang", let's talk about transformation. Describe how nature guiding has changed during your experience. Please state again when you when first became active in nature guiding, and how long you've been active for?

**D:** Ja, there's been a big change, I have to say. I still remember when I got into guiding- end of 2000 when I started guiding. You know getting more competent wasn't really then- yes, one had to be more competent to guide- be qualified, but things weren't really as strict as they've become in the past 3-4 years, and I don't know if it's maybe about training that was offered years back, like myself we were involved in a course that lasted for 18 months, in comparison with what gets offered today- the 2 week course or 4 week course, or six week course. So I don't know if it's about that that now some people would sit in a class, be able to read and write, learn what is in the book for 6 weeks, then become a guide and be responsible of the lives of the clients behind you, and not having the practical part of it, so I think, maybe that's what should be looked at. If one is going to responsible it needs to have theoretical part, and also practical part of it.

**AP:** Don't you think that one of the advantages of FGASA is that they have always stressed that practical part and you can't write the higher levels unless you have had the required time of practical experience as well?

**D:** I'm a full FGASA member, and I do like what FGASA has done in the past 15 years and I see the fruits, and I can foresee the best of more than what we have now in the future, but what I still find is that looking at the levels of FGASA, there's a local level guide, there's a level I guide, and a guide is allowed to guide with level I, not even practical experience. So long as you are a qualified guide, so long as you can take an assessor on the vehicle and show the assessor that you can be competent in safety with the rifle, safety with the vehicle, be a bit informative, be able to communicate with the guests, you know how safe you are with the guests as well, in comparison to everything, with the rifle, with the vehicle, to the animals, but personally, I don't think it's enough. I think with the

training- the training shouldn't be too short, shouldn't be too long, but it must involve both theory and practical before one gets into guiding and becomes an active guide.

**AP:** So do you think the solution then is to have some kind of apprenticeship for guides- that the new guide should spend time as an apprentice?

**D:** Yup, I think that's a way to go. Our job is not referred to as one of the most risky jobs in the country, but I think it is, in the sense that you know, you're there, you've got dangerous animals around you every day that you're within a game reserve and I believe that when you are in the bush there's always an eye watching you that you're not aware of and yes, one should be using the senses that you've got, but for instance, if you take flying, you will not be in charge of the plane as a captain up until you have done a certain number of hours of flying, and being a co-pilot for a certain amount of time in that airline, and that's how guiding should be. You are responsible for lives, and at the end of the day you want people to come, get the experience, and go home safely, and tell other people about the experience that they had in Africa- and ja, we're ambassadors, why not?

**AP:** Do you think opportunities in the guiding industry are still hampered by the prospective guide's race, gender, social status or economic class?

**D:** I think you know as New South Africa, literally that has died the past 15 years or 14 years of democracy, but what I do find is that some of the operators, and I'm sorry to say this, but are still against the fact that you could have a guide that is a lady. Some of the operators are against the fact that you could have a guide that is- how can I put this in a good way- African guide (I don't want to say black or white), but yes, there's still a little bit of that.

**AP:** Do you think there might be other reasons why women are not attracted to guiding, because you're suggesting that there's some amount of transformation in race, and not so much transformation in gender?

**D:** I think guiding is hard work- hard work in a sense that you've got a lot of hours that you put behind it- looking at the fact that you'll be driving that vehicle out there- you've got to change a flat tyre there- sometimes you've got to fix your own flats- you're looking at the heavy luggage that often you have to pick up, so yes, it's a fact that women are capable of doing anything, but…you know, I know a few ladies that are guiding, that are very good guides, but some of them still believe that guiding is too hard for the ladies…so the answer is yes and no.

**AP:** I want to go back to something you said earlier which I thought was very interesting, and that is about the sort of military nature of guiding. Do you see that there's a kind of parallel between guiding and military activities? There's a couple of instances I could name, but maybe I'll let you respond to that?

**D:** What's your question based on?

**AP:** Well, then I'll elabourate quite clearly…you carry a rifle for a start, ok. Then you walk through the bush where you may encounter certain dangers, which in the case of being a soldier would be an enemy, but in the case of being a guide is a potentially dangerous situation, or potentially dangerous animals. Part of your way of avoiding danger is your strategy, in other words you don't go into a thicket, you don't follow the spoor of any animals with young. Tracking is another parallel between guiding and militarism. Are you following the kind of points that I'm trying to see in the association between military experience and nature guiding?

**D:** Ja, well you know in the eyes of a lot of people that might be more or less similar, but you know, looking at how we operate, I think it's completely different. Yes, we operate with weapons, but our way of thinking with the weapon, and the way of thinking as a soldier with a weapon is completely different. We would use a weapon if you have to- if you've run out of options of getting yourself safe with the clients behind you, yes, you might have to use a rifle, but also you try to give the animal the last moment of doubt, being that it would maybe stop, turn around, and also the other thing is the more closer the animal comes if you don't have a choice- if it's charging and not stopping, the closer it is the better, because now your target is slightly bigger that you're going to take if you have to and I haven't been in the army, but I suppose in the army its more of self-defence what we're doing. We're more of a protection if something goes wrong, not really being out there combating, or waiting for somebody to shoot at you, that you'll shoot back at so ja…personally I think that they're completely different.

**AP:** I have got to say that it's nice to chat to somebody who completely agrees with me about that one, "Dikgang", because you find that all the older white men, and if you think of all the early game rangers- if you think of Stevenson-Hamilton, he was a colonel, and if you look at all the early game rangers in the Natal Parks, they all had this military association. Now I hated being in the military, which I was forced to be in some 25 years ago, but I really like nature guiding so I also always view them as completely different activities and I think you've made a very good point, that a guide only carries a weapon as a last resort, whereas a soldier almost has it as a first resort. If a soldier spots an enemy, his objective is to shoot him, whereas if a guide spots a dangerous animal, his objective is to avoid creating a dangerous situation.

**D:** That is true. Looking at how we carry weapons as well. As a guide, when one goes for a walk you would carry a weapon that is loaded, but it would have to be safe, there's nothing in the chamber, your bolt is closed and locked and you release your firing pin as well so the weapon is safe…*(tape switched off)*

**AP:** Sorry for the break there "Dikgang", that was me getting excited at spotting a Spotted Bush Snake moving through the tamboti tree that's above us- that's a tamboti, isn't it. But what we were saying is that the method of carry with a soldier and with a nature guide essentially is different, because if you're a soldier you have a safety mechanism which you can just flick off, whereas the method of carry with a nature guide is obviously with no round chambered and the bolt relaxed. That means that you don't alert your enemy by the cocking action, but you might alert an animal by the cocking action that there's something unusual going on here, which might help to scare off the animal. And also it makes your method of carry that much safer, than just a safety catch, so I think we agree on that issue of safety, don't we.

**D:** Ja, definitely, I fully agree.

**AP:** To go back to the thing about women and women are- perhaps there are more women soldiers these days than there used to be as well, but what you've said about the very physical nature of the work is certainly correct. I remember in your class there were a couple of women there- are they still guiding?

**D:** No, they're not guiding, they didn't make it through to FGASA so they didn't pass the exam, and you know the sad thing is that they gave up and one of them Tebogo, she is working with the gate, so she's a gate guard, literally- that should be FGASA endorsed and I'm trying to motivate her so hopefully she'll get back into guiding, and that other lady Rene- she's in the west with one of the lodges, so she is basically working in the front of house- I'm not sure, I haven't spoken to her for quite a while.

**AP:** Talking of that class "Dikgang", and no there's still a couple I am going to meet, but can you tell me what happened to everyone else?

**D:** Ja, we've Ignatius that stayed with River Lodge, and he's done quite well. I think now he's guiding but part time and he's now more into management, and there's also Godfrey who is now working in the community lodge on the west, he's the head guide, and the other guy would be Moremi who is also part time guiding, part time manager, and then we have myself I'm here at "this lodge" *(lodge name has been deleted to protect identity of "Dikgang")*, and then Julius, he was actually I suppose, may have been the best of us, he was a drop off with nature conservation in Pretoria- he's just disappeared now- I haven't heard of him for the past 6 years, then Jonny is with Mosetlha Bush Camp- he's doing very well as well, so, out of eight five are guiding, which is a good success in a sense, not really as much as I thought.

**AP:** We've had an off tape session and "Dikgang" has been requested to be recorded anonymously for purposes of this research, so that he can express some of his honest criticisms of the system at the moment.

"Dikgang" we went off tape for a while, but I think you made some of the strongest points that you've made, and that is that you feel that the FGASA system and the THETA system are still culturally biased, especially in terms of language.

**D:** Yeah, well, I'm a fully FGASA member and I think FGASA has done quite well within the country, and the past few years and putting the standards of guiding, and trying to promote guiding and getting it a bit more professional, but people forget that we're not all English- you know English speaking, but as education, one has to speak English, but what I find as a problem is the terminology that gets used within the exam. About two years back I wrote an exam Level II and there was a question within first aid about abrasion, saying what is abrasion. You know I am almost thirty years now and getting involved on a daily basis with English speaking people for the past eight years, maybe ten years, and I haven't heard a single person talking about the word abrasion. So often here and there they would put terminology within the exam and FGASA and I actually do find that as stealing a point away from me, because one is trying to work for a higher mark, which is 75% and you cannot afford to loose a point of something that you don't know.

**AP:** "Dikgang", it brings us to the point where- there are terms in ecology which you have got to know, there's terms that you use, so let's forget about THETA and forget about FGASA and maybe tell me- what guidelines would an organization use to set an exam that was fair to non-English speaking people?

**D:** Ja, I think at the end of the day we all speak English, but I think, the question in relation to an exam should be relevant to the subject, and yes, there are some terms that one has to know when doing something, or getting into a certain profession, but some personally I think are completely unacceptable.

**AP:** Maybe in terms of resolving this, "Dikgang", do you think it would be a good idea- FGASA is an association, and we're quite clear on that, and I think they do perform the function that an association should perform, but they're not a union. Do you think that the guides should have a union?

**D:** Ja, I think as a security of any form of employment, anywhere in the world, yes, there should be, but also depending on the individuals- either you want to be within the union or not, but yes, I think there should be.

**AP:** You might be surprised to here that Grant Hine said "The problem with white boys, is that they don't toyi-toyi."

**D:** That is true- I don't think toyi-toying solves anything, but I truly believe that if there's a problem in any field, I don't like talking about a problem, but let's say a challenge where there's a little bit of a misunderstanding between two parties, that toyi-toying doesn't help much- it's all about wasting time. People should be,

especially employers, they should be keen to sit down and listen, and I also find guiding a little bit difficult for quite a few people, especially if you look at the hours which we put in behind it. Yes, it's something love you know, but at the end of the day, it's a profession, and it's a way of how one is making a living but looking at the fact that if one is getting ready to get a family, you know, to be a guide, it becomes one of the most difficult things, though it might be something that you love being a passion, but then at some stage it gets in your way of doing some of the things in life, like having a family where you need to have a bit of time with your kids, with your wife and ja! Then I think it's something that we have to re-look at- try to make it work.

**AP:** The problem about toyi-toying I think is that it's easy to assemble a group of people who are toyi-toying against something, but what are they toyi-toying for? I think Grant and I have agreed in our discussion that many people object to the THETA system, quite a few people might even object to aspects of FGASA, but how to come to a solution is where those different people who object would not necessarily agree, so the difficulty always is, not necessarily what are you against, because people will say, we're against the THETA system or we're against the FGASA system, but what are you for and that's always trickier. It's always easy to say "there's something wrong with this and that" but how to fix it is always more difficult, isn't it?

**D:** That is definitely true. You know I think as a profession- guiding, you might get two different organizations, maybe association or whatever, but at the end of the day there should be a format, or a way of agreeing, or agreement between both parties, and try to get things done easily in a right way.

**AP:** Working hours is certainly one of the things that makes guiding difficult. What about the living spaces that people have, and what about the salaries that they receive? Have you got any comments on that?

**D:** Yes, it's quite a tricky one to say, but what I still do find with the operators is that they will give you a salary that one would say "it's a lousy salary"- maybe that's what they think it should be paid, but we forget that you know they will say "yes, you would get this salary which is not that great, but the tips are good." You know a tip is not a right, it's how the guests feel- they're not forced to tip you, so it's not something that is guaranteed, and I suppose that's where we should be looking at guiding, you know it's a profession, it's not something you do just off the street, overnight, and you say "yes, I'm a guide, I will guide, give me a rifle, give me a vehicle". It's a profession like anything in the country that's a profession- could be law or it could be being a doctor, or being a teacher or whatever. And I think that should be a similar thing to guiding, where there should be a standard, or maybe an average wage, that one can make a living out of, apart from depending on the tips because that's where we- you know I don't blame other people some times when they are pushing because they're wanting to

get that tip that they can make a living out of, and that's where I find things a little bit misunderstanding, or maybe wrong.

**AP:** So you think that people within the industry, the industry owners are still taking advantage of things like the tipping system? Because when once I was an overland guide, and an Australian- now Australians are notorious for not tipping, you are probably aware, by now, but he said "why should I be paying in the extra bit for your salary when your bosses should be paying that?" I think he had a good point.

**D:** Ja, that is right. One should look at the fact that you know these people as well that are coming as clients- some of them are working with clients and they don't expect a tip out of what they are doing, and you know as a business, or as a career, you know there should be a way of rewarding by means of payment, so that the job can be done properly, not really expecting a tip out of whatever and that's what I find that in some of the places some guides often wouldn't really treat guests the same- especially if you get somebody from South Africa, that you know, the rand is a little bit weak, that you know that as a South African, someone cannot afford to tip you a thousand rand, whereas you might get somebody from England, or a rich Saudi, that will come and give you six thousand rands worth of tip. Then you know, if you're looking at both parties, you'd rather have a Saudi than having a South African and that's why I think it's unfair, and it's actually the operators that are causing this to happen…ja!

**AP:** I think we've exhausted these things, "Dikgang", unless there's more that you want to say about the living conditions of guides. Perhaps you want to comment on that.
Do find that guides often have- they're required to know a lot, but they don't have a big enough room to have all their books and stuff like that?

**D:** That is true, but I think it's changing. The past three or four years with some of the lodges coming, getting overseas investors coming to build the lodges, things are getting slightly better in a sense that they are creating a bit of competition between the lodges, and I suppose that's one need- you know you need to have that competition so that life can become better. Especially for us as guides- looking at the amount of time that you put, that you need a bit of time to take it easy at the end of the day, and get time to have whatever study material and space to get everything together.

**AP:** And what about families, "Dikgang"? Do you want to tell me a bit more about your family and how difficult it is to be a guide and have a family?

**D:** I think for the moment it's still alright. I'm getting to that stage- by the way, I wasn't going to tell you about it but in about 2 months time I will be a committed man- she's also here, so for now it's still alright, but if I had to be a guide somewhere where they cannot accommodate her, or maybe wouldn't be able to

offer her a job, then you know, I love guiding, and this is my passion- I don't see it as a job, I see it as a hobby, something that I have done when I was young, that I'm expressing that to other people. So the problem of it is that if I'm married, I wouldn't afford being away for a month from my family and I don't know, that's something that needs to be looked at.

**AP:** Don't you think it's often because the institutions, that is the employers, don't really view guiding as a career path? They view it as something that young people do. When they get old enough to get married and that, they have to go and find themselves another job.

**D:** I think that's how it's been seen. Things have changed now, guiding is a profession, not something that you can get out of what you are doing and getting into it for a few years. It's now become a profession and like any profession it should be viewed as being something you can do still being a family man, like being family orientated.

**AP:** Just to change over now, "Dikgang". We spoke a little bit about FGASA, and you were quite positive about the FGASA system. Can you comment on how there may be differences in the FGASA and the THETA system, and whether those gaps have been filled, and whether you see the same biases that apply to FGASA as also applying to the THETA/SAQA system.

**D:** Firstly, I really believe that there should really be two- if I can say organizations, referring to as FGASA and THETA, there shouldn't really be two organizations that are holding qualifications for one individual but one has to pay membership for both, because at the end of the day, you know, it's money that is coming out of the pocket, that you're loosing over what shouldn't have happened, but what I think, and I might be wrong, I might not really be, you know, the cleverest person that you'll find but what I still believe is that THETA and FGASA should have became one thing, one organization, that THETA should have come with their ideas and FGASA coming with their ideas and saying "look, you've been operating for such a long time, and us as government, this is what we say, and how can we make this work together?" and then come out with one solution and still have one organization or association, that we're paying a membership fee into and holding qualifications as well, as one body, not two different bodies.

**AP:** That would have been great in an ideal world, "Dikgang", but really, you're probably aware that THETA system came out of the whole SAQA system, whereas the FGASA system was seen to a "white boys' club". So even although they are now speaking to each other better, initially the THETA system was very suspicious of FGASA, one being a "white boys' club" and two of FGASA not operating within the national qualifications framework, that is not being outcomes based. More recently they've been, or they see more eye to eye, but can you not understand historically that THETA didn't necessarily approve of FGASA?

**D:** I think I might know a little bit about that, but not as much as one would want to know, but yes, you know looking at where we came from in the country with education, and the way we were taught, it's completely different, and that's why maybe we're struggling so much with FGASA- not having anything against FGASA. You know, I still strongly believe that if you're wanting to progress, people have got to live together, and then try to work out the solution of achieving something.

**AP:** Do you think the whole new system, the THETA system, they through out the baby with the bathwater, in a way, in an attempt to make something new, they risked throwing away something like FGASA which was of value?

**D:** Look, I suppose you know the people of FGASA, I suppose they did a bit of research behind it and they knew what they were doing, they knew what they wanted to do, and how things should be done, and THETA, coming more out of the National Qualifications Framework part of it, but I still do remember when the things started that we had somebody- I wouldn't mention the name, who didn't know anything about guiding and supposedly had to be an assessor. And if you don't know anything about the subject- you know, how do you judge it, how do you mark it? So that's where I still believe they should have maybe had a good approach and then tried to sort out something with FGASA, sit down, look at things and then come out with a solution.

**AP:** I mean if you have a look at the history of culture guiding- they used to have a body called SATOUR that qualified guides, and they totally disbanded SATOUR, and I don't think the THETA system has got culture guiding now in a better place than it was 15 years ago.

**D:** That is true. You know sometimes people take advantage in wanting to do something, that they don't look what's going to happen within whatever they are trying to do in future, and ja, I suppose, as I said earlier on, they still have to sit together, THETA and FGASA and then work out something and be one body.

**AP:** Do you think here in the North West Province there's a distinct style of guiding that differs from how they guide in the rest of the country?

**D:** Maybe yes, maybe not. I think within North West things are done slightly different we are more into conservation than into stocking areas. I don't know much about the lowveld or other places in the country, but from what I hear from other people especially quite a lot of guests that I do get, talking about chasing big game up in other areas, not being sensitive to the area, in a sense that you know, people don't drive on the road, you know, you get a guide that thinks "ah! We had a lion there two days back, so I'm going to drive in there and see if the lion might be there, maybe that's the favourite spot!" because at the end of the day, we're creating a lot of impact with the vehicle by destroying the grasses and I think that also education must play the most important role, like as I said, you know with

the courses that get run that are very short, yes, you know they are great, at the end of the day somebody needs to start somewhere, but if you're thinking of a short period of time of running a course, having to know what ecology means, having to know what grass succession means, because that's the main thing that we're not taking into consideration because sometimes we get somebody driving over decreaser species of grasses, not knowing what that grass is. What's going to happen to that area if you go off road there? So it's all about being competent and having a good general background of knowledge, that needs to be done by people that have been within guiding for the past 20-30 years, but can no longer be part of guiding, because they are family committed, and they can't do this anymore, but we need to try and change this, make it work for everybody, and we need those people that's been in the field for quite a while.

**AP:** You spoke for a while there, "Dikgang", about driving and walking. Tell me approximately what is your time break-up between guiding on a vehicle and guiding on foot?

**D:** I don't think really that there's any time break-up, because with marketing, people come with a package, they know that they will have two game drive activities per day, and that should last for a duration of time, often about three hours, maybe three and a half or whatever amount of time that the product is selling, and then often they would say yes, they might have an activity. We do have trails as well, or walks, that you can organize with your guide or some guests there's special trails that get done by other companies, so ja!

