

-- Speaker 1 00:00:12 Hey everyone. Welcome to episode one of rewild all the G whoop. It feels so good to say that I thought it was only right to kick off this show with a personal mentor of mine. Bill given of the wild source, we chat about how his company is disrupting this a fiery industry, how to persevere through a global pandemic that practically shuts down your business and that it's okay to change your career path, no matter your age or your degree backgrounds. So who was bill and why is he so awesome working for more than two decades as a wildlife biologist, bill has conducted studies on a diverse array of species ranging from endangered butterflies and jumping mice to ALS Mexican wolves, Jaguars and African big cats. Bill's focus is on conservation research to mitigate conflict between big cats and humans over livestock. Bill is founder of the wild source, a travel company, featuring wildlife biologists, planned safaris in a mission of conservation through empowerment of local people. Since 2004, bill has organized and guided small groups of forays, where he is able to share his knowledge and a passion of wildlife with his guests. Bill style is to feature the local guide who is the ultimate expert on the region visited while bill adds a more global perspective on conservation, wildlife research and animal behavior. So let's get to the show.

Speaker 2 00:01:41 Pretty sure I'm alcoholic after COVID. Yeah, no, I think everybody's an alcoholic after COVID. I don't know what you're talking about. Five, six days a week of drinking. No, we had to calm it down. I'm to the point now I'm like, so I'm trying to not drink on weekdays. Yeah. That's been my goal. I've talked about that. I never achieved it, but by the time Thursday comes around and is like, um, uh, I mean, c'mon, it's what Tuesday. And I was like, I gotta bring bourbon, bourbon, bourbon, just like real field work wouldn't have done. Oh my God. Can you drink? Just hopefully not enough where you're going to be hung over for the next day of field work. You're going to be up early to hang over. It doesn't matter. The wildlife research through there, especially because wildlife doesn't have the same, you know, they're just, they're going to be there at 6:00 AM. Whenever the sun rises and you bet your ass, you gotta be there to do the work. Oh my gosh. That's so good. Awesome. Cheers, my friend. Cheers. This is awesome. I think that your story

Speaker 1 00:03:00 Is really cool. And kind of just to be one is just start with that. Like where'd you grow up? How the heck did you even get to Colorado?

Speaker 3 00:03:08 Well, it was, it wasn't a natural wildlife and outdoors thing growing up in Washington DC area. I was, uh, I was just telling my boys this, this past weekend, like never camped until I was like 23. Never snowshoed barely any hikes. Yeah. Yeah. They're very different than the things I discovered. I loved. So, but there was that draw. I actually had a trip. We did the one family trip out West when I was in seventh grade. And, uh, the highlight for me was grand Tetons and Yellowstone. And I was, uh, we had to keep a journal every, my sister and I were forced to keep the journal, but mine ended up being like a biologist field book. Like today we saw three moose, nine Ravens just counted it all up, but that, I always remembered that. So after college I came to Colorado and saw it and I knew I wanted bigger wildlife and bigger outdoors. And that brought me out.

Speaker 1 00:04:12 Yeah. Because as you say that, um, talk about your college career. Cause I know that was kind of, you, you took a very different path to wildlife biology, your, your path isn't normal at all, which is super cool. So like how did you get to like that big, um, endangered species contract?

Speaker 3 00:04:30 Yeah. Started, uh, I had the double major in business management economics, which basically meant, I didn't know what I wanted to do. And then I graduated and moved back to Washington D C area. And my first job was doing financial support for the Navy as a private contractor. I figured out quickly, I didn't really want to do that. So I started volunteering, which was interesting being in Washington DC area, but there was actually some cool stuff along the Potomac river. And I volunteered for us fish and wildlife service, counting bald Eagles in the winter. They would fly back every night to the roost. So I would have like my position fo --

-- r the last two hours of the day. And I would count all the Eagles and walk out in the dark and I loved it. So then, uh, then I got into Johns Hopkins for a master's degree in environmental studies.

Speaker 3 00:05:23 It was called with like a wildlife concentration. And it was interesting cause I was probably the only one without a science undergrad in the program. So I had to do a little double Chacho to keep up with people. But then at the same time, I don't know it was way easier for me because I loved it and it came naturally. And uh, then I got my first kind of environmental job with the Chesapeake Bay program with the state of Maryland. And I quit doing, uh, defense contracting, took a job with the state. Like it was a contract job where every day, like if you didn't work Christmas, you didn't get paid. No holidays, no benefits, no nothing. But I knew I just wanted to get my feet into that field and then came to Colorado with no job. I just quit and said, I got to go do, you know, be where I want to be.

Speaker 3 00:06:22 And I ended up being lucky to get a job with the Colorado natural heritage program where they really hired me to do like financial administration since I had more experience with that. But as part of my negotiations, they had to promise me a day in the field with the biologist every month and then doing so I ended up learning quite a lot and I became qualified to survey for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, which was Colorado's kind of premiere, federally threatened species. And, uh, and that led to my own private company where that was our biggest thing. We'd looked for the jumping mouse and, and, uh, got to do all their bald Eagle work, burrowing owls, and that kind of thing. And that kind of got me into the new career of wildlife.

Speaker 1 00:07:11 What was in you like what made you decide to make those big changes? I think a lot of people, I mean, me included it's, it's hard to make that leap, especially for something that you don't know, there's a high risk. I mean, like you left to go to a contract job in a field that you hadn't been in before and then just randomly go to Colorado with no job in mind. Like what was in you to make you,

Speaker 3 00:07:37 I don't think I've ever really thought about that before, but I think I'm not very risk averse. I've always, luckily I've had a lot of confidence in myself to pursue things I care about and I've never particularly been financially driven. I think that becomes harder every year of life. I get more responsibility and older and you start worrying more about getting the money. And I will say that it's become more of a trapping than it once was, but especially in my twenties and thirties, I, my money was something that came, but that, wasn't what I worked for. I wanted to do something I cared about and ended up being great because of that led me to an entrepreneurial career where I get to do things I care about and be financially, you know okay. With that. That's so cool. Yeah. That's awesome.

Speaker 1 00:08:29 That's like the dream I'm like every single person anymore. Like I think, and just kind of, you know, these times, I think it's really shown people how important that is having financial control of your wife and everything. And you really took that. You just took with it and ran.

Speaker 3 00:08:44 I think the interesting thing is, and I'm sure this has happened with you. You meet so many people who got a biology degree or they were going to do wild wife and now they're an, or a banker or whatever, because it's hard to get a job. Then when you do get them, they're seasonal jobs where you only get three months of work and then you have to find the next thing. And, uh, I think, uh, not, not letting the finances determine it, let me slowly make my way through the wildlife world. And you know, it started with, like I said, jumping mice and rare butterflies and all of that. And the dream was, you know, let me radio track a lion, let me call her a big cat, a carnivore. And that, that took a long, long time. I was like late twenties. I started doing things with mice and by the time I call her to mountain lion or a African lion, I think I was about 40. And then things just got better from there.

Speaker 1 00:09:46 Awesome. God, your work is so cool. So how did you get to Africa? Where's that transition Colorado to Africa, that's literally an ocean and a planet away. So how did that, ho --

-- w did that, what's that story? How is it

Speaker 3 00:09:59 Really unexpected? I think, you know, as I was saying, I didn't have the background outdoors and with wildlife growing up, but we did have the national zoo and a white tiger was my favorite thing. And then we also had the tremendous Smithsonian there. And so I got to learn a lot and I loved watching wild kingdom and Jacques Cousteau and all of that. So always Africa was like a dream. This is, you know, I want to go and see these big mega wildlife and, and, um, but that never really thought about it. And I got lucky with wildlife consulting that, you know, it was all endangered species work, which mostly means you're looking for species. So Solon can do a development project, unfortunately. And I kind of got what I would call windfall where there was a, a big project of 150 mile pipeline that I didn't expect to get.

