



African Wildlife Exposed

A CELEBRATION OF NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Acclaimed wildlife photographer Greg du Toit, in his quest to continue sharing the beauty and power of the African bush, has released his book, *African Wildlife Exposed*. Page after page, the images of African wildlife capture the imagination, evoke the senses and stir emotion. Through his descriptions of his encounters with the animals, he lets us know that his passion for what he does, and for the subjects of his photographs, is deep and heartfelt.

The acronym for the book, AWE, is what Greg would like people to feel when paging through his book. Rather than seeking awe of his work, he would like us to be in awe of Africa, wanting to

learn more of her beauty and diversity. This collection of his work, assembled over the past ten years, is the kind that one could happily page through for a long time to come. Greg's passion for wildlife was fostered from a young age, when his family regularly travelled to the bush at the weekends. At eighteen years old he started working as a wilderness trail guide, ensuring he could remain in the environment he loved so much. Photography became an interest later on, forged by his desire to share with family and friends what he was experiencing in the bush on a day-to-day basis. Greg has had the unique opportunity of experiencing the African wild at close range over the past ten

Photos: © Greg du Toit

years. When asked about changes that he has seen in the animals' environment during this time, he says that in South Africa, more land has actually been made available for wildlife, with farms in certain areas being returned to the wild. He also notes that the decrease in the rhino numbers over the years, because of poaching, has been dramatic. "When I was working as a trail guide, it was normal to see lots of rhinos all the time, and we took them for granted. Now, on the rare occasions that we see them we appreciate them so much more, and we are saddened that there are so few of them." When asked how he manages to get so close to the animals, Greg says that his work as a wilderness trail guide gave him the opportunity to study animal behaviour and learn how they react in different situations. Greg uses this knowledge to capture his pictures at exactly the right moment, thus creating award-winning images.

In 2013 Greg won the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award, beating 46000 entries from 96 countries around the world. The photo he submitted, 'Essence of Elephants,' was taken at a watering hole, where, with the right combination of skill and luck, he captured an image of elephants drinking, with a baby elephant running past him at very close range.

On the more technical side of things, Greg prefers to take his photos at 200 ISO, rarely going above 400 ISO, to avoid what he calls 'noisy' images. His favourite time for taking pictures is in the hour before sunrise. He enjoys the early morning ritual of preparing for the day with a cup of coffee, before heading out.

When your working environment is the African wild, dangerous encounters and unusual occupational hazards are to be expected. Greg recalls when he had to make a mad dash for his home in a remote part of Southern Tanzania, where he and his wife were stationed for about eighteen months. A young bull elephant had left his herd and chosen instead to adopt Greg and his wife as his new family. The elephant regularly came to a mud wallow that Greg had created not too far from the house, but made it clear that he did not like any mud-side company. Greg tells how one day, he had to go to the wallow to attend to pipes that the elephant had damaged. Unhappy at this intrusion, the elephant, in a cloud of sand and dust, charged at Greg, who had to run for safety at full speed, diving through the doorway just in time.

Greg shares his passion for photography and wildlife by running photographic safaris, where his guests have the opportunity to share in his expertise. The safaris are for anyone wishing to experience the African wild, and thanks to Greg's easy-going nature, each individual's preferences when taking their photos are catered for.

Greg has many stories to tell of his experiences and what they have taught him. Let's hope that he has time to sit down and contemplate his unique encounters, and share them with the rest of us. ■ Dominique Phohleli

To purchase an autographed copy of African Wildlife Exposed and find out more about Greg's African Photo Workshop safaris, visit www.gregdutoit.com