**AP:** Don't you think that driving is still over-emphasized and walking is still under-emphasized?

**D:** I suppose it depends on the clientele as well. As we all know that if you're driving, you've got more chances because you're covering a lot of ground, hoping that at some stage when you come around the corner there will be animals. You might be able to go closer, not close enough to threaten the animals, but to be able to take a picture, if you have a good camera, whereas with walking, yes, it's wonderful, it's quite amazing, I mean I'd rather walk than driving, if I had to choose, but walking is more about giving that experience that you don't have from the vehicle, looking at the little things that you can't see from the vehicle, being able to smell, being able to have that feeling of being within a dangerous animal area…ja!

**AP:** So, if the choice was up to you, would you do more walking and less driving?

**D:** O yes, definitely, I would do more walks than driving.

**AP:** "Dikgang", let's finish up now and tell us a bit about your vision of guiding in the future?

**D:** I think guiding in the future, you know, it has got to change, and I suppose it will change the mindset of everybody within the industry, looking at the thing that one shouldn't really be expecting a tip when having people on the vehicle, because now we take a tip as a right, not as something that you might get, maybe not anymore, and it pushes us that often we try to chase, and get from one sighting to another, passing that little Golden Orb-web Spider that you could talk about, you know passing that Burchell's Coucal feeding a chick of a Great Spotted Cuckoo, so that you know it's mind blowing for the people. Passing that Lilac-breasted Roller, forgetting to tell people that what you see there are not the true colours of the bird but instead the reflection of white light within the *(pockets?)* within the makeup of the melanin or the pigments of the feathers, we tell people about tannin, but it's a theory that they hear everywhere, and they get bored of it. We don't have that time to stop and show people- get them to taste a broad-leaved tree, taste what it tastes like, that bittery taste, tannin, get them to taste a leaf from an Acacia tree, get how nice the taste is, show them why the animals prefer eating from those trees than the broad-leaved trees- you know those practical part of it. Drive and pass those hyaena pastings that you see next to the road, that rhino midden, but you can talk about it for 20 minutes and change people's mindset. And you know, you forget that tracks don't lie, and if you don't see a rhino, you see a midden, you tell them what is happening in the midden. And these people they can *(build?)* up that rhino within their imagination, but you know, because we're chasing a tip, it's a bit of a problem. So, I suppose in the future there should be proper training, that there should be a lot of time being spent in the bush as guides, having internship programmes, and that might I think improve the standard of guiding within the country.

**AP:** "Dikgang", thank you very, very much for your time. It is highly appreciated. Have you any closing comments, or anything you would like to add before we say goodbye?

**D:** Ja, well I think not really much. It was actually a great pleasure to meet you Anthony after 7 years not seeing you, and you know what amazes me is that you still appreciate nature, and that you're still excited about nature, and that's what I would like to see, having a similar thing, after 10 years of being within the bush still appreciating sunrise, still being able to watch that impala, still being able to watch that male lion sitting there, not doing much underneath the tree, and being able to tell that when he is there, he is doing something. Animals are never there because of nothing, they're doing something. So that appreciation, that love behind our job, and the last thing being sensitive, and I hope that things will get better within tourism, being sensitive to the environment as well with guiding, and the most important thing, safety, and I suppose that comes with training, if you get in the right people who are showing you what to do, which is exactly the same thing- you get elephants- the young boys they get kicked out, and they need those old bulls to teach them what an elephant is all about, and ja, that's all!

**AP:** "Dikgang", I see you coming into musth very soon, and that's great, you've worked your way for your 35 years to your mating rights, as you know bull elephants enjoy, and the best of luck with that, and I trust the bug has bitten you deeply enough that you're not going to look for a job in the big city, but you're going to stick with this profession for the rest of your days, hey!

**D:** Oh, yeah! I'd definitely like to see myself being 60 years and being able to still take people out on a walk, you know and appreciate the bush, but not forgetting that this knowledge has got to be passed down. So if you are having a knowledge that you aren't giving to other people, I believe it's waste, because you know, everybody's going to die, and then you go away with that knowledge, and not passing in to other people. So I think we should have people like yourself, Anthony Paton, that should be out there teaching young boys, about guiding, and ja…may God Bless!

**AP:** They say in Africa, every time an old man dies, a library is lost. I hope you have paid good attention to your grandparents, and your parents, and you get much out of them, while they are still around, too.

**D:** Ja, definitely, that is true. I don't know it's maybe education- but we tend to be losing the values and the customs, but I hope they should still be there, and people should be passing them through to the up and coming generation and make the best of South Africa.

**AP:** **"**Dikgang", thanks a lot, it's been a great pleasure talking to you.

**D:** Thanks a lot, Anthony.

*(Interview ends).*

Transcribed and proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 13- IGNATIUS BOGATSU

*14h30 20th March, 2006 Madikwe River Lodge, Madikwe*

**AP:** Hi, Ignatius, how're you?

**IB:** Alright, Anthony, how're you keeping?

**AP:** I'm keeping well. It's been about…more than five years since we've seen each other and the first thing I'm going to ask you is describe how you got involved in nature guiding. (I know part of the story, but you can fill in the rest).

**IB:** Okay, um, at first I did field guide training with Environmental Training Group in Madikwe Game Reserve, which started in late 1999 until early 2001- it was an 18 month course, and at the end of the course, I was offered a job in Madikwe River Lodge, as a Field Guide.

**AP:** So how long have you been in nature guiding now?

**IB:** From the 1st of April, 2001, until at the moment.

**AP:** What is it that still makes you love this work?

**IB:** I would say Mother Nature's unstopping surprises, and the fact that you learn, you know there's a whole lot of things that you learn on a daily basis, I guess.

**AP:** Now tell me about the characteristics that you think are typical of nature guides. Do you think they are unusually egotistical or big-headed?

**IB:** I can only answer for myself. I would say every person is unique and different in their own nature and ja, I guess with every field, irrespective of the profession you will find your people that have got an ego problem and big-headed people, I would say.

**AP:** And do you think nature guides are unusually individualistic?

**IB:** Not necessarily. Like I said, every person is in their own way different, naturally, and I wouldn't generalize.

**AP:** Do you think guides are introverts or extroverts, and tell us which one you are.

**IB:** I think I would first start with myself- I'm a bit of both. You do get days when you really don't want anything to do with people- you just want to be out in the bush all by yourself listening to the sounds and feeling the air and all that, and ja, you tend to get both sides, both kinds of people in the industry, I would definitely say I'm a bit of both sometimes, depending on the circumstances. Ja!

**AP:** Now describe for me what you think the qualities and characteristics which are necessary and typical for nature guides.

**IB:** Definitely tolerance, understanding, willingness and patience.

**AP:** And what are the characteristics which you think are undesirable in nature guides?

**IB:** Self-centredness, or rather, let me say selfishness, not having the will to learn, if you're not open minded you're selfish, you're self-centred, this is definitely not the industry for you.

**AP:** Tell me about your philosophy of humans and of nature?

**IB:** I would say that there's no-where that humans and nature do meet. Given the generation at this current moment in life, maybe in the early days yes, but at the moment, I would say no.

**AP:** What do you think it is that has caused people to become so far separated from nature in such a short space of time?

**IB:** I would say fast changing resources, especially modern technology that has made man more reliable on it than natural resources.

**AP:** Do you think that science has been afforded an artificially elevated position in contemporary thinking?

**IB:** Well, think of it this way, if you take a normal Sandton living human being and put them in the bush for 24 hours, chances are they will survive- by pure luck, and if you take a normal rural living human being and you put them in Sandton, they'll probably survive a lot more longer, than any good luck, the opposite.

**AP:** So really that's about most people these days are really urbanized, so they don't have the skills- it's not necessarily science, but technology has protected them from the elements. Would you agree?

**IB:** Definitely. People now days are more science and technology reliant to be able to survive. People cannot live without their cell-phones, people cannot live without their PCs, internet and what-have-you, but out here people living in the rural areas cannot live in the city when they don't have an Aloe, when they don't have a Bushman's Tea, or things like that.

**AP:** Do you think there's a decline in the value attached to traditional culture and religious values?

**IB:** Definitely, definitely so.

**AP:** What do you think is the special value which attracts people to the wilderness or the bush?

**IB:** The majority of people come here because they want to cleanse their soul, they want to revitalize their minds, they want to revitalize their bodies, and they can only get that out here and not anywhere else near a big city.

**AP:** Do you think there is commonly a sense of the primitive origin of humans which attracts people to the wild or to the wilderness?

**IB:** To some extent I would say- there's very few people that have got that kind of perceptive, or knowledge, but the majority do not have a clue.

**AP:** Do you think there's a common sense of a "higher power" which attracts people to the wilderness?

**IB:** In a way yes, in a way no. I know of instances where I would say yes, but in most instances I would say no. Some people would come to the wild, not to do game drives, not to do game walks but to sit and spiritually- what's the word- refresh their souls, and refresh their minds and bodies.

**AP:** What role does the guide serve apart from the safety and relative comfort of the clients?

**IB:** The fulfillment of the trip, the enjoyment of the whole holiday, and the experience and the information that he passes or shares with the clients.

**AP:** Right, let's go on and talk about ethics for a while. Do you think that the "khaki fever" produces problems between (particularly male) guides and (particularly female) clients?

**IB:** I think that's an individual thing. I would not again generalize. You do get those individuals who believe in the "khaki fever" thing, and you do get those that do not. Some lodges or some camps don't even have khaki uniforms for that matter, some don't even have anything that has to do with wilderness uniforms, they just use normal shirts and a different colour uniform for guides so like I said, I wouldn't generalize, that's an individual thing.

**AP:** But do you think that it happens that attractions arise between guides and clients?

**IB:** Well, it's a subject that cannot be argued, it does happen, although on a professional level you cannot let it show, but it does happen. I have known a few guides over the years that are now married to the then clients when they did meet them and they are now husband and wife, and have families and all that you

cannot, you don't know where your future lies, and you cannot really forbid your feelings towards someone who you are really convinced is your future soul mate.

**AP:** What do you think should be the accepted norm concerning guides drinking alcohol with clients?

**IB:** I think every institution has got their *(its)* own operational code of conduct. Madikwe Game Reserve on its own has got the guides code of conduct, and I know we have got our lodges code of conduct. It does once again boil down to your own individual prerogative, you know how far you can go and you know what your limit is, and if you know when you're there then you won't let yourself go overboard.

**AP:** What are the other ethical problems that are commonly encountered by nature guides?

**IB:** Being unable to tolerate each others culture, I think, and the failure to try to understand where other people come from, especially once you're in a group on a vehicle, or in a group out there guiding, being able to tolerate another guide with their short-tempered whatever misfortune. People do have their own skeletons, but if you do learn to tolerate and understand and help each other, that would be a thing of the past.

**AP:** Do you believe that ethics, attitudes and values can be taught?

**IB:** Ethics cannot be taught. You can guide somebody and everything else you can teach people, but ethics, I don't think so.

**AP:** So where do you think you developed your ethical position from, if it can't be taught?

**IB:** Let me rather say this. I would regard myself as fortunate- I've had the right people guiding me throughout my life, from when I was still a child until I got to high school, and through my first job and everything, until I became a guide, I would say I've met the right people and they've always been helpful and guiding and advising and willingly available to help me if I would just sort of stray off line.

**AP:** Let's talk about safety for a while, Ignatius. Can you tell me about the precise origins of the term "The Big Five"?

**IB:** "The Big Five" as far as I know, or let me say my perception of "The Big Five" is, it's a term developed from early days of hunting, and I understand it as the most five difficult or dangerous animals to hunt. That leaves you with lion, leopard, elephant, black rhino and buffalo. That's how I understand the term "Big Five".

**AP:** Well, the interesting thing is that everyone gives me almost the exact description that you've given me, but no-one can tell me anything more precise than that. So, who first coined it, I don't know, and Dr. Ian Player, who is probably the expert in the country, says that the expression "The Big Five" is probably of recent origin, and was made up for commercial purposes, because if you read any of the early hunters, as I have- I've read descriptions from Selous, I've read descriptions even from Rooseveldt, and I can't find any of them making reference to "the Big Five". Does that surprise you?

**IB:** Ja, definitely. To cut a long story short, let me say I don't know. But that has been my perception all along.

**AP:** Do you think your guests are anxious to encounter "The Big Five" as part of their experience?

**IB:** Clients that come to the wild for the first time, or the first few times, yes, are more interested in seeing big stuff, than stopping for a blister beetle, or stopping for an African Monarch Butterfly, or stopping for a caterpillar, or stopping for a millipede track, or picking up a millipede. They're not really interested in things like that. They want to see lions, they want to see cheetah, they want to see elephant, ja! But people that have been coming into the bush for a while, are now gaining interest in small little things that they have overlooked over the years.

**AP:** In your personal experience, and that of your immediate circle, say, other people who have worked at Madikwe River Lodge, which animal species have been involved in life threatening experiences?

**IB:** Mostly elephant, especially in Madikwe, and Black Rhino.

**AP:** Have any of your clients or you ever been under direct threat from one of these animals?

**IB:** I personally had to stop an elephant at 10 metres. Fortunately it worked, I only had to throw my peak cap at his face, and it worked, thanx God for that.

**AP:** So that's the closest one that you know of?

**IB:** That is with me. There have been cases when people got killed, or badly injured, or cars badly damaged, but with me, ja, that's the closest I've been.

**AP:** Would you lead a trail in an area which contained dangerous game without a rifle?

**IB:** I would say I have built enough confidence to do that. I do go out walking on my own without a rifle, without any weapon of a sort, because I'm more alert, and

I'm very much aware of my surroundings when I walk. I tend to think that rifles do give people a very, very false sense of security.

**AP:** Speaking of rifles, if we can go onto the subject for a while, but have you had difficulty concerning the requirements or legislation for you to carry a rifle as a field guide?

**IB:** I would not call it or lable it a difficulty- things do change, and I believe they do change for the best, and with the new Firearms Act that has been implemented over the past three years, I think its for the best, but it's just a long procedure.

**AP:** Do you believe that this will become more efficient in the future?

**IB:** That's my hope, that is definitely my hope.

**AP:** Have you heard suggestions from people at SESETA that a .375 may be deemed to be not adequate protection from dangerous game?

**IB:** I've never come across such information, and I don't know, I've never heard of it. I have read issues written on FGASA newsletter about the different impact between a .458 and a .375, but I think that has to do with what you are dealing with, every wildlife environment is different from one place to the other, so animals will not behave the same from one given institution to the other.

**AP:** Do you know of any instances where guides or their clients were injured as a result of rifles or vehicles?

**IB:** Not in Madikwe, and I really haven't been following most of the stories flying around, but I would say incidents that have happened in Madikwe that I know of are probably a result of history between man and animals.

**AP:** Is it true that you had at one stage and may still have some problematic elephants?

**IB:** That's pretty much so…yesterday afternoon I got charged by a herd of elephants- that was a pretty close call, but we were on a vehicle, so that was OK.

**AP:** Was it a breeding herd?

**IB:** Ja, it was a breeding herd.

**AP:** And what distance did they charge you from?

**IB:** They charged from about 30 metres and they charged for about 40 metres or 50 metres, then they gave up because I just carried on driving.

**AP:** So you were facing away from them, fortunately.

**IB:** When they started charging I was facing towards them, but I was at a road junction, so I managed to reverse out- do a three point turn out, well in time.

**AP:** Sorry, I know you mentioned an incident before that you had on foot, but could you just describe that again in a bit more detail, while we're still on this subject.

**IB:** Well, I was doing a team-building walking session, an hour walking session, and our lodge is on the banks of the Groot Marico River, so we walked out the western end of the lodge and we did a circle around the lodge on a walk doing insects, footprints, grasses, flowers and all that, and we got to a river crossing, and as we started descending into the river, we encountered two elephant bulls that had just finished having a bath. It was a very hot summer morning and they just stormed from out of the water towards us so, ja! I screamed at this one that was in the front, he would not stop until I took off my cap- this particular one- and threw it at his face, and he got a fright. He stopped and he turned around and he ran off, and his companion followed behind him.

**AP:** And then you went and calmly picked up your cap. Were the clients impressed?

**IB:** At this stage I was definitely calm, because you can't let your nervousness show. The clients have to rely on your behaviour, so if you start panicking you've obviously lost control of the group. Yes, I did pick up my cap and check if everybody was alright, and then we had a five minutes breath out breath in session before we carried on back to the lodge. By the time we got to the lodge, the one lady fainted on the couch.

**AP:** Quite stressful, really. Have you heard of the incident, a true story in the Kruger Park where a lion charged the group several times, and a client died of a heart-attack?

**IB:** No, I've never heard that one.

**AP:** The guide- I've never met him, his name is Soury. I've met his wife, but I've never met him.

**IB:** Ignatius, like a good guide guide, I want to back-track and return to some of the trail we've already been over. Naturally, we all have some experiences with "bad"clients, and I think naturally, we all have some experience with burnout. When the two happen at once- when you're sort of gatvol, and you've got the difficult people- that's one of the times that you're really challenged, isn't it?

**AP:** Ja, Anthony, let me start of by saying, first of all you contain your professionalism, and you try to remember what your reason is being at the lodge you're working at. You do get to a point where you just want to hit somebody in

the face with your fist, but instead you go and hit a door or a wall, where the guests cannot see that, and you still come out with a smile.

**IB:** Give us a description of a difficult client- what are the characteristics that really needle you?

**AP:** Difficult clients are people who believe that everything should be done the way they want it, irrespective of rules and regulations, people that believe that because they have paid money, they have the right to whatever they want, they have the right to whatever they paid for. You know, given the time, given the place where you operate from, some things are very, very impossible.

**IB:** Sometimes it's the ethics of guides that they have encountered before. Or it also might be the social experience of those people- they're used to being bosses, and they don't realize the danger of trying to be bosses in something they don't know about. I must stress this. Most of those clients are often very wealthy people, people that are catered to for whatever need they may require, and they don't realize some things are just out of their control.

**AP:** Let's switch across Ignatius and talk about transformation: describe how nature guiding has changed during the course of the six odd years during which you've been a guide.

**IB:** A lot of things have been very, very professionalized, there is a lot of involvement with the government, and a lot of National rules, qualifications and requirements that are part of it, and I would say from when I started until now there's a lot more professionalism that is being injected into the industry.

**AP:** Are the opportunities in field guiding still hampered by the prospective guide's race, gender, economic class or social status?

**IB:** It used to be and at this moment, I would say no. I have got two female guides, I have got two male guides- three male guides including myself, and I get trainees every six month from the Companies Hotel School, and they come as male, female, German what-have-you, it doesn't really matter.

**AP:** Do you think the THETA / NQF system adequately addresses the need for transformation and diversification within the industry?

**IB:** I would say that has caused a lot of confusion at the beginning, and its looking like at the moment its straightening out and people are being more understanding of the whole THETA/SETA/NQF, and a people are now willing to give it a try and that's the qualifications the new guides are introduced into so it is becoming a lot easier for people to understand and get accustomed to.

**AP:** What do you think are the benefits brought by this THETA / NQF system?

**IB:** Well, if it works- I've never been outside of South African borders in terms of my work, but I believe that will work in the whole of southern Africa if you are qualified in the NQF qualification.

**AP:** And what do you believe are the problems with the whole THETA/NQF system?

**IB:** Processing qualifications takes forever to come through, that's the main problem and they need to emphasize on that.

**AP:** Are you still a member of FGASA?

**IB:** Yes, I am.

**AP:** Don't you feel frustrated being obliged to duplicate between a FGASA qualification and the NQF equivalent of the same *(qualification)*?

**IB:** Frustration is the understatement- in Madikwe you've got to have all the qualifications, and if you don't have them, then you're not allowed to guide. To put a plate of food on the table you have to have those to be able to work in Madikwe so that's what I do, I don't have much of a choice, I think I have to oblige.

**AP:** Do you see that there has been increased co-operation between FGASA and THETA?

**IB:** At the moment, I don't know, because I've done my transformation of the FGASA old qualification system, and I did the new one and I just renew whatever I need to renew to be legal.

**AP:** In your opinion is there language bias in the method of testing used by FGASA and do you think there is language bias in the method of testing or assessment used in the THETA NQF system?

**IB:** I would not say bias. Listen, we get clients from all over the world, and if I was to do my qualification in Tswana, that means I would not be able to conduct efficient interpretative game drive or game walk, if I did it in Tswana with somebody who comes from Spain- can only speak a little bit of English- that would be a major, major communication breakdown.