Speaker 3 00:10:57 I got it. Like with one month notice you need to get out there and survey this whole 150 miles. So I wrote an ATV and I really wrote it 300 miles because you would go up every day, then back to the vehicle and go spend the night and then back up. And so that was through a part of Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota, which was awesome. Amazing. And then the big thing that was unplanned money with that too. So I, I thought about for a minute, do I pay off my credit card debt? Or this is the chance I could take my girlfriend to Africa and do something that I've always wanted to do. And fortunately opted for that. So my girlfriend is now my wife, Molly, and I made a trip to Botswana and that started a whole new chapter in life, really on the Safari.

Speaker 3 00:11:49 We were, you know, I was sharing little bit of wildlife knowledge cause animal behaviors, animal behavior, no matter where it is. And some of the guides and a few of the guests said, you know, you know, a lot about wildlife, you should lead safaris. And I thought, Hey, this is the, instead of this windfall one-time thing, this is maybe something I can do every year or two. So it wasn't really about making money, but, you know, can I get a chance to travel and use my expertise to get to go on Safari? And that's how the kind of crossed over slowly into the Safari business.

Speaker 1 00:12:26 So it's like my passion is Africa and seeing these wildlife, let me use my skills and marry them together and voila.

Speaker 3 00:12:34 Exactly. And so it made a lot of sense and it started a little bit as this hobby of, I just want to be able to travel. And at the same time, I had a little disappointment as biologists going to Africa. You know, I knew you nature's going to share what it shares and that's fine. But I picked one specific Safari camp because I really wanted to see African wild dogs, you know, rare, amazing, and dangerous species. I had seen a film on that years ago, and that was why I went to Botswana because I wanted to see the dogs. And I got lucky and saw them at the first camp I went to. But by the time I got to the third camp, that was every book I read said, Oh, this is the VIP camp for wild dogs. And this is the best place.

Speaker 3 00:13:20 And I got there and found out that and seen wild dogs in two years. So then the biologists in me kicked in and I thought, no, you know, I can, I can figure out like maybe I can keep a database of sightings and figure out what the real wildlife odds are to see things and help people. And it really started out as more of a data project. And then, um, eventually I shifted because I actually was finding some endangered species, too many times for the oil and gas companies. Like that was my biggest contract. And like on no notice, I said, we're not going to use you anymore. That specifically I've found some burrowing owls and they were going to have to wait to do their pipeline for about 90 days and they were not happy. So they just stopped using me. And at that point I said, Oh, I've been leading trips for five years to Africa. I love it. I know how to plan all the trips. And I've been building towards this, you know, data, public sharing of information. I was like, you know what? This is a chance for me to offer the wildlife biologists advantage and just start planning so far as using that expertise and really the passion of understanding the wildlife.

Speaker 1 00:14:38 So that's how the wild source came to be. That was it.

Speaker 3 00:14:41 Wild source name had b --

-- een there, cause it was really going to be this data source of, you know, good wildlife information rather than a planning company. But at that point it was easy for me to flip the switch and this, the wild source planning operation was born at that time. What year was this at this point? That was 2008. So I started,

Speaker 1 00:15:05 That's an interesting time to launch a new business, like at full.

Speaker 3 00:15:11 Exactly. So it was a, I think it worked to my favor because you know, the, as you're familiar with the industry, there's a lot of luxury and expense. And, and yet, you know, I think the agents had gotten used to that and a little spoiled. And so when the recession hit, there was these people who were passionate about Safari for the reasons that I believed in that they cared about the wildlife experience and they cared about great guiding and local people and they didn't care that much about the luxury. And I was able to come in and just really offer great deals, including being confident to plan off season safaris. Like, uh, so, you know, I, I brought a different approach, I think with the wildlife expertise, like traditionally people wouldn't go to Botswana in the green season, which is the time of year. It gets a rain, but what are we talking about?

Speaker 3 00:16:08 It gets like three to four inches in a month. It wouldn't be called rainy anywhere else, except for in a place where it doesn't rain at all for seven months. So I was able to have the confidence to say, Hey, you can go to these camps at this time of year. We just have to pick the right places. And with doing that, I was able to be new in the business and yet start winning some, you know, Safari deals and getting people and building up a great client base. And you know, it was slow in the beginning, hard for a year, but luckily my consulting business had been doing pretty well. So I had like that year of money to bridge the gap and we ran up right against being done with all of that money and caught traction just enough time to convert and make it with the Safari business and never have to do anything in between.

Speaker 1 00:17:00 Well, that people can't say the same thing. And the fact you were able to push through. So it sounds like what, five or six years you have been doing it by this point for it to finally be like, okay, this is what I'm doing full time is the wild source. And so it was just you in the beginning, right? You're doing everything

Speaker 3 00:17:15 Just me working out in my basement too. But you know, we had my Molly and my wife and I talked a lot that, you know, I'd play on the Safari for ourselves. And then we had planned it for the different groups that I was leading. And, you know, you get a little bit of attitude that you have within yourself that, you know, Hey, we know how to do this. I think we could do this better than the people that are doing this and they're getting paid to do it. And so know we had to, we had to step up and really prove that like, are we, do we really have that ability? And luckily it seems that we did because we've escalated and grown and done a lot of, you know, innovative things in the Safari industry.

Speaker 1 00:18:01 Yeah. You really have. And I think that's how we, you know, just became such good friends was because of you, you do everything completely differently, which is awesome, which is awesome. Like just going on your website, people click around, like they can see top level how you're different and you mean, you use terms that no one's even heard of before, like, um, disruptive empowerment that is phenomenal. Like I respect it so much. And if you wouldn't mind just chatting about it, like, and also how that came to be. So with your background, I'm sure you saw some things going to these camps, experiencing these things, probably seeing some of the discrepancies. And it sounds like that kind of fueled how your safaris run differently.

Speaker 3 00:18:47 For sure. Yeah, it's interesting because obviously I came at it from a wildlife point of view. The reason I visited Africa was to see the wildlife and that was my passion. And, you know, I had mild interest in people or whatever, but that, that was not the focus. But even on that first Safaria was, uh, a local Botswana. I called <inaudible> manager and him and I hit it off so well. And I remember leaving saying, if this guy lived in my neighborhood, he'd be one of my b --

-- est friends. And it kind of grew from there that the, the human relationships that you made, where you just took it all to the next level, the wildlife is always phenomenal, but meeting people and connecting with them and strengthening that bond became such a rewarding and important part of the experience for me. And then that's where we coined disruptive empowerment. I need to put a Wikipedia because

Speaker 1 00:19:49 I

Speaker 3 00:19:49 Invented it. I Googled it. I haven't found that term anywhere else, but we needed to find something to encompass what we're doing on the human side. Uh, you know, it became clear very early on that guiding was by far the most important thing for every Safari. You know, you need the knowledge of the God, the passion of the God, that our ability to, you know, manage and connect with people. And it's just so much, and there's not that many guides that can do all of that. There's many that, you know, have great knowledge, but they're not motivated with people or they're great with people could tell a million stories, but they couldn't find an animal if it was laying in the middle of the road. So, you know, finding all of that in somebody and then somebody who wants to work hard all day to deliver that wildlife experience.

Speaker 3 00:20:37 And, you know, I got lucky from leading the groups. I was guiding with a lot of guides. I, you know, I didn't come and drive the vehicle and do all the guiding. I worked with a local partner. So at every camp and every Safari, I met other guides and we would work as a team. And, you know, I always want to feature and highlight them that are the real experts, local expert. I bring some kind of, you know, global point of view and some general wildlife behavior, but they're the real expert. And so through that, I started to find, yeah, there's not that many amazing guides and the ones that are, you know, you need to treasure those people. And luckily, you know, the ones that were great, I would work, try and work with again and again. And then you just become great friends, you know, you're working together, but then afterwards you're hanging out together and you're sharing your stories and your lives and, you know, really become a brother to you.

