

**POCKET GUIDE TO
THE PLACENAMES
OF
THE KRUGER
NATIONAL PARK**



FLOORS VAN DER WATEREN

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KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

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INDEX

A

Afsaal.....	1
Albasini ruins.....	1
Amatshukeni.....	2
Ampie se boorgat.....	2

B

Baanbreker.....	2
Babalala.....	2
Balule.....	3
Bangu.....	3
Baobab Hill.....	3
Bateleur.....	4
Berg-en-dal.....	4
Biesiesvlei.....	5
Birdhide.....	6
Biyamiti.....	6
Black heron.....	6
Blinkwater.....	6
Bobbejaankrans.....	6
Boesman.....	7
Boulders.....	7
Bowker Kop.....	7
Boyela.....	7
Bububu.....	8
Buffeldorings.....	8
Buig-of-bars.....	8
Bume.....	9
Byashishi.....	9

C

Coetzer.....	9
Crocodile River.....	9

D	
De Laporte.....	10
Dimbo.....	10
Doispane Road.....	11
Dokweni.....	11
Duke (waterhole).....	11
Dzombo.....	12
Dzundzwini.....	12
E	
Eendrag.....	13
Elandskuil.....	13
Engelhard.....	14
Erfplaas.....	15
F	
Fairfield.....	15
Fayi Loop.....	15
G	
Ganspan.....	15
Gayisenga.....	16
Gezantfombi.....	16
Girivana.....	16
Goedgegun.....	16
Gomondwane.....	17
Grootvlei.....	17
Grysbok.....	18
Gudzani.....	18
Gumbandebvu.....	18
H	
Hartbeesfontein.....	19
Hatlani.....	19
Hillside.....	20
Hippo pool.....	20
Hlahleni.....	20

Hlamvu.....	20
I	
Injayamtepe.....	21
J	
Jakkalsbessie Private camp.....	22
James (waterhole).....	23
Joáo.....	23
Jock (waterhole).....	23
Jock of the Bushveld.....	24
Jones se dam.....	25
Josekhulu.....	25
Jumbo.....	25
K	
Kaleka.....	26
Kanniedood (dam).....	26
Khandzalive.....	26
Klein Nshawu.....	26
Klopperfontein.....	27
Krapkuil.....	27
Kremetart.....	27
Kruger Tablets.....	27
Kumana.....	28
Kwaggaspan.....	28
L	
Lamont.....	28
Langtoon.....	29
Leeubron.....	29
Leeupan.....	29
Letaba.....	29
Limpopo.....	30
Lindanda.....	30
Longwe.....	30
Loskop.....	31

Lower Sabie.....	31
Lubyelubye.....	31
Lugmag.....	32
Luvuvhu.....	32
M	
Mac's borehole.....	32
Mafotini.....	32
Magamba.....	32
Mahlambandlopfu.....	33
Mahlati.....	33
Mahonie.....	33
Makhadzi.....	33
Makhohlola.....	34
Makongolweni.....	34
Malelane.....	34
Malopenyana.....	34
Mandadzidzi.....	34
Mangadyane.....	35
Mangake.....	35
Mantimahle.....	35
Manungu.....	35
Manzimhlope.....	35
Maqili.....	36
Marheya.....	36
Marhumbyeni.....	36
Maroela.....	36
Masala.....	36
Mashokwe.....	37
Masiterata.....	38
Masorini.....	38
Matekevhele.....	38
Mathekenyane.....	38
Mathikithi.....	39

Matjulu.....	39
Matlhari.....	39
Matshitshindzudzi.....	39
Matukwale.....	40
Matupa.....	40
Mavumbye.....	40
Mawawi.....	41
Mazanje.....	41
Mazithi.....	41
Mestel.....	41
Metsimetsi.....	42
Mhala.....	42
Mhisanamond.....	43
Mhlupeka.....	44
Middelvei.....	44
Milalani.....	44
Mingerhout.....	45
Misumani.....	45
Mitomeni.....	45
Mlaleni.....	46
Mlambane.....	46
Mlondozi.....	46
Mondzweni.....	46
Mooigesig.....	47
Mooiplaas.....	47
Mopani.....	47
Mpanamana.....	47
Mphongolo loop.....	48
Mpondo dam.....	48
Mshatu.....	48
Mhlabama-dvube.....	48
Munywini.....	49
Mutlumuvi.....	49

