Wildlands Studies
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PRESERVING WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY IN AFRICA: THE SOUTH AFRICA PROJECT

Meeting Place: Los Angeles, CA
(Time & location determined later)

September 28 – November 9, 2010
12 semester system units (equivalent to 18 quarter system units)
Program Fee $ 2695 plus $150 Application Fee

Thank you for your interest in our Wildlife and Biodiversity Program in South Africa. On our fall program, our team members will have an unprecedented opportunity to explore and investigate the wildlife, plant and human communities in the spectacular ecosystems of South Africa. During the Southern Hemisphere springtime and operating from our bases in the Baviaanskloof and the Great Fish River Reserve in the Eastern Cape Province, participants will learn firsthand about the cultural and wildlife heritage of this extraordinary country, while participating directly in research geared towards understanding how South Africa's natural ecosystems function and how best to reconcile the conflicts between people and wildlife across this dramatic landscape.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

With 11 official languages and nearly as many unofficial languages, South Africa is a model of cultural diversity, experiencing a burst of intermixing of races, cultures and histories since the end of Apartheid in 1994. Its new democratic government has brought much change, but many old traditions, as well as old problems of poverty and environmental degradation, remain. Like many of the world's wild areas, this stunningly beautiful place faces a range of challenges - a situation we will investigate onsite and firsthand. Indeed, we will be involved in efforts to restore the integrity and grandeur of wildlife and flora still recovering from the ravages of rampant hunting, overgrazing and habitat destruction that occurred during much of the nineteenth century.

South Africa is divided into eight biomes, or ecological life zones, each with distinct environmental conditions and related sets of plant and animal life: Nama Karoo, Succulent Karoo, Fynbos, Forest, Subtropical Thicket, Savanna, Dessert and Grassland. The Eastern Cape Province, where we will be based, is home to extraordinary biological diversity and contains seven of these eight biomes. Also resident are a variety of large mammals including the "mega-herbivores", elephants, buffalo and black rhinos, "predators" including leopard as well as an impressive variety of rare and endemic plants.

The human community of contemporary South Africa is similarly rich in cultures, languages and lifestyles. During our program, we will have an opportunity to meet and interact with Xhosa-speaking people in rural settings, English and Afrikaans-speaking farmers and conservationists, reserve managers, and researchers. Together this will broaden our horizons and give us unique insight into the lives and perspectives of these peoples and how they are intertwined in the modern-day, democratic society of this fascinating country.

Perhaps the most striking feature of South Africa is the country's impressive wildlife communities. South Africa is host to a diverse flora and fauna, including a breath-taking array of birds, grazers, predators, insects and plants. World-renowned parks and reserves attract visitors from around the globe with interests in wildlife

viewing, natural history, photography, and relaxation. Ease of communication (nearly all educated people in South Africa speak English, although often as a second or third language) and excellent infrastructure give added appeal to the country as a tourist destination. However, as human development continues, natural areas have become increasingly isolated islands in a sea of a burgeoning human population. And the two are inextricably linked: ecotourism and hunting are among South Africa's largest industries. Wildlife tourism provides much needed revenue sources and employment opportunities for people, while at the same time improving ecological conditions on lands previously subjected to overgrazing by livestock. The South African system is unusual in that private land owners are allowed to own the wildlife on their property after meeting certain criteria. We will explore how this provides both opportunities and challenges to maintaining natural ecosystems. The balance between people and wildlife forms one of the central themes of our team's investigations in the Eastern Cape.

PROJECT GOALS & ACTIVITIES

Through hands-on approaches, team members will gain a unique perspective on ecosystem management and wildlife biodiversity conservation issues in South Africa, working in and traveling to areas well off the beaten path. Our field study initially focuses on coastal ecosystems followed by the unique blend of biomes across the Baviaanskloof Mega-Reserve and then to the Great Fish River Reserve, a provincial nature reserve of about 100,000 acres. Its resident wildlife includes black rhinos, African buffalo, kudu, eland, hartebeest, hippos, baboons, vervet monkeys, jackals and leopards, among others. Elephants are slated for re-introduction and this brings its own set of issues which we will examine on site.