Speaker 3 00:21:34 And in that realm, you start to learn things and you start finding out how little some of them were getting paid and that, you know, the camps, a lot of the camp companies kind of treat them as disposable. They think, Oh, they're a great guide, but if they leave, we can just get another guide in their place. And they don't really understand that, you know, as nice as your tent may be, that's not what most of the guests returned for. They might come there the first time for that, but they were turned because they love that person. They're connected to what they shared with that person. And so I quickly learned it's all about the guides. And unfortunately just the way that colonial system is where there's not enough respect, and then there's not enough compensation. It made it so easy for me as a, with a different point of view, which, you know, I think a lot of it is just a generic American kind of thing.

Speaker 3 00:22:31 But I also, in that Washington DC upbringing, I was lucky to grow up in a diverse environment. I had parents who were civil servants and worked in government and, you know, put things into taking care of other people. So for me, it just came naturally to, to say, well, they deserve more and, and deserving more. You know, I can economically find ways to reward them more and then doing so rewards meet too. I ended up with more business. I can, out-compete everybody by saying, you know, do you know who the guide is? If you go with another company, because if you go with us, this is who the guide is. Here's the biography. And so it's, uh, it's been a win-win for everybody in a big part of it too, was I saw so many guides that they work and they succeed and they, you know, save their money and then they buy a vehicle and they become what you call a freelance guide where, you know, it's great that are now entrepreneur they're on their own, but then it's great, but it's so hard because where are they going to get their customers from?

Speaker 3 00:23:38 You know, a lot of them, they have, you know, a few loyal customers that come every year and those people really do support them, but that's not enough to fill your year. You need --

-- some kind of a marketing channel then how are you going to market when you're out in the Bush? How do you take reservations? You know, communications are getting a little better now, but oftentimes these guys are out there with, you know, they've worked 14 hours a day that are in the middle of nowhere. They can't easily communicate and make arrangements for somebody. And then, you know, there's the pressure of when yeah, we all know as a young person, you have that car and you're worried like, Oh my God, my car is going to break down. How am I going to get to work? Well, when your work is your car, now you own one vehicle.

Speaker 3 00:24:21 You put so much of your life in owning that vehicle. If that breaks now, what do you do? You don't have support. You can't run your Safari. You've got guests coming from across the world. So we, you know, part of it was figuring out to take all these obstacles to the success out of the way where, you know, through our company, the wild source, we can take the reservations, we can help plan the Safari. We can, uh, you know, we've got partners who have lots of vehicles and things that can give back up if the guide's vehicles not working, or if the God doesn't want to own a vehicle, the vehicles are expensive. We can arrange the vehicle and the guide can just do what they do best the guiding. So that was a big part of the disruptive empowerment as well. And then, uh, then you reached, uh, the Safari camp level and it's, you know, that's where I really, wasn't seeing very many local people and ownership of camps and the whole philosophies all run through this thread.

Speaker 3 00:25:24 If you want to go to be guided by that person, wouldn't you also really prefer to stay at a camp where there are donor. So to me, that was a natural progression. So we've been able to create and Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania, now three camps where we have local guides who are involved in the ownership. And, you know, we can do a lot of that with equity of, of hard work. You know, they don't need to put in 25% of the cash or 50% of the cash to own the percent of the camp. They're, they're doing the hard work they're, they're helping the higher, the local staff, which you get way better staff. If you've got peer group hiring right from their own villages and can speak to them in their own languages, you give away better people. So they bring all this kinds of value that, you know, you have to consider that payment and then they can be empowered fully as owners of properties.

Speaker 3 00:26:22 And that's, that's where we've been leading the industry. I think we've really made an innovative approach. And I know all of our team is super proud of the accomplishments we've made, but we are, hopefully we're getting started glitters. You know, we want to do this with way more people get more people empowered. And then hopefully that becomes this pressure that builds up within the industry where other companies have to do it because yeah, we're not going to own a thousand camps. I wouldn't want to, we couldn't keep the soul that we have in it, but I would love for other companies to feel that pressure and go, Oh, this guide is so good. Or this person who, you know, maybe, maybe you had a lady who started as a housekeeper and then she became a waiter and then you trained her to be a guide. And now you don't want to ever lose her, give her a part of the camp ownership. So hopefully we're blazing the trail that many follow so that the, the opportunities created by our model go exponential rather than just what we can do ourselves.

Speaker 1 00:27:29 God, that's awesome. I mean, it really is like having been in the nature travel industry for quite a while now, it's just to see how you're doing it differently is very respected and not, I mean, not to mention, I'm sure the quality is so much more because when you own something, when is yours, is your baby, that is your camp. I mean, by all means, it's going to be better quality for the guests, for the people who work there for, I mean, the wildlife there, cause I'm sure that there's going to be more of a personal relationship. It's like, you know, leper, Kayvon, or, you know, whoever the leopard is in the area. Like they're going to have a personal relationship with everyone. That's there.

Speaker 3 00:28:09 Definitely. And that's, you know, really we consider ourselves a, a mission-based conservation company more than a travel --

-- company, but travel is obviously the tool. And it's for all the reasons you just mentioned. I think the guests have a better experience because they feel the pride and the ownership that's occurring and the staff who aren't owners, because there are peer group of the owner on site, there feel way more empowered and they do feel like it's their camp as opposed to just a job that they have. And then that leads to the conservation because it goes back to the community where it gives the wildlife value. They say, you know, we're not just going to get the low level paying job. If we protect this wildlife, we've got a chance at ownership. This guy's got it. And he's in our community and I could be the next person or my child might be somebody who gets this in the future. So it just puts that whole appreciation on the wildlife travel that comes and that that's all centered around the, that, and the, the value of that wildlife being conserved.

Speaker 1 00:29:17 So you're just, you're like, you're almost putting legacy in the Safari. That's so cool. I mean, it really is. I mean, just the idea of being able to inherit something like part of a business, part of it. You don't hear that, especially in this industry.

Speaker 3 00:29:34 Well, that's what we hope. I mean, we all, it's all our lives. It's like, uh, we we've come to call it a, like, it can just be a job. Like guiding can not be a job. Camp ownership can not be a job. It has to be a lifestyle because pretty much you're always working on it, but it's also so rewarding, but that's, it, it has to be a bigger picture thing. Like, um, you know, you can't go from being a wildlife biologist and caring about conservation to just planning extraordinary journeys that, you know, costs a lot of money for people who then go and then they come back. Like that's not rewarding to me. What's rewarding is that connecting all those people, connecting the wildlife and the natural world to these people who don't get to live that all the time. And then those people are so responsive. They're, they're touched for life and they want to contribute. And, you know, they've, they have often are asking for ways, how can we help with conservation? What organization can we contribute to? And that's when, you know, you've made this, you know, this difference that that hopefully leads to legacies because in the end, that's, that's, the mission is let's, let's create long lasting conservation. And that only comes through economic improvement of these local people.

Speaker 1 00:30:54 Absolutely. I think that's part of why you and I love travel so much because it is one of the strongest conservation tools. There are period, because there's a difference when you see an incredible BBC documentary or something. I mean, these beautiful pieces of work, and yes, it does something to you. I mean, that's, I binged them. I've watched our planet and like planet earth so many times it's ridiculous, but there's something so different when you go and when you see it and you connect and then this special place has this spot in your heart that forever, like, you'll never forget, like you will never forget it. And ah, yeah. I mean, even the camps and the people, I mean, you know, my latest trip to Africa when I was there for a month, like I have half of them, that's my Facebook friends. I love them. They were so amazing. Some, I mean, it was so hard, like Botswana that was hard to leave. That's a hard place to leave.

Speaker 3 00:31:56 Uh, but it always comes with you. And that's the thing after you, after you have these experiences that sticks with you forever, and it's really what we need on, you have to go on the huge picture. I mean, we need a global community and there's no substitute for actually knowing people. And you know, I'm sure you saw it. I see it all the time with, um, on social media, with travelers that we've sent and they are connected with people that, you know, where the tents stored at the camp or the waiter and, you know, as well as the guide. And that's when I know like the connections are going to all these different levels and a lot of the time that's, that's our staff, that's our staff on the camp in Kenya. That's, you know, reaching out and sending the friend requests to the person on this side because those connections are real. It's not just, you know, you tip me well, now I'm going to say something nice to you. There's, there's real connections and soul that --

-- happens with all of this. And that's what makes us special.