**AP:** So you think that people who are not English first language speakers just have got to accept some amount of language discrimination if you could call it that?

**IB:** I think with the word transformation being the topic here, um, like I said, we will need to give it a bit of time, and give the two, or the major bodies involved in the whole qualifications framework to have to come to some kind of agreement, or

some kind of a system which can work for everybody, at the moment I think we have to deal with what we've got and what works for us.

**AP:** Do you think that- or let's put it this way, if guides were to form a union, would you be keen to join that union?

**IB:** I don't like to talk as such, so being in a union or being in union delegate would definitely not be my piece of bread.

**AP:** Do you not think that there are certain legitimate grievances which guides have- I mean I can propose some- the package, the incentive to get tips, the living conditions and the working hours, and also the perception by the industry that guiding is a young persons job and as soon as you're older and get married, your family is not catered for by the industry?

**IB:** That is very true, but since the government has decided to jump on board, I think they are the ones that should be addressing the issues- given the fact that we carry the county's responsibility, image and a whole lot of things when we do take these clients out there, they should really be making an effort of making sure we are looked after by lodge owners, and all these companies that employ field guides.

**AP:** Do you think the THETA / NQF system adequately addresses the need for transformation and diversification of the industry?

**IB:** Yes, they do. If you go back 20 years, I am sure you were pretty much aware, if not in the industry then, there's a lot of things that have disappeared, like people coming from the army, perceiving themselves as potential guides, because they have been in the jungle or the bush for three years patrolling the border between Moçambique or whatever, you know your true cowboys then, those things are gone, gone with the days. I think yes, THETA is playing a major in the transformation.

**AP:** Do you think that there is any similarity between nature guiding and soldiering? Or do you think that that's purely perception on some people's part, that favour that perception?

**IB:** I would definitely say there used to be, but now those things are gone. People that were there then, are not here anymore, so you've got a lot of young blood in the industry and they are introduced into a lot of professional and good guiding etiquette- the sort of format, and you don't get a lot of those- if you do still get it it's probably your old school boys that are still doing it.

**AP:** Some of the issues of the two industries are still the same though- the ability to shoot well, the ability to track and your general bushcraft, your ability to plan and implement appropriate strategy for whatever you're doing, and of course what

you're doing is different in war and nature guiding, but nevertheless some of those skills exist between both industries don't they?

**IB:** Yes, they do. Being a soldier is something else, being a field guide or game ranger is something completely different, and I think trying and mixing the two, or trying and merging the two to make one is where a lot of things go wrong. That's where you get people attacked and killed by animals, that's where you get people not being aware of their surroundings, not being able to heed warning calls and signs and all this.

**AP:** Don't you think that field guiding and game ranging themselves should also be separated as activities, or do you think that all skills necessary in game ranging are required in field guiding, and vice versa?

**IB:** I think that anybody that registers with FGASA and they get a FGASA module before they write a level I exam should know the difference between a game ranger and a field guide and trying to mix the two will probably complicate things. A game ranger and a field guide are two completely different people and they don't maybe- given their environment- that's the only thing they do have in common, but their job descriptions are completely not the same.

**AP:** Interestingly I found out, both from Mike English in the Kruger Park, (Mike English is the doyen of wilderness guiding in the Kruger Park) and Ian Player who is the same figure in the Natal Parks- both of them felt that the best people for guides were game rangers, and when the guides- guides needed time off, and in their time off they should be doing game ranging duties- and that prevents the kind of burn-out that guides who work with clients the whole time experience.

**IB:** I think they'd probably be talking about the old days of tourism where lodges would have clients on weekends- today it's a completely different subject, you've got a full house from Monday to Monday, and if you are operating every day from Monday to Monday from 5 o'clock in the morning, going to bed at 12 or 1 at night, in three weeks time you definitely do need a break.

**AP:** So you think a decreased number of working days in the month is a better solution than a rotation of duties?

**IB:** Ja, I'll tell you this for a fact. I am a head guide at Madikwe River Lodge, and I start my day if I have clients to take out from 4-30 in the morning and I am always about 11-12, or between 11 and 1 in bed, so if I'm not doing anything particular during the day, I really appreciate my lunch-hour nap, and if I don't get that in a weeks time, I promise you, you don't want to be on my wrong side.

**AP:** And here comes this bastard with a tape recorder to steal the little bit of free time that you have…

**IB:** No, I'll catch up this evening- I'll have an early night.

**AP:** Thanks, Ignatius. Now tell me something- your branding or your style here at Madikwe, or Madikwe River Lodge, what do you consider to be the unique hallmark of guiding- what is the style that you have to try and teach to the new guides that come here. What is the hallmark that makes you unique here at River Lodge?

**IB:** First of all, Anthony, as a guide, you have to establish your client's need, their expectations, and you work around that. I mean you don't want to have somebody that's been on game drives- 145 game drives and then you still take them through the basics of a first-timer, explaining what a wildebeest is and what it does and doesn't do. So, if you have got a guideline of what your clients needs and expectations are, you work around that and you have got that persons needs and expectations met and fulfilled, then…that's what I try and encourage my guides to work around.

**AP:** Yes, I think that that's a very important one, Ignatius. Don't you find that guides still have a tendency of not taking that extra time to actually ask their clients questions, and sometimes there's a tendency amongst new guides to treat the clients as if they know nothing.

**IB:** It does happen. I've been in sightings with a few guides, and fortunately enough some of the people that they've had have been people that I've had on my vehicle, and I was pretty amazed to hear the guides still start from scratch, interpreting a sighting and explaining, you know an animals social behaviour, and this and that, instead of focusing on what the animals behaviour is at that time and interpreting that, they still go back to the life expectancy, gestation period and things like that. It does still happen.

**AP:** And the other thing- obviously if your client is an ornithologist, you're going to facilitate him to guide in any bird sighting that you have or else you're going to get into trouble. A guide's really a facilitator, aren't they?

**IB:** That's very true. People often ask me why don't I do like other guides do, or stop at a sighting and start talking, and I say "I do not believe that's the way you're going to teach people." If I am going to sit around and talk the whole time, on a Sunday afternoon or a Monday morning with people that have been in the vehicle from Thursday or Friday, they're not going to remember a word of what I said to them for the past 6 game drives, so in a way I try and implement or employ a strategy that was employed on me when I was a trainee, of having to figure things out, because that way they have time to think about it and it's not going to leave their minds pretty soon…and I've had Ian Sinclair on my vehicle and we did a lot of birds- ja, I think it does come across, particularly with people of that caliber, I think they can tell immediately if your knowledge is up to scratch, or if you know nothing…

**AP:** And did you pass the acid test with Ian Sinclair?

**IB:** Oh, yes, he was pretty impressed with my knowledge of, especially the LBJs.

**AP:** So you've got your larks and pipits ironed out…I'm sorry I didn't take a bit more time with you then because I've seen one or two that have had me stumped, but obviously operating as you do in the field every day, keeps the hot tips on those things fresh in your mind…

**IB:** Once again it boils down to what you do in your spare time- you know where you battle, and if you take time to work on that…that'll come in handy one day.

**AP:** Ja, I mean I think one of the things with guiding always is that you have to store a whole lot of knowledge that you don't often use. So self-study is one of the critical things in which you can see whether someone's going to become a successful guide or not…

**IB:** Yes, we at Madikwe River Lodge do a week cycle session where somebody does insects for a week and then somebody does trees or flowers or plants for a week. Next week we move onto something, so we rotate the whole information- in five weeks time, everybody has got something new to learn and to teach the others.

**AP:** Of course, learning is one thing, but another thing that I'd like to talk about is assessment. Do you think the assessment system is culturally or otherwise biased?

**IB:** Not that I know of, or have experienced, no.

**AP:** I believe you recently passed your level II exam. Would you like to tell me a bit about that- about your practical assessment?

**IB:** It was nothing out of the ordinary- I knew it would be tough, and knowing who I was going to be assessed by- I think I prepared myself pretty well.

**AP:** Sakkie is known as one of the toughest assessors in the system and some people even argue that he is too tough- I guess you've heard that.

**IB:** Oh, yes. Ja, but I mean, he trained me to be who I am, to be what I am, so I wouldn't notice the toughness. Maybe for someone who doesn't know him very well, not that I do know him that well, but over the time that I spent with him, I think I know what he expects, and ja, I did my best to give him what he expected from me.

**AP:** He is certainly a man who impresses by his own knowledge of things, and not being local to this habitat I am sure you are still impressed by what he does know, for example.

**IB:** Very much.

**AP:** Do you think the THETA/ SAQA system is open to abuse?

**IB:** I have heard rumours, and I'm not quite sure how true they are, but I cannot really elabourate on that, I'm not 100% sure.

**AP:** Do you think you're in a position to comment on the merits of this system compared to the methods used in the past?

**IB:** I don't think so, no. I really don't think so.

**AP:** At this stage I think we've covered most of the information that's written up specifically for my questionnaire, Ignatius, and thank you for being pretty concise and to the point, but is there any other information pertaining to guiding, and guiding at Madikwe, which you think would be useful to me?

**IB:** I think from my side, I don't really have anything. Perhaps if you were to approach the Operational Warden, he'd probably have a thing or two that he would give you or advise you on- he's operating from a higher level than I am so his observation of things in terms of qualifications, and how FGASA/ THETA and the guides work in Madikwe would probably give…he'd have a definitely a different perspective.

**AP:** And from the admin perspective, you must have managed fairly cordial relations with your lodge to be able to have become the Head Guide and stayed here this long. Would you like to talk about your career-pathing in the past and how you see things for yourself in the future.

**IB:** Once again it goes down to your personal attributes, I think, and I always reflect back to why I am here, and what my role is and whenever I am given a task I make sure that I do it to my fullest ability and I think that's why I am where I am today, and I'm working harder to go much further, making it myself as a manager in the near future and I hope it all works out for me.

**AP:** Of course that's one of the frustrations with guiding, is that you reach a certain point where your career-pathing determines that you move out…*(tape ends).*…that is one of the frustrations of guiding is that if you want to progress in your career-pathing then guiding is about a 5 year job, and after that you either have to put up with no progression or you move from guiding into management. Ignatius?

**IB:** I don't tend to look at it that way. That's more like modeling. I don't like to think of guiding as modeling. I believe I can guide till I'm 40-45 or so but over time you do loose energy, you're not as energetic as you used to be, and you tend to find somewhere where you're more relaxed or capable of pacing yourself, and obviously with the inflation rate and a whole lot of things going up all the time, you're looking at better…greener pastures, but I'm definitely going to guide for a while.

**AP:** And what is your vision of where guiding needs to go in the future?

**IB:** I think they need to… that is the parties involved, the government and the qualifications bodies and the lodge owners, and the guides need to work towards a point where everybody benefits accordingly, and they're treated as much as they're expected to give in on their daily jobs.

**AP:** And what do you think needs to be done most urgently to allow such a situation to come about. Who do you think…which of the role-players needs to do the most movement, and in what direction must they move?

**IB:** I think the government, and the lodge managers or owners need to get together and look at the needs and where the guiding industry is going over the next 20-30 years or so and maybe aim at half that time, and try and get a solution before, and make sure that everybody is happy.

**AP:** Now tell me about- you spoke about a bit of guiding on foot, but it seems that most of your guiding is from a vehicle. What percentage of your guiding time is on foot, what percentage is in a vehicle, and what breakdown would you prefer to see as a professional guide?

**IB:** I think my opinion on that will not really matter as much. Given the rules and regulations of where you operate, you tend to balance the things. We are allowed to walk certain animals here, and given the behaviour of certain animals I would love to be walking more, but I am not able to because of some incidents that have happened with elephants and other animals, so it restricts my needs or what I would like to do more, and ja, I'm happy with both at the moment.

**AP:** But in an ideal world, if you had full choice, what percentage of your time would you spend walking compared to driving?

**IB:** I would say 60% of the time I would spend walking because there's a lot more that you see on foot that you don't see on a vehicle- from a vehicle you're always rolling at 20-25km/h, whereas on foot you're much slower than that and there's a lot more that shows up or comes out while you're walking, and you're more at a ground level with everything.

**AP:** And do you think the typical tourists at your lodge are in line with that? Do you see an increase in interest in walking and a decrease in driving if the clients ideal percentage was to be catered for?

**IB:** Not really, you don't get a lot of keen walkers, but with good convincing , yes, you can get it right.

**AP:** Don't you think the people who are keen on walking are usually the more experienced people, the people who have done their fair share of game driving, the people who know all the large mammals, and are now interested in trees and insects and birds and that sort of thing?

**IB:** Yes, that is mostly the case, people that have been on game drives a lot more are more keen to walk and see smaller things, observe smaller things that you don't really get to observe from a vehicle.

**AP:** What are the new small things that you've seen and really enjoyed recently?

**IB:** This year I would say a lot of caterpillars that I've never seen, some I remember from a child- my childhood age, butterflies that I've never seen in a long, long time, but have come through this year because we've had a tremendous lot of rain.

**AP:** Do you think that human influence is the cause of the unduly rainy weather or do you think there's just a natural cycle in nature that brings rainy weather around every so often?

**IB:** I think lately, it has to do with human influence, all this gas burning and ja, it's all human results.

**AP:** Ignatius Bogatsu, I've taken up your small patch of free time that you have in the middle of the day when they're not whipping you and chasing you about. I'd like to thank you very, very much for giving me this hour of your time. I am most grateful, and when I have got it in electronic version I'll send it to you for checking and editing, to iron out any details where I may be misquoting you, or I may have misunderstood what you have to say, but without any moments exception it's been a very enjoyable interview, and I'd love to hear any closing comment from you.

**IB:** Ja, once again, like I said, it's really good to see you after so long, and ja, I don't really have anything much to say, apart from thank you, and I hope to see you again and hear from you once more.

**AP:** Thanks, cheers!

*(Interview ends).*
Transcribed and proofread by Anthony Paton.

## INTERVIEW 14 – MOREMI KEABETSWE

*17h30* *Buffalo Ridge*

MK: I am Moremi Keabetswe.

AP: It's very nice to see you again after some six years; I think it is since we last saw each other.

MK: Yes, yes, it's almost six years. Sometimes, I thank you very much for the training that you have given to us. I think it has been working very well for us.

AP: Well, I know you from your training but tell me a little bit more about how you became involved in nature guiding?

MK: To be honest, sometimes when I started this, you remember the group, which was selected to train, was the group, which was actually part of the community surrounding the park, to benefit from the park. So, I was fortunate in the marketing to be selected, before that I wasn't actually ……. in conservation, I was a teacher then, because of the unemployment issue by that time, I couldn't get employment as a teacher and I decided to do something different and the opportunity came out for nature guiding and I decided to do it. So that's when I decided to do nature guiding.

AP: Will you go back to teaching if you had the choice?

MK: It's almost six years of me doing this; I don't think I'll have to go back there!

AP: So, you think you've chosen your direction?

MK: I think so and I say most of the people that I met, when I explain to them I have been a teacher before they start to appreciate the fact that, they think I'm also doing teaching here, that's part of it. And I just tell them you know what, part of the fact that I'm not going to assess you, that's the most crucial thing I think, to assess your worth.

AP: Neither teachers nor nature conservators earn very big salaries, do they?

MK: No, not really!

AP: So we must think you must love the work. What makes you love it? What you love about it?

MK: You know nature is something that you learn more from, that if you learn more from something like that you probably going to like it and also the good thing about it is that you met different people of which you learn more from other people and the good thing also is when you always out on game drives, you see something different and you get your mind occupied to think differently all the time. You don't get stereotyped like working in an office you got a program that you have to follow. That's how I think it's very good for me and I like it a lot.

AP: Of course, when you nature guide, you remain the learner your whole life, don't you?

MK: That's affirmative. That's another thing, yes!

AP: And when you're a teacher, you're kind of an authority but your clients are often bossy or difficult to you when you're a nature guide?

MK: The thing is you never know who you got in a game drive, so you just to be careful of what you are doing and then you got people who have paid a lot of money and they will want their money worth in there, so you just become flexible with that. So, if they try to become bossy with you, you also try to become submissive, it helps a lot!

AP: You can't always be submissive because sometimes you know better than your clients even though their rich and influential, they don't know everything about the bush!

MK: Yes, that's affirmative, yeah. More over that I am in charge of them out there and if something happens wrongly out there, I am responsible, so I always try to be harsh to them but you know you can't be harsh to your client otherwise we going to upset him and he is not going to come back and we want his business….

AP: Absolutely! Now tell us a little bit about this place, Buffalo Ridge.

MK: All right. Buffalo Ridge is one of the community owned lodges in Madikwe, fortunately it is the first one. We got another one, which is going to be built on the other side of the park, on the eastern side of the park, which is going to be for the community called Malapedi and this one belongs to the community called ……just on the western side of the park. So, by the time we started the programme with you, you recall until you were giving us the training, this thing of the community owned lodge was still in progress, so there wasn't anything that has happened by then and then it took almost seven years to have this building here which is now operating effectively to the benefit of the community.

AP: And how long has it been going for?

MK: It has just been built for almost one year three months now.

AP: And you were here from the beginning of that?

MK: Yes, yeah! I was working with other lodges before and then when this was started I decided just to leave those lodges and come and work for my community.

AP: So, where did you actually work?

MK: I was working at Jackie's as a barman, waitering.

AP: Yes, I remember that!

MK: Yes, and then I decided, I left Jackie's to go and work for River lodge and I had been at River lodge for almost one year and I left River lodge to go and work for ……..lodge, which is also on the eastern side. The owner of the lodge…….for two years there and then I explained to him unfortunately I am just going to leave them because there is a community lodge which is now going to be operated on the western side of the park and then I have to go open up there.

AP: You missed out on guiding for quite a while as a barman. How long did you work as a barman for?

MK: Almost a year, the whole year I worked as a barman and then if I got an opportunity I'll go out for maybe as a tracker for another guide, if there is a need for a relief guide I would stand in every opportunity to go and do it but I missed it a lot.

AP: So, even while you were at Jackie's you managed to do a bit of guiding?

MK: I did, but not a lot.

AP: Why, was there a shortage of opportunities for guides then or did people not appreciate your skills or had you not passed something or what was the problem?

MK: Huh, you know it mainly depended on the owner to decide on you, especially if you was just fresh from school, then maybe he didn't think I was qualified enough to do it so I didn't want to push anything there and then I decided okay I will just wait for him to decide when does he think I am going to be ready and then there wasn't any other opportunities around the park unfortunately, and there was some other things that were, I'll say could have may be got to keep me behind, was I had just received my drivers licence and you know going out and driving a vehicle without that experience is not easy. So they decided just to keep me aside because of that I think and then but by the time they decided to give me an opportunity I think it was a relevant time for me to start doing it full time. They gave me just a minimum opportunity and then the aim was to keep me for another lodge which they were going to build in the future but River lodge desperately needed a guide and I found out that I had to go to River lodge, there was no other way.

AP: So, it worked out well for you in the end, didn't it?

MK: It did, yes it did!

AP: What are qualities and characteristics, which you believe, are necessary and typical for nature guides?

MK: I would say nature guides would actually like to be, you would have to be a practical person, the first thing and then you have to be friendly as you going to deal with the client and then you also have to be, I say, environmental friendly because if you go out there the there will be some opportunities that you will have to deal with and then you also have to make sure that you work in a way that you also conserve the nature though you are benefiting from it. And I would say that's it. And the other thing is that you should also be willing to learn more because you just mentioned that being a guide you actually learn almost everyday, all the time there are opportunities coming out for you to learn and there is things that you don't know, that you think you might be knowing and once you get the opportunity in finding out you don't know that thing you become excited about that.

AP: Absolutely, yeah! And what do you think the characteristics and qualities, which are undesirable in nature guides, are?

MK: You know, guiding is when you do it you have to like doing it. There is a p……. that if you're a guide you get an opportunity of being thanked by your clients, they will give you some gratuity and then if you put money up front, that's when it is wrong because not all the clients will be able to thank you the way you expect to be thanked and once you got something like that, you got a group which doesn't thank you like the previous group, you will take that attitude to the new group that is going to come and that is not going to work for you because you are going to drive that group not with the passion and humour but with the ……

AP: Yeah! Don't you find that, obviously we all like a bit of extra money but sometimes people have said *thank you* with much more enthusiasm and respect and sincerity than other people who have given you money as though they just have to do that?

