

Stewards of a Community and a Wildlife Preserve

Phinda is a 170-square-kilometer wildlife preserve in South Africa that was the site of one of Africa’s most ambitious reintroductions of the Big Five—the leopard, lion, rhinoceros, cape buffalo, and elephant. Intense management is required to keep the animal populations well and in check.

At its inception, Phinda was funded by &Beyond,¹ a company that makes money housing, feeding, and guiding safari tours and shares part of the proceeds with the local community. When &Beyond shifted the burden of providing operating costs to Phinda, the naturalists that care for the animals had to become entrepreneurs. By charging volunteers to learn about conservation, they have been able to fund the important work they do. The

“By charging volunteers to learn about conservation, they have been able to fund the important work they do.”

experience attracts students of biology and ecology, as well as the occasional middle-aged adventurer. The volunteers pay to keep records of animals that the naturalists spot, and, in exchange, they get an up-close look at the Big Five.

Ecotourism protects animals while employing about 10 percent of South Africa’s workforce. With the success of Phinda and &Beyond, innovation and wisdom came together to connect two seemingly contradictory goals—economic growth and environmental preservation.²



1 Meredith Palmer, &Beyond naturalist, personal interview with Peter Rea, Phinda, South Africa, October 2015

2 Rea, P., Stoller, J. and Kolp, A. (2018). *Exception to the Rule: The Surprising Science of Character-Based Culture, Engagement, and Performance*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, pp. 129-131.