Speaker 1 00:32:58 Yeah. Yeah. I mean, just you talking about it, like I'm picturing, you know, just the people, it's the people that you remember. Yes. I'm a wildlife biologist. The wildlife blew my freaking mind and I was so happy, but I can't imagine not having that people piece, that people piece how much I connected with everyone. I can't imagine going on Safari and not having that.

Speaker 3 00:33:24 That's, that's been the like feedback loop. That's been remarkable for us to see. Cause we'll send people, you know, we, we don't only use our own camps. We don't only use our own guides. There's lots of things like, you know, you want to go gorilla tracking and we don't have anything there we'll, you know, Zambia's one of my favorite Safari areas. We don't have a camp there. So, you know, we plan trips for people everywhere, but oftentimes we'll see, like maybe somebody goes to Botswana and they go to three camps and they come back and they say that that was the best travel experience in my life. And they loved it. And we'll hear from them three or four years later and they're ready to do a Safari, but we send somebody to Tanzania and there are two weeks straight with one of our guides.

Speaker 3 00:34:14 They come back and they're scheming. How can I book my next trip? So many people book within 90 days of coming back because the, the, just every day they're thinking about that experience and that they need to do that again. And that's clearly the people connection. Cause the wildlife viewing, you know, is awesome and all these places and they can, you know, and the wildlife is that I want to come back and do that someday. But it is that personal connection that makes this immediacy because you just loved it to that level that you want to, you don't want to wait for that experience. You need to have it on the books to do it again.

Speaker 1 00:34:56 I was scheming when I was, I was on my plane flight out of Cassani. And I was like, how could I get my husband and my cat Botswana and not leave? Like I didn't want to go that badly. And if I was in a position at the time to book another trip to come back by all means, Oh my God, I have been back so fast. I mean, there's something, I mean, right here, we have Botswana just staring at me right now on the Delta and everything. Like just the idea of coming back. I mean, no travel period right now, pretty much anywhere. Um, but I guess we're bouncing back. Yeah. And I guess it was a really good segue. Yeah. I mean, if anyone knows what's going on with COVID and how it's affected the world right now, it's you. And so what have you seen, like, how are some of these African countries that you work in? How have they been affected? How's the wildlife been affected the people in your business? How's everything going?

Speaker 3 00:35:56 It's obviously been economically devastating. Fortunately, the actual illness of COVID Africa has done well well, better than anywhere else on earth. So fortunately like Botswana, for example, uh, I'm not sure how many countries have had less, but I'm sure I can count them on my fingers. It's, you know, few hundred cases and deaths last I saw was like four. So it's almost a non-issue but the problem is, you know, the tourism is such a big part of the economic engine. And for months there was just shut downs and a lot of people do live hand to mouth. And for, for those people, it's, you know, it's been a real struggle. I will say the people are so resilient. The ones that I know are creative and resilient and tough and well better prepared to handle it than the people I know that live here. But, uh, you know, th that's the big repercussion has been the economic devastation.

Speaker 3 00:37:01 The East Africa start opening back up early, Tanzania opened as early as mid June and they really didn't lock down like everyone else. Their president literally said, I will kill thousands of people who live hand to mouth if I shut down our economy. So they did lose tourism, but they did not, you know, really shut everything else down. So they did, uh, they came through that and know, luckily for them, the COVID cases do not seem to be a big issue right now. Kenya opened August 1st for international travelers. And by second half of August, I was there. As soon as I heard that was opening, I had made my plan. I thought was important to go and expe --

-- rience, you know, there was a couple months of making COVID protocols and what does this look like? How many hand washings and distances and masks and you know, all the very important things to keep people safe.

Speaker 3 00:38:03 And then there was a lot of preparation, but you have to see it in action. So I went and I tried it out. It was, I thought extremely safe, safer than living here in America. People will do a good job of following protocol. And, um, there was such easy travel. Like I fly economy class, but I had whole Rose to myself. I got the way down and stretch out. And, you know, I w I was worried about wearing a mask the whole way on the flight, but it was, you get used to it after a few hours, and it really wasn't that big of a deal. And so worth it to go, then you're in this outdoor environment. One of the safest places you could be, there's almost no COVID cases. You're outdoors. All the tourists have to test negative within 72 hours or in Kenya, they give you 96 before arrival.

Speaker 3 00:38:56 So everybody's recently negative, which, you know, it's not going to be a hundred percent, but it's pretty good. So, you know, luckily that started to pick up, we've had a few, we've probably had about 15 parties for September, October, November of people making late bookings and saying, I want to go, I'm tired of being locked down. I want to go do something new. And it's been super smooth for all of them. And I think every one of them would say it was the life change they needed. It was, you know, I know I can speak for my own self. It was a soul restoring situation to go there. And I actually had a couple of days where I just didn't think about COVID and, you know, get that freedom and see the wildlife. And there's way less travelers right now. So the wildlife experiences and viewing are more exclusive and it really couldn't be better, but it takes that, you know, the, the ability to not be nervous about making the long plane trip is really what it comes down to.

Speaker 3 00:39:55 Most people have confidence if they get to Africa would be good, but nobody wants to get on the airplane. And then, uh, Southern Africa lagged, the South Africa was the one country that had a bit of cases and it took them a while to open. And, you know, you couldn't really access Botswana without coming through South Africa. So now just, uh, mid November, they've opened up to Americans. And so now everything is up and running. There are a few camps that are shut down. They just didn't have enough business. And there, you know, most of them are saying, they're just shut down temporarily and plan to reopen and may or June or whatever. And then when the next season picks back up. Yep, exactly. So that's all then, you know, really our biggest challenge has been the, the figuring a way to navigate the economics of it all like, uh, in Tanzania, our camp, the timing was kind of good.

Speaker 3 00:40:51 And late March is usually April. We take our camp down and then we move it to follow the migration. And it reopens in June and it quickly became evident that June wasn't going to happen. So we put the camp into a container and just let it live in a couple of containers and stored it in Urrutia Tanzania. And we waited and, you know, we were ready. Like we could go set it up for August if things picked up, but it wasn't happening. And everybody was postponing. Luckily we had almost everybody postponed for a year. So, you know, that's, that helps immensely that, you know, the things are still on the, for the future and you're not having to give refunds and things like that. That's the only thing that kept everybody bad really. But, um, there's still months of no work. So if we've, we started the wild source foundation and a lot of our customers or past guests decided to generously donate, and we've been able to raise like \$30,000, which it goes fast, but you can also do a lot with it.

Speaker 3 00:42:01 As you know, I realized for my, I have a family of five and for like a takeout dinners, often 75 bucks or something for that same amount of money, I can pretty much feed a Maasai family for a month. And so we've done that. We've fed like 15 different sections of Masa community that are all related to the staff members that we have in our camp. In Kenya, in Tanzania, we've been able to, to send some funds, to give people a little bit of money to get by. We've created things like, um, micro business, I --

-- think is the best thing that we've been able to do. So like my partner in Tanzania Dayo came up very early with the idea to start a pub. And it was good. He's had some farm land that he's held for a long time, that he never had time to do anything with.

Speaker 3 00:42:58 So first thing he did was plant crops. The second thing he did was take, uh, some of our tents to start living there. And then he built out a little pub. And with that, we've been able to employ some of our staff like, um, you know, I said earlier that the gods have become my brothers. One of the things that we're we're do have a couple of women training right now. And one of them Winnie and Tanzania was like, the waitress had front of the house person at R and Josie camp. And then we started training her in wildlife biology and training her as a guide. So during this time she's been able to go and work at the pub. She also took a really important step of getting a driver's license. This is, it's kind of funny. The one thing, the one thing we all know how to do that a guide does as Americans is drive, but over there, it's the opposite.