Muzandzeni.....	49
Mvubu.....	50
N	
N'wamanzi.....	50
N'wamatsatsa.....	50
N'wambu.....	50
N'wamuriwa.....	50
N'wanetsi.....	51
N'warihlangari.....	51
N'waswitshaka.....	51
N'waswitsontso.....	51
N'watimhiri.....	52
N'watin'wambu.....	52
N'watindlopfu.....	52
N'watinungu.....	52
Nandzana.....	53
Napi.....	53
Newu.....	53
Ngobeni.....	53
Ngodzi.....	54
Ngotso.....	54
Ngwenyeni.....	54
Nhlanganini.....	54
Nhlanganzwani.....	54
Nhlanguleni.....	55
Nhlotini.....	55
Nhlowa road.....	55
Nkaya.....	56
Nkovakulu.....	56
Nkuhlu.....	56
Nkulumbeni.....	56
Nkumbe.....	57
Nsasane.....	57

Nsemani.....	57
Nsikazi.....	57
Ntomeni.....	57
Ntshivana.....	57
Ntsumaneni.....	58
Numbi.....	58
Nyala land.....	58
Nyamarhi.....	59
O	
Olifantdrinkgat.....	59
Olifants.....	59
Olifantsbad pan.....	59
Orpen camp/ gate /dam.....	60
Ou kraal.....	61
P	
Pafuri.....	61
Phabeni.....	61
Phalaborwa.....	62
Phonda hills.....	62
Phugwani.....	62
Piet Grobler.....	62
Pretoriuskop.....	62
Punda Maria.....	63
R	
Rabelais.....	63
Randspruit (waterhole).....	63
Ratelpan.....	63
Red rocks.....	64
Reën voël.....	64
Renosterkoppies.....	64
Renosterpan.....	64
Rietpan.....	65
Rockvale.....	65

Roodewal.....	65
Rooibosrant.....	65
S	
Saalbek.....	65
Sabie river.....	66
Salitje river.....	66
Sand river.....	66
Satara.....	66
Shamiriri.....	67
Shibavantsengele.....	67
Shibotwana.....	67
Shilowa.....	68
Shimangwaneni.....	68
Shimuwini.....	68
Shingomani.....	68
Shingomeni.....	68
Shingwedzi.....	69
Ship mountain.....	69
Shiphampanane.....	69
Shipikana.....	69
Shipirivirhi.....	69
Shirimantanga.....	70
Shisakashanghonzo.....	70
Shisha.....	70
Shishangani.....	70
Shitlhave.....	71
Shitsakana.....	71
Shivulani.....	71
Shongololo.....	71
Silolweni.....	72
Silwervis.....	72
Sirheni.....	73
Sitfungwane.....	73

Siyalu.....	73
Skukuza.....	74
Sonop.....	75
Stapelkop.....	75
Stevenson Hamilton.....	75
Stolsnek (waterhole).....	75
Sunset dam.....	75
Swartklip.....	76
Sweni.....	76

T

Talamati.....	76
Tamboti.....	76
Thulamila.....	77
Tihongonyeni.....	77
Timbavati.....	77
Timfenheni loop.....	77
Tinhongana.....	78
Tlhalabye.....	78
Trichardt road.....	78
Tsendze.....	79
Tshanga.....	79
Tshokwane.....	79
Tsutshe.....	79
Twisappel.....	80

U

Uitspan.....	80
--------------	----

V

Vervoer dam.....	80
Vlag koppie.....	80
Voetpad.....	80
Voortrekker.....	81
Vudogwa.....	81
Vurhami.....	81

Vutomi.....	81
W	
Wilverdiend.....	81
Wik-en-weeg.....	82
Witpens.....	82
Witsand.....	82
Wolhuter (tents).....	83
Wolhuter (continued).....	84
X	
Xitangeni.....	85
Z	
Zambhala.....	85

KNP

Afsaal

Situated between Skukuza and the Malelane Gate. It was named by Dr U de V. Pienaar in 1985 when the existing road was built. "Afsaal" is the Afrikaans word for taking the saddle off a horse after a long trip. In earlier days, visitors to this area were still on horseback. Since then this place has been a picnic site.

