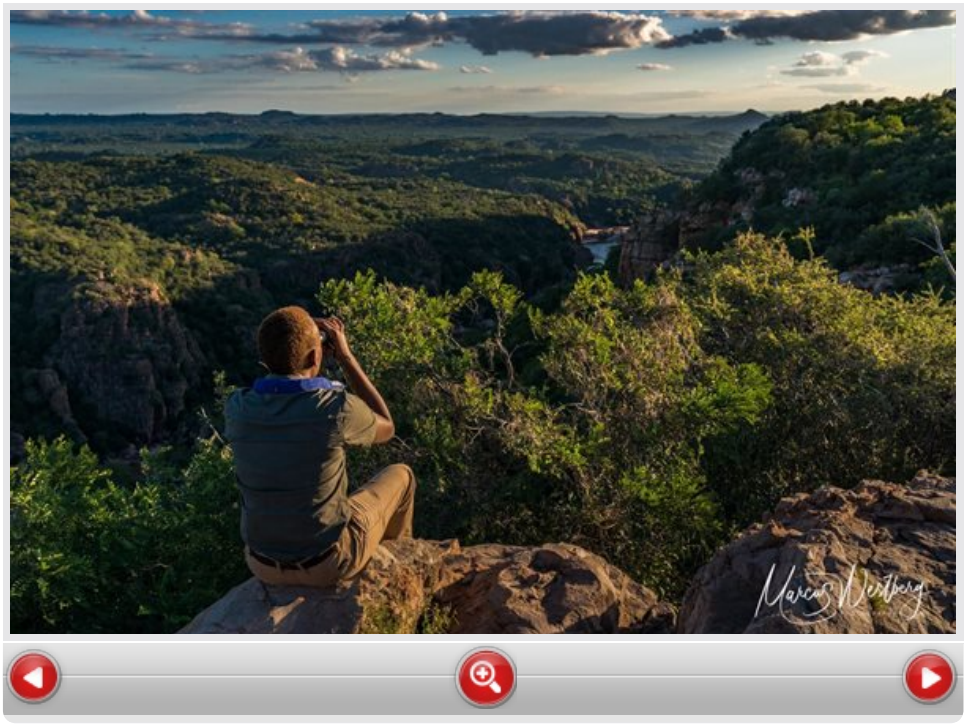
Meet Makuleke's first female field guide: Shiluva Khosa

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Women from all walks of life are celebrated for their valuable contributions to various industries and sectors this August during national Women's Month.



As more women enter the workspace and take up leadership roles, the traditionally male-dominated career of field guiding is one of the sectors that has seen women from all backgrounds perusing their dreams of guiding in the wild. One such a trailblazer is Shiluva Khosa.

Shiluva is celebrated in her community as Makuleke's first ever African female guide.
Makuleke is a conservancy jewel situated in the northernmost section of the Kruger National Park close to the Punda Maria gate.

EcoTraining took some time to get to know Shiluva who currently works as a field
and back up trails guide at Return Africa in the Kruger National Park.

1. Why Field Guiding?

"Growing up I have always had a love and passion for nature and animals. After high school and a few years of studying other courses, I finally found myself on this career path. I've never looked back or regretted my career choice. There is nothing more satisfying to me than to be amongst the biggest of animals and having close encounters with elephants has been the most wonderful experience. Field Guiding is a very satisfying career."

2. How did you become a Field Guide?

"I started to engage with Norman Chauke a Tracking Instructor at EcoTraining, who is also my cousin. I asked him about his chosen career path and how I could do a Field Guide Course.

That is when I started to do research about EcoTraining and the two different career options which could lead to a career in field guiding."

3. Were you sponsored to do the EcoTraining course?

"Over the years, EcoTraining would take students from Makuleke Village to sponsor them to do the Professional Field Guide course. However, at the time I wanted to do the course there was no student intakes. I then decided to pay for myself and the company then offered a discount towards my studies."

4. What course did you do through EcoTraining?

EcoTraining Professional Guide Course for one year.

5. What does it mean to be the first black female guide at Makuleke?

"Honestly, I never really saw it as anything, I thought I was just doing my job. That was until people started to talk about it, and a lot of women in the village started asking me about it and how they can also become field guides. This made me realise that I am making an impact and that I am an inspiration to others. This motivated me even more to further my studies within this field of guiding."

6. What are one of your most memorable memories of the bush?

"We stopped for sundowner drinks on one of Luvhuvhu east's lookout points (fever tree lookout). As we were watching hippos, something else stole our attention. A goliath heron walked slowly towards a small bush on the river bank. In the small bush were two squirrels alarming, but they did not move. Finally, the heron caught one of the squirrels by its fluffy tail. The heron walked back towards the water with the squirrel dangling in the heron's big mouth, fortunately that squirrel managed to escape death.

The heron did not give up. He went back to the small bush for the other squirrel. The goliath heron took the second squirrel and got a good grip on it. Unfortunately, this one did not escape like the friend did. It was drowned in the water and hit against the ground and then swallowed by the goliath heron."

7. Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

"I would like to further my studies and obtain the highest qualification in the guiding industry – a Professional Field Guide and perhaps SKS on a specific subject in the bush. The opportunities are endless."

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