Speaker 3 00:43:52 So many people, and they've never had a car that didn't have a reason for a license. So often we have people who get the book knowledge of guiding and they don't know how to drive yet. So when he got her driver's license, which is really exciting and, uh, you know, starting these other businesses help with things like that in Kenya, our partner paying started a dairy farm, and we were able to put a little bit of financing in that to help him. And he's got a project where he has chickens breeding, and then the excess chickens are given to Masa widows who don't have incomes in their house to get food security. And then there's the milk from the dairy farm. A lot of that is sold, but some has given to families and needs. So there's, you know, it's generated business, it's generated jobs and then also food security and help for people on a wider scale.

Speaker 3 00:44:46 So focusing on those kinds of projects has been good for us. And so, you know, a lot of these things are things we've talked about for years and we just didn't have time to do so. Exactly. We're lucky that we're always busy. So in this time we, uh, we tried to make a list of initiatives. What are things that we can accomplish during this time? And that was one of the things was clearly our people on the Africa side needed help. So it made sense to pursue a foundation and start to really activate all these projects. You know, a lot of stuff we've done in the past where like we trained biologists and, you know, we've, uh, we've helped give loans to gods for cars and start different projects that we were just doing on our profit business and didn't try and get donations or do anything.

Speaker 3 00:45:38 So it's really outreach of programs we already did, but of course, with help from past guests and people wanting to contribute, and then we were able to do so much more so that that's been the real positive out of the COVID. And as things become less desperate, it will be even better because hopefully the foundation will proven its worth to people and they want to continue to support it. And then when people are already fully salaried and had lots of guiding work and, you know, lots of everybody's busy, we'll be able to do the next level of projects. They're more engaging community things and growing our wildlife research and things like clean water for communities, we'll be able to just move into the next levels. Um, you know, I've gotten a lot of micro business ideas for about Swana where we want to, we want to start like a transport where there's some really remote villages, as hard for them to get anything. And it's hard to start a business if you can't get supplies and things. So we want to have like a cheater on express where people can put in the orders of things they need. And twice a week, it'll go the long drive to the main town and bring back things for people. So, yeah, there's so many creative and fun things that you can do that will really be impactful. So that'll be the next level. Once we get past this more desperate need, Don,

Speaker 1 00:47:07 I know that we were starting to talk, um, before we hit the record button, you kind of had mentioned something a little bit about Tanzania and women. Do you kind of want to elaborate? Cause I stopped you intentionally for the recording, but I --

-- want you to kind of get, just go ahead. And what, what have you seen?

Speaker 3 00:47:25 Just, I mean, there's, there's two levels to one. I alluded to a little bit that it's just a lot harder over there, like here. Yeah. Not that there aren't people in America that are in way more desperate need, but most of our community of travelers and things where, where people who have a lot of privilege in life and for us, the sacrifices of COVID and the struggles of getting by like, yeah, our companies had like 85 to 90% revenue reduction. So it's been, it's been a hard year, but luckily we've had lots of good years and we were able to weather that for some time. But you know, people over there literally, you know, we, we have Masa ladies who are wait staff at the camp who that they're heads of households and, you know, these are 20 something year old massage ladies that, you know, somehow that their fathers have passed away and they don't have brothers or whatever.

Speaker 3 00:48:25 And that they're it that are, you know, head of five, six person households. And they're all, depending on them, there's so much pressure and, you know, without regular work, what are, what are they supposed to do? So that's where, you know, we've tried to do some food security things and deliver food and, you know, find money to send and that kind of thing. But it's just so hard. And then, uh, you know, just this week we had one of our best people, her sister passed away giving birth, and now she's, you know, in charge of a three-day old baby and heartbroken from losing her sister. And yeah, it's just stuff that's hard to imagine. And

Speaker 1 00:49:07 I can't even, I'm one of four girls. I can't, I can't even comprehend that. Like I can't and my nephew just turned one, like just one of my many nephews, but like, I just can't fathom that.

Speaker 3 00:49:24 Wow. That's yeah. Serious challenges. You have to be tough to get through those things and resilient in that. That's the part that inspires me is that you see that resiliency, but you know, you want to do as much as you can to help. Cause you realize that when we're complaining and bitching, that things are hard and Oh my God, I have to wear my mask. Or I, you know, I can't have enough people over for Thanksgiving. These aren't real problems compared to what a lot of people deal with. So it's a, it's an eye-opener that you, you, you know, know about such things and, and care about people that are going through that.

Speaker 1 00:50:05 Yeah. I guess why travel is just insanely important? Like when you leave your small little bubble, like I'm from a very small town, a very small down, everybody lives in their own little bubble and I was part of that bubble. And so I left and when you see real struggle, when you feel real problems and you come back to America, it almost makes you laugh. I mean, I don't mean that to come off the wrong way, but it really is true. It's like, Oh, my internet is out today. Oh, boo. Freaking, who are you kidding me? Like, Oh my gosh, I don't get wifi or cell service. And this one part of the country, that's not a real problem. Having traveled, gone to some very remote places in Tanzania and met a lot of incredible women and just saw what they were experiencing and also kind of being on the receiving end of some of that as well. Just everybody just needs to leave the comfort of their home and experience a different culture and see things like that. I will not even pretend to know what it's like to lose my sister, let alone and something as intense as childbirth and then have to raise that child. I don't even know what that mean. That life experience is. So beyond my comprehension that I can't even fathom what that's like.

Speaker 2 00:51:32 Yeah. Um, I'm fortunate not to have it firsthand as well, but yeah. I'm glad I know have those relationships that matter. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Speaker 1 00:51:43 Yeah. And also for you, like you've built this incredible business, that's helping change that seat and you know, that, that current, I guess, state of being for them and empowering them and giving it's all full circle, like, that's why I love your business model so much because it really is. It's disruptive empowerment. Like, because when I was over there, um, most of the camps, if not all the camps were run by and I don't want to make this sound bad at all because they were very well run camps. And they're very incre --

-- dible people that I met, but they were mostly ran by South African business that was running all of these camps, um, and employing local people. And just seeing that, I don't know, it just, when you're an outsider and you go into a country, like you can see it more like you can see it more like these again, not to say anything bad, but it was these like white South Africans that were running these camps and it wasn't the local people. Um, I've luckily in a lot of these camps, they were to the point now where it was locals running the camps, they were the camp managers, which is fantastic. It was wonderful. And one of them that was right outside of a kind of catty. Um, it was actually ran by a woman which was, and she was amazing. She had like her motherly touch

Speaker 2 00:53:11 And she loved all of us.

Speaker 1 00:53:14 And that was a very incredible experience. But yeah, that's just, I don't know. It must, it must really get to you to see what's going. Yeah. I mean, that's

Speaker 3 00:53:26 The transition that luckily is occurring is, you know, 15 years ago, that was really the common model. And it was usually some kind of an ex-pat management couple and this, and this really got into some of the, the driving force of the empowerment model. Because again, as you learn, you start finding out that, you know, the management couple gets paid two, three times as much as the guide who has been there for 15 years and is the ultimate part of the experience while this couple will probably stay two years and then move on to their next adventure or whatever, which I kind of found offensive. And then I learned there was things like, uh, you know, some of the companies will pay to fly the, the management couple back to Europe or back to South Africa or whatever. Whereas the local manager wouldn't get those same kinds of benefits.

Speaker 3 00:54:27 So, you know, there was just this big inequity that goes on. I struggle with it sometimes because you know, um, I'm a foreigner and I'm very ingrained in the Safari industry. And if you're passionate and you love it and you know, there's no reason you shouldn't be able to earn your spot in that, but at the same time, it has to be the lion share needs to go to local people. So to me, to me, I, you know, I love to see that as an exception because you were exceptional, you were great, you were passionate. This is a career for you. It's not a one-year stop over a gap year kind of thing. You know, you're actually somebody who has experience in training and passion and have been there then. Great. But I think for the most part, you know, the best jobs needed to go to local people.