Albasini ruins

The ruins itself used to be the home of the first European to stay in the area where the KNP is today. João Albasini was born in Lisbon in 1813 and died in the Zoutpansberg in 1888.

He was a trader and ivory hunter of great renown to whose prowess hundreds of elephants and rhino are said to have fallen.

Albasini arrived in Delagoa Bay in 1831 as a trader.

He moved to Ohrigstad, south of the KNP, and opened a shop, where he met and married a maiden van Rensburg. He settled in the KNP along the Sabie river at Makashula`s Kraal in 1845.

He gathered the remnants of several scattered tribes around him, equipped them with firearms and trained them to shoot. This tribe was later known as the Magwamba tribe. It was not long before he was acknowledged by the tribe as their chief.

Birdhide

This construction at Skukuza and Shingwedzi was built in such a way that it would not interfere with nature, but would allow birdlovers to have a better vantage point from which to view birds.

Biyamiti

A large seasonal river and a tributary to the Crocodile River. The Tsonga word means “where barricades had to be erected around dwellings”. The word is derived from ku biya = to make a barricade + miti = huts/dwellings. The river was very attractive to the first Tsonga settlers who moved in from the east. They however had to barricade their huts against aggressive attacks from the local tribes.

Black heron

Named after the rare heron species *Egretta ardesiaca*. It prefers dams to rivers and has a strange and wonderful method of fishing: it spreads its wings over its head to form a canopy. It is a nomadic bird, totally black in colour, with yellow feet.

Blinkwater

A descriptive Afrikaans word, meaning “shiny or clear water”.

Bobbejaankrans

The Afrikaans for “the high rock of the baboons”.

A “krans” could also mean “a rockface or high boulder”.

Doispane Road

In the olden days Doispane was a Ranger's outpost halfway between Matimba and Skukuza. A tribesman who returned from working in the gold mines in Lydenburg used to stay there. His name was Doispane, the way he pronounced the nickname "Dustpan", given to him while he was working in the mines.

Dokweni

This name is derived from the Tsonga term: "doko-dokodoko" which can be translated as "to wish for something". Being a perennial spring, this naming could refer to the waiting on the water in arid times.

Duke (waterhole)

An old fellow-campaigner of James Stevenson-Hamilton, Thomas Duke was of late with the Rimington's guides. His parents had immigrated to South Africa from the south of Ireland.

His father became a successful farmer in the Eastern Cape up to the native uprising of the 1870s, until his homestead was burned to the ground. Duke was about twelve at the time and was beaten and ill-treated, until, during the night, he was released by one of the family servants who felt pity for him.

He ran for about twelve miles, barefoot and practically naked, until he found safety.

His parents were treated remarkably well and were sent to the nearest safe post where they joined up again.

Later Duke joined the Cape Mounted Police and Rimington`s guides, both in which he quickly rose in rank. He joined Stevenson-Hamilton in 1902 as ranger at the Park and was one of the oldest serving, very colourful staff-members.

Dzombo

This small stream runs between the Tsende, Letaba and Shingwedzi Rivers. The name Dzombo was given to the only one of the “Great Seven” elephants shot by poachers. He was fifty years old at the time and was shot with a Russian AK47 rifle. The Tsonga word is derived from dzombolo = “to wait for something that is slow in coming”.

Dzundzwini

This large koppie is situated on the plains south east of Punda Maria and can easily be seen. It also boasts a lookout from your vehicle. The Tsonga word means “at the land belonging to the chief and cultivated by his people”.

The chief of the village at the time was called Matibee, and in 1836, when Louis Trichardt trekked through this area, he called it “Matibeetuin” which translates into “Matibee’s garden”.

Eendrag

The previous government under the National Party's rule had a motto under their official badge that (since the Union of South Africa) read, "Eendrag Maak Mag", which directly translates into "Unity is strength".

