

THE JOURNEY OF THE BARK SPIDER

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Wilderness Trails exposes you to people from all over the world, representing different countries and cultures. The common denominator unifying all these people is personality. It doesn't matter what nation you represent, the same personality traits come through. We are all human after all.

At the start of a career in wilderness trails in 1998, I hosted an individual with a vast knowledge on things natural. He was skilled at sharing his knowledge with his peers and definitely enjoyed having their ear. His opening gambit was his desire to see a bark spider whilst walking on trail. I in all honesty had never come across this spider before and felt a little inadequate. "You have to start somewhere" I consoled myself. We as individuals have a profound influence on each other, a fact at times we are not even aware of.

Seven years later, with over half of my trails in Southern Kruger, I can in all honesty say I have closed the chapter on the bark spider. As we are all diurnal creatures in habit on trail we find the spider in its daytime retreat, backed up against the bark of a tree, hence its name. Some individuals have thorn-like projections protruding from their abdomen, simulating the thorns of a tree. The spider dismantles or ingests the greater part of its web in the morning, leaving only the bridge line behind. Locate this bridge line suspended between 2 trees and carefully search for the owner. This is 1 of the many small things one can see whilst walking in the bush, which in part, is a great deal of what the experience is all about. The diminutive scops owl follows a similar approach, hiding by day against the trunk of a tree.

Wilderness trails have given me an opportunity to grow as an individual. First and foremost acquired knowledge is vast and learning never ending. Our fast shrinking wilderness areas are here for us to learn about nature, about ourselves in it, and our relationship to each other. This journey of over seven years has allowed me to grow as a person in the face of so many different people and experiences. It has taught me humility and instilled in me a deep respect for nature and everything in it.

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