

WildArk acquires first wildlife conservancy in SA

Conservation organisation WildArk, together with guide training organisation EcoTraining, has acquired its first wildlife conservancy known as 'Pridelands'.

WildArk is committed to securing parts of identified green belts around the world and is working with environmental scientists to restore, manage and protect the rich biodiversity of these areas as a way of conserving wildlife.



At 4,500-acres, Pridelands, a former hunting farm, presents an example of intact vegetation of Combretum woodland.

Habitat restoration

“This is a fantastic step for our organisation, and I’m incredibly proud to realise our first conservancy for African wildlife,” says WildArk founder Mark Hutchinson. “The partnership with our close colleagues at EcoTraining, will help build ecologically sound restoration of habitat, open another 4,500-acres into a greater conservancy that includes state-owned, private and community areas, allow freedom of wildlife movement and provide local job creation. It is hopefully the first of many WildArk conservancies that adjoin existing networks of private, state or community-owned conservation areas.”

EcoTraining MD Anton Lategan, a passionate advocate for conservation in Southern Africa, also realised a 20-year

personal dream in the acquisition of Pridelands.

“Our desire is to restore the farm to migrational and residential wildlife such as lion, elephant, rhino and buffalo. The property already has general plains game, leopard and hyena – with excellent cheetah sightings and reports that lions came through the fence briefly!” Lategan said.



His father, John Lategan, has also come on board as a partner. John spent his life farming in the Northern mountains and has been travelling the Lowveld his entire life and has a depth of knowledge regarding the local ecology.

WildArk ambassador

Australian rugby star David Pocock, who is an ambassador for WildArk, will spend early February on the property, engaging with owners Hutchinson and Lategan on plans and experiencing the South African wilderness. He will then head to his family farm in Zimbabwe where he will be involved in various conservation and community projects.

“What excites me about WildArk is the bigger vision of trying to connect people to wilderness areas and to wildlife, as well as to provide a platform and vehicle to get people involved,” said Pocock. “I grew up wanting to identify every bird I saw and know what all the animals were. To provide a platform for people to do that and feel like they are contributing to other people learning and to the bigger story, that’s pretty exciting to me.”



Australian rugby star David Pocock, ambassador for WildArk

WildArk and EcoTraining plan to develop ecotourism and education opportunities that include establishing an EcoTraining camp on Pridelands as well as engaging local school children to connect with nature through the property on a regular basis.

One of the key goals at WildArk is to make nature and wilderness areas accessible to anyone. Through its content hub for the wild, experiential learning and travel offerings, and its conservation partnerships, WildArk aims to allow anyone to become educated, engaged and involved in protecting wild places.

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