Speaker 3 00:55:18 And so luckily it's growing in that way, but that's where I think I'm a very impatient person I'm getting old, so I need things to happen quicker. So to me, you know, I think, I think when I first got into this, you know, 10, 15, 15, 20 years back, I would say, you know, okay, the, you know, we need to get these better jobs going to local people. And now that's what a lot of Safari companies tout is we have all local managers now. It's not enough for me anymore. Now I want ownership. Like a job is great and we need those to go there as they're starting to, but that's not enough anymore. Now I want locals owning things. So to me, the job is just the requisite thing. And now the more exceptional thing is empowering owners and that has to be the next step. And that should be the final step, I guess eventually it'll be like, people like me won't own any of it. It will be, instead of being a partial owner, I'll be just somebody who enjoys the place and it will be a percent locally on which would be great.

Speaker 1 00:56:26 Awesome. Just partner with them. Like this is our portfolio camps, it's all locally owned and just have like a standard of experience, whatever that would be. I mean, obviously for the wild source would be pretty high, but that was good. Um, so it's kind of switch it a little bit, let's chat about, so the part that you and I, so we've come to love the people side, but first and foremost, our passion, our cats,

Speaker 3 00:56:55 No doubt about it. It's all about the cats.

Speaker 1 00:56:59 It's all about the cats and that's how you and I definitely connected in the first place. It was just about the cats.

Speaker 3 00:57:04 You should share that part that, you know, originally you contacted me when moving --

-- to Colorado from Ohio as a aspiring master's student, almost done with your master's, but needing some mentorship on a research project for big cats. Yeah. And luckily

Speaker 1 00:57:26 We've also been zero incredible business. And, um, before we get into my project though, let's, let's chat about why your camps are so incredible and why setting up my, my, uh, project was so good for your specific camps because of your guides and how you're there all the time and just, yeah. Just chat about that. It's very different. Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:57:47 Yeah. Well, yeah, my kind of just little before I started all the Safari stuff, I did get invited to do research in Botswana on African lions studying human wildlife conflict with lions. So yeah, that was kind of my crowning and goal was to work with big cats as a biologist.

And I was able to achieve that. And then one of the inspiring things for me, I was part of a great team in Botswana called the Kalahari research and conservation group. And one of the things I liked was there was a lot of local mutt Swana involved. And, you know, there was one who was going for his doctorate. There was one going for a master's. So the, you know, these guys were achieving. And then there was a few of us that were foreigners involved, but I love that part because it felt like a real team and that we were accomplishing it together around that time.

Speaker 3 00:58:49 Um, like couple of years into that research, my, my partner and I in Tanzania decided we needed to do a camp where we kind of known for our hardcore game viewing, which means like breakfast boxes have to be ready to go sometimes while it's still dark. So we can get out early and stay out all day. And a lot of Safari camps struggle with that service level. So we thought, you know what, let's have our own camps so we can have things the way we want it for our style. And with that, we thought, you know, Tanzania has a lot of which I've really come to love because like we were just talking about the many more of those are owned by local people than any of the others foreign countries I've been in. So sometimes I look around and, you know, you can be in central Serengeti and there could be a little crowd of vehicles out leopard or something.

Speaker 3 00:59:41 But what I love is I look around, I go that guy that owns that vehicle and this guy owns that company. And I realized like, yeah, there's a lot of people there, but at least the local people are the ones benefiting. But at any rate, we, you know, we didn't want to just do one more Safari camp. So we needed a, to have a difference. And with that, I saw this national geographic of like the lion research team in Tanzania. And yeah, it was the American guy leading it. And then there was all these American and European ladies, and then there was like a local driver and that was it. And I just thought about my experience in Botswana. And I thought, you know, we need to create some opportunities for, for people who are interested in being wildlife biologists in Tanzania that are actually Tanzania.

Speaker 3 01:00:33 And so that was kind of our, our twist and that married perfectly with the wildlife biologists planning aspect that we were known for. So we created it when we started with, you know, we brought on two guys to be wildlife biologists. One was a guide, one was not, and we just started doing observational recordings of big cat behavior, trying to identify individuals keep records. And that was like seven, seven, eight years ago or so, and still going. And now we have, uh, we have a couple of new trainees and a couple of new biologists, and that's where you and I came together with your master's project because we wanted a way to have the guests interact more with the biologists and show them more of the conceptually, you know, this is what we are actually doing. This is the data we're recording. Sorry, you should say what you did.

Speaker 1 01:01:34 No, it has been again, thank you for letting me do that. But kind of what I had studied was bringing citizen science into the Safari experience. So if we make these Safari participants scientists, does it make them love the cats more, pretty much is what the question was in a much funner sense than what the question actually. Um, but yeah, so for that particular project, I built a pretty rudimentary app. And then what the biologist did along with everybody in the car is we had this app --

-- and then they were to record the observations that they were seeing of the cats there. And then of course we did pre and post surveys to see kind of how their connections were with the cats pre trip and how they were post-trip. Um, and we just had incredible results. Like we even got some pictures from the guides of the Safari participants, putting in the cat observations, what they were seeing, the hunts that they participated in.

Speaker 1 01:02:33 And it was really incredible because everyone had reported some sort of increase in empathy or connection with the cats that they had seen. And what was even cooler about all the participants that we had is they had all been on Safari before. So this wasn't a new experience because I mean, as you know, the first time you're on Safari is just like freaking mind blowing. So just take that factor completely out. And we pretty much turned all of your travelers that agreed into scientist along with their guide. And, and then from what I understand, then my rudimentary app, you then invested in an actual app that the guides now use to record all their big cats observations. So what started as just a graduate project for me has now turned into a long-term wildlife study, which is incredible.

Speaker 3 01:03:29 It's really good. Cause it just helps engage the guests at the end of the biologists could always say, so what I'm doing and they'd be writing, you know, notes, but that's not engaging. And like, um, I, I especially love it for family. So far as like my own kids, they love it. They take the tablet, they enter, you know, the cheetah, what's it, it's hunting, it's going for a Grant's gazelle. And this was the result. This is just take seconds to punch in. But all of a sudden you've become a scientist. You understand, this is what the data that they're looking at. And then, then it opens up the conversations with our biologists where they're able to then explain, why do I care about this data, this data with this behavior? Why is this important thing? And you do, you, you get much more informed guests that are way more connected and then they do want to keep up with conservation when they come home.

Speaker 3 01:04:24 So it's, it's been really successful. It's a simple, it's a simple connector piece, but it gives a lot more importance to the program as well, because these are entry-level biologists. They're not all four year degrees or any of that. And then it gives structure to their project in a way for them to engage and share with the guests. And, uh, and now we have a biologist in Kenya as well and, and a dura camp cause in Josie was going well. And then, um, we, we brought on Sarah <inaudible> lady, um, came on as a guide trainee, but she actually did have a four year degree in biology. So she came to our guide training at the end of 2019. And, uh, the Tanzania biologists worked with her and, and, uh, taught her to use the app. And now she's keeping data on Tamara. And that's great because when our tens Nia camp goes to the Northern Serengeti, there are cats that go between Serengeti and Tamara. And now we have colleagues working on both sides of the book.

Speaker 2 01:05:35 Oh my gosh, my wildlife biologist right now is dangling

Speaker 3 01:05:38 Well. Even for me, like the gods workshop is like the week I love of the year where we get our teams all together and we cross borders and come together. But this, uh, we didn't get to have it in 2020, unfortunately, but our 2019, yeah, I I'm with the guide so often, but the best was we had the biologist car and it was fall like what it started with the, you know, two guides and in Tanzania, two biologists to start the program. Now I was sitting in there and we had, we had, uh, two women training. We had two established biologists. We had one of our former biologists, who's now Supreme guide and then another biologist and training young man. And I just, I was so happy that it'd be in a car that was full standing room only in the way and cruiser, because I have that many biologists now. It was really super cool.

Speaker 2 01:06:46 That's so cool. I know this is okay. It fits no, but has there been any chance to analyze any of the data yet from that? I mean, I know I created that. Oh my God, what year did I create that 18. 17? I don't know. But then, but it wasn't too long after that, that you, you invested in that app. I actually think I have it on my, I mean, I, I did not delete --

-- that off my phone. I still definitely have that on my phone.

