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## **AFRICAN SAVANNA PROJECT**

### **SWAZILAND**



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### Is this experience for you?

Are you wanting to experience African places and cultures in a way that gets you involved? Are you wanting to make a difference by doing something worthwhile on a fun project in need of support? Are you looking to make new friends and gain a new perspective on what's important in life? If any of these things appeal then joining one of our projects is likely to be a rewarding experience for you. If you are not looking to get so involved and want more of a travel experience then consider joining one of our expeditions, or if you just want a place to stay while you do your own exploring check out our accommodation.

Would you like to work on a conservation project in a national park containing big African game? Do you want to learn hands-on wildlife research and conservation management techniques? Are you happy to camp in tents and cook on open fires? Would you like to help forge new ground in understanding the ecology of African savannas and their threatened species? If these things appeal then joining our African Savanna project is likely to be a rewarding experience for you. If you would rather join a conservation project in a scenic mountainous area check out our mountainlands project. If you would rather help people on social projects then check out our community and teaching projects.



### The African Savanna Project

Savanna vegetation is the most widespread and typical of African ecosystems and is the habitat which supports so much of Africa's wildlife. Although African savannas are well represented in conservation areas they are undergoing widespread changes as a result



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of human influence through land management and climate change. Although African savannas are better known for their large charismatic game such as elephant, rhino and lion, there are a variety of smaller species that are threatened and important in the functioning of these ecosystems. They also contain some extremely long lived trees that have survived for centuries through droughts, fires, floods and other environmental change. There is a pressing need to better understand the ecology of African savannas and their threatened species in order to be able to manage them and effectively conserve them. Despite this, the resources available for doing so are limited. Hence the birth of the African savanna project.

This project involves research and hands on conservation action to investigate the ecology of savanna species in northeastern Swaziland to help in their conservation. We try to identify which species can be used as general indicators of the health of savanna ecosystems. Threatened birds and bats are a focus of this project in particular their reproduction and movement. Rhino and elephant are also monitored to identify activity patterns and changes in social structure. Tortoises movements and activity are monitored and threatened plants (some found nowhere else in the world) may also be surveyed to monitor reproductive success and survival.



### **The project setting**

The African Savanna Project is set in the 60,000 ha Lubombo Conservancy of north eastern Swaziland which contains lion, rhino, elephant, leopard, giraffe and a whole host of other big game. Working within this area, you will be joining the staff and researchers of All Out Africa to assist with a variety of research and conservation activities.



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This area of Swaziland is particularly rich in threatened species, and forms part of the Maputaland centre of endemism (one of the World's "hotspots" of floral, as well as faunal, species richness and endemism). It is an area that provides an excellent location to investigate savanna ecology because of the variety of land-use histories on different parts of the area.

It is also an area with an interesting story behind it. People have long occupied the Lubombo Conservancy area and there are remains of stone age tools dating back 10,000 years. Iron Age Bantu people moved into the area, bringing cattle and goats with them, about 800 years ago but villages were isolated and wildlife abounded. During the late 1800s European hunters and a rinderpest outbreak helped to decimate wildlife in the region and a number of species went locally extinct. Some of the first wildlife to become threatened in this region were the large mammals (rhino, elephant, lion) because of their conflict with humans and attraction for hunters. In 1902 the whole area was concessioned out as a game and cattle ranch and the numbers of wildlife recovered to the mid-1900s. Around 1967 the ranch was sub-divided into different areas which subsequently became the Hlane Royal National Park, Mlawula Nature Reserve, a cattle ranch and communal tribal land. Hlane has subsequently reintroduced a variety of large game (lion, elephant, rhino, giraffe etc). In 1999 the Lubombo Conservancy was launched to co-operate the management of each of these adjoining areas with the aim of forming one large conservation area managed as a unit. Building partnerships and knocking down fences to allow the wildlife to roam free is a process that takes many years but this is conservation in action and by joining the savanna project you can play your part in this process.



