



Intern Activities on UmPhafa



'On a daily basis, you will record key animal sightings, including new births, as well as maintenance and security issues!'

All information is correct at time of publishing (January 2026) and may be subject to change.



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GAME COUNTS

One day every month is dedicated to game counts. Led by our conservation team, you will undertake a drive, which will cover the whole Reserve. During this drive you will stop and count any animal that you see. You will age and sex the animals, and check their general condition. This is an essential activity that not only allows us to collect vital population statistics, but is also used in establishing our carrying capacity for the Reserve as a whole.

ANIMAL BEHAVIOURAL STUDIES

One of the most important aspects of working and living in an environment such as ours is understanding our animals' behaviour; animal behaviour tells us so much. You will undertake various studies, including general ethograms and feeding studies, mostly on large game, such as giraffe, buffalo and rhino.

DATA COLLECTION

On a daily basis, you will record key animal sightings, maintenance issues, security issues, deaths, births and any other relevant information. Data is fed into a database and is an essential management tool for our Reserve team. This data is also available for specific research projects.

SPECIES IDENTIFICATION

Led by our conservation team, you will assist with the individual identification of key animal species, such as leopard, rhino, buffalo and cheetah. Identifying individuals of key species enables us to better understand population dynamics.

FENCE PATROL

Supervised by our ranger team, you will patrol the Reserve's main perimeter fence looking for any damage to the fence and to check that the electrical current is at sufficient capacity. Repairs will be made where necessary and repaired when on patrol, or alternatively extensive damage will be reported to our main fencing team.

Patrols such as this are a crucial aspect of the Reserve's security. Not only does it ensure that none of our animals have moved beyond our perimeter, but it also allows us to check that there has been no intrusion by poachers. Checking for snares is also another crucial part of this patrol. It is vital should any animal have been caught in a snare that it is found as soon as possible to avoid loss of life.

VELD MANAGEMENT

The number of animals and species that we can have on the Reserve depends on the vegetation. It is essential to ensure that the balance is right. Too many grazers, for example, would have a dramatic effect on the grasslands.

Vegetation surveys enable us to calculate our carrying capacity. You will assist with various vegetation surveys including trees, grasses and invasive/alien plants.





'Learn new skills such as tracking and identification!'

You will assist with the placement of trail cameras and study nocturnal activity on night expeditions!

NIGHT DRIVES

You will go out on to the Reserve at night in one of the Reserve's vehicles. You will be using a high-powered spotlight and will focus entirely on nocturnal activity. This is a fantastic opportunity to see the Reserve as a whole new environment, as well as a chance to look at the beautiful African skies.

TRAIL CAMERAS

You will assist with the placement of a number of trail cameras. These cameras allow us to access a world rarely seen, especially with regards to our more shy or nocturnal animals. Cameras are placed for up to two weeks in specific areas of interest and are then collected for analysis.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

At certain times of the year, the Reserve is working to assist organisations such as the Endangered Wildlife Trust. One of the projects we run here on the Reserve is a bonding and holding facility for the endangered African wild dog.

Our role is to hold the animals for the trust in a large boma until a permanent home is found. With the conservation team, you will perform twice daily checks on the animals and assist with feeding. In the case of bonding, daily ethograms are undertaken to assess relationship development with regards to separate sexes and, from this information, various stages of the bonding process will be implemented.

HIGH PROFILE SPECIES MONITORING

Led by our conservation and ranger teams, you will assist in the monitoring of high profile species. Certain African species are more vulnerable to security incidents such as poaching than others and it is an essential part of the day to day management of the Reserve that these animals are accounted for everyday and are in good health.

BIO-DIVERSITY STUDIES

During your stay we will study and assess water quality in our streams running through the Reserve, as well as carry out butterfly, bird, river and insect surveys. We also monitor parasitic load during the warm and rainy months.



MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES

EROSION CONTROL

Led by our conservation team, you will work in areas that need rehabilitation. These areas will have been dramatically affected by erosion. The role of the team is to undertake various practices such as 'brush packing' to minimize any further damage and create new growth around these areas.

ALIEN/INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL

Over the years, a number of alien or invasive plants have become dominant in certain areas of the Reserve. Events, such as fires often allow certain species to regenerate and other species to degenerate. You will assist with the removal of these plants allowing for more favourable species to dominate.

ROAD REPAIR AND CLEARING

The Reserve can be affected drastically by seasonal showers and wind erosion. Therefore it's essential to fix the roads and clear the bushes away from the roads so they don't impact on vehicles - we need to ensure we can access any area of the Reserve.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE

With the conservation team you will carry out the cleaning and fixing of the boma (holding enclosure) ready for any animal introductions, as well as additional activities when required, such as repairing and painting fence poles.



OTHER SEASONAL ACTIVITIES

WATERHOLE AND VEGETATION ENCROACHMENT

Led by our conservation team, you will visit various fixed points on the Reserve. Here you will document via photographic evidence water hole capacity/levels and assess the level of bush encroachment.

FROGGING

You will visit the Reserve's various waterholes and record species diversity. This will be added to our species identification record. This is a seasonal activity that occurs during the rainy season.

SMALL ANIMAL TRAPPING / PIT FALL TRAPS

Using ethical Sherman traps, you will set up small mammal grids to assess species diversity. This is a seasonal activity that does not occur during the very hot summer months of December to March.

FIREBREAKS & BLOCK BURNS

Led by our Reserve maintenance team, you will assist in undertaking firebreaks along the Reserve's main boundaries. The purpose of these breaks is to stop runaway fires. This is highly seasonal occurring in the months of June to September.

ANIMAL NUTRITION

Led by our conservation team, you will assist with the distribution of essential animal nutrients, such as salt licks and mineral blocks. This is a seasonal activity occurring during the drier winter months (June- September).

DAM RESTOCKING

During the Summer it is important that we monitor the levels of fish in our dams as they are an excellent indicator of the health of a fresh water ecosystem. Temperature variations throughout the year can affect these dams and it's vital that we check the quality of the dams.

GAME CAPTURE

Between March and October you may get a chance to take part in game capture or witness the release of new game on to the Reserve. This is as and when it is required by the Reserve and not guaranteed.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Interns will be able to experience (depending on their length of stay) various activities off the Reserve on alternate weekends. This can include a bird of prey display, hikes along various trails within the Drakensberg Mountain range and horse riding to name but a few. All off-site activities are paid for by the individual intern and are not compulsory. (See Off-site Activities Pack)

