



Tracks of Giants expedition to kick off in Namibia

27 April 2012

Starting 1 May, a small team of dedicated conservationists will traverse over 5,000 kilometres through six countries, west to east through South Africa, on a wilderness trek -- they will complete the entire journey on foot, in kayak, and on mountain bike, without the use of motorized transportation. This expedition, Tracks of Giants, will raise global awareness of the importance of human/wildlife issues and transfrontier conservation – nature conservation across political borders -- in Southern Africa.

The Tracks of Giants' route has been carefully selected to follow ancient elephant migration paths and to traverse current elephant habitat, thus highlighting the issues faced by southern African elephant populations (and other megafauna) across their ancestral range. Elephants disperse locally due to seasonal variation in resource availability, and they also undertake long-distance movements in search of territory, resources, and security.

Expedition leaders Ian McCallum and Ian Michler will lead a small multi-generational, multi-racial, and gender diverse team, including two wilderness rangers from the Wilderness Leadership School (South Africa): Lihle Mbokazi, currently the Experiential Education Manager at the Wilderness Foundation (South Africa), and Mandla Mbekezeli Buthelezi, the head Wilderness Guide of the Wilderness Leadership School. As the expedition traverses Southern Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, it will be joined on specific sectors by "conservation giants", people working and succeeding at ground level on local and regional conservation challenges.

"We will be travelling on foot, using mountain bikes, mekoro's (traditional dugout canoes) and kayaks," says Ian McCallum. This will emphasise the connection and interdependency that man has with nature. "The route that we are taking follows ancient elephant clusters and migration routes through six countries including Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa."

Tracks of Giants is a project of [The Wilderness Foundation](#) and [The WILD Foundation](#), and supported by Avis, Kayaktive, Hans Holstein Trust, and numerous other generous sponsors.

Along the way, the expedition team – including the core team, local giants, and some international conservationist—will document the various successes and challenges relevant to the human-animal interface, interact with local government and conservation agencies, and hold community meetings at villages in each country.

The Tracks of Giants expedition will explore conservation models that include traditional knowledge, and ecological thinking and implementation, to bridge the gap between the needs of wildlife, humans and the changing environment.

National Geographic is a digital media partner and will document the trip via its multiple digital platforms. The trip will also be closely monitored on dedicated social media sites, all drawing from the TRACKS Media Centre (www.tracksofgiants.org).

Follow the Tracks of Giants on: www.tracksofgiants.org

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Media details from Claire Warneke: info@sa.wilderness.org