During tumultuous times, not necessarily between races, the idea of "Together we stand, divided we fall" was very much of a reality, stemming from the days of the "Great Trek", during which, even then, white settlers could not, for the life of them, stand together.

The only time when "Eendrag" came into being was during the Anglo-Boer war, when South Africans revolted against British invasion.

Elandskuil

The biggest antelope in the KNP is the Eland. More accurately, the Eland is the biggest antelope in Africa. The word "kuil" is an Afrikaans word that normally refers to a small waterhole. The insertion of the letter "s" results in the meaning "the waterhole of the Eland".

In 1960, the evasive Eland was seen as the rarest of the wildlife in the KNP. Today, it is still uncertain which is the rarest of the antelope, but of the animals it would most certainly be the seldomly seen wolf- specie the Cape hyena / Brown hyena.

The African Eland, *Taurotragus oryx*, has a wide variety of family members. Its family hails from varieties in America (Moose), from the giant Eland in Alaska as well as similar versions in Russia, Scandinavia and Poland.

The African version can reach a weight of over 750 kilograms and a lifespan of more than 20 years. Despite the size and weight of the animal, it is still very agile, alert and graceful, and it will clear a fence of two metres in one startled bound.

Many places in South Africa have been named after the Eland, mainly with water connotations, such as Elandskuil (waterhole), Elandsvlei (marsh), Elandsrivier (river), Elandsfontein (fountain) and Elandslaagte (depression). The reason for this would be that the Eland is a thirsty antelope due to its size and diet. The type of food it prefers is normally found in well-watered areas, and it only eats specific types of grass, which is taken in at staggering quantities.

The quality of vegetation is normally watery and Brackish, or with a high mineral salt content.

Engelhard

The Engelhard dam was named after an American millionaire who, after visiting the park, donated the money for the building of the dam after the Park had seen one of the driest seasons in 1961.

Injayamtepe

On the Sabie river road there used to be a memorable site called Injayamtepe (named after a watercourse Inja kaMthephe, which is a tributary to the Sabie river, approximately 5 kilometres west of Skukuza. Unfortunately this site or river is not listed on the latest maps anymore. It means “the dog of Mthephe”, the name the Swazi people gave to Ranger Healy.

Healy sent a Swazi Ranger to fetch a greyhound from Ranger Wolhuter at Matimba. On the way back to Skukuza, the dog died of pure exhaustion and the extreme heat of the day, and was buried there.

What makes it memorable, is that Healy routed out the Black helpers from the compound at Skukuza and drove them to weep and lament at the death of the dog!

A fine block of granite was erected on which Healy had the words neatly carved: “Erected by G. R. Healy in loving memory of Mary, aged 3 years”, followed by the date. Some of the older rangers might still be able to remember and show tourists where the tombstone is.

(Please bear in mind that this is not on a tourist route anymore, and that it might not be allowed to view it.)

In his book 'South African Eden' Stevenson-Hamilton remembers how he often heard tourists, after looking at the stone, remark on how wrong it was to bring your children to the Lowveld!

Jakkalsbessie (Private camp)

The Jakkalsbessie, *Diospyros mespiliformis*, is one of the finer trees in the park. The direct translation from Afrikaans would be "Jackal-berry". The reason for this naming is unknown, as the jackal has no interest in this tree.

The tree is sometimes also referred to as the "Transvaal ebony". The only possible connotation to the jackal could be the leaves of this tree, which might have looked similar to the ears of the jackal to the beholder who named it.

The leaves are ear-shaped, leathery and vary from 4- 14cm in length and are thickly veined. As with many of the indigenous trees in the KNP, this tree is considered by the natives to have magical and medicinal powers.

The fruit can grow to up to 2,5cm long, oval to round, is yellow and smooth when mature, and is completely edible.

Animals eat it and native Africans brew beer from it. Fruit can also be dried successfully for future consumption. According to the natives, the leaves have antiseptic power to heal wounds and infections.

James (waterhole)

Next to the old Malelane-Skukuza Road, a borehole was sunk and once again, named by Dr U de V Pienaar. He named it after T.L. James, who was stationed as a ranger at Malelane from 1933 to 1950.