Our program begins with an overview of key social-ecological issues prevalent in the Eastern Cape. Examination of key conservation and land management initiatives will assist in orientating team members to the diversity of the landscape and its inhabitants. Participants will be introduced to the semi-tropical and semi-arid ecosystems, with emphasis on the 'bushveld' or thicket environments. The project will be split between the Baviaanskloof Mega-Reserve and the Great Fish River Reserve. Our time in the Baviaanskloof will be spent purposefully migrating between various 'bases' to expose ourselves to a variety of land-uses, ecosystems, wildlife and conservation initiatives. At the Great Fish River Reserve we will be based at a restored nineteenth-century farmhouse and participate in field research taking place here. During the first weeks of the program, our focus will be on acquiring the skills of a field biologist, learning about the natural history of the region, and sharpening our observational and analytical skills. Much of our efforts will involve the black rhinoceros populations of the two reserves. However, we will also work with carnivores as well as with some of the smallest mammals in Africa. For all of these, we will assist with ongoing field research projects which aim to realize tangible outcomes for conservation and people. In addition, we will study local history, and the languages and cultures of local peoples in preparation for rural visits later in the program. **Please note that no prior research experience is required on this program; all methods will be taught on-site in South Africa**.

Initially, at the start of the project, we will learn to identify resident wildlife species both visually and by track and sign and become familiar with key plant species as well. We will then learn and participate in on-going efforts to monitor these communities, focusing on techniques that form an important part of the ecologist's and conservationist's toolbox. With these tools in hand, we can begin to address research questions about the functioning of these African ecosystems, and the dynamics of the interface between human and wildlife communities.

With our newfound knowledge and experiences, we will visit other reserves such as Addo National Park, famous for its dense elephant population. We will compare the ecology (animal-plant interactions) and degradation states and discuss related wildlife management issues. By day we will go on game drives and hikes. By night, we will participate in game censuses using vehicles and spotlights, revealing roaming nocturnally active species such as aardvarks and jackals.

Although much of our time will be spent in or adjacent to Reserve areas, we will also be involved with research and management projects 'off-reserve' and in rural areas. This aspect will enable us to investigate the various options available to meet local stakeholder needs as well as achieve conservation aims. Such efforts may include promoting the indigenous (traditional) Nguni cattle as a livestock breed more suited and less destructive to local grazing lands than introduced "European" breeds. We will look at the impacts of different management regimes (e.g. private ranches, communally-based grazing areas, conservation areas, etc.) on ecosystem health and integrity. On Reserves, private farms and lands we visit we will assess the success of these contrasting approaches to conservation through interviews with local people, owners, managers, and other wildlife professionals. We will look at the potential role of ecosystem-based restoration in the improvement of degraded environments. Such restoration efforts include planting of native shrubs as part of the broader effort to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide levels and counteract global warming. We will engage with this effort and the monitoring of its results and in this way help to mitigate the effects of our own travel to Africa.

As human populations increase, people and wildlife have come increasingly into contact - and often conflict. Reconciling how, simultaneously, to protect and conserve wildlife populations while supporting human economic growth and cultural diversity is one of the greatest challenges faced by conservationists today. To grapple with these human-wildlife controversies, our program will try to understand the human dimension through dialog with local people whose livelihood depends on the land. Exposure to local people and their perspectives - through discussions and visits in rural villages and pastoral areas, local ranches and towns - will help educate us about their needs and concerns, as well as the historical, economic and cultural constraints under which they operate. We will also visit the historic University of Fort Hare, an institution whose alumni include many of the leaders of the struggle to overcome Apartheid and many of those who are leaders of the new democracy of South Africa. This institution not only maintains important cultural and historic resources but is active in research and education to meet the many needs of this new yet ancient society.