Conservation efforts over the past decades have tended to focus on turning the tide of decline of large game, but their habitats and the smaller species associated are increasingly threatened and often little understood. Raptors (birds of prey) and predators for example being at the top of the food chain suffer the cumulative effects of savannas



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becoming degraded, yet they can roam huge distances and therefore are exposed to a variety of threats. Bats are very poorly known and understood in southern Africa yet they play a key role in the ecosystem. Reptiles are also important in the ecosystem and are often overlooked.

The African Savanna Project is revealing important information for the conservation of savanna species. Without this information, we will not be able to effectively conserve Africa's wildlife in today's changing environment, and we may lose some of these species. Volunteers are needed to support this project and help with the research and conservation action.

### **Accommodation Arrangements**

Depending on the timing & project needs, volunteers will either stay in a rustic cottage or be camping in tents, which will be provided, inside a national park with no electricity. Communal ablution & kitchen facilities will be available. Simple food (3 meals per day) will be provided and facilities are basic but include pots, pans, crockery & cutlery, hot water & parafin lanterns.

Each volunteer will need to share cooking duties and be responsible for washing his/her own clothes (hand washing facilities will be available). Sleeping bags will be needed but mattresses and pillows are provided.

Transport to the project site will be provided using a project vehicle. Within a project site, large distances may need to be covered by walking.

### **Project Activities**

By joining the African Savanna Project you may get involved in a number of the following activities depending on the timing of your placement:

- Walking, driving and cycling through big game areas to locate active nests, roosts and dens of threatened birds (eagles, vultures, storks) bats and predators (hyenas, genets, serval cats) breeding in northeastern Swaziland;
- Visiting known nests, roosts and dens to monitor reproductive success of selected species;
- Weighing, measuring, tagging and ringing young birds and bats to monitor their condition and allow study of their survival and dispersal;
- Carrying out night drives to survey the presence and abundance of nocturnal predators;
- Helping to monitor & look after game kept in enclosures for eventual reintroduction;
- Radio-tracking selected threatened species fitted with radio-transmitters to determine home range and spatial patterns;
- Erecting nets and harp traps for the capture of bats and birds;



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- Visiting and observing long-term monitoring sites to investigate the ecology of threatened species;
- Recording habitat and environmental variables associated with the collection of the above information;
- Helping to record, computerize and analyse field information to store, process and understand the information gathered;
- Helping to write up and to communicate the findings of the research as popular articles or scientific publications;
- Helping to develop and implement conservation action plans for the threatened species as information becomes available.



### **Weekends**

You have the option of taking part in various weekend activities including white water rafting, mountain biking, game viewing, adventure caving, hiking, horse riding, swimming, golf, tennis, squash, fishing or just relaxing in a sunny climate. Where possible long weekends will be arranged and expeditions to Mozambique, Kruger National Park, St. Lucia and the Natal Drakensberg are on offer. If you are interested in any of these activities let us know and we can let you know the availability and costs.

### **Organisation**

All Out Africa – is a non-profit foundation and our mission is to engage people from around the world in the research and action necessary for a sustainable Africa. For more information about All Out and our team go to [www.all-out.org/about\\_all\\_out](http://www.all-out.org/about_all_out)

### **Your commitment**

During your stay we ask that you contribute constructively to your project and behave responsibly. We ask that you uphold our organizational values of integrity, vision, teamwork, discipline and passion.

Some basic ground rules:

- Be considerate of the local people and environment, help with cooking and cleaning up.
- Abide by the laws of the country and rules of the place.
- Pay your way – with things not included above (e.g. telephone, internet, weekend activities).



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- Do not drive any vehicle without the permission of the project leader.

### Contact Information

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### Other Information

**Malaria** – It is advisable to take Malaria prophylactics as most of the research is done in malaria areas.

### CHECK LIST

In addition to your everyday clothing, it is essential that you include the following:

Hiking boots	Long trousers (light cotton)
Hat	Sun cream (at least 20 SPF)
Binoculars	Back pack (small day pack)
Water bottle	Sandwich box
Waterproofs	Mosquito repellent
Head Torch + batteries	Camera + films + batteries
Note pad + pens	Sleeping bag
Neutral bush clothing (Khaki)	

Currency:      Rands  
MasterCard & ATM card is sufficient

Visa:      On entry