Speaker 3 01:07:12 This is where the next step really needs to come in. Or our guys are a little weak on it, to be honest, there's a, that they are amazing in the field. Like we have a couple that are really just, it comes so naturally and they understand these cats way better than the, you know, master PhD, American, European, whatever, like they're that level of field biologists. But when it comes to reporting data and analyzing it and, you know, even just sending me the photos and things, that that's a part that's still a work in progress. So yeah, we need to, honestly, I like our, our new trainees that are the ladies that are taking so many notes and I have a feeling that may be a little better at the report. Then our current team, I won't say if that's a man or a woman, but the, these candidates, I would say they're are stronger at it than our more advanced biologists.

Speaker 1 01:08:22 Well, whatever, all that data does come over. And like, that's a beautiful thing. Kind of why we set up the project in the first place is they were collecting all this amazing data, but it was just on some random notebook in the side of the Safari car. Then you're just like, so can I like get that data? Because I mean, you guys know the cats, like they know the cats, they're with the cats all year round. Exactly. And that's part of the reason why we even did this project in the first place, because no one knows the cats better than your guides. And so we were even very sure to add a note section to save if this was a cat, they knew, um, cause they probably knew them. Um, and then we could track somebody throughout their life, like a cat throughout its entire life. Since they're always going to be in their same territory, your guides are always going to be around them. But yeah, that'd be really cool to see the data just to see what they're doing.

Speaker 3 01:09:16 No, it is. And it's important to have the monitoring over years. And that's a, that's a big thing I want to see cause we just want to make sure the populations are secure. And if we see problems or trends that, that, you know, are of concern, we won't be able to report that. And I will say that's one of the proudest things I have found with our biologists team is they've kind of become the resource for the more known pro programs like, um, we are the only ones out there every day and uh, Southern Serengeti and due to region. And so like the Serengeti cheetah project, we shared a lot of data with them. There's um, cope lions, which is famous mama Simba and she's around in and Goro crater quite a lot and comes over to him, do to, but not there all the time. So when we, when we see things like there was some wines that were having some mysterious deaths, you know, we were the ones who can call and report it and work with the warden and that kind of thing. So it's, it's, we've become really valuable on the ground resource, which from, you know, in a short number of years funded just out of our own profits and you know, all of that, I think it's, it's really, it's been a nice program to establish.

Speaker 1 01:10:35 That's awesome. That's awesome. I think that's another thing. It just takes people's connection to the next level, especially now that you have like an established way to record data. Cause like when I was in Africa and my past trip, I was there for quite a long time in many different countries, but none of that was going on. Like that was, there was no established project of the wildlife and I saw wild dogs. I thought wild dogs on two different occasions, which is incredible and, and two different parts of Botswana. So these were different packs. That's incredible, you know, and one pack had about 16 puppies. Like of course me, I'm just like drawing all over the place and just melting inside because I'm looking at 16 puppies. Um, but these were different packs. So like to have been, you know, just some sort of recording what their behaviors were.

Speaker 1 01:11:27 I got to see a full hunt, just like those kinds of things. Like seeing that, just think how much more data could be collected, if that was more the standard. And if the Safari participants in the vehicle aren't interested, that's cool. I mean, it's, it literally just takes 30 seconds per observation to record the data of what these cats are doing. And for, from the strict research side, you can't be --

-- everywhere at once. Like, I mean, you might be a painted dog researcher, but you can't be where all the Safari vehicles are. But if there was a way to kind of congregate all of that data from everybody, seeing all of these observations across their whole range, like how incredible would that be and how much more engaging it would be for all of the people in the car?

Speaker 3 01:12:22 Yeah. I've thought about developing more of that kind of an app, actually, a more widespread guide collection of data. I think that's something I'm definitely interested in the future and you're right, that the guides, they often know more than the researchers and the filmmakers and all of that. Um, interestingly, just with Botswana closed down, one of the things we've done with the wild source foundation is we, we kept a wildlife monitoring presence at Bushman Plains in the Okavango Delta. It's a, it's a real wild wilderness camp, but it is there's five villages that are a couple hours away, but traditionally that area can have more of an issue with poaching. So we wanted to make sure we kept a presence in that area. And so we've kept guides and trackers and we've had them going out on drives monitoring, and they actually think it was in around August.

Speaker 3 01:13:25 There was a new wild dog pack that showed up. And one of them had a collar, which we were lucky. We actually have four packs that we see three regularly from that camp. It's kind of wild dog epicenter, but they knew right away. None of our dogs have callers and they saw this one. And so, uh, the guy diesel got in touch with the wild dog researcher who I pretty sure it was in Europe because of COVID and not able to come and track any dogs, but has, you know, can look at the satellite collars. And there was actually a group of six males that had emigrated from a pack in the Moremi reserve. And so they'd come 160 kilometers to the area.

Speaker 1 01:14:16 I was going to say, that's not close to anywhere

Speaker 3 01:14:19 Far, but the researcher could see on the satellite. They, they don't, all they know is the movement of one dog. They know there was six males. They don't know if they all stayed together. They don't know if only this one dog is there. They have no idea. It turns out that, uh, there was four females is split from a pack that we knew from our area that had joined these six to make a new pack. And the guy diesel was able to figure all this out and report it to the researcher. Whereas, you know, it just shows the technology's awesome. There's a lot of stuff you can do with it now, but on the ground, eyes and knowledge is always going to be the absolute, most important thing. And when you can coordinate the two, then you can get the full picture of these kinds of things. That's amazing.

Speaker 1 01:15:11 All right. Since we're looking at Botswana right now, where is bushmen planes?

Speaker 3 01:15:15 It is up here in the top of the Delta right in here.

Speaker 1 01:15:21 Okay. Wow. Yeah. I have not been up in that little note of the Delta. I was in some other places of the Delta, but no, that's great.

Speaker 3 01:15:31 It's close to VM bruh. And Duma are on the other side from where? Bushman planes. Yeah,

Speaker 1 01:15:39 That's awesome. Cause I was at like Kings, I was kid

Speaker 3 01:15:42 King's fool.

Speaker 1 01:15:45 Um, and then, uh, then I was also like in some booty and then Yachty and stuff like that. That was incredible. That's where like I saw the wild dog hunt. Of course,

Speaker 3 01:15:54 That's right. I saw first dogs too. In this era here. I saw them. I stayed at Duma tau, first dogs I ever saw.

Speaker 1 01:16:03 I visited, I visited do Mattel. They were building a little different at the time. Oh my God, the dogs. I had one dog experience too. Yeah. When I was in the Delta, it's just, I mean, I love big cats as you know, they're my fave, but that was my goal of the trip as like, cause once you, once you start to go down the predator path, you you're like, wow, okay. So seeing dogs is going to be the really hard part and to see them will be next freaking level. Yeah. So to go on that hunt was just, and it was funny. Cause again, the example of guides, knowing stuff, the guides knew the antelope dogs. They knew. They're like, Oh man, I really liked him. Like they knew the individual though, that was unfortunately taken in that hunt. Of --

-- course, being the predator, carnival, whatever you want to call us. Um, I was stoked to just see it, take it down. That's my favorite thing. Watch as much

Speaker 3 01:17:10 As I love cats, African wild dogs is my, my favorite.

Speaker 1 01:17:14 It was relentless. It was relentless. It was amazing. It just, it was, we were watching all of them. It was very hot. And then out of nowhere, cause they know they did the classic greeting and then it was off. It was good time and they didn't stop until they took it something down. And then they called the pups. And so we were all around and then the pups came, um, to just kind of help clean up the mess and everything. And it was just to see them like hopping through the forest, like the grassy area out of the trees.

Speaker 3 01:17:47 I can't give the details as it may not happen. But BBC is talking about a wild dog planet earth, three episode that I'm advising on, but it's not, it's not a go project yet. So we'll see off. I can give you details.

Speaker 1 01:18:07 So you're saying they're gonna have to do a follow-up episode once that becomes more of a thing and you can tell me all of them.

Speaker 3 01:18:13 Absolutely. We can promote planned or a three at the appropriate time.

