



A conversation with Andrew Barratt and Shamwari Private Game Reserve

Andrew Barratt



Congratulations on winning 3 Awards in the ITFFA 2024. What is the background on why you got Involved in Film:

My journey into film began in 2008 when I took a gap year after finishing school and worked with Australian Filmmaker Lyndal Davies as a production assistant on the Animal Planet series Shamwari: A Wild Life. From there I developed a deep fascination for storytelling and visual arts, specifically in wildlife and documentaries.

What is your Excitement About Filming Wildlife:

Filming wildlife is particularly exciting for me because it allows me to explore and document the intricate and often unseen aspects of animal behaviour and ecosystems. The challenge of capturing these moments in their natural habitat, while conveying their beauty and significance to a broader audience, is both thrilling and rewarding. The stories and people behind modern day conservation is especially captivating, as a human and emotional element - is for me at least - paramount in conveying a message successfully.

What are some of your Current Projects that you are working on?:

At the moment, I'm working on season 2 of Shamwari Untamed - a docu-series chronicling the behind the scenes work of the conservation department on Shamwari Private Game Reserve. The first season is currently licensed worldwide to Netflix.



Shamwari Private Game Reserve

is the embodiment of how a bold, ambitious conservation project can turn back the clock, restoring a piece of Africa's natural heritage to what it once was.

Shamwari marks more than 30 years and is lauded as a conservation success story, but when the project began the outcome was far from assured.

CEO Joe Cloete, who started his conservation career as a field guide and hosted Shamwari's first game drive, recalls there was a great deal of scepticism if not outright opposition to the project.

"The Eastern Cape just wasn't considered a safari destination, so it wasn't just case of marketing Shamwari but the entire region. There were also people who didn't like the idea of reintroducing predator species to the area. In those early days we spent a lot of time convincing people not only that the project was viable, but also about the benefits of having a big-five game reserve as a neighbour."

The malaria-free Eastern Cape, where Shamwari is situated, was once one of the richest wildlife areas in Southern Africa, before much of it was destroyed by hunting and over-farming.

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Your thoughts on your participation in ITFFA 2024:

Participating in ITFFA 2024 has been a significant milestone for me. It's a validation of the hard work and dedication that goes into creating compelling wildlife documentaries. Being recognized by such a prestigious festival not only boosts my confidence but also motivates me to continue pushing the boundaries of my craft.

And the Impact of Winning an Award?

Winning an award at ITFFA 2024 has been a tremendous boost for me. It enhances my credibility and visibility in the industry, opening up new opportunities for collaborations and projects. It also underscores the quality and impact of my work, which is invaluable for building and sustaining a successful career in filmmaking.



A conversation with Andrew Barratt and Shamwari Private

Then in 1992, a dedicated conservation team began buying up land, removing boundary fences, and reintroducing indigenous fauna and flora. Each phase was strategic, ensuring sufficient space, food, and water for the animals to thrive while also managing the balance between predator and prey species. Reversing nearly 300 years of human impact, took a great deal of patience, expertise, ingenuity, and investment. Shamwari, meaning “friend” in the local Shona language, is one of Africa’s leading Big5 safari destinations spanning some 25 000 hectares. This private reserve boasts five ecosystems supporting many plant, bird and animal species. It is also home to one of South Africa’s most experienced wildlife teams. Six uniquely styled lodges and the Shamwari Explorer Camp offer a distinctive ambience in untamed Africa.



Guests’ activities include visits to the unique Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, Vulpro@Shamwari as well as Born Free Big Cat Sanctuaries. Riverdene and Long Lee Manor offers a Kids on Safari program that educates and entertains. Guided bush walks, spa treatments, and stargazing are available on request. Shamwari’s conservation initiatives draw attention to the plight of wild cats and abandoned, and injured wild animals as well as Vulpro which is the only vulture conservation organization of its kind on the continent.

Shamwari created a You Tube channel ... Why?

Shamwari TV started during the hard lockdown as a way of showcasing the reserve’s wildlife and helping some of its neighbouring communities. Initially it was just Andrew Kearney, head

ranger at the Eastern Cape private game reserve, going out onto the reserve armed with a rifle, cellphone, and filming anything of interest he came across. His enthusiasm and encyclopaedic knowledge of the bush soon resulted in his posts gaining followers. That’s when Shamwari and Andrew Barratt, co-owner of Hungry Bison Films, teamed up to start producing professionally filmed and edited episodes. Over 120 episodes later and Shamwari TV has proved a huge success gaining over a 120 000 followers across various social media platforms and millions of views from around the world.

Documenting the conservation projects on film by Shamwari Private Game Reserve is vital for a range of reasons

It effectively raises awareness and garners support by vividly illustrating the impact of conservation efforts and the importance of preserving wildlife and habitats. Films serve as powerful educational tools, helping to inform and engage the public about the complexities and successes of conservation work.

They also provide a valuable record of progress, enabling the monitoring and evaluation of different strategies over time. By capturing these efforts, films inspire others to take action, contribute, or volunteer, while also preserving a cultural and historical record of the work being done. This documentation not only showcases innovative conservation techniques but also reinforces the significance of ongoing efforts to protect and sustain biodiversity for future generations.

Mission and Approach of Shamwari Private Game Reserve

Conservation Philosophy – Conserving a vanishing way of life.

Staying at Shamwari means you are participating in and experiencing an immensely successful conservation project.

Shamwari Private Game Reserve is the embodiment of how a bold, ambitious conservation project has turned back the clock, restoring a piece of Africa’s natural heritage to what it once was. With the aim of restoring this area of the Eastern Cape to its former glory, Shamwari Private Game Reserve was born of a need to conserve the land and its abundant wildlife, birdlife and ecological diversity.

Even after more than 30 years, Shamwari is still looking for ways to grow the conservation programme and enhance the ecological importance of the reserve.

It recently acquired an additional 1 338 hectares of land to the north and south of the current reserve. This will benefit the existing species and will also allow it to reintroduce other once-indigenous species such as spotted hyena and, at some time in future, African Wild Dog.

“Hospitality, the guest experience and the conservation of indigenous fauna and flora are interdependent. Without our guests the conservation work could not happen.” Joe Cloete, Shamwari CEO.

The films links are the following:

Shamwari Promotional Video

Gold Award

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3C8alcnk7M&t=9s>

Africa’s Largest Vulture Relocation

Gold Award

<https://vimeo.com/909664539/e3ef88aefe?share=copy>

How do Lions Communicate? You will be SURPRISED!

Silver Award

<https://youtu.be/2wC3Dn0Qnel>

Contact Details:

Andrew Barratt

www.hungrybisonfilms.com

andrew@hungrybisonfilms.com

Shamwari Private Game Reserve

www.shamwari.co.za

reservations@shamwari.com