MK: Yes, sometimes you, you, I think I will appreciate it for words say a lot; *thank you a lot you did a very good job for me* and then I will appreciate that more than getting some money because you find that you got a client who is quite rich, he didn't appreciate what you did but the fact that he can give you money, he just give it out and then you, ya so! I think I appreciate both, even if he gives me something I'll appreciate it but if he does not give me something but says it out I will also appreciate the fact that I done something worthwhile.

AP: But, in a way, it is a bit about the industry taking advantage because you get paid a fairly modest salary and those that pay you rely on the fact that you should get tips over a period of time.

MK: Ya, that's the other thing. When you get employed, they will tell you that you got this kind of a salary plus gratuities, which is something that I think companies generally mention because once you get to know that you are expected to be getting gratuities, if you don't get them, you have to put the blame on someone, which is going to end up being putting the blame on your clients in order……..as if they are forced to.

AP: Ya, absolutely! Because a lot of people don't know that the word tip derives from the phrase *'to ensure proper service'*, that's where the word comes from. So, if you don't get a tip that's the client telling you they didn't appreciate your service or it may be a case where the client has really pulled out all the money they could already to come here!

MK: Yes, yes!

AP: What would you say is your philosophy of humans and nature?

MK: Can you explain it a little bit?

AP: Okay, do you think humans are just another animal in nature or are humans very different from nature, are there a parallel between how humans are with how animals are? That sort of thing!

MK: Oh no, no, no! I'd say we are actually part of nature, we are actually part of nature. There are quite a lot of things that we as human beings basically learn more from animals. And the fact that we have got these game reserves, we have actually intervened in the life of animals because we have actually cornered them, put a fence and said you must stay here. And once we have actually done that, we must always keep on doing it.

For an example, if you get into an area whereby you keep elephants and you started to reproduce a lot you will come to a point that…….filling capacity of the area…….., so there is something you need to do about that, which means you either reduce the number in a way that you don't actually hurt yourself by doing that, you also don't hurt animals. So, I will say we are part of nature and more over that we get to the truth to the point that you like put a fence, there is going to be some limited areas whereby, for example, sources of water, you not going to get water everywhere and animals that stay in that area, if there wasn't a fence around it, they would have known where to get some water because they are clever enough to know where to get all these things. So, you also have to intervene to make sure that things like water sources and areas, you also need to supply to your animals because you have actually cornered them in that area.

AP: Yes, often we compound our problem then and get water provisions and you get over grazing.

MK: Yes, yes that's another thing.

AP: Actually, most animals are not too populous. The really over populated animal is the human being, is that not right?

MK: I would say yes, we are more than elephants. But we think we can squeeze ourselves to live, we are easy to accommodate to live in a small area but if you look at animals, they don't wake up early in the morning to work like we do and they don't have that good mind like we do. I don't know what you call it, but they don't think like we do.

AP: Yeah, they don't have deep thinking!

MK: They don't have deep thinking like we do and we have actually get into their lives. I think even if we can just leave them to live in an area, which is quite nice, and open in freedom you'll be able to control their numbers effectively.

AP: And that's not possible in the world anymore because humans have taken over most of the country.

MK: Yes, yes!

AP: Now, do you think science has been afforded an artificially elevated position in contemporary thinking? In other words, I am trying to say is science like the new religion?

MK: Can you say it again, Anthony?

AP: I am saying is science somehow seen as a new religion, as a new god; we view science as something that everyone must respect and believe in?

MK: I would say so, yes! There is a lot of things we do, as Christian people we do have belief that the world has been created…….. but if you look at science, it says there was a big ball, there was a collapse and then all those things gets formed and then we are now getting to believe more in that because science like that one, it shows you that there is an evidence of saying why we say South America

was just actually, was once in line with Africa because you can see the species that you get in South America, you also get in the western side of Africa. And you can also see where they actually fit together if you put them together if you like make them a parcel. So I think science is actually realistic and we are now talking about global warming which is going to effect as right to the future, or something like that which is part of science and we don't think like, God has put aside things that he is going to put to us to benefit in the future to come, we think about what we see from the science that you get of what is happening around the area.

AP: Are you satisfactorily convinced that the unseasonal weather we are seeing at the moment is a result of human activity?

MK: I am Christian. I don't really want to commit myself there but I will say I think it was time for these things to be happening now but I won't know when to say we might have contributed to this but if you look at point, like if you think about science, you can talk about pollutions and things like that but I think for us to get this more rain, we have been praying to get some rain, so I will say God has given us rain, I don't know what we could have done without it.

AP: Yeah. Do you think that there's been a decline in the value attached to traditional, cultural and religious beliefs?

MK: Yes, there has been a very big decline because we are Tswane people, we have got quite different beliefs from Western cultures but we are almost all, most of us, westernised.

AP: So, you weren't always Christians?

MK: Not really! We are not Christians but we are now almost all westernised because we get to think Christianity is the only belief to get into. And then we don't have our own cultures we used to have; we don't do some other things we used to do. I will give you an example, there is a lot of ……that we believe could be medicines to us, that has been in practice in the past but once you get a headache, knowing that you can use a certain specie of plant to heal it, we don't do that, we just go straight to the chemist.

AP: Yes. Aspirin is easier that whatever tree it was.

MK: Yes.

AP: Yeah. Do you think there is a special value, which attracts people to wilderness or to the bush?

MK: I would say more people like to come to the bush just to see animals and learn more about them. And people that will come over to the bush, they might be people who might have seen some documentaries about the animal and they get to think, you know how about I see this thing happening live. And then I would say thanks to the people that make the documentaries because they make it so easy that we think we see a lion stroking and chasing and killing a wildebeest in two seconds.

AP: Yeah.

MK: Which doesn't happen in real life so those things will push more people to come and think this will happen.

AP: But they might be disappointed.

MK: Yes! No, once they get to see the real thing happening, you then explain to them, you know what you have to be patient enough for this to happen and you then you also have to explain to them that whoever made the thing, he might have made it over a year or more than a year just to get that fifteen minute scene and then they also understand.

AP: Yeah, yeah! No that's certainly the case, isn't it? Do you think there is commoner sense of the primitive origins of humans, which attracts people to the wilderness?

MK: I don't understand that.

AP: Do you think that people have a sense that once we were living as animals as well and it makes them, when they come out here, they get more of a sense how it was to live as a early human, before we had all this technology that surrounds us?

MK: To be honest, I don't think so! But what I think is that I found it is the Europeans and Americans when they come to Africa, they think Africa is, they think differently about Africa, the way I found out from other people and then they also think black South Africans are actually living in the wild with the animals, you get to a point where you think to them if they can have a, let me say an option of having a white guide and a black guide, given the opportunity to choose, they would then choose the black guide because they think if you are black, you know the bush much better than the white person, only to find out, we also have learned like some of the white people have learned about the bush. It's not like we originate, we do originate from there but we lived a western life, we lived with the life that wasn't with the animals there and then I'll say that people that come in, they just come in to seen the animals, people who come in South Africa, who visit South Africa from abroad and thinks we want to see, learn more about the culture, I think they are the people that we think they want to learn more about how black people lived with animals and I don't think also they classify themselves having lived with the animals in the past.

AP: Isn't that quite ironic that your teachers were some white guys?

MK: *(Laughs)* Not really! We just have thought about it and say no, no. They have been out there before us and it has been, it has been one of the careers that we black people never thought about it, the white guys seen it before us and we have just to learn from them and

AP: Yeah, I think we all learn from each other

MK: Yes.

AP: It would be nice one day in South Africa when you're not just a white person or a black person but you're just a person.

MK: Yes, yes. I think we are getting that way.

AP: Yeah, is there commonly a sense of a higher power, which attracts people to the wilderness?

MK: What, what?

AP: When I say this is fabulous, it makes me think of a creator, something like that.

MK: Yeah, that's affirmative. When they do come up here, you find that lot people when they are in this kind of environment they think this is the real life. When you think about life, this is the real life. The thing is, it's very, very quite. Once you get called, it's either an animal call or a bird call which is a melodious call to listen to and the other things is, the build up, if you look at the surrounding areas, you think about, more about the creative process. You think why he did decide to put hill there instead of there and all things match with each other unlike if you stay in a city. The buildings that you see, they are all man made, you stay in a flat you see everything the way, not the way in which it was before. Everything you see has been constructed to be like that. And I think most people do appreciate to stay in the bush. If they got an option to stay in the city and the bush, I say they will prefer to stay I the bush because they think the bush is the real life.

AP: What roles do you think the guides serve, apart from the safety and relevant comfort of the clients?

MK: I think as a guide, you are also an ambassador to your country so you have to make sure you actually represent the whole country very well. The other thing is they, the guests, rely on guides as a teacher and whatever you're going to tell them, their going to take it the way it is, teach them about. To us the clients will be like kids at school. They don't know things and they come to the school to learn and once you tell them a wrong thing, they get it wrong and it is very difficult to take it out of them and then I think there is a way the guides should be. We try by all means to be honest enough to our clients and to make sure that we teach them effectively and then you know, here and there you might make some mistakes because nobody is perfect but we try by all means to make sure that whatever I say is something that I found out amore about it and if ever there is any client in the vehicle that knows better about that you are also flexible to get his point of view and then you will learn something more from him and then if you get convinced of what he is saying and then maybe could use some research that you have made, you also get to align yourself with that or maybe go further to research more about that and find out that the client was right and correct whatever you have been saying in the pastcbecause it is wrong.

AP: You sometimes get surprise if you find a client who is very knowledgeable?

MK: Not really! Sometimes you get into a vehicle like I said, you never know what you got in the vehicle so if you find out the client knows more about wildlife you also get to involve him or her so that you can learn more, so that you can also impart more knowledge for some other clients. So, it's not actually surprising you also know that some other people have been exposed to this a long time ago, before we did and then they know much better than we do.

AP: Do you think guides take enough effort to find out whether they got such an expert in their midst?

MK: Not really. When we normally start, when I do my game drive I just start as if I don't know who is in the vehicle and if there is any person who has been exposed to these kinds of environment in the vehicle I will just find out with the question that he is going to answer, he is going to ask sorry and then with some question that he is going to make as we go out to the game drive. Because I think if we can find out from the start who you got in the vehicle, you're not going to do it right, so you have just to do it as if all the people involved doesn't know a thing and then that's what I think is good to do. If you know that someone who's sitting in the vehicle is an expert in drives, you're probably going to just drive because you don't want to commit yourself by saying you know this kind of drives, what if you do a mistake and they just mention you are wrong about it, you feel like. And once you are wrong with one thing the clients that you are guiding will think whatever you are going to say thereafter might also be wrong, just that there's no one to prove you wrong in the vehicle.

AP: But surely you can say, do you agree with me to that person who you know is an expert?

MK: Yes, yes.

AP: So, is that right?

MK: Yes.

AP: So, one of your skills is to be facilitator?

MK: Yes, yes.

AP: Moremi, let's talk about ethics for a while. Do you think that Khaki fever produces real problems in relationships between particularly male guides and particularly female clients, that romantic attraction to the guides can cause a problem?

MK: I think yes it can. You know we are guides, we are also human beings and you end up studying guiding as a youngster and then you are in an environment whereby you are exposed to see the ladies and then it is part of life to come across ladies and then propose them is such a light. So, yes you sometimes do get very nice ladies that you get tempted to speak to on the game drives but there is what we also must find as a professional, like a professional boundary, you treat your clients like your student at school so you don't have to propose your student because once you do that, you got a student who is going to treat you as a partner than as a teacher and then when you go out on a game drive and then you got to propose to a lady and then you start keeping interested, you know when the relationship starts that there is always some misunderstanding here and there and then you not going to agree with her on all the things because there is something…….to use other things just to tease you or to find out if you really love her. And then, that might also disrupt the whole game drive when you got some other client. And then you also try to be professional enough, if you propose a person and you suddenly don't get to agree on one point you might have a negative attitude towards that person which we are supposed not to be having as a client. I say we get tempted a lot but we just try and control our self on that.

AP: What do you think should be the accepted norm concerning guides drinking alcohol with clients?

MK: I would say, to me I'll say, you are welcome to do that but you can only do it when you are hosting a client for dinner and then you must have a limit because once you get drunk, you'll end up saying things you're not supposed to be saying and then you can also get drunk and the next day you're on a hangover and then you're supposed to be sober minded to take a game drive and then it's not going to be looking good.

AP: Yeah, so you think guides must be mature enough to know where the limit is and where to draw the line?

MK: Yes.

AP: What are the other ethical problems, which you commonly find with nature guides?

MK: I don't know if this could be one of it! I'll say with guides you sometimes get to be money-driven if you get to a point whereby you expect your clients to give you more tips, you end up not being environmentally friendly whereby you get to a point of pushing more to think you will impress your client to give you more and then that thing is very bad to us. You shouldn't be doing it but just sometimes coming out. For example, you get to see the lions lying in ……because it is very hot, it's where they can only get the shade. Your clients cannot see those animals clearly and then you think you haven't done your work by not showing them clearly, you end up having to push them out the …….., which is not environmentally friendly, which is not good to them and to the environment.

AP: Yeah, it's not ethical conduct.

MK: It's not ethical conduct, yeah. But if we are not money-oriented we could have done it much better. Yeah, and I don't know what to say more on that. It's like everybody is doing it and you are supposed not to.

AP: Yeah, so you get caught up in other people's lack of ethics and you compete with people that don't have ethics.

MK: Yeah.

AP: So, you all drive each other to some level of pushing the boundary. You all know that's not ethical but you land up getting to do it. And do you think that does happen to people?

MK: I think it does.

AP: And you would say it happens to you?

MK: I would say it does.

AP: So, you all push each other, on other words?

MK: We all push each other, yes.

AP: And what about authorised driving is it the same problem?

MK: Yeah, we try to have some limit to doing it but sometimes, like I said, you get pushed by your clients to do it.

AP: If that other guide can pull his vehicle there to see the lions, then you'll have do it.

MK: You have to do it, yes. The other thing is, if you do it, if one park guide do it and you think you can't do it, the clients will look at you and say you don't want to do it for them. So you end up having to do it even though you know it's the wrong thing you're doing.

AP: Yeah, you have a word with the other guides afterwards?

MK: We normally have some meetings in our area there of operations and when we go in this meeting we then discuss things like this where, by the time…….I don't think was necessary but though I followed you because I didn't want to make my clients feel like I don't want to do it for them. And then we are actually in competition with other lodges, though we are not fighting. If you get to see to a point that one lodge can go and you can't do it, you are likely to loose your clients to that lodge. So you are trying always to keep your clients happy by doing whatever is good to be done. But if you can maybe just explain to your clients that *I am not allowed to be doing this, do you think it is worthwhile doing it,* and they think it doesn't then you just have to leave it.

AP: You don't always win but you sometimes gain?

MK: Yes, yes.

AP: Do you think that ethics and attitudes and values can be taught?

MK: No, not really. It is something that you grew up with, it is something within you. So, it is very difficult to say this is what you have to do, this is what you shouldn't be doing. It might just come from you to know that if I'm doing this I'm wrong, I shouldn't be doing it.

AP: But it must be taught at some stage if you have that in you, may be it's something you only learn as a child, you can't teach it to adults?

MK: Yeah, I don't know what I can say that had to be taught but a person has to be guided.

AP: Do you throw litter down in the park?

MK: I don't really do it.

AP: Ok, do you always know not to throw litter in a nature area?

MK: No.

AP: You must have been taught?

MK: Yes, I was taught as a child I shouldn't be doing it.

AP: So, you are saying that ethics can be taught?

MK: *Laughs*

AP: But may be only to children?

MK: Only to children, yes?

AP: Not to teach them to adults?

MK: Yes, yes.

AP: Why is that? Why is it difficult to teach adults?

MK: I think adults they got to this point of knowing. And they also like, they always got a question why, so……someone that ask you why, you don't have a clear reason to answer that why question then he's going to do it.

AP: Don't you think adults have already got their habits and ethics become a habit? Good ethics is a habit?

MK: Yes, yes.

AP: And that's why it is best to teach ethics to children because then it becomes a habit to not throw down litter. And when someone has got a habit of throwing down litter it is quite hard to persuade them to *wait, that's not a good thing that you're doing.*

MK: Yes, yes.

AP: We're going to talk now a little about safety around here. What are the precise origins of the idea of the big 5? Where does it come from, the big 5?

MK: All right. What I know about the big 5 is that it is the 5 difficult animals to hunt on foot, that's why the name big 5. It is actually a hunter name, not in size but…….

AP: Do you know who that hunter was that made up that name?

MK: No.

AP: To be honest, I don't know either and I have been researching it very hard and Ian Player, who is probably the expert on nature guiding in South Africa, says he thinks that phrase of the big 5 has been made up recently, within his lifetime and it didn't exist in the old hunters and I can tell you I read ……., it doesn't exist in …….., I've read various other hunters and none of them have mention of the big 5. Is that a surprise to you?

MK: It's a big surprise.

AP: So, I don't know. If ever you do find out who the first person to coin the phrase of the big 5 was, please do tell me and there will be a tip for you. How do clients have to, come to this expectation of the big 5?

MK: I think it is something that has been pushed, each and every area in nature conservation, it always pushes to say we offer big 5. So that's why the people will come because of knowing that the area offers the big 5, they will come to see the big 5.

AP: So, if the clients didn't make up this big 5 themselves, where does the preoccupation of the big 5 come from?

MK: I don't want to commit myself there, I am not really sure.

AP: Yeah because I think it is a marketing thing.

MK: It is a marketing thing like I said.

AP: It is hard to compete with. Someone says we've got the big 5 and you say we've got very nice bird life, where will most people go?

MK: They will go to the big 5.

AP: So, it is a marketing thing that people have got into. In your personal experience and those in your immediate circle, the people that work here at Buffalo Ridge, which animal species have been involved in life threatening experience?

MK: I would say elephant.

AP: Elephant?

MK: Yes, elephant.

AP: So, that seems to be the answer for most of Madikwe?

MK: Yeah.

AP: So, have you ever had cause to shoot an elephant?

MK: No, I haven't.

AP: Have you ever had a client injured or killed by an animal?

MK: No.

AP: Have you ever been injured or threatened by an animal?

MK: No.

AP: Have you ever trailed them around?

MK: I have been chased a couple of times but not in a very bad instance.

AP: So you……elephant?

MK: No.

AP:

MK: I am not sure what you are trying to do……..?

AP: Because Kruger has been honest about their record. In fact I've actually seen their record; they shot 41 animals in the history of trails since 1978. Is that surprise you?

MK: Yes. I think, I don't know but on the marketing point of view, this and this has happened; you're also saying to your clients you are not safe to be there.

AP: You still go on trails at Kruger Park; those trails are booked choc-a-bloc.

MK: Yeah.

AP: Yeah, but it's not like very public information but I'm just saying I've researched it and I found out, you know what the most shot animal is?

MK: No.

AP: White rhino.

MK: Is it?

AP: Yeah, does that surprise you?

MK: It does because

AP: You would have thought elephant wouldn't you?

MK: Yeah.

AP: Yes, well its 12 white rhino to 11 elephants to 8 buffalo, 7 hippos and I think 3 lions.

MK: All of them in trails?

AP: All of them in trails. That's the record for trails here, I don't know if there have been any vehicle incidences but that's the trails records. Now would you lead a trail in this area without a rifle?

MK: No, I won't.

AP: Will you walk on your own without a rifle?

MK: Not really. It all depends on the distance that I have to walk, to the point that I am walking to. For example, our lodge is about 100m from Madla village and sometimes we will just walk to the pub.

AP: Yeah, you don't mind that?

MK: Yes. But I won't just walk in a thick area where I am not sure what's happening around there!

AP: So, if you had to go to Leeusfontein now?

MK: I won't do it, I won't do it.

AP: What would you be thinking about in your head?

MK: What if I come across an elephant on the way.

AP: And have you had unpredictable behaviour from elephants?

MK: Yes.

AP: Has it been …….or been…….. or both?

MK: I would say mainly it has been ……..

AP: Yeah.

MK: Yeah.

AP: Your major concern here at Madikwe you think is the breeding herds of elephants?

MK: Yes, I will say the breeding herds on elephants.

AP: And how is the conduct of the bulls here?

MK: The bulls are quite well relaxed. It really depends.

AP: Is it very…….. And you get buffalo around here?

MK: Yes, we do get some buffalos but we normally get to see big herds of buffalos'.

