



Far left: Tracking requires close attention; some tracks, such as these, are clear, but to the untrained eye others are simply smudges in the sand.

Left: Students take turns in leading the group tracking a rhino and calf.

Tracking a trail to a bright future

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drink and then we continued the pursuit – stopping along the way to identify birdcalls – through a dry riverbed.

I could tell by the breeze on my bare legs that we were upwind of the mother and calf (a tip picked up from the bit of training received) and, sure enough, there was a sudden crashing noise of big animals in the bush ahead of us.

We couldn't see them, but they were well aware of our presence and made off again.

After about three hours, and opportunities to view other animals, including some beautiful eland, the big moment came. With Tutani leading the group, the two rhino crossed our view. We had found them, and the game was up.

Back at the academy we could relax with all the students, the other half of whom had been watching wildlife DVDs under the supervision of Janetta, Pokie's wife. She is delighted to be playing an active role at the academy, providing meals and giving "house-mother" support to the students, as well as giving some of the lessons.

Pokie is intensely satisfied with the way things have developed.

"It has always been my dream to teach these skills and I am very pleased to be here. You learn a lot by teaching others, which gives you extra confidence."

Alex had the last word: "Our aim is to empower the custodians of Africa's wilderness to preserve the continent's remaining wild areas. Our intention is for our graduates to bring authenticity and accuracy to environmental education, anti-poaching, ecotourism, data collection and conservation, all of which hold the promise of gainful employment for these young people."

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