

# Wildlife social media platform launched

The Tracking the Wild platform is the latest addition to the wildlife social media arena, which offers both the ability to record and share animal sightings, and the discovery of Africa's national parks and game reserves.



The free iPhone and Android apps mean that your safari holiday snaps can be shared with a community of wildlife lovers and simultaneously contributes to wildlife research.

The platform is the brainchild of John and Natalie White, both avid conservationists and wildlife lovers. Married and living in Cape Town, they have combined their skills and unwavering passion for the outdoors to create a platform that takes a familiar concept, crowdsourcing, and uses it to collect the valuable data conservation research needs to protect our world's biodiversity. Their goal is to raise awareness of Africa's wilderness through sustainable tourism. They believe that Africa's wilderness can only be protected when people have the opportunity experience its beauty and contribute towards its preservation.

John hails from KwaZulu-Natal and has spent a childhood and more in the bush, now with an MBA from UCT and several years of banking and consultancy experience under his belt, he is following his entrepreneurial heart, which has an indisputable passion for Africa - especially Africa's wildlife. His wife Natalie, originally from the UK, has used her talent as a graphic designer to create the platform's sophisticated design. They have been meticulous in their quest over the last two years to develop a product that gives tourists the opportunity to have the best possible wildlife safari experience, investing both time and money into building a polished, user-friendly platform based on the latest technologies.

## Rhino safety

With conservation issues front of mind for John and Natalie, the platform cleverly addresses some of the highly topical issues around wildlife poaching, going beyond the obvious rhino-poaching crisis. Tracking the Wild does not permit the posting of any rhino sightings and actually has the ability to completely exclude location information for any species whose safety could be jeopardised by its location being made public. This can be done on a park-by-park and individual species basis. Each park information page within the app also carries telephone numbers where people can directly report poaching.

John says that although Tracking the Wild was created to harness the power of social media and works in a similar way to platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, it has been designed specifically with wildlife in mind. He believes that the problem with standard social media platforms is that they have not been designed for capturing wildlife sightings and are therefore not ideal tools for sharing sensitive wildlife data.

John goes on to explain that although WhatsApp groups, Tweets and Facebook posts are great if you are in the park and looking for wildlife, they are not equipped to collate the sightings data in a way that it can be of value to wildlife research organisations. The Tracking the Wild database, however, feeds sightings to researchers at the University of Cape Town's Animal Demography Unit, who then use the information to understand the distribution, and change in distribution, of species throughout Africa.

Looking ahead, John and Natalie have plans to add even more functionality and expand the number of parks featured on the app, at present there are more than 40 listed, including South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Apart from the public reserves, they are also making a start on listing private reserves, Limpopo-Lipadi and Welgevonden Game Reserves have already signed up. Natalie, who looks after the marketing and social media side of the business, believes that many of these lesser-known private reserves can gain great exposure from being part of the Tracking the Wild platform.

Tracking the Wild is free to download from the [iTunes App Store](#) and [Google Play Store](#).

Go to [www.trackingthewild.com](http://www.trackingthewild.com) for more information.

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