AP: And are they well behaved?

MK: I'll say they are well behaved. I think it is because they are still very shy so you don't get to see them clearly, once you get to see them they are always lying in their herds and you never get to a point whereby you get to push them. So, we never get to see their real behaviour but I think they are well behaving.

AP: That's good. And lions, have you ever had trouble from lions?

MK: Not really no.

AP: And leopards, you just lucky if you see them?

MK: Yes.

AP: And how are the rhinos around here?

MK: The rhinos I say, white rhinos are quite a lot…….but the black rhinos, there had been a couple of incidences that I was charged by black rhinos.

AP: So, it wasn't like they were really gunning at you, they were just like giving you a mock trial?

MK: Yes, I think so.

AP: Have you ever encountered the black rhino on foot?

MK: No.

AP: Where the black rhinos mainly found?

MK: You get to see them spread almost all over Madikwe but……..

AP:

MK:

AP: It seems to me if you look at the South Africa…….., that the white rhino has been substituted by the black rhino in the big 5?

MK: Yes.

AP: Also, marketing again?

MK: Yes, that's also marketing. We don't even mention to the clients if they ask you about the big 5, we just explain to them that ..…..and you don't actually them that the black rhino, instead of the white rhino. As soon as they see a rhino, they saw one of the big 5.

AP: Because you want the list of big 5 creatures to be bigger?

MK: Yeah.

AP: And what about the small 5?

MK: *Laughs*

AP: You know the small 5?

MK: I know the small 5.

AP: You tell it to your clients?

MK: It gets to a point whereby the clients know a bit about the small 5and I go the extent of explaining to them and showing them the national buffalo rivers…….

AP: On the western side of the windmill……

MK: Yes.

AP: Have you ever encountered an incident where yourself or anyone you know was injured either by a weapon or vehicle?

MK: No.

AP: Because I know that when I did my game ranging practical they told us that weapons and vehicles are more dangerous than animals.

MK: I'd say yes but I never had an incident or I don't know anybody that's been actually troubled by that.

AP: What……

MK: You tell me.

AP: I'm asking because I am not sure but I think that's a ……..

MK: Is it?

AP: Lets talk about transformation in the industry now, Moremi. Do you think that nature guiding has changed during the time that you've been working, the past six or so years? Is there a change in nature guiding?

MK: No, I don't see any changes. I think the only that has that I think may be considered changes is more opportunities being given out to everybody now.

AP: Ok. That was actually my next question I was leading into. I was going to say are the opportunities in nature guiding still hampered by …….guides, race, gender, social status and economic class?

MK: No. Because what now is happening is you can operate in an area and then if you get assessed……

AP:

AP: And a lot of people don't realise that. When you pass level 1, they say so what, eh? Have you done your level 2 yet?

MK: Not yet unfortunately Anthony because I have been involved in the set-up of this community lodge so I never had an opportunity to study further, to do other levels and for now I am part of the management of the lodge, this them makes it very difficult for me to study further, to uplift my level. For now I am busy doing my management thing so then

that will balance. So I am making an opportunity to be able to settle for one thing, if I was just a guide, a full time guide all the time, I would say I would be busy doing level three now. But, unfortunately because of I am also doing the management part of the lodge, I am now busy focusing on doing the management part because maybe in the future, in a years time, to take over the managers of this community lodge.

AP: Tell us more about the community lodges and how it developed and how it happened to be your community that produced this lodge here.

MK: The opportunity was given out to the community surrounding the park to build the lodges inside and then we were fortunate to be the first community to do that and what happened is, the community then, through the assistance of a group of consultants from……..raked up the money to build up the lodge and then we ended up having this structure here which has cost us something like R8.8 million to be constructed and after that……

And then we hired a private company called …….to do marketing for us…….so they actually doing marketing and operating of the lodge for us. So what is now happening is……

AP: Right Moremi, we're back again and hopefully we'll have our normal voices back. You want to just do a quick testing into the mike?

AP: Yes, it sounds like we sound okay again Moremi. You were just telling me a little more about how your concession was being managed.

MK: Like I was saying, we as the community got the building of the lodge and then it has been marketed and operated by ……because marketing is the most important thing in a lodge. So we got them to do marketing for us just because they are good in doing it and then we got, I don't know if I said it before, but we've got a 45 year lease on the land and then we got a 10 year contract with the …….who market for us. So we believe that after that 10 years, we'll be able to market and run the lodge as a community for the rest 35 years by ourselves and then the whole income will be then going straight to the community without sharing it with anyone else.

AP: But Moremi isn't that quite a strain on someone like you because you are expected to learn management skills and guiding skills?

MK: Yeah Anthony, it's a bit difficult. You know most of the time I'll be out on a game drive, conducting a game drive and then I also have to be around the lodge, to see that the lodge everything runs smoothly there, of which something that I can't do and then what we actually trying to do in the future is we do have some trackers which act as junior guides and then we are trying actually to implement skills to them of guiding, so we think maybe in a years time we'll be able to have them to be guiding and then we'll be able to do management full time.

AP: Isn't one of the problems with guiding is that there's no long time career pathing for guiding, so what happens is that guides sometimes land up staying as something like a senior guide and not being promoted for a very long time, will the alternative be to go into management?

MK: Yeah, it is. We think actually being a manager of a lodge with your experience of guiding is a very good thing and then you know what you expect your guides to be doing, if they are doing it wrongly you will be able to advise them how to do it better and then I think it's actually guiding will limit you, you can't go anywhere else. Once you're a guide, you're a guide. You can't leave guiding for nothing, for anything else sorry. And I think if you're a manager, you will be at some other stage wishing to be going out with some clients to have more knowledge then because you think you still can do it. And then I think what you'll be doing is, having tour guides being trained as guides at some stage, if there is a need for us to have a real guide, it will be opportunity for us to go out again and do it.

AP: It creates a third pressure on you as well because then you've got to be a good trainer.

MK: So, unfortunately I'll have to be. But, you know once you were actually thoroughly trained I think you can also be a good trainer. So you also have to just implement that knowledge that has been implemented on you, to someone else. And then I think I got an opportunity, got may be an advantage of having being a teacher before that, I can also be able to impart knowledge on some other guides effectively. I hope its happening but I am trying my level best to make sure that my tracker is getting more out of me to be as good as I am.

AP: Now, what would they have done Moremi if they didn't have you?

MK: I think they will have someone else better than me.

AP: Perhaps. Now, let's talk a bit about training. How do you think, what are the skills that you need to train a good guide? What are things that you admired about the training than you got from people like Saki, …….., myself as well?

MK: I think you guys had quite a knowledge of the bush and you actually taught us a lot, which is something very important, and then you were also very easy people to talk to and then you actually made our life very easy. You know you were actually in a situation whereby you had to learn something that you never got exposed to before and then we were like, like we said in the past, we were supposed to be teaching adult something to live with in the future, it could have been difficult for you guys to do it but the way you handled it was very, very good. And then I think we also, I have developed that kind of a skill thinking that in the future I will be able to use the skill that you have used to impart knowledge on me, impart knowledge on someone else.

AP: I have met your tracker, Franco, who I am sure is effectively a trainee guide. What do you do with Franco everyday to make sure that he is ready?

MK: We, before we leave for game drive, let's say we go out on the game drive and then I always tell him that he must actually listen to me here and there clearly and he is very good in doing it. When I make a mistake he can just easily point it out and say today you have said that instead of this, which makes it, which is actually quite impressive for him to be able to help me. I think I am his teacher and if he can point out a mistake, which means he has learnt a lot. And we sometimes we always ask him if he understands a thing because sometimes it is difficult for him to ask me a question when I'm with some clients. I'll say he better just keep it and when we get back to the lodge, he'll say you

know you said something about this but I didn't clearly understand what the thing was and then I'll explain to him in a better way and sometimes if he sees something which he is not sure of, I always ask him to point it out even if out on a game drive so that you can all learn from it. Sometimes you'll be seeing something that he doesn't understand so may be I do know about the thing so I'll explain. But we always try to push things together and always try to relay things together there again. If maybe I had identified something like a tree, which he is not sure about, if we get back to the lodge, he'll try to look it in the book and then if he cant find it and he will come to me and say Moremi, can you please help me with that tree that you identified and we talk about everything.

AP: But the other thing that Franco doesn't have that's taken you quite a while to acquire is the language and literacy skills that you have.

MK: Yes, you know I would say speaking English. English is not our mother tongue so you always struggle to be able to express yourself. So, what I always try to push into him is that he must try always to speak it because that's the only way to learn it. I think he becomes shy and it becomes very difficult and so if we are hosting guests together for sundowners, I always ask him to be able to speak to the guest. Sometimes I leave him with the vehicle, may be I'll go somewhere else and the guests will ask him some questions and I don't want to interfere when I find him busy explaining it to the guest because it's the only way to learn.

AP: Yeah, absolutely. And is he enjoying that or does he find it terrible?

MK: He is, he is actually enjoying it.

AP: And who else have you got besides Franco?

MK: We've got Sidney. He's always been out with Godfrey so he is also learning something from him.

AP: So tell me what's the special, what do you think what's the special selling point of Buffalo ridge?

MK: Being a community lodge, sells for itself. And then guiding in Buffalo ridge I'd say we are doing it quite differently from other lodges. We try by all means to guide and then put more of our cultural interpretation into it which makes it different from other guides and then people also like the fact that we are community owned and then we are guides from the community which means they think what we are doing is what we actually understand. And I think it is a selling point itself.

AP: Yeah. I mean I must agree with you about that, I think maybe it's going to become even more of a selling point in the future. But do you think that the assessment system from Peter or……..can be culturally or otherwise biased against the learners? In other words, it has not appreciated some of your traditional knowledge, that sort of thing.

MK: I don't think so. I think they just have to acknowledge that and they just have to say your cultural knowledge is something that you ……so I don't know really how they are able to assess you on that because it might be something which is ……..down, so they just have to acknowledge it.

AP: But, most of the assessors are still white these days?

MK: Yes.

AP: So, it's almost like we replicated the old system again? But really it's not a racist thing that those people got chosen on but more on that they have the educational background to make it into that system.

MK: Yes.

AP: So, it's almost like we're replicating the same unevenness in our society in a different way. You think of the system as unfair?

MK: I don't really think it is unfair. I think we are getting there. We got late on to this thing and we then don't actually blame anyone on it, I think we are getting there. So, in the future we will be able to be assessors also.

AP: Do you think that …….system is open to abuse?

MK: To be used effective or?

AP: No, to abuse. Unfair assessment by judges!

MK: I don't think so.

AP: Do you think it is fairer than any system you've known before?

MK: I don't want to say it is fairer than any other system because I don't think I've been exposed to any other system in this kind of industry before.

AP: But you satisfied that the system is fair?

MK: I would say it is fair. The fact that it has given opportunity to a lot of guides to be able to express themselves and then a lot of people like you, for example……is not good enough, he can't pass his…….but he can be assessed as a local guide which is very good thing. I think it is very fair and well I appreciate that fact a lot.

AP: Now, conditions with guides are quite variable. We've spoken about cultural bias; we've spoken about language. What are the other problems, you could say, are encountered by guides?

MK: Maybe, I don't understand the question

AP: Ok, well maybe I'll just prompt you directly. Do you think guides work hours, which are too long? Do you think guides live in conditions which are often, well not conducive to families or cramped or too small? Do you think guides get paid too little and do you think employers of guides rely too much on the guides getting tips?

MK: Yes, I will say absolutely. I think what is actually happening is being a guide, you always have to be, you are working with some clients and then you are expected all the time to be friendly to your clients but you, for example, if you get to work to be working

long hours it actually gets to a point that we get so tired that we can't do it. And then we are also human beings, we also get tired and then we don't have to be dead tired not to be able to understand yourself because once you get to that point you become very useless and then your guiding skills just drop. So, I'll say, working more hours is actually killing us at times and the other thing like you spoken about is the tips. The fact that the employers put tips up front is also killing us because we're……..get employed, it sounds as if tips…….of your salary and sometimes it doesn't come out and then it brings the whole attitude that if you guide you always need to be tipped and if it doesn't happen, you just have an attitude of not appreciating what you have done.

AP: Yeah. Do you think therefore that guides should aim towards unionising, a specific union directed to guides, to nature guides or to guides in general?

MK: I am not sure if that will work but I think there should be a very good relationship between an employer and a guide. I think that it is the only thing that is going to work effectively. If your employer, I'll say if, for example, that's why I was saying that I do appreciate a manager to have been a guide before because he has been put through that kind of environment of being a guide. He knows what difficulties that come across and then what actually are the things that pushes a guide to be doing the things that he is doing. And then being a manager and then have guided before, you will be able to know that if your guide says you know what I am tired today, you will understand the situation he is talking about. But if you have been doing something different and then you become a manager of a lodge you won't understand when a guide says he is tired because you think what he is doing is just sitting on the Land Rover driving and sitting on the land rover coming back which is, you think, not a work.

AP: Yeah, he is just a ……, he doesn't have a clue! You will be interested to know, I think, Moremi that some of the top guides in the industry recommend that you can only guide for half of your working hour. Ok, so that's a week on and a week off or a month on, a month off or six months on, six months off. Even an old veteran like Ian Player, he says, that's right, that's how that has to be.

MK: Shuuh!

AP: Otherwise, you won't last for long.

MK: Yeah, sure.

AP: It is suggested that you should do other work in the mean time, not that you should have a six whole months in the year not working but you should do something different, game range, managing, whatever it is that is suitable for your level so that you're not with clients the whole time, so the clients don't make you mad. And we all agree about that as all of us have been guides for a long time till we became unreasonable with clients and then you can't do your service to the full.

MK: No, I do agree with that. I always find it so difficult for me, if I arrive from my office I always feel so energetic, I always know that the first clients I am going to have will receive the best of …….but once I am nearer to my……..I am exhausted that I sometimes just do some patch ups because I am so tired and then it doesn't come out in me, I am so tired, I am trying my level best but it doesn't come out.

AP: The one thing that guides have to realise is you often think it is only you that becomes like that; that becomes rusty, drained and grumpy and tired an all that stuff but in actual fact it's a common thing with the industry, I found. So I, may be guides, may be what that suggests is guides don't communicate with each other well enough to know that we all experience the same thing.

MK: Yeah, may be. I think it is also a time factor that. We never have time to spend with some other guides, you know I am working Buffalo ridge, ……..is working with ……..once he got his seven days off, I am busy at the lodge and once I got my seven days off, he is busy at the lodge. We never get a chance to be together and in between when I am not busy if I don't have some clients, he's busy with some clients so you never get a chance to be together to share ideas or……..

AP: Yeah. I thinks that's the key problem because you are quite close to each other, both sort of intellectually and in space but in time you kind of got programmed that you can never meet with each other, you can never communicate with each other except on the radio. You know if I am on the radio that's only because there is a piece of business that's got to be concluded and you conclude it in these terms, in radio terms, it's very quick. You don't actually have a whole afternoon workshop which, if your management all coordinated with each other, you could have whole afternoon workshops and you could realise that a lot of people are having the same experiences as you.

And he wanted to hit them in the face, you know. And it's not so unusual and it wasn't them it was me, you know. Look what usually happens, the chances are when you are very tired, is when you get the very bad clients, those two things add up to that feeling you know. If you get a good client and you're tired, that's fine. If you're fresh and you get a bad client, that's also fine, you can manage that but when you're, when you are tired, they talk about burnout, the word is burnout and all these top veterans talk about burnout.

Now tell me something, another thing Moremi, we spoke a little bit about, about using weapons and anything like this and I had interesting discussions with both John and Ignatius concerning the similarity and differences of a nature guide and a soldier. Do you see any kind of similarity between a nature guide and a soldier?

MK I don't think there are similarities there.

AP: Because, these old white men all see these similarities and these young black men, none of them see the similarities. But let's consider a couple of things. Both a soldier and a nature guide work with rifles; both a soldier and a nature guide need to have good tracking skills; both the soldier and a nature guide need to have good tactical skills or plans of the activities that they do. I mean obviously there's differences we are going into but isn't it quite surprising to think that you are more similar to a soldier than you might have considered?

MK: Yeah we are. But I think we both have a rifle but I got a rifle as a last resort to use to me but I think a soldier to him it's the first thing to use, once he gets in trouble the rifle has to rescue him. But I got a rifle, to say, when I get into a situation whereby there is nothing I could have done or there is nothing I could do by then, then I resort to using it.

AP: All right, who suggested this idea to you?

MK: I would say, I remember I think on my training this was also being, I was being taught about this thing that you should always in a situation of ……..and elephants you must always have an escape route which is going to help you a lot because when you get cornered by an elephant at some other stage, you got nothing to do which you then have to resort to the only thing to do is to shoot it.

AP: Ok, who is the person that taught you this?

MK: No, I can't remember this.

AP: Because you know what, all three of you have said this so someone taught it to you very well.

MK: Yes.

AP: I suspect it's Saki.

MK: It could have been Saki. I can't remember who it is actually.

AP: Ok, well whoever taught you this taught you this very well because all three of you have strongly stressed this difference that although you carry a rifle and you must be able to operate it well, it's a last resort.

MK: Yes.

AP: So, I think, to me, it's a distinguishing feature of Madikwe because I've never heard that being if once says that put them in corner but all three of you have actually said that very, very clearly without prompting. So I suspect you got Saki to thank for that.

MK: I will say thank you to Saki.

AP: Yeah. Now look, in a way, I am very happy because I also not like the older white men, maybe it's a generation thing, I also believe that the weapon is there as a last recourse and although we have some similar skills to soldiers, I don't think any of us aspire to be soldiers. You see the other thing is those older white men were in the second world war as soldiers and the people that came before them were in the first world war soldiers. You look at the history of how did they set up these units and also maybe in Madikwe, you haven't had the anti-poaching unit, so you haven't had the units that are more like soldiers and you can see the separation between game rangers and field guides because in Kruger they work more with game rangers working as field guides and field guides working as game rangers and so on. You see the benefit of that?

MK: No.

AP: You know that's the time off for the field guide who gets to do something different.

MK: Yeah, I think it's a very good idea, actually it's a very good idea because once you get to be ……with clients, you don't stay with clients and once you break off you go and just do the environment.

AP: Yeah, is there no chance of that happening in Madikwe?

MK: I don't think so.

AP: Because they have separated out the two jobs very, very extremely so there is no ways you'll work on anti-poaching jobs, there's no way you'll fix roads?

MK: Fixing roads we do but patrolling around the park we don't because we thing it is a government post to be doing it and we are working privately sometimes, so it's quite different.

AP: Yeah. Do you ever meet with those guides that work the patrol?

MK: Not really. Sometimes we just do come across them as you drive when they are out on the patrols, then you just ask them what they found and what's been happening around the area which they've been patrolling. So you never got to a point of sitting down with them and talking certain things.

AP: I think, may be on of the things about Madikwe that I picked up is that it is over-specialised; one side doesn't talk to the other side like they do in Kruger.

MK: Yeah, I would say we come together as guides almost every month, in the first week of the month, we do come together as one and then there is the Parks board guys, I would say, the game rangers will be represented by the …….or their leader there and if ever there is anything they come across they would then relay to us, we also relay whatever we come across in our guiding but we never get a chance to be sitting together being, like to do face each other, face to face, we always be sending someone else to do…….

AP: Yeah. So you agree, there is in some way a communication problem?

MK: Yes, yes.

AP: Okay, let's finish up now Moremi. What is your vision of nature guiding in the future?

MK: Can you explain this vision?

AP: Your vision, what you imagine, how would you like things to be in 5, 10, 20 years time in guiding?

MK: I think, what I think is, we in Madikwe we are very special we live in Madikwe. To us, operating very close to the community and then we are aiming to be the community, to get the community to develop together so I think in the future we have to make sure that the opportunities are given out to almost everybody around the park. And then maybe the key people who have started this thing, I think what we are left with is to make sure that we do get our younger brothers and sisters to be guides in the future. We don't want to take Madikwe to ourselves but we want to benefit more from Madikwe and then we also want to be able to use Madikwe effectively and if you look to the point that poaching mainly in some other areas, it's a cause for the surrounding communities not benefiting from the park and they then resort to the poaching of wildlife out of the park. So if we can get the community to be benefiting more from the park then I think poaching won't

be a problem even in the future, we don't have it as a problem now but you never know what will happen tomorrow but I think if you get the community to benefit more from the park, for example, by being nature guides……..