João

The firstname of João Albasini, for more information regarding this character, see Albasini ruins.

Jock (waterhole)

Full description will be given below.

Jock of the Bushveld

Jock was the most famous dog in the Lowveld, and most probably one of the most famous in the top ten legendary dogs of the world.

Jock was the runt of the litter and destined to die by being drowned in a bucket of water, when Sir Percy Fitzpatrick saw the intended murder in progress and intervened.

He detailed that a bullterrier bitch gave birth to six puppies, origin and race of the father unknown.

The mother`s name was Jess and she gave birth under the tree where a man by the name of Soltke prayed, died and was buried.

Soltke was a man from German origin, could hardly speak English and was found walking the main transport route. He was dressed in a suit and tophat with an umbrella to ward off the sun. Some transport drivers felt sorry for him and offered him a lift.

On this trip, Soltke saw a bird he wanted for his collection, and, in his hurried excitement, he fired both barrels of his shotgun into his leg. They summoned the closest to what they could get to a doctor, who turned out to be a self-claimed chemist, "Doctor Munroe", who was so drunk at the time he arrived he could not do anything for the praying German.

A doctor from MacMac arrived by horse and amputated the leg. The poor Soltke, however, died the next morning from blood poisoning, and he was buried under the tree where he did his praying.

Three months later, Jock was born on this very site. Sir Percy Fitzpatrick wrote a book called Jock of the Bushveld, which is certainly worth reading. In the nineties a film was also released by that name. A statue of Jock can be seen on route H2-2 in the KNP.

Langtoon

The Afrikaans word “langtoon” strictly means “long toe”. This affectionate nickname is used to describe the *Actophilornis africanus* or African Jacana, which is a very common resident to the watery areas in the park. They move around on floating vegetation and their long toes help to distribute their weight evenly.

Leeubron

A direct translation from Afrikaans would be “source of lions”. Lions apparently used to come here to raise their young, as it was fairly safe and abundant with easy prey and water for sustenance.

Leeupan

“Lion pan” would be the direct translation from Afrikaans and was named by ranger LB Steyn in 1930. This waterhole close to Tshokwane has always been a popular drinking and relaxing site for lions.

Letaba

One of the most beautiful rivers of the Lowveld. The word “Letaba” has two possible interpretations, “river of sand” and “the river that rises in the mountains”. These translations are of Sotho origin.

Masiterata

This name has another interesting background and can be said to be Tsonga-afrikaans. It was the name of a person who lived here and is a Tsonga corruption of the Afrikaans word “magistraat” which means “magistrate” in English.

Masorini

The Masorini ruins on the way to Phalaborwa gate is an important archeological site. It dates back to the Stone Age and was used for forging metal until the 19th century.

Matekevhele

This Venda word translates into “the place of abundant maize”.

Mathekenyane

The Tsonga word for the jigger flea, *Tunga penetrans*. This horrid insect was introduced to Africa from tropical America in the 17th century and has spread fast within Africa’s tropical and sub-tropical regions. After fertilisation, the female flea burrows into the skin of her host, generally in tender areas that are easily penetrated, such as between the toes or under the toe-nails. As the eggs develop, she swells to the size of a pea, before the eggs hatch through the hole she came in from. The wounds inflicted by these fleas are often infected and very painful. Should the body of the flea be broken under the skin, it will result in severe ulceration and complications.

Munywini

The word means “place where salt occurs” in Shangaan and the watercourse is a tributary of the Nwaswitsontso river. You will find it about 12 kilometres north-north-east of the Lower Sabie rest camp.

Mutlumuvi

An interesting name, an adaption of the Sotho “motla-omobe” by the Shangaan tribe. The explanation of the name would be “dangerous when in flood” as per the original Sotho. This watercourse is a tributary to the Nwendlamuhari and can be found 21 kilometres north-north-east of Skukuza.

Muzandzeni

This picnic site was named by Ranger J. Kloppers and hails its name from the Tsonga language, which translates to “where the Tsessebe’s are”. Apparently he saw a small herd of them at the time he was there.

