



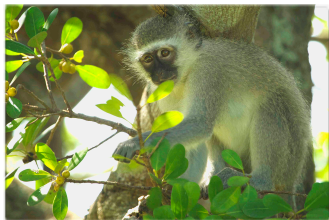
Region News

Volunteering in Africa with
Jennifer Dartt - Partnerships in
Understanding Opportunity

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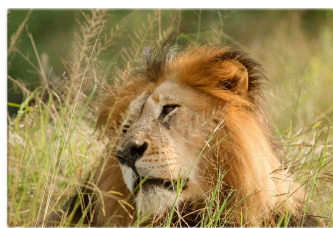
Volunteering in Africa: Interview with Jennifer Dartt, Minnesota Volunteer State Coordinator

I interviewed Jennifer Dartt, Roots & Shoots Volunteer State Coordinator for Minnesota, about her recent journey back to Africa for a month of intensive volunteering and exploring. International experiences, like this one, give Jennifer a unique perspective on helping groups to think globally...and act locally. (M. Kahl)



You recently returned from a long trip to Africa—where were you visiting?

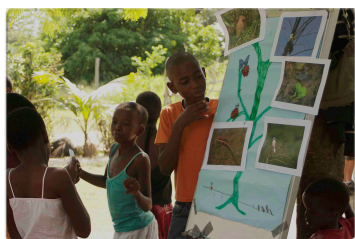
I have always had an interest in African wildlife and photography. I wanted to go on game drives to see the animals in their natural habitat and develop my wildlife photography skills. African Impact has a project called Wildlife Photography and Conservation Education in St. Lucia, South Africa. The Green Vision Foundation is building a species database of animals and plants in the iSimangaliso World Heritage Site. The photographs will be available free for educational purposes from their website. The iSimangaliso World Heritage Site consists of five ecosystems: Indian Ocean coral reefs, sand dunes, wetlands, grasslands and savannah. It's located along the eastern coastline of South Africa starting in St. Lucia up to the Mozambique border.



I understand your trip was a special one, one involving service. What did you work on as an international volunteer?

I traveled by foot or vehicle into game parks to photograph animal behavior and I visited Zulu villages to capture their cultural traditions. Once a week, I taught a conservation education lesson at the Khula Daycare Center run by Pastor Zulu.

The most rewarding part of volunteering was spending time with the children and teaching them about conservation. I was amazed how much they knew and contributed to the lessons. The field trip to



the beach with the five-year-olds who had never seen the ocean before was very exciting to see. I helped African Impact discuss ideas on how to start an environmental conservation club at the local primary school.

Why did you choose to volunteer abroad as opposed to just traveling?

Traveling alone abroad to an unknown country can be a little frightening. Volunteering with an organization that is well known and speaking with a past volunteer on a project that interests you before committing is very helpful. It is important to understand the country's culture differences and to learn basic phrases in the local language. It helps minimize the culture shock and makes your experience more positive.

What were a few things that you learned while volunteering? What was surprising to you?

My volunteer experience in South Africa has taught me that although we may have different traditions and lifestyles, we can work together on a common goal. I encourage your Roots & Shoots group to contact a Roots & Shoots group in another country to share project ideas and learn about one another. You have the passion for people, animals and your environment in common.



What would you like to leave us with?

I know that my time in Africa and the things I learned while living there has made me a stronger individual. I am currently looking for a career in environmental conservation and education and trying to make a lighter impact on our planet.

Want to connect abroad?

We are in the early stages of setting up a regional partnership between the Great Lakes Region and Roots & Shoots groups in Lugufu Refugee Camp in Tanzania. Look for an interview with a Tanzanian Roots & Shoots coordinator in early June.

Please let us know if you are interested in starting a regular pen pal relationship with groups in Africa, by sending your group name, age, size and type to Melanie Kahl at mkahl@janegoodall.org.