AP: There is really quite a big community out there and limited opportunities is there, isn't there?

MK: There is, I'd say there is but I would say there are quite a lot of opportunities if you get into the park and then you can do something different in the park and there's a lot things to be doing here if we do open our minds. We never thought of, I don't think anyone in our community even might have gone to study ecology or something like that which is something, which we also have put up front. If we got a kid at school, we must, if they must maybe have conservation education in school, teaching them more about conservation, get them to be exposed to the parks, get them to meet the ecologists and find out what it is that ecologists do and from there the people will be able to get the opportunity of becoming ecologists or something like that. I think opportunities, like you said it, is limited. I will agree with you there because we are from a community of +/- 7000 and not all of us will be able to work in the park because we can only may be hire less than 200 people but the opportunities are there, they just need to take them over by us.

AP: But certainly the key thing is about perception. If 200 people work in the park and their happy with their jobs, they will persuade the rest of their communities not to poach?

MK: Yes, yes I see that.

AP: Because if 200 people got jobs, that they have all got families, it circulates down in to quite a high percentage of those 7000 people.

MK: Yes, yes.

AP: In the end, you can have a community that sees a purpose and meaning as elite in the park and that's the idea. And what do you think needs to be done in the future to get this vision of yours to be realised?

MK: I think there should be, like the programme we went through, I think it should be brought in again and then people from the community get to be trained to become guides. We had an opportunity of doing this and then it was supposed to have been a pilot project of which I think they should now find out it has been a very effective pilot project because we are now being guides. Fortunately, you have come to interview almost all of us and then because of that I think we now have to redo it again and then help some other people may be less our number or same number as us and then from there, we will be able to get 8 more guides into Madikwe from the local community and then once you get reach to that you can keep on trying to also in the future.

AP: Moremi thanks very, very much. It's been lovely talking to you and you have given me some very interesting insights on not only on the community projects but also on your life and how things have gone. Congratulations for making a success of yourself and also for sticking to and working with your community and all the best of luck for the future.

MK: You are most welcome Anthony and I think I thank you more for the information that you have imparted on me. And then say thanks today because we are now so empowered to be guides out there in Madikwe. I think we are represent you guides very well. Thank you!

## INTERVIEW 15- CLIVE WALKER

*17h00 21st March, 2006 Rhino Museum, near Melkrivier (outside Lapalala)*

**AP:** Thank you very, very much for meeting me, I know it's a public holiday *(Human Rights Day)*, for what its worth I really enjoyed your wife *(Conita Walker)* and her young charge *(3 year old female black rhino)*, quite literally a charge. For someone who spent many years in the Wilderness, you chose your parents carefully to get the surname of Walker…you don't have a doctorate or anything like that like Dr. Ian Player?

**CW:** No, I have no doctorate, my University Degree comes from the bush, and my professors were the Shangaans and the Tswanas who taught me, and my thesis was signs of the wild, so that's my university degree.

**AP:** Absolutely- Struik have done a good job of your book with very nice illustrations. Is that the only book that you've produced in that line?

**CW:** It's one of two. As far as guides are concerned I contributed to guides as far as illustrations are concerned, but that's the only one I did entirely alone, without the people that helped me acquire the knowledge, in other words it's written by myself, the photographs are mine (many of them are mine) and many of the drawings are mine. I have contributed to a book on carnivores with Professor Bothma and to a book on the Kaokoveld with Professor Bothma and Doctor Anthony Hall-Martin, but they're not guides, and they're not coffee table books, they are attractive picture books, but they've got in-depth information. The one book that comes the closest to being a guide is the latest one "Soul of the Waterberg" by Professor Bothma and myself and that is very much more a guide book in terms of serious information that anyone would want to know about this part of the world.

**AP:** Can you take us back and describe how you became involved in Nature Guiding?

**CW:** In 1966 I worked in the then Bechuanaland Protectorate as a game ranger and during that period and I'm not quite sure who influenced me other than my own passion for walking in the bush especially where there were elephants and it was subsequent to that that I went back to what was then the Tuli circle in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe where I became interested in the pioneer history of Rhodesia, which led me on to the archaeology in terms of the iron age and early stone age people of that region, and it was during that period and I would say just prior to 1970, with the influence of meeting game rangers and having had some experience of guiding a group of people into Tsavo National Park in 1960 when I was traveling by boat from the UK via the east coast and the meditaranian and I persuaded four fellow passengers to join me on a 4 day "safari" if I could put it that way into Tsavo National Park in Kenya. I arranged the car hire, the food and having had experience in the bush, prior to that, before I ever went to England, I

convinced them that they should go with me and that I had some experience but the truth is, if it be told, that I never really knew where I was going, but I knew that at the end of where I was going there was Mt. Kilimanjaro, which is really what I wanted to see. If I could see elephants, and black rhinos that would be wonderful. I got to achieve all three of those objectives and as a result of sharing the cost with two English girls, a South African girl and a Rhodesian (at the time) tobacco farmer, I thought this was wonderful. I had more knowledge obviously than they did, because I had had exposure to Africa and its wildlife, and just the mere fact of being able to explain to otherwise fellow passengers who knew far less than me something about the bush, which in reality was nothing…I really knew very little, except I knew something about elephants. It appealed to me in a great way, and it manifested itself ten years later, when I felt that I would like to do something involving school children in the Tuli Block in Botswana. And this led to me in 1972, at the instigation of a life-long friend of mine who persuaded me to go on a Wilderness Leadership School Trail at Umfolozi and Lake St. Lucia in 1972. That experience I can say of many highlights in my life, changed my life certainly the most in terms of what I was later to get involved in. The trails officer was Don Richards who was based in Durban, we flew down, we joined the other two- six trailists at the Blue Waters Hotel in Durban for the night and the next morning we set off for what to me was the most glorious experience possible. A Zulu game guard, Don Richards, the eight of us, I think four or five donkeys with all our gear on it, and a donkey handler, and into the wilderness of Umfolozi we went for four days, and that experience ignited something in me and I vowed there and then that this is what I would like to do, and I set about on that trip which included two days at Lake St. Lucia of getting as much information that I could out of Don, which I kept notes about. And you know the long and the short of it is that I eventually was convinced that this is what I wanted to do and Don Richards convinced me from my earlier thinking that it should be children that I should interest myself in, which is in fact what happened and together with a Dr. Eric Thorbourne who was also a student, if I could put it that way, of the Wilderness Leadership School and a Johannesburg physician by the name of Jean-Jacques Jossi we formed what was called by us loosely the Tuli Wilderness Trails and it was aimed at Hilton College schoolboys whose grandfather owned a farm in the Tuli block enabled us to actually operate on that farm- it was “Big Five” country, or maybe with no rhinos, but when I say “Big Five” it had lion, leopard and lots of elephants, but it lacked buffalo at that time and certainly there’s no rhinos- to this day there are no rhinos. I led the first trail in 1972, and this was fantastic. From then onwards I gradually got more experience by going on further of these trails, until I was offered a position in 1974, if I am right in my memory, by the Wilderness Leadership School, at the time under the Directorship of Barry Clements, and I went back to Zululand for additional training. One of my principal instructors was Jim Feely, who was the architect behind the concept of wilderness trails, and he brought it to the attention of Ian Player, and Ian has always very generous in admitting or acknowledging that it was Jim Feely who brought the American concept of wilderness trails to Ian’s attention. And then of course, that school, and the then Natal Parks Board, developed the wilderness

concept in an African environment. 1975 I spent running trails for the school in the Tuli Block, which was my old stamping ground, so the interesting thing was that I was a ranger in 1966, went back on a number of expeditions, mainly archaeology and finally history, started with these Tuli Wilderness trails for Hilton College schoolboys, then the Wilderness Leadership School. That's when I went up from high-school going children to adults because the to the Tuli became an adult operation. 1975 December I left the Wilderness Leadership school, and together with my wife who you were speaking to earlier we founded, together with Michael Brett, who first encouraged me to go on a Wilderness Leadership School in 1972, he, my wife an I formed our own organization, a section 21 company which we named Educational Wildlife Expeditions. From 1976- 1994 we ran wilderness trails in the Okavango Delta, and the Tuli Block and Klaserie Game Reserve where we had a permanent camp and it became my life and my passion. I guess if not hundreds, but thousands of people from all walks of life went on these trails. That satisfied me a great deal from my own personal point of view, but something still kept nagging at me- when I had the opportunity in 1981, after a struggle to get trails going in Pilansberg, which ended up not being successful in their early formative years and I won't go into it in detail, I was offered a year contract together with 2 colleagues to buy a 5 000 Hectares Reserve not far from here, 21 kilometres away and which I had certainly identified as being the perfect place for school children because of Don's influence from the age of nine through to matric. I was fortunate in having taken the late Dale Parker in 1980 on a Wilderness Trail together with his wife to the Okavango Delta, which like so many people I have known in all walks of life- a wilderness trail has the most amazing effect on people that come from all walks of life, and it had the same effect on him and his wife. It subsequently led to him going on another Okavango trail, and then when I came up with this opportunity to acquire this reserve- his wife had longed to own a private game reserve and he was only too happy to oblige if I would be involved with him and become his partner. Many people have said did I come here to become a land-owner, did I come here to do whatever else- I didn't- I came to the Waterberg not to acquire land or to get into partnerships in luxury lodges or anything. I came with a view to setting up a trail based on Don Richard's Wilderness Leadership School philosophy. I was successful in coming to an agreement with Dale in 1981, to his death in the year 2001 we created the Lapala Wilderness School and over 55 000 learners and teachers went on our courses which were anything from two nights to five nights, led by trail guides both men and women. The school today continues with the wishes of the late Dale Parker's wife. I am the patron of the school, I lecture to groups, my wife does all the rhino work with them and kids come here, and I'll give you an amazing example, I've just been to lunch in Marakele Pty. Ltd. Park, and when I arrived I was greeted by a young black man who turns out to be the chef for this lodge at Marakele. He was a school boy at the Metse Settlers school. He came to Lapalala on a wilderness experience. He then got a job at the "Big Five" restaurant- he worked there for 5 years. He is now the chef of this very, very lovely place in Marakele and he was so excited that he had seen me, and I couldn't remember him because there are thousands of kids that are

lectured to. And he's one of a number- another very good example, is the lady who today is the manager of the Green Trust of South Africa, who also as a 14 year old school girl went to Lapalala- I lectured to her in a group of 60 kids and when she left school she just said to her mom she wants to go to University and she got a degree and she joined the Department of Environmental Affairs, and today she's been in the Green Trust now for 4 or 5 years- all through that wilderness experience she's had. I could go on and name more, but the interesting thing is I once said to Ian Player years ago, I said "Ian, do you really believe that all this hard work and all this effort can make any difference?" and he said to me "Clive, I want to tell you one thing. If we make one convert, one disciple out of a thousand, it's been worth it!" and Ian Player's 100% right. I only have to think, or cast my mind back, to a Wilderness Leadership School trail that I led into the Tuli Block in 1985 with 8 married women from Johannesburg who left their kids behind with their husbands, went away with me for five days. We had the most extraordinary experience amongst elephants and those two great rivers the Shashe and the Limpopo. On our last night as is customary on Wilderness Leadership trails we would talk about what role people could play and what was the experience all about and did they really feel they had benefited? The question came up about the Endangered Wildlife Trust which I had founded in 1973 and I had being toying with the idea of creating a committee that could assist a small group of trustees that could do the office work and fundraising and functions and as it turned out conferences and seven out of the five *(eight)* said they wanted to get involved and in due course they came back and duly formed the Endangered Wildlife Trust Ladies Committee. That organization is where it is today because of the effort that those seven women on a voluntary basis put into that organization. We have been together on Wilderness trails, subsequently many of their husbands as well, and they again with me, over and over again, and to this day we- there's about three couples that still go away with Conita and I, into the Tuli Block usually, to reminisce and to enjoy bird watching and to just get into wild country. That's just another example of my personal experience of what wilderness trailing and a wilderness experience does. Whether it was Dale Parker, and whether it was the key to starting Lapalala, or whether it was Nadine Clark, who is a teacher at the Lapalala Wilderness School and prior to that a school girl pupil, who has gone on to write these incredible books for children about learning about nature, the whole story is endless, in terms of the question you asked about how did I get involved in nature guiding. I don't know if you've asked me directly what benefit it has, but I've added that to it, in any event. So that's how I got involved in it and I cease to be active in the Wilderness School, it's been taken over in 2002. Lapalala continued- I'm the patron as I pointed out and this museum is a consequence of all those years of the desire to impart knowledge that's not necessarily my own, but others. I had 22 field guides that worked for me from 1976-1994 and I think all, bar 4 or 5 are still in wild-life or some related field. So I've had an incredible journey with not only the women or men who are the instructors or the guides of the school programme, but the 22 men who were the wilderness guides of our EWE programme. Then you know to have been connected to the Wilderness movement ever since as a result of that,

the books that I've been privileged to either jointly author, or have authored on my own, stem from those experiences.

**AP:** Do you think that science has been afforded an artificially position in contemporary thinking?

**CW:** You know from my point of view, science is the end product of our knowledge, but if we loose wisdom by loosing knowledge along the way and we loose our wisdom as well, I think we have a problem, but certainly science has a great deal to do with our knowledge of the natural world. Science alone is not the forming of one's own personal intellect or understanding about the natural world. Science is there for specific reasons to discover, and its not necessarily important in my terms. When you look at the men who trained me, most of them were illiterate, but they knew more about the African bush than any Masters or Phd could teach you about the workings of nature. So you can't dismiss the one, and you can't dismiss the other. They're essential elements of our understanding of life.

**AP:** Do you think there is a decline in the value attached to traditional cultural and religious values?

**CW:** Yes, I do believe that. The advent of modern life and society- people in my opinion have tended to undervalue traditional ways of life. Part of my philosophy behind this museum in arresting not only a part of Afrikaaner culture- in this school *(ie the school on which the Rhino Museum is built)* was an Afrikaans Primary School, but I have brought in elements of our natural history- I am particularly interested in the histories of previous societies that actually lived here. I spent the 23 or 24 years that I was at Lapalala encouraging the universities at that scientific level to actually unravel that knowledge. It's very much part of my own philosophy and it's linked to a spiritual as well as a philosophical approach to these things.

**AP:** What is the special value that attracts people towards wilderness?

**CW:** You know, it's not all about elephants and lions- it's about certainly the solitude side of it and the spiritual dimension is indispensable as far as I'm concerned. Being in wild country with companions who share a similar ideal to you, and it's the most wonderful experience to take people from an otherwise sophisticated lifestyle, often with ideas about life that have become so distant from just simple things. I think of a wilderness trail that I led to the Okavango where the lady in the aircraft behind me was worried about what the toilet facilities would be like in the islands that we were going to sleep on, for the next four nights, and I thought to myself "Lady, if you only knew that it was a toilet role and a small garden spade, but I'm not going to tell you this until we actually get there." She was from the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, married to a lawyer, obviously someone with a good education, and well off, and they were on the point of emigrating and I thought, "This is going to be where I am going to have the

greatest difficulty over the next trail, over the next five days". She turned out, when once she had got over that initial fear like how do you handle a simple thing like daily ablutions, when you've got seven other people around you, and nothing between you and Cairo except a large amount of water, and she turned out to be the most extraordinary company, and just dived into it and it never became a problem. So I think a lot of these things are in our psyche and we fear them, but when once you go on a wilderness trail, it just breaks down, and this is one of the greatest aspects of a wilderness trail.

**AP:** Do you find that there is commonly a sense of the primitive origins of humans which attracts people to wilderness?

**CW:** They might not arrive consciously thinking about that, but it does have an influence on them. One thing I firmly believe in, and I feel very strongly about this, is that there is a tendency in our country to look over a vast area like Lapalala, and we call it wilderness, but we conveniently forget that humans have lived in that environment, for thousands of years, or possibly even three million years at the longest, and they have tinkered with this so called "wilderness" over a very long period of time and they've used it. So if one is talking about a "wilderness" that is the absence of humans, then you're heading in the wrong direction, because humans are an integral element of wilderness. With most of the people that I've known the philosophy that we've taught is that they mustn't talk about wilderness in isolation from humans.

**AP:** Do you think there is commonly a sense of a "higher power" that attracts people to wilderness?

**CW:** I can't…there are many people who come with me on wilderness trails who express that- it may not be the first night, but they have this sense of a "supreme being" when you look at nature and you get them away from every modern day life. They have this sense…I personally believe that, I feel very strongly energized by that and its part of my life and my thinking, but not everyone comes in and consciously raises it as an issue- we might be looking at an incredible sunset over the Shashe river with elephants out there on the ground and a sense of something comes over people, they don't necessarily always put their finger on it and say this is a religious experience- more often I think it's a spiritual experience one can't always explain.

**AP:** What role do you think the guide serves apart from the safety and relative comfort of clients?

**CW:** In a sense, why people are attracted to the guide in that the guide is actually taking are of you over those next five days, but I think that the attractiveness is not because he's there to look after you. It's the knowledge that he or she has, that they are able to impart and share with you, and that's the essence of a wilderness trail- being with somebody who is profoundly attuned to the natural

world and if he or she is a good guide, it just comes out of them. You can never get enough of that, because they're opening a world to you that you previously had no knowledge about.

**AP:** Do you think that "khaki fever" produces real problems in relationships between particularly male guides and particularly female clients?

**CW:** I think we have this image in South Africa which is unfortunate in that respect- one hears people talk about "land-rover jockeys", who are not game rangers, although they are often called game rangers, and we hear about this "khaki fever" and it can be often said by people in a very almost derogatory sense, which is a bit hurtful because almost all of us at some stage or another are in khaki- khaki not in the first instance because it's glamorous for reasons of being not obvious- what's the word?

**AP:** Inconspicuos.

**CW:** Inconspicuos. The shirt you've got on is the opposite of what I'm talking about. There is an attraction- it's got nothing to do with the khaki- the attraction I think is, that person- (a) he's carrying a weapon, one assumes he knows, or she knows what she is doing, and they hold your life in their hands, so therefore a bond develops. The whole issue comes down to how that guide responds to that. If someone is carried away by the person with four gold bars and he's got wings on his hat and he flies a big aeroplane, or it's a guide carrying an elephant gun, I guess there's something about that. So there's a glamorous level to it, but serious guiding is not about that. I can tell you in my day when there were no guide training organizations, I never went through one, I encouraged the then Transvaal division of Nature Conservation in the old days that we needed some form of- we needed some organization that could become our home. When I started off as a guide, we were regarded as something very unusual. There seemed to be no belief that this was a serious career. It was somebody who had worked in the bank, who had not done too well, who had dropped out of society, who became a guide, so we as guides were not really looked upon as being serious professionals. I was the first- I don't know if you were aware of it- I was the first chairman of FGASA...

**AP:** I wasn't actually…

**CW:** and I was, together with old Don Richards, he and I organized the first field guide's conference or workshop that ever took place and it was at Lapalala, and he and I long pushed, together with a number of others that have done some fantastic work, encouraged the formation of FGASA, which in my opinion has done an exceptional job in lifting the level of the awareness of what serious guides are all about. Today it's a lot of hard work to become very proficient. To get to FGASA level III, you've got to put a lot of effort into it, it isn't anymore good enough that your uncle has a game farm, and you've shot an impala and you

know the signs of the wild. It goes far beyond that, so I am delighted that today field guiding is regarded as a serious profession, and it's not just the so called "jungle fever" as you have mentioned.

**AP:** What do you think should be the accepted norm concerning guides drinking alcohol with clients?

**CW:** Look, I've got nothing against a guide drinking a beer in the evening, what I have got against is that no guide can sit up drinking all evening and then think he can guide a trail the following morning. The odd beer, all my field officers, most of them had the odd beer. I never ever banned my officers. If it came to my attention that they'd over-stepped the mark and that they had taken liberties in that respect, we censured them, pretty much so. When I was with Wilderness Leadership School, all wilderness trails which were conducted by us which involved children, there was no alcohol ever present. So I think one has got to, from my own point of view, be reasonable about it, but a responsible guide, should definitely know that, it's like a pilot- if a pilot has a drink in the evening, you know it's up to him to realize the responsibility, as it is with the professional guide.