Speaker 1 01:18:19 All of them too. That's fricking awesome. Would it be Englishman planes? If, if okay. If it goes through. Okay, well I'm going to put all of the good Juju out there for that to happen because that would be incredibly exciting.

Speaker 3 01:18:35 It will be amazing.

Speaker 1 01:18:38 Oh, this has been so fun. So I guess kind of, kind of like the next part. What, so you've been in the field of conservation for a long time. You've seen kind of what the world needs. What do you think is the biggest need right now to make sure that these incredible wildlife that you and I go over and just love and see all the time and just, I guess the planet in general, like what do you think we need to do now to make sure that they stay here?

Speaker 3 01:19:10 Yeah. W we have to value it, like the sort of big problem. And it's actually where kind of my original economics background and it's served me well with wildlife conservation and research because it all comes down to unfortunately money is the thing that drives this world and then less, we're going to all change our cultural mores or whatever, which I don't see happening soon. That's a big part of the problem. And it's really why, you know, conservation travel is the best tool for conservation conservation travel for conservation, but it's, you know, it's the effective tool because it gives value to wildlife for people like you and me. And probably a lot of the audience that's watching this, you know, we, we can just say wildlife is amazing and be protected and we should be willing to dedicate places and share it. And you know, that's what we believe.

Speaker 3 01:20:15 But the reality is it doesn't work that way. It has to pay its way. So the tourism is the easiest way to bring in economic benefits and put a real value on things. The problem is there's so many areas where there's not any tourism developed and there's still wildlife. And those are the places where it's disappearing. Like, um, yeah, there's a lot of conservation scare tactics, I guess I'll call it. But yeah, as a lion researcher, I see these things and like eight years ago, people were like, there's going to be no lions in 2020. I mean, that was ridiculous. The lions in Serengeti, thank God are super protected and secure lions and muscle Amara lines in Okavango, Delta lines and South long one Zambia, all these places because of the tourism, because of the park Rangers and dedication of countries to protect those areas, which is mostly because it brings in tourism revenue because of that, there's lots of secure populations.

Speaker 3 01:21:20 The problem is everything outside of those areas that pay it's just disappearing. So we have to, you know, I mean, there's a lot of room to grow new parks. There's more travelers than we need in some parks that, you know, would love to spread out and see new places. And I think we have to take that part seriously. Or, you know, there has to be a lot of this has government, proper management, which is not an easy thing to, to come up with, especially in countries that have great need, but you know, you have to have the foresight to say this part generat --

-- es this much money and we're going to take 20% of that and use it to fund this next park that won't pay for many years or to create a corridor that connects this park to that park. So you know, where the money does come from, needs to be shared to, you know, protect that next area, which, you know, the wildlife does great when protected.

Speaker 3 01:22:20 So if you can create a new area and the first 10 or 15 years, you're going to have spoiled wildlife travelers, they're like the Wildlife's not good enough for me, but then it's going to become great. And then there's more places for us to go. So I think it has to be like that. And in addition to paying for the area, and that means the people like, you know, the people can not, you can't have people that are starving to death next to a protected wildlife area where people who have relatively a lot of wealth are going for vacation, like the money has to make it, to uplift those people. And if it does, they will fiercely protect that area. They become your best conservationists. They become the ones who say, no, you can't dam that up. Cause we're going to lose the water. And it's going to kill our park where we get our money from.

Speaker 3 01:23:15 So, you know, it has to be that kind of, uh, economic sharing and generation and thinking ahead, and then climate change is, you know, we have amazing places protected today, but those places are going to change and you know, we maybe need to shift things and that's going to be a whole nother, big headache that, you know, I probably won't be allowed around to see the whole story on that one. But, you know, hopefully we start working on things like renewable fuels and hydrogen power and things that slow, that changing effect. And then we are going to have to start thinking ahead, like these parks are going to shift. And then some of those cases that may mean, uh, a country that had amazing tourism there. They're not the place anymore at all the wildlife moved to the North, into the next country. So, you know, I think, I think it's going to be, uh, a changing shifting thing. But the main thing we have to do is just keep the importance of it. If we, if you give up or you just say, things are disappearing, it's discouraging, like there's solutions, but we have to, we have to care enough about them to make them happen.

Speaker 1 01:24:30 Yeah. She gets some of those little electric Safari vehicles coming up. Have you seen the new Bollinger? Have you seen one of those? Oh my Jesus. So I love cars, but it's something my dad has definitely ingrained in me. And to see now that so many car companies are really grabbing onto this and are making electric cars and you used to look up the volunteer. I want one so bad. It's like this bad-ass, off-roading four by four just tank. And there's like a truck and like an SUV, like a Bronco, I guess you would call it version. Um, but yes, little things like that. And just imagine how quiet and electric versus a diesel Safari vehicle would be in the Bush, like

Speaker 3 01:25:17 Are a few Safari companies are doing stuff like running off cooking oil and biofuels and things, which, you know, that could be a future. A big problem is logistics stuff. Like even like you can't buy new land cruisers because you don't want all the computerized crap. You need like an Africa. We still need to get vehicles that can be manual and be fixed in the Bush. Instead of the computerized stuff we have here in America, that everything has to go to a garage and be plugged into a special diagnostic system. So, you know, but there's also a chance to leap frog. Like the mobile phone stuff is so much better in Africa than it is here. Like yeah, if I call on a U S plan from Kenya, it's like four bucks a minute. If I call on with a Kenya phone, it's like a nickel, you know, they, they weren't saddled with landlines.

Speaker 3 01:26:10 They didn't have all the infrastructure that we have here. So they just jumped right to mobile. And it's the same kind of thing. I've become excited about hydrogen technology and hydrogens everywhere. It's, you know, you can, uh, you know, unlike oil and gas, which really depends. Who's got the riches in this world to a large degree. Uh, honestly, big empty places are perfect places to set up hydrogen plants that don't do any polluting and they can give all the energy you need to power your country. So my hope is some of these developing nations get tapp --

-- ed for these kinds of projects and they can actually leapfrog ahead in some way or some regards and skip generations of things that, you know, didn't turn out that great for society and they can go right to the best thing. So, you know, things like that could really help. So I hope there's like a real focus on the developing world. It's important. We need, we need there. We don't need the resources of mineral wealth. What we need is the resources of, you know, carbon sinks and natural places and keeping the diversity of life. But we can't sit here while we consume so much and expect them to suffer and protect everything. So we need to really shift resources to where we invest in that side. And that will lead. I hope to lasting conservation.

Speaker 1 01:27:39 That's good. No, that's so good though. I completely agree. So I guess this has been awesome. So where can anybody like connect with you or the wild source? If anybody wants to reach out, what's the best way to get ahold of you?

Speaker 3 01:27:51 Yeah. And then we're easy. We've got our, one of the COVID things. We rebuilt our website. So

Speaker 1 01:27:57 I did look at it. It looks good. I noticed that, Oh,

Speaker 3 01:28:01 Did very little to do with it, but our team did an amazing job. So I would encourage anybody to look@thewildsource.com and there you can see really more about our mission and the way we do things and all the information's there. And then there's a contact form. There you can email info@thewildsource.com. You can just go to the contact, their phone numbers there on the website. That's really the easiest. We do have an office in golden Colorado where we're doing this right now, but I think you're the first visitor in many, many months. So, you know, people are welcomed to meet us in person whenever they're ready to do so. These days we can do zoom meetings or phone calls or whatever. So there's, we're easy to find. We have a great team of seven here in Colorado, that all are passionate about what we do and believe in the mission and are exceptionally knowledging, knowledgeable and caring

Speaker 2 01:29:02 About the travelers that we get. Yeah. They're all amazing with some of your wife's amazing margarita is we have some good, COVID do like to have a good social as well. It's good for a team cohesion. Great. Awesome. Well, thanks bill. Thank you. It's fun.

Speaker 1 01:29:23 Hey, thanks again for listening to this episode of rewild ology. If you like what you heard hit that subscribe button to never miss a future episode, do you have a cool environmental organization, travel story or research that you'd like to share? Let me know <inaudible> dot com until next time friends together, we will. Rewild the planet.

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