The Tsessebe, (*Damaliscus lunatus*), are found in small herds of five to ten, with a dominant territorial bull. They look very similar to the Hartebeest, and is often referred to as the “Bastard Hartebeest”. Horns occur on both sexes, spread outward, then back and slightly upwards.

Ntsumaneni

The Shangaan word means “place of the red ochre”. The Shangaan used to dig out red ochre from this hill for cosmetic purposes. The men used various markings to show their standing in the community as warriors, newly-weds, cattlemen, etc. The women had similar markings for newly-weds and other markings for widows, virgins and female royalty.

Numbi

Just after the entrance to Pretoriuskop you will find Numbikop. To start, the history of the name Pretoriuskop is uncertain, but some believe that the name was given after the old president M.W. Pretorius rested at this hill after a journey he undertook. The name “Numbikop” was given to this hill in honour of a Tribal chief by that name. The name “Numbi” has no particular meaning in this case, but some African slang dictates a “numbi” to be the breast of a woman.

In Swati the word “iNumbi” would mean the round fruit of a small tree or shrub.

Nyala land

Named after the rare and handsome antelope, the Nyala (*Tragelaphus angasii*). Thanks to Piet de Jager, a ranger in the KNP in the early 1920`s this close to extinct animal was rescued as a species. He made it his personal quest to safeguard these antelope and to re-establish them in their natural habitat.

The Nyala is also the antelope which is on the split between the larger and the smaller antelope. Interestingly, the Nyala male is big enough to be referred to as a “bull” instead of a “ram”, but the Nyala female is referred to as an “ewe” and not a “cow”. This makes the Nyala the only mammal that has a bull and ewe in their specie!

Nyamarhi

The Tsonga word for the Cape ash (*Ekebergia capensis*), also known as the “Dog plum”. This tree is widespread from areas close to Knysna, through Natal, Zululand, Swaziland to eastern and northern Transvaal. It is usually evergreen and can grow up to 22 metres with a pointed crown display in the forest, but with a widespread crown in the open.

Olifantdrinkgat

Afrikaans for “elephants’ watering hole”

Olifants

Name given in Afrikaans for Elephants’ River and –camp. The Olifants River is known as “Lepelle” in Sotho, “Balule” in Shangaan and “Libhalule” in Swazi. The similarities in the combination of the three names are quite interesting!

Olifantsbad pan

The Afrikaans direct translation would be “Elephants’ bath pan”, which is quite overdescriptive of why it was named so.

Orpen camp/ gate /dam

These sites were named after the most extraordinary couple who ever graced the KNP with their presence. The late James and Eileen Orpen have rendered inestimable service in the interest of game protection in all the national parks in South Africa. While the couple were surveying the western boundary of the camp, (without payment) they noticed that most of the farms along the boundary were used for hunting and game farms, relying on game that crossed the boundary in search of better grazing and water.

Eileen Orpen decided that the only solution to the problem was to expand the park to the west, where she immediately, to a great expense, purchased approximately 30 000 morgen and donated it to the National Parks Board.

Eventually, a total of 8 farms were bought and donated! Notwithstanding these generous gifts, the Orpens were probably the most open-handed contributors to wherever there was a need to the conservation of nature; whether in the form of windmills or a dam, they were first to show their undying love to the wildlife and conservation of the KNP. They will be remembered as long as people will care for their legacy.

Skukuza

In 1902, a single structure – an old blockhouse at the Sabie river bridge was all that was erected. This blockhouse was called “Reserve” and was later renamed to Skukuza in 1932. This came about after many other structures were erected around it and formed the head office from where everything started. The name Skukuza is a corruption of a Zulu word Sikhukhuza, meaning “the man who brought about change.”

Another similar interpretation of the word would be “the man who came and turned everything upside down.” Should this name be given to a female, it would be interpreted as “the one who sweeps clean.”

There is a lot of honour in the undertones of this nickname and the man it was bestowed upon was the “father” of the KNP, the most extraordinary James Stevenson-Hamilton. He was not the most beloved man in the first years of the reserve, as he changed the lifestyles of entire villages and individuals by adding laws and restrictions to the once “Hunter`s paradise.”

After his efforts started showing the rewards and results of extreme hard work from his side to change a culture of hunting and lifestyles of villagers, people realised the value of conservation and fell in step with what he tried to achieve.