**AP:** What other ethical problems are commonly encountered by nature guides?

**CW:** I think it depends what you define as ethical…taking liberty with the opposite sex. We were very strict on that…you don't get away with that…you'll be found out. Field guides should be like any profession, that if you're being paid to look after people, you have to absolutely…I won't go into any detail, but I dismissed two of my staff for that type of conduct. It's not anything that I enjoyed doing. The ethical side of it comes into how you approach your job in terms of dangerous game. The liberties that you might take, or the dangers you might put people into terms of giving a high end experience…there has to be that kind of ethical approach. One of my officers had to shoot an elephant once- it was very difficult for him and our organization. There was an enquiry into it, and he was exonerated with full exemption…it had nothing to do with him. It more likely had to do with other people driving around that caused the problem in the first place, unbeknown to them that there were even people there. These are the issues that I think that all field guides who are dealing in areas where there is dangerous game is the level to which you might put your clients and yourself in danger, and that is a very critical component of guiding.

**AP:** Do you think that ethics, attitudes and values can be taught to adults?

**CW:** Yes, I do. I mean, none of us are born perfect- we all make mistakes, we all can be irresponsible. It's a human trait. Yes, I do believe that…you know there's that old adage that you can't teach an old dog new tricks…I don't know, I think I've been taught a lot of lessons…and I'm an old dog (laughs)…yes, I do believe you can and a wilderness experience can do that- it can bring out the most amazing

responses in people, once they're exposed to this. That's what guiding is all about. Guiding is not just about showing people elephants, it's about what is your attitude towards life, your attitude towards responsibility- whether you remain a bank manager for the rest of your life, but once a year you go on a wilderness trail. That wilderness trail teaches you other things as a result of the example set by that guide.

**AP:** Let's talk about safety for a while. What are the precise origins of the term "The Big Five"?

**CW:** The origins of the word "Big Five" come from the hunting world, and it goes back to the days of hunting in Kenya. As we all know, there's more than "The Big Five". They are the most common and what would you say, not mega but what is the word I'm looking for- anyway the superstars of the bush so to speak. The origin comes from the hunting world.

**AP:** Everyone tells me this but no-one can tell me the precise origins- they can't site any 19th century writer for example who used that term.

**CW:** I can't give you anybody particularly, but I would say that if you were to look it up in the East African annuals, the ultimate animal that you can hunt if you come to Africa are one of those "Big Five" and the rhino dropped off the screen after the 1950s for many, many years, so they could only get the "Big Four", but it's an ego driven thing in the sense that if you shot one of the "Big Five". But who precisely it was that laid down the "Big Five"- that's it got to be that "Big Five" and that hippo are not included- it doesn't appear to be so glamorous…*(I don't know)*

**AP:** Where do clients get that expectation of "The Big Five"?

**CW:** They get it through the media. They get it through literature. Through coming into contact with people who have an outstanding experience- maybe meeting some of them on a wilderness trail where you actually do come face to face with a lion…

**AP:** Have you yourself ever had critical or life-threatening experiences involving dangerous animals?

**CW:** Yes, I have. I have never had a dangerous experience with a leopard, and I've never had a dangerous experience with rhino either black or white because mainly I have operated in areas…although when I was being trained in Zululand, we did have black rhinos there, but most of my experiences have been with elephants. I have had life threatening experiences with elephants and lions.

**AP:** Which would you rather face of the two?

**CW:** I am more comfortable with elephants. I am not that comfortable with lions. I've had lions twice attack my group on a wilderness trail.

**AP:** Have you had to shoot one?

**CW:** No, I have never shot an animal in twenty-odd years of guiding. My trackers have been with me. I have taken evasive action to get out of elephants. I've listened to my staff that lived there on where I should go and what I should do, and look, it is not necessarily that one has deliberately sought it- on the occasions where I have been attacked by lions we came across them suddenly, in the case of elephants almost similar experiences, but my experience is greater with elephants and I worked in the Tuli Block as a guide. We had upwards of five or six hundred elephants, so elephant close encounters- I've written a book about it, and I'm busy with another one. Elephants would be the greatest. The one animal I have never been concerned about is the leopard, because I've never made an attempt to get anywhere near one, and invariably you won't see them, and the one that I have gone out of my way to make certain that I don't get anywhere near is the buffalo. I think the secret to any of these problems, or any of these situations that can develop is that you must eventually develop a knowledge of knowing the distance at which you can be from these animals, and the circumstances in which you place yourself that can cause that. In the case of the two lion experiences, we stumbled on them and they didn't see us till the last moment- happened very, very quickly. In both instances the lion stopped after a full blown charge. No rifle shot was fired. In the case of elephants it was just using extremely good bushcraft just to get out of those circumstances. I think the question is of distance. If you want to look for trouble you can get to close to either lions if you track down lions- I don't believe in tracking lions, I think lions should be left alone. If you come across it like we often did then you just freeze and back off, and either they run away or, in my case on two occasions I was attacked.

**AP:** In the latest FGASA newsletter, Bruce Lawson wrote a letter which he called "A Day to Remember", and I've written a reply to him to say it should have been called "A Day to Regret". I didn't like his attitude, the way he presented that article, and I have heard that subsequently Bruce Lawson has heard of my comments..

**CW:** Isn't Bruce the..he's aguide, isn't he- a professional guide?

**AP:** Yes, and he's apologized unconditionally for the way in which he presented that incident because not only was he tracking lions, but he was tracking lions with cubs knowingly with clients…so I said to him…

**CW:** Well, I did that in my youth. I tracked a lion with a group of people, and I nearly bought it. Me, or my tracker with me in the front. And I got out of it, just absolutely realizing that I'd made a terrible mistake, and I backed my whole group out, and that was one lesson I never ever forgot. That was many, many

years ago and I have never ever believed that one should track down lions. You shouldn't actually track down elephants even for that matter. Elephants can pin on their feet very quickly, and they're a formidable thing coming at you. People think that they're big and you'll crack it somewhere with a .458. Don't believe it! They are very fast and can be lethal.

**AP:** Well, I think that you and I and many other people are certainly agreed that we shouldn't push that envelope, and in most cases- if you look at these Kruger incidents- you won't believe what animal tops the list there.

**CW:** Of attacking or of being shot?

**AP:** Of being shot. In Kruger.

**CW:** Is it the rhino.

**AP:** White rhino, 12 white rhino have been shot to 11 elephants in Kruger, so that tells you one thing, and it tells you that the guides were complacent and they got too close.

**CW:** Well, you know, not that I want to brag or anything, but in the book I'm writing- each and every one of them are named in the acknowledgements because they've brought so much joy to different people *(tape ends, some words lost during changeover)* there was the one incident which I mentioned earlier, and he was the only one of 22 men over the period of something like 20 years that had to actually ever kill an elephant in a situation where he had no other choice. It's like the Wilderness Leadership School has got an incredible record as well. The thing about the Wilderness Leadership School, is that it just seems to breed something into the men and I think- I'm not sure if they've taken on women…

**AP:** Yes, they have.

**CW:** There's something about what the school stands for, its ethics, its principals, its founder Ian Player every one of us look up to- as Americans look up to Aldo Leopold and John Muir, here in South Africa the wilderness movement look up to Ian. That's, you know I'm not trying to blow Ian's trumpet, he doesn't need it, but that sort of filtered over all of us, and we felt we had a duty to actually impart knowledge about simple little things to do with botany and nature in general- I mean I had a reputation of being an elephant man, because I was always in the thick of the elephants, but that was only a portion of the 8 or 10 hour day that we encountered. There were things like battle sites and grave sites and archaeological sites going back to the Mapungubwe on the Tuli Block side there's this continuation of Mapungubwe so the pioneer history came into our trails, the arcaheology came into the trails, the importance of rivers…it's not about seeing elephants 8 hours of the day, and rock art in particular. I am involved in writing a book together with two other authors on the Limpopo River and I have covered all

bar about 15%- my last bit is the Marico River back down to the Crocodile, then it will be done in terms of photography and drawings. You look at a river like this and you read the Sunday Indepenedent this last Sunday and you realize how seriously threatened the world's rivers are. That's what wilderness trailing is all about- it's not just about how many elephants you can in a day- it's what's happening to our rivers.

**AP:** I have noticed a tendency of people to go from the Wilderness Leadership School to working for serious conservation causes. There must be a connection.

**CW:** Oh, yes! If you look at the history of their officers, and the impact they've had on thousands of people's lives, young and old, the Endangered Wildlife Trust Ladie's Committee is one example. *(Laughs).* I mean that was dedication like I have never experienced in my life…

**AP:** Describe how nature guiding has changed during the course of your experience. You've been in it now for 40 years or more- in a way more, so you've obviously seen nature guiding change over time. Can you describe what your impressions were then, what your impressions are now, and where you think it's all going…

**CW:** Well the whole…not theory…the whole…

**AP:** Ethos?

**CW:** The whole ethos of wilderness trailing has never changed for me. What it's gone from has been sort of…in a sense…I wouldn't use the word gung-ho, but a little bit rough and sort of not altogether quite structured, and this is where your earlier question about science has come…it's gone from a non-scientific activity to in many respects a scientific activity, in that there is serious learning to be entailed in producing ultimately a good guide. I've seen guiding which was hair-raising, unrecognized, it wasn't regarded as a serious profession. Where it is today, a really top quality guide, in my opinion, is the equivalent to a person in the top of any of the professions, whether it's an architect or a professor at a university. You're in business of teaching people about the holistic side of what life is all about. It's not just about elephants and sunsets, it's the whole thing. So, the movement today, for me, and I think I can speak with some experience, because 22 field officers that were on our adult programmes, and all the officers that I had at Lapalala's Wilderness School- you're talking about serious minded people, and they have developed over time. You asked me about teaching an old dog new tricks…look what…not that he was an old dog, but look at my late partner, who had a knowledge of nature and wildlife, and in the 20 years that we were friends and partners in the development of Lapalala wilderness, this man became an absolute crusader for conservation. He took his share certificates out his filing cabinet and translated that into real action, acquiring land, saving rivers, getting involved in the black rhino. So it can be done from young and old.

**AP:** Do you think opportunities in guiding are still hampered by the prospective guides race, gender, social status or economic class?

**CW:** I think let's start with the economic class. Guiding, I think is still looked upon as being not in the same light as it should in terms of what salaries should be. Guides should be getting really good salaries, and there's been a tendency to think "Oh, he wants to become a trails officer or a field guide, so therefore he'll work for next to nothing." I think the whole system needs to move a step up and realize that this is your front-line troupes, they are the one's that actually carry the torch for your organization whether it's a luxury lodge where you do walks or you do guiding. From that level, you're dealing with a very important member of your organization, so from that point of view, a great deal still needs to be done to recognize that the top guys in the profession need to be looked after. Just let's follow on from the rest of that question- there were a number of things…

**AP:** Well, we spoke about race and gender and social status?

**CW:** If you look in my day, when I started off Wilderness Trails in the Tuli Block, when it comes to race, my second gunner, my tracker, was of a different race to me. They weren't leading the trails. That has turned around. Today you get very, very competent outstanding black people in the field of guiding. Look at the Birdlife South Africa, an incredible job they've done with training. Local guys that have shown some interest, with a pair of binoculars and some good training, and some bird books. Look at the Zululand Birding Route today, which has become so successful, so the race side of it has turned around a great deal. I think when it comes to the…there's another aspect to this, but let's deal with gender. I've always believed that women can do as equal a job if they give them the training. Most of our officers in the Environmental Programme were women with the children. The minute they're not facing elephants and lions. But I never had a lady on my adult trails programme. In those days it didn't seen that that was the field in which the girls were going. Look at it today. Many of these organizations employ very, very competent women. I believe there's equal opportunities, and should be in that sense. When it comes to the the…there's another question within that that you're talking about. I lecture Africa Nature Training Students every year. The field exercise here, mainly to do with archaeology, linked to rock art and that extending the whole training, then I give them a talk in Johannesburg, I can tell you that out of a group of say 30, there could be as many as 20 in that group who are women. Not all of them want to be guides. What they're doing, they're doing this guide training course because they want to advance their own personal knowledge of the environment. That didn't happen 20 years ago. 20 years ago there probably wasn't guide training, and today, look at the number of guide training schools. Look how hard it is. I interviewed a young lady the other day who has just done level I. She left University, she took up catering, she became qualified in catering as a chef for 15 years, she went into IT she qualified in that, and she wasn't getting enough satisfaction out of life, and she decided to enroll on her own bat and she did FGASA at least entry level I as a guide. That's

all she wants to do now, and she's taken a year off to get as much experience and exposure before she takes the next step. That girl is going to make it. She is 35 years old. She is going to be an outstanding guide, there's no doubt about it.

**AP:** It's almost like the commitment is more important than the intellect.

**CW:** Ja, but more so than that is the passion- the passion that I read in the late Barry Clements and Don Richie and Hugh Dent. That's what actually rubbed off on me. I just wanted to serve that cause. I didn't care how hard it was to actually do it, and I came up the hard way because there weren't organizations that could train you. I mean, I would have done this the day I left school, but I had to end up shooting elephants in Mocambique, because my uncle had a connection and I went off to kill things bigger than myself. So I had to do it the really hard way with lots of blood and flies and today I look back on and say "Well, what really did I think I was trying to do?" But in that process who took me out after elephants- people I couldn't even converse with properly because I couldn't speak Shangaan. Hunted in Portugese East Africa, that'll tell you how far back it was, but boy, I certainly learnt a few lessons that way, but that's not easily available to people *(laughs).*

**AP:** The sad thing is, it's not something you can really pass on in a book.

**CW:** No, you've got to have that practical experience. You've got to have that practical experience.

**AP:** Do you think there are skills out there that are just going to be lost for all time?

**CW:** If we're not careful, there will be. We're loosing skills in terms of culture. We could very easily use the skills in terms of knowing medicinal plants. Take for instance the connection that people living in the middle of nowhere have in terms of what hyaenas mean, or aardvarks, or from that spiritual world, all those incredible things that make up life. But I think that the movement is big enough today, and the demand has been created, by the tourism world interest in that more and more tourists around the world are wanting something more than a sea cruise- they're actually wanting to learn a lot more when they get to that destination. They're becoming much more sophisticated, much more enquiring, its become an educational thing.

**AP:** Do you think the client is getting ahead on the game faster than the guide?

**CW:** I don't know. I have more to do with the guides that I see coming along than I do with the clients- I am not in the client field anymore. I see a tremendous interest out there. It amazes me that there are so many people in Johannesburg that pay good money to get onto these courses, and they don't intend giving up their job as an architect, they just want to learn more about what's happening, and they

develop this incredible bond with the person who is actually their instructor. That becomes a very enriching experience.

**AP:** Ja. Do you think the new THETA national qualifications framework adequately addresses the need for transformation and diversification in the industry?

**CW:** No, we've been through that here, we've had these THETA programmes. Where I think it's not been that successful is the desire to put the students through a course up to a certain level, and there does not seem to be this continuation to make sure that they really get right in the end, in the experience I've had, I'm not in it anymore, but we've had these students here, and we've had them being trained here, not in my establishment, but over the road. I think it's the expectations of THETA are greater than the actual number of jobs that can be because THETA could train a student up to a level. If that doesn't go beyond that level, no professional organization readily wants to employ somebody who hasn't got that added level of the various entry levels and be confident that you could send that person out even if he does, and he does or she gets out of the vehicle and walks people into the bush and an elephant suddenly arrives, how is that person and you know that's why in my opinion, and I've heard criticism on both sides. My opinion about FGASA- FGASA has been very strong on insisting that these principals be maintained and that the levels be maintained- there are people who have criticized them (FGASA) and it's FGASA sits in a little bit of a difficult situation, whereas THETA is the recognized area that the government wants to go. FGASA is a membership organization.

**AP:** Ja, quite so, but the industry will recognize a FGASA qualification quicker than they'll recognize a THETA one.

**CW:** Well, I've got nothing but admiration for FGASA. I think FGASA have stuck to it. I have been passed by long ago, because I handed over the reigns, but my belief in wanting a FGASA kind of organization has never been diminished by how they have stuck to it and how they have insisted on their standards being met.

**AP:** One of the perceptions, I suppose, and this is about perception, necessarily than about reality- Leone Whateley called FGASA the "white boys club", I've heard this phrase come out of her mouth, and she's the main honcho at THETA. There has been a sense that FGASA represents the old South Africa or something like that. I think that THETA have learnt over the past 5 years that maybe they should take a more friendly attitude towards FGASA, which you see happening now because they have realized that their standards- or that if standards are going to be maintained they won't be achieved by THETA by alienating FGASA.

**CW:** Exactly. I don't think FGASA ever, in any knowing sort of a way, have ever seen that they're an elite white boys, or white boys and girls club. There have got to be other reasons for that being the case. If you take the Game-rangers Association of South Africa- it's long being criticized for being a white male dominated

organization and they've done their best to change that, and these things will change in time. I think there must be- I've lost contact with some of the FGASA people but FGASA people are very aware of that. They would do their absolute best to change that.

**AP:** For example in my current work capacity as Education Officer of Cradle of Humankind we trained 40 guides last year, who all got FGASA membership as a result of that. Up in Madikwe I've seen three of the guides who we formerly trained through the Mafisa initiative, which was on FGASA standards at that stage…

**CW:** Well, look at the Lapalala Wilderness School. 15 years ago it would have been an all white officer organization. You go to Lapalala today, there are more black officers than there are white officers, and its not that they deliberately went out to only employ black officers. It's not like a…these people have emerged and started to come up, and it's a changing situation. I think that people must accept that for 40 years most black people were denied the opportunity of having those kinds of opportunities- it's changed a lot.

**AP:** What I found remarkable on my visit to Madikwe now was how ethics, which could only essentially derive from people like Sakkie van Aswegan, are strongly held by the black guides who are doing the best at Madikwe at the moment.

**CW:** Well, there you are.

**AP:** Let's start finishing up…let's talk about, well FGASA is an association, but do you think that guides should be unionized- do you think that guides should form a union? Grant Hine, the current CEO of FGASA now says…

**CW:** He worked for me…

**AP:** He says that the problem with white boys is that they don't toyi-toyi. And I said to him "Grant, you can get white boys, you can get any group of people to toyi-toyi against something, but the question is what are they going to toyi-toyi for?" And that's where I don't think there's a unanimity amongst people in the industry. You could certainly get people to toyi-toyi against, for example, the THETA system- all its beaurocracy, and all the delays that it's caused, has caused a lot of bitterness amongst guides, but the question is what would they be toyi-toying for? What values do you think guides should be striving for. What conditions, what situation do you think will make the lot of guides better in the future, and the whole career more professional?

**CW:** I think that FGASA must stick to what it's always been good at- maintaining high standards and principals. You don't need a union to achieve that- you need officers- men, women, black or white, that are proud to be guides, and proud to be

associated with an organization that becomes a family to them, as opposed to a union.

**AP:** There has been suggestion from some of the guides in Madikwe- Setswana speaking home language guides, whose English is good I must tell you, that there's language bias in the FGASA set-up or system.

**CW:** Do you mean leaning towards English?

**AP:** Ja. Favouring English speaking people- for example one guide said he was asked what "abrasion" was and he said that in 20 years of talking to English speaking people (or however long he's been talking to English people for), he had never heard, he had never heard the word "abrasion" used. Yet, he lost some points in a first aid question because he didn't understand the word "abrasion".

**CW:** I think he's got a point. I think he's got a point. I think guiding should never get to the point, and you raised this right in the beginning- guiding is not just simply about science. Guiding is about human beings, and taking other human beings into the bush, and if you get to the point where you become a university professor, talking to people from the big city going into the bush, actually that's where guiding is going to loose its real value. We're dealing with ordinary people here. Guides are ordinary people.

**AP:** You've already effectively stated that if you pay people peanuts you get monkeys on the job, and that the employers have got to realize that a higher percentage of money has got to go to guides salaries. I think what they rely on is tips- and then the guide acts for the tips…

**CW:** There's a danger. I believe you should pay the person, the guide, irrespective of race or gender, a good salary because at the end of the day, the experience that he's going to impart as a well rounded off guide is what's going to make people come back to you over and over and over again. And if you're want to short-circuit that you're going to end up with what the industry has been doing for the past I-don't–know-how many years, you're going to end up with this massive turnover of people. They get burn-out. They get frustrated- in the end they feel as if they're just being used. The industry needs to stop that. The industry must think "Oh well, if so and so is unhappy with the job, we'll just phone up FGASA or who-ever else is out there and we'll get another guide. You can't get another good guide. When you get a guide look after them properly.

