

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Sisters men worked with safari service

*Continued from page 1*

Park. Kruger National Park is also home to the “Big 5” species of African wildlife, which includes elephants, lions, leopards, Cape buffalo, and rhinos.

But this was no vacation. William and Alex worked at Tsakane, building fences, clearing trees knocked over by elephants, repairing roofs, helping guests, and assisting the camp guides who led twice-daily, non-hunting safaris into the bush. Tsakane offers both a walking safari, accompanied by an armed guide, and an evening trip in “bakkies,” or converted Land Rovers with elevated seating.

Living and working deep in the African bush presented

many dangers, but the brothers were trained by the Tsakane staff to recognize signs of aggression in the various animals, to be cautious, and to work together.

“Lions are very predictable,” William says.

The intentions of a large elephant can be more difficult to discern. On many occasions they encountered the “African road block,” which is a giant bull elephant standing in the middle of the road. Says Alex, “You can’t shine your headlights at it, because it will get mad, if you honk the elephant will get mad, and if you try to move closer to it, it will get mad.”

The brothers note that of all the dangerous big-game species they encountered, elephants are most universally feared.

“Because you can’t run from them,” Alex says, “and they will go through anything



PHOTO COURTESY WILLIAM AND ALEX CYRUS

Elephants have to be approached carefully, as William and Alex Cyrus learned first-hand.

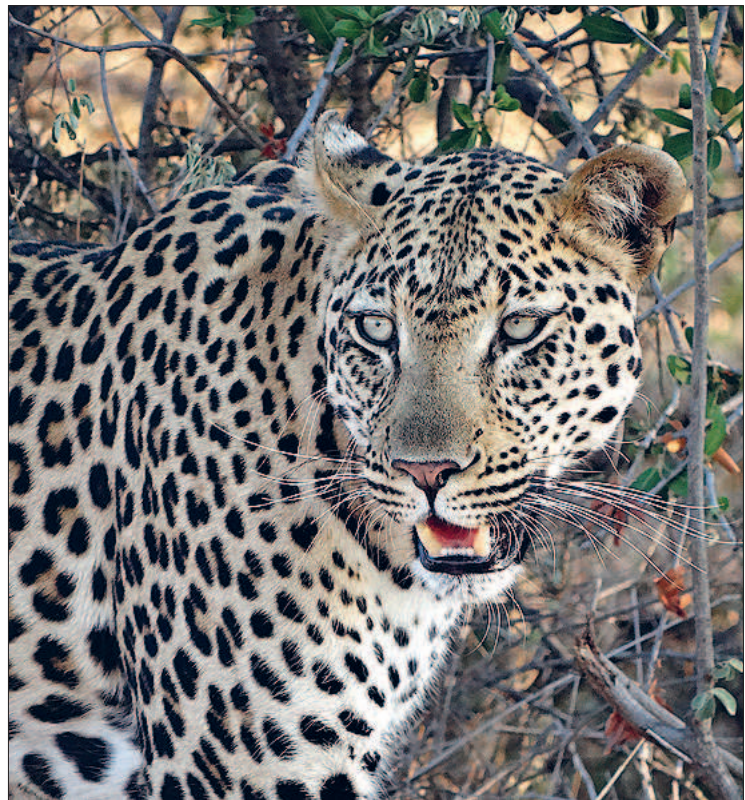


PHOTO COURTESY WILLIAM AND ALEX CYRUS

Africa still contains the wild nature of our imagination.

to get to you.”

The Africa the Cyrus brothers encountered is still very much the wild place of our imaginations. One day William and Alex saw a large buffalo at water hole near their camp. Only a few days later, guides discovered this same buffalo taken down by lions.

The brothers note that the poaching of animals, usually for ivory, remains a tremendous problem in the area, and that park rangers were on anti-poaching patrols 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They often saw anti-poaching helicopters flying overhead.

After two months of hard work at Tsakane, the brothers turned their attention to fun, rented a small car, and began a personal tour

through the rest of South Africa. Travelling the length of Kruger National Park, they eventually covered the entire coast, from east to west. They dove in shark cages, bungeed off the Bloukrans bridge (the highest jumping bridge in the world), visited Boulders beach, home to the endangered African penguin, and photographed shipwrecks off the Cape of Good Hope.

The brothers learned a lot during their three months in Africa, and made many memories, from chasing elephants out of their camp at night to early mornings in lookouts, watching over watering holes filled with crocodiles deep in Kruger National Park. And they are thoughtful about what they learned.

“Don’t listen to the

media’s take on places, on what there is to experience in a particular place. Go there, use common sense, keep your wits,” William says.

“I’m thankful for everything we have,” Alex adds. “Talking to South Africans, some of them are just happy to have electricity some nights. There is so much we take for granted.”

Tsakane means “Happy Place,” and certainly it was for William and Alex. Their eyes light up when William mentions sitting in camp at night, listening to the lions roar not 20 meters away.

“You can feel it in your chest,” he says wistfully, and from that alone one can believe that the Cyrus brothers will carry South Africa with them forever.

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