Overall, our program offers the experience of a lifetime - an extraordinary and unusual opportunity to live and work in a variety of African wildlife habitats, from savannas to coastal habitats, while at the same time becoming intimately familiar with the people and cultures occupying these extraordinary landscapes. You can expect to gain valuable experience in both in field research and conservation/development work and go home with a host of unforgettable memories from our time shared together. By the end of the project, we will have gained and contributed to a broader perspective on the interplay between the human, scientific, ethical and ecological dimensions of conservation in some of the world's most precious wildlife habitats. We will leave with a sense of accomplishment, having added to knowledge and understanding by contributing to long-term projects. Our primary requirement is that you are enthusiastic, adaptable, open-minded and ready to learn. We look forward to you joining us.

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ACADEMIC CREDIT

Students will receive 12 semester units (18 quarter units) awarded through California State University Monterey Bay Extended Education. While students usually encounter no difficulties in transferring credit to their home campus, applicants should check with their advisors prior to enrolling. Our staff will be happy to explain the program in further detail to the applicant's advisor, if necessary. The South Africa field studies program gives credit in three courses:

ENVS 370, Environmental Wildlands Studies (4 semester system units)
ENVS 371, Environmental Field Survey (4 units)
ENVS 372, Wildlands Environment and Culture (4 units)

Students will be evaluated on the basis of: 1) examinations; 2) extent and quality of fieldwork; 3) participation in group field activities; 4) and the design and implementation of an independent project; and 5) a written report to the group.

Team members are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and responsible manner. The Wildlands Studies Program reserves the right to require any student to withdraw from the program if their conduct is detrimental to or incompatible with the interests, safety, or welfare of any course participants.

TEAM LOGISTICS

Arrangements will be available for team members to fly from Los Angeles International Airport to Port Elizabeth, South Africa. You can also arrange to join the group in Port Elizabeth if that works out better for you. In this case, you will need to meet the group flight when it arrives. At the end of the program, you can decide whether you want to fly home on the scheduled date or remain on your own in South Africa before using the return portion of your ticket.

Within South Africa we will use a variety of vehicles ranging from vans to 4x4 pickups. On a few occasions we will be making multiple day hikes from relatively primitive campsites. Because of our mode of travel, it is essential that you are able to carry all of your own gear, so please make sure that you can do this before you leave. **An above average level of physical fitness, stamina and resilience is required.** You will need to be able to carry a 30-40 lb backpack for 5-8 miles over uneven terrain. Later on, we will send enrolled team members a specific gear list for the South Africa Program.

Reasonable efforts will be made to follow the program that Wildlands Studies has outlined here. However, experience indicates that weather conditions and bureaucratic considerations may affect our plans. Wildlands Studies has put together an innovative program in South Africa, and team members need to be flexible, patient, and prepared to adapt to unexpected situations. Being flexible also allows us to take advantage of unique opportunities that inadvertently arise during our journeys, often producing some of the program's most memorable moments. In Africa one learns to expect the unexpected!

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PROJECT COSTS

Program Fee:	$2695 plus $150 Application Fee due August 1, 2010 Enrollment on a space-available basis after the fee due date until the program is full.
Estimated in-country Expenses:	$1850 per person share of the land, transportation and fuel; most food costs; park fees; lodging; safari supplies; instructor travel; activity/ research costs; readings).
Airfare:	$1600 (estimated)
Personal Spending Money:	$300 (this varies according to taste - but don't be caught short)

Students should inquire at the financial aid office of their home campus regarding the use of their loans or grants for this course. CSU Monterey Bay Extended Education/ Wildlands Studies are not responsible for non-refundable airline or other tickets or payments or any similar penalties that may be incurred as a result of any course cancellation or changes.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

You will need a current passport that is valid for at least six months after the project begins. US Citizens can obtain a 90-day tourist visa upon arrival.

PRE-PROGRAM MAILINGS

Detailed information regarding travel and visa information, gear/food, meeting plans, in-country payment, medical recommendations and academic preparations will be sent to all team members in a subsequent logistics letter about 8-10 weeks before the project initiates**.**

PROJECT LEADERS

DIETER VAN DEN BROEK is a wildlands researcher interested in ecosystem management, restoration and participatory strategy development. For the past three years, he has been involved with landscape restoration in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

MATTHEW ZYLSTRA has extensive experience with ecosystem management and social-ecological restoration through conservation initiatives. He currently lives in South Africa.