**AP:** Isn't burnout a function of the hours that guides work?

**CW:** Yes, it's a function of their hours, but that comes down to being disgruntled with what they earn, and your ability. And it's not always that people are doing this because money's the objective. The problem with many of us who go in to this, we go into it because it's a heart, passion , enthusiasm kind of thing and we're

prepared to overlook what our needs are, because that's what we want to do. So people take advantage of that, and I think that that's wrong. Yes, you could get away with taken advantage, but today, grab, look after the guy or the girl, because if they're serious about what they're doing, they are going to make your business very successful.

**AP:** Clive Walker, closing remarks; describe your vision for nature guiding in the future.

**CW:** Well, I'm probably the wrong person to ask that, because I've been passionate about guiding ever since I took those poor 4 unfortunates to Tsavo National Park, and in a sense I bluffed them into going with somebody who knew something and when I got there I really got there I realized that I nearly knew nothing at all, but it created a sense of wanting to, whatever knowledge I had acquired to share it with others, and I think that guiding in South Africa is one of the most fulfilling activities of one's life, and it's fulfilling in the sense that you're sharing it with others. Driving around in a vehicle is one thing, but when you're on foot and you've got your own pace that you can work with, the interaction between you- it becomes philosophical, it becomes spiritual, it becomes political- political not in a negative sense, in that you're discussing what life's all about. I think guiding, my hope and my vision for guiding it creates a sense of saying "Listen this is a rare commodity we've got out there, and thanks to this lady or gentleman over here, they've opened a door for me that I previously was not aware of, and it's ignited something in me, and I may be a bank manager for the rest of my life, but I do understand why we need to care for this." I guess that's how it is for me.

**AP:** Clive Walker, thank you very, very much for your time. I know I've taken up an hour and a half of your time.

**CW:** No, well you said an hour and a half. You haven't gone over that. We've been invaded by flies and little midges, by the looks of things.

**AP:** It's one of the joys of having a passion for outdoor guiding, isn't it?

**CW:** *(Laughs)* What vehicle are you driving?

*(Interview ends).*

Transcribed and proofread by Anthony Paton.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix I- Additional Informants

17 Grant Hine (detailed response per e-mail from Johannesburg)
18 Wayne Lotter (per e-mail from Mpumalanga)
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20 Peter Sandenberg (per e-mail from Maun)
21 Garth Thompson (per e-mail from Zimbabwe)
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**APPENDIX II**

# INDEX OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS IN INTERVIEWS & THESIS

**amadlozi-** ancestors, more specifically in the traditional Zulu cultural context (Zulu- singular is **idlozi**)

**askari-** young male associated with older male for mutual benefit (Masai??)

**bakkie-** vehicle with front cab and (usually open) rear end for loading goods; in America a "pick-up truck"; in Australia a "ute" (from utility vehicle) (Afrikaans- can also mean a rectangular metal container for carrying or eating food, although not in this context)

**braai-** traditional meal of meat cooked on metal grill above fire, often with **pap** (Afrikaans)

**Broederbond-** literally, brotherhood or brother guild, secret organization of Afrikaaners from the 60s until the 80s. somewhat like the Freemasons, but with a slightly sinister edge- though later they were to become more benign. (Afrikaans)

**boma-** area demarcated by fence of thorns to keep animals out, holding area to keep animals in, or sometimes socializing area which has a shape or style of such a demarkated area. (Zulu)

**bwana-** boss. Subservient term used by east Africans to white masters. (Swahili)

**deus ex machina-** unexpected power or event saving seemingly impossible situation (Latin- literally god from the machinery)

**fanigalo-** South African pidgin language (usually based on Zulu, English & Afrikaans)

**gatvol-** fed-up, but has implications of a plugged anus, which makes it a far stronger term than any English equivalent

**gemsbok-** large straight horned antelope, found in desert and dry habitat (Afrikaans **gems**= ibex / chamois, **bok**= goat or antelope)

**Hluhluwe-** spur on the heel of a cock, from whence name of climbing plant with similarly shaped spur, from whence name of river where this climbing plant occurs, from whence name of town and game reserve on this river (Zulu **ihluhluwe**, p. **amahluhluwe**)

**is mos so-** it just is that way (Afrikaans)

**ja-** yes, commonly used by South African English speakers (Afrikaans)

**lobola-** traditional bride price of (ten or more) cattle paid to brides father (Zulu- s. **ilobola**, p. **amalobola**)

**klipsringer-** small antelope usually found in pairs on rocky outcrops or ridges (Afrikaans- **klip**=stone or rock, + **springer**=jumper)

**kloof-** inaccessible densely wooded slope (from Afrikaans)

**kudu-** largest of the Tragelaphine antelope (from Xhosa **iqhudu**)

**maar-** literally meaning "but", in the context in means something like "just" ie. "I must *maar* do that" means "I must just do that" not exactly, but hence its use in spoken English (Afrikaans)

**mensaab-** senior woman. Subservient term used by east Africans to white "madams". (Swahili)

**Mfolozi-** variously rendered iMfolozi (pl. iziMfolozi) or uMfolozi (pl. oMfolozi) zig-zag, from whence the river with zig-zag (meandering) course. The Black Mfolozi and White Mfolozi join at the end of the game reserve and have two distinctive colours due to the differing soils which they flow through. The commonly held explanation of why the square-lipped rhinoceros is called the white rhinoceros, is that it is a mistranslation from the Dutch *wijd* (wide), but an alternative explanation offered is that white rhino are found proximal to the White Mfolozi, whilst Black Rhino are more common along the Black Mfolozi.

**Mielie-meal** maize meal- otherwise called **pap**, known internationally as corn porridge or grits

**Mma-** Madam or Mrs.-form of address of an unknown adult woman (Setswana) see **Rra**

**musth-** periodic condition of heightened concentration of testosterone and other hormones in male elephants, affording them dominance and preferred breeding access over other bulls, and also making them potentially dangerous to other animals including humans (Hindi??)

**nagana-** sleeping sickness, borne by the tsetse fly, it has been incorporated as an (South African) English word (Zulu)

**nunus-** insects, arthropods or small creatures (Zulu- s.**inunu**, p.**izinunu**)

**nyala-** antelope of Tragelaphine tribe (Zulu- s.**inyala**, p.**izinyala**)

**pap-** traditional South African corn porridge sometimes eaten as together with meat from a **braai** (Afrikaans)

**paraat-** prepared or ready is the dictionary translation; the word is used by English speakers because these words do not do justice to the intended meaning; diligent, militaristic, obedient and even somewhat sycophantic are all implicit in the word (Afrikaans)

**potjie-** cast metal iron cooking pot, usually with three legs to raise it above the fire (Afrikaans)

**raison d'être-** purpose, rationale, motivation or justification (French)

**(die) rooi gevaar-** literally, "red danger", or "red peril" the perceived threat of communist takeover, used extensively in apartheid governement propoganda in the 70s and 80s.

**rinderpest-** disease affecting cattle and other herbivores. A most serious epidemic broke out in South Africa in 1896. (the name is Afrikaans, but the disease spread from Russia)

**Rra-** Sir or Mr.-form of address of an unknown adult man (Setswana) see **Mma**

**Satara-** allocation of place name by Hindi surveyor after the number 17 (Hindi)

**Skukuza-** Derived from Tsonga name *siKhukhuza* "he who sweeps clear everything in his path", nickname given to James Stevenson-Hamilton. Skukuza is the main camp of Kruger National Park.

**stompies-** cigarette butts

**tabula rasa-** clean slate (Latin)

**toyi-toyi-** protest dance- traditionally against the apartheid government- now against any authority (origin- township slang?)

**tsetse fly-** species of fly which is the vector of *nagana* or sleeping sickness (Setswana)

**ubuntu-** humanity or humanness. Inexactitude of this translation motivates inclusion in South African English (from Zulu)

**veld(t)-** grassland (from Afrikaans, or with a 't', Dutch)

**veldskoens** (or **veldskoene**) traditional South African leather "field shoes" (Afrikaans)

**zeitgeist-** spirit of the period or age. The term was popularized by followers of C.G. Jung (German)

**APPENDIX III**

# INDEX OF SPECIES MENTIONED IN INTERVIEWS OR THESIS (ARRANGED BY ENGLISH COMMON NAMES)

| English Common Name | Scientific Binomial | Other language reference in text with explanation where possible |
|---|---|---|
| Acacia tree | *Acacia spp.* | Acacia is one of the most widely distributed genus of trees both in species diversity and in numerical distribution. Acacias are recognized by compound leaves and paired thorns at the base of the leaf. |
| African Monarch Butterfly | *Danaus chrisippus* | One of the most common butterflies, they sequester poison from their larval food plant, the milkweed. They are thus poisonous and this leads to their appearance being mimicked by other butterflies, most notably the female Common Diadem. |
| African Rock Python | *Python sebae* | The largest snake in southern Africa which can reach 5m in length. Large snakes may eat animals even up to the size of an impala. They are the only non-venomous snake which is considered potentially dangerous to humans. |
| Baobab tree | *Adansonia digitata* | It is believed that baobabs can live over 2 000 years, and can survive ring-barking by elephants. As the specific name suggests the leaves are digitate or palmately compound. |
| Black Rhino | *Diceros bicornis* | *uBhejane (pl. oBhejane)*- the Zulu word is unusual as an animal name because the word class class1/2 is almost entirely composed of nouns referring to humans, this being one of the rare exceptions. |
| Blue Wildebeest | *Connochaetes gnu* | The Afrikaans name means "wild beast" referring to this animals anatomical similarity with cattle. The specific "*gnu*" derives from the Khoi name for this animal which is an onomatopaeic derivation from the warning snort made by the Black Wildebeest. |
| Burchell's Coucal | *Centropus burchellii* | Nicknamed "the rain bird" after its beautiful descending then ascending call likened to water coming out of a bottle. This species has now been split, the species north of the Limpopo is now the Whitebrowed Coucal. Burchell's Coucal is named after William Burchell (1782-1863), explorer and naturalist, whose name is also given to Burchell's Courser, Burchell's Sandgrouse and Burchell's Starling. His ownership of the Plains Zebra is under dispute, though he did name the "nominative" sub-species Burchell's Zebra (see Plains Zebra). |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (Cape) Buffalo | *Syncerus caffer* | Bulls, particularly large older bulls are referred to as *daggaboys* or *dagaboys*, by some guides. *Dagga* or *Daga* (pronounced "dugger" to rhyme with "bugger") is a coloquial term for cement or building mud- and alludes to the habit of wallowing to become caked in mud particularly popular amongst older buffalo bulls. (*Dagga* with an Afrikaans g sound like in scottish *loch*, is the local name for marijuana). |
| Caracal | *Felis caracal* | Afrikaans is *Rooikat*, quite literally, Red Cat. Rare outside game reserves as it is still often killed by sheep farmers which consider it a threat to lambs. |
| Chacma Baboon | *Papio ursinus* | Called *imfene/ izimfene* in Zulu and *tshwene / ditshwene* in Setswana, the generic name *ursinus* means "bear-like" and refers to the projecting muzzle. |
| Chamaeleon | *Chamaeleo lepis* | Chamaeleons are easy to spot at night so make an interesting item for night drives, though one informant questions whether handling chamaeleons at night was ethical behaviour. Traditionally chamaeleons are feared due to the myth known to the Zulus as *sibambe lentulo* ("we are caught by the lizard"). |
| Cheetah | *Acinonyx jubatus* | The world's fastest land animal is called *iz/ihlosi* in Zulu and *mangau/lengau* is Setswana. |
| (African) Elephant | *Loxodonta africana* | The phrase *Loxodonta* quite literally means "bow-toothed" and refers to the ridges on the molars and not the tusks. |
| Fig Trees | *Ficus spp.* | There are a wide variety of fig species in the region, and each species has a sybiotic relationship with its own species of wasp. This is referred to as "obligate mutualism". |
| Giraffe | *Giraffa camelopardalis* | The Afrikaans name of the world's tallest mammal *kameelperd* (literally camel-horse) is notably similar to the species name in scientific binomial. In Zulu it is called *iNdlulamithi* (literally taller than the trees). |
| Golden Orb-web Spider | *Nephila senegalensis* | A large and impressive looking spider that produces quite strong and sticky webs, which are designed to inconvenience and embarrass unweary field guides. |
| Great Spotted Cuckoo | *Clamator glandarius* | A bushveld cuckoo that parasitizes crows and starlings. |
| Hippo | *Hippopotamus amphibius* | The scientific name comes from Greek, meaning "horse of the river able to live on land and in water". The word *amphibius* is problematic because although a hippo is amphibious in behaviour or habitat, it is a of course a mammal, and not an amphibian. |
| Hominid | *Homo spp., Australopithecus spp. Etc.* | Not a single species, but any extinct or extant bipedal ape including all human ancestors |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Honey Badger | *Mellivora capensis* | The Afrikaans word for this species *Ratel* is preferred by many English speaking guides. The scientific binomial means "honey-eater of the Cape", though the term *capensis* was initially applied to creatures found anywhere in current day South Africa. |
| Human | *Homo sapiens* | The most dangerous creature on the planet. |
| Impala | *Apycerops melampus* | The most common antelope in savanna reserves, they are a delight to new tourists, but are soon ignored by many due to their relative abundance. |
| Khaki Weed | *Tagetes minuta* | An indicator of disturbed ground, they are pioneer plants which promote conditions for other plants to establish themselves |
| Leadwood Tree | *Combretum imberbe* | The only common member of the genus *Combretum* which is not called "bushwillow" in English. Dead trees have spiritual significance to some tribal groups who believe that they are the home to ancestral spirits. |
| Leopard | *Panthera pardis* | The ubiquitous large cat which survives very sucessfully in close proximity to humans. |
| Lion | *Panthera leo* | Very well known, feared respected and ultimately dearly loved creatures, found mainly in the bushveld. |
| Lilac-breasted Roller | *Coriacias caudata* | A brightly coloured bird, common in bushveld areas. |
| Marula tree | *Sclerocarya birrea subsp.caffra* | One of the favourite foods of elephants, which is one of the few trees adapted to survive ring-barking- which is a common feeding strategy of elephants. |
| Millipede | Order: *Diplopoda* | Any member of the order ??? the most common genus are often referred to by their Zulu name of *isongololo* or its derivative "shongololo". |
| Mopane tree | *Coleospernum mopane* | Trees or shrubs with papillionate ("butterfly-shaped") leaves, which turn a beatiful variety of reds, oranges and yellows towards winter. |
| Mosquito (malaria bearing) | *Anopholes spp.* | The species are recognised by their habit of holding their striped back legs in the air when at rest, they are the vectors of the valaria virus. |
| Nile Crocodile | *Crocodylus niloticus* | Usually under-rated as a potentially dangerous animal, it is in fact the only creature in the southern African bush which regards humans as a natural and normal part of their diet. |
| Nyala | *Tragelaphus angasii* | All *tragelaphines* have spiral horns. It is considered the intermediate antelope for consideration of whether male and female are cow and bull respectively (larger than a nyala) or whether they are rams and ewes (smaller than a nyala). To emphasize this, it was decided that male nyalas should be called bulls, whilst the females are called ewes. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Plains Zebra | *Equus burchelli* | Often called Burchell's Zebra, the objection to this name being that the nominative sub-species, Burchell's Zebra is (like the Quagga) an extinct sub-species. Both can be recreated by selective breeding from extant sub-species, an ongoing project. |
| Sable Antelope | *Hippotraugus niger* | The scientific name means "horse-goat which is black". It belongs to the same genus as the roan antelope. In Setswana the the sable is called *kwalata êntsho* whilst the roan is called *kwalata êtshêtlha.* |
| Serval | *Felis serval* | A rarely seen spotted cat found in grassy portions of bushveld which specializes in catching rodents. |
| Silver Terminalia | *Terminalia sericea* | The most common species of terminalia, indicative of sandy soils and used for the production of *mokoro* poles *(ngashe)* in the Okovango Delta. |
| Tamboti tree | *Spirostachys tamboti* | Although its close relationship to the *euphorbia* family is not obvious, this tree is poisonous and any meat cooked on this wood will cause the eater to become very ill. |
| Three-awn Grass | *Aristida ascenscionis* | Typical grazing grass species in bushveld. |
| Tree squirrel | *Paraxerus sepapi* | This is the common wild squirrel in the South African bushveld. The specific namd in the scientific binomial *sepapi* derives from the setswana name *sepape* for this species. |
| Tsetse fly | *Morissa gloristans* | The name comes from Setswana. This common fly is a pest as it is the vector for *nagana* or "sleeping sickness". |
| Vervet Monkey | *Cecopithecus aethiops* | The English word "vervet" derives from the French word for "green" and refers to the colour of the scrotum in east Africa- in southern Africa the scrotum is blue. |
| Wasps | Order: *hemiptera* | There are hundreds of wasp species, but a large group of them have evolved to a highly developped obligate mutualistic relationship with fig trees |
| White Rhino | *Ceratotherium simum* | The name is said to derive from a mistranslation of the Dutch *wijd* which means wide, as suggested in the alternative name Square-lipped Rhinoceros. Alternatively it was the species found along the White Umfolozi rather than the Black Umfolozi where Black (or Hook-lipped Rhinoceros) are found. |
| Yellowbilled Oxpecker | *Buphagus africanus* | Common bird which removes parasites from large herbivores. |

# A Day to Regret:

I would like to comment on Bruce Lawson's article "A Day to Remember" concerning his experience of a serious and threatening lion charge in Klaserie Game Reserve. Bruce has been brave or foolish to offer this article to us for general reading, and I feel there is something wrong in his tone in describing the episode, and it exemplifies the macho mentality which underlies what is purported to be the FGASA ethos. He does not use adjectives like foolish, regrettable and ill-considered when describing his own actions, and it is unclear whether he was proud or ashamed of his actions on that day. Perhaps, he has mixed feelings, as no doubt he might. Whilst his ultimate actions and control of the situation were certainly commendable it can be clearly noted from the story that he was the architect of his own misfortune.

If you are tracking lions and it becomes evident that there is a male, several females and "possibly a cub" you should have the good sense to go and find something less exciting to do **at once**, regardless of foolishly created expectations. Any assessor who was walking with an SKS DA candidate when he made the decision to continue on such spoor should reasonably fail the candidate on the spot. The object of SKS DA should not be how much danger you can encounter, but how much danger you can avoid. Furthermore an informed deferral of this sort should be credited to the guide as a non-intrusive encounter of the highest order. Bruce goes on to say "Ignorance is bliss…" It is not clear whether he is ascribing this ignorance to his clients (for which ignorance they cannot be held accountable, as they have a guide for this very reason) or his own ignorance. Someone who has SKS DA should never be allowed to plead ignorance, and particularly not of the danger of tracking animals with young- particularly big cats, elephants and black rhino, or of tracking dangerous animals into dense or unsuitable habitat.

I do not wish to focus only on Bruce Lawson as if he is the only person who has had an encounter of this nature, but the underlying reason for the macho attitude of the guiding industry is the over-promotion of the Big Five, which as most guides know are those animals most problematic to hunt on foot, particularly when injured. We should not be trying to vicariously relive the hunting era when the likes of Frederick Selous and William Cornwallis-Harris shot everything with four legs and proclaimed themselves legends for it. We should regret this period of mindless and macho raping of the wilderness.

Yet engrained in our minds, and particularly the minds of white males, is a strange nostalgic desire to re-live this inglorious and brutal past when the white hunter swept away everything in his path. SKS DA should not be seen as the single pinnacle of all FGASA guides' progression, the apex of the FGASA trophic pyramid. Whilst I agree that it should be one of the peaks on the FGASA mountain, other SKS peaks such as Birding, Palaeoanthropology and Wild Flowers should also be given prominence. SKS DA should not be given to those who lack the good sense to avoid confrontational encounters with dangerous animals through deliberately (or "ignorantly") encroaching into their comfort zones. Whilst the SKS DA guide needs to know how to handle these situations- and Bruce Lawson clearly did admirably- he should also not orchestrate them- where Bruce Lawson did deplorably. The standards for SKS DA should reflect the ability to anticipate and avoid such situations as of higher merit than causing them and then dealing with them. Prevention is better than cure. Sometimes lions just want to have lunch, and for all parties concerned, let's hope it's not going to be you…

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