Tinhongana

This Tsonga word refers to the wildebeest fly. This borehole was sunk amidst clouds of these pests and named by J. Kloppers in 1962.

Tlhalabye

This hill was named after a Tsonga person by the same name.

Trichardt road

The first white men to have crossed the country now included in the KNP were those led by Louis Trichardt in 1837.

The objective was to reach Delagoa Bay and establishing contact with the Portuguese and the sea.

They travelled with their wives and families by oxwagon and due to malaria and tsetse-fly fever, many deaths were recorded. Even Louis Trichardt himself, his wife and many of his companions died shortly after their arrival in Delagoa Bay.

Contact, nevertheless was established and, stimulated by their success, the Transvaal Government made strenuous efforts to establish permanent communications with Lourenço Marques. Here, Louis' son Karel Trichardt was very prominent in establishing this route. In their honour, this road had been named, which in part is still the original route they took and joins up with the old main road, frequently used by transporters in earlier days.

Wolhuter (tents)

Harry Christopher Wolhuter was one of the most remarkable men that ever graced the KNP. He was introduced to James Stevenson-Hamilton at the age of 27 to be a game ranger in his force. Eventually they worked together for more than forty years, fighting for conservation and the well-being of the KNP.

In these 40+ years in the service of conserving the KNP, Wolhuter became most probably the most famous of game rangers ever. In the Boer wars, this South-African born, native of the wilderness, joined an obscure British rank fighting the Boers, called Steinaeckers' Horse. After the war, he joined J. S-H to fortify what is today the proud KNP. In the bit more recent service of the KNP (then known as "the Sabie game reserve") in August 1904, Wolhuter was travelling in the typical way of the time, on horseback, two donkeys carrying all he owned, four black policemen by foot and three dogs.

They headed off on 26 August 1904, towards a waterhole Wolhuter knew well and found it to be dried out. This came to be late in the afternoon. He instructed his four companions to follow his tracks, as he wanted to head out to another waterhole approximately 19 km further. It started to become dark, Wolhuter's one dog "Boel" was with him and the dog sensed something strange. Wolhuter knew the area and thus far never encountered lion.

In his writing of “Journal of the Society for the Protection of the Fauna of the Empire”, he writes that he saw some movement that he thought were reedbucks. The next instant he saw the lion on his left, ready to bound. He had no time to lift his rifle, and instead spurred his horse and changed course, which ended up in the horse getting a few minor scrapes from the lion’s paws only.

The velocity of the lion’s attack and the retaliating bound of the horse threw Wolhuter right into the face of the second oncoming lion. He found himself, after coming to his senses, to be dragged by his right shoulder under the lion on route to where the lion planned to devour him. In the process, he lost his rifle and realised that all he had left was a knife in his belt of approximately 6 inches in length.

He used his left hand and stabbed the lion in the shoulder as well as in the neck, after which the lion released him. He then climbed the first tree he could find and could hardly relax before the first attacking lion reached the tree as well. Between his shouting and the feisty barking of his dog that found him again, the second lion left as well. He tied himself to the tree until his companions found him and could get him to medical help.

The above version is but a very short summary of the actual story and the author would like to encourage further reading of this remarkable encounter. The knife and lionhide is available for viewing in the Stevenson-Hamilton memorial library in Skukuza.

Xitangeni

This Tsonga word means “at the cooking hut”.

Zambhala

This waterhole in the vurhami spruit bears the Tsonga name for “potato”.

About the author and this book



The author became a qualified Tourist Guide in 2004 and subsequently started his own Tourism Company. In all his endeavours, he accompanied guests from around the world to various places in Africa, but would always include the Kruger

National Park, as this was where he would always know where to find whichever animal it was that his guests had not yet seen or photographed.

Many of the questions that arose from his guests, were: "Where did this name come from and what does it mean?" Reluctant to answer a question which he does not have the answer to, he decided to make a study of the names given to places in the KNP. This took a while to complete and names might have changed or have been added since the completion of this task. But here follows a very interesting read and an essential handbook to visitors and friends of the Kruger National Park alike.

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