
MOBILE DATABASE · ARTICLE

CYBERTRACKER KRUGER

Author / organisation	CNN
Year recorded	2004
Region	Africa · South Africa
Category	Conservation
Original source	us.cnn.com
Archive page	kiwanja.net/mobile-database/cybertracker-kruger/

This document is part of the kiwanja.net Mobile Database, an archive of more than 700 articles, reports and projects on mobile technology for development, collected between 2003 and 2010. It is reproduced here for reference; the original author's rights are retained.

Explore more. Browse the full archive at kiwanja.net/mobile-database.

Looking for support with your own social change work? See kiwanja.net/work-with-me.

Ken Banks offers coaching, mentoring and strategy support.

Keeping conservation on track

Wildlife sanctuary gets high-tech shot in arm

From CNN's Shantelle Stein

Wednesday, December 29, 2004 Posted: 1:04 PM EST (1804 GMT)

(CNN) -- Keeping track of the thousands of animals, plant species and birds that inhabit South Africa's Kruger National Park is no simple task, but thanks to a GPS device, the job has become a lot easier.

Home to the big five -- the lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhino -- the park is one of the biggest wildlife sanctuaries in the world, and is the biggest in South Africa.

It covers two million hectares, roughly the equivalent landmass of Israel, and 22 rangers monitor the animals' activity.

Six months ago, the park introduced a Global Positioning System (GPS), called CyberTracker, to make the job easier.

The rangers, along with their teams of animal trackers, monitor what goes on in the park.

The CyberTracker is icon-based, making it easy to use, including for trackers who are illiterate.

When they see an animal, they chose from 40 different animal icons on their screen which ones they have sighted.

They are also given the opportunity to record activities such as drinking, feeding, running, fighting, mating and sleeping.

The GPS connection automatically stores the longitude and latitude of the sighting, giving insight into the flora and fauna of the park, as well as environmental trends.

Steven Whitfield, a ranger at the park, told CNN that tracking had previously been done on a verbal basis.



The CyberTracker monitors animal movement and environmental trends.

SURFER'S PARADISE



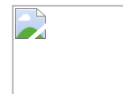
'[Bionic dolphin](#)' fulfils lifelong dream for inventor

RELATED

- [A handful of information](#)
- [GPS technology to keep kids safe](#)
- [Smart helmet for motorcyclists](#)

SPARK

Find out how tech is changing our lives
[Click here](#)

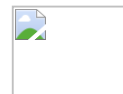


YOUR SAY

Send your thoughts on this story to spark@cnn.com or [read](#) what other viewers have to say

VOTE

What has been the most significant invention or discovery of the past 50 years?
[VOTE NOW](#)



YOUR E-MAIL ALERTS

He said that he was not very tech-savvy before the handheld devices were introduced but the CyberTracker was proving to be invaluable.

"I was very opposed to it in the beginning. But it didn't take long once I had been working with it that I started realizing the benefits," he said.

"We've always had to remember areas that we patrolled. We would often leave areas out and we very often over-patrolled certain areas. Now, you switch on your computer and see where you have patrolled, where you haven't patrolled, and you reprioritize."

Every morning Whitfield and his team of trackers meet to discuss the previous day's animal sightings and plan that day's patrol schedule.

At the end of each day, the information from the handheld devices is loaded into Whitfield's computer and every month the information is sent to a central database where statistics are analyzed, including those about endangered species, possible poaching in areas and outbreaks of disease.

The brains behind the CyberTracker is Professor Louis Liebenberg, a South African tracking expert who developed the technology more than eight years ago.

He got the idea while hunting with traditional Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert -- their knowledge of plant and wildlife is unrivalled.

"What I find very exciting is I believe the art of tracking itself might represent the origin of science going back more than a hundred thousand years," he told CNN.

"At the moment, when the bow and arrow is dying out and traditional tracking as we know it dying out, we can use a little hand held computer to revitalize tracking and develop it into a modern science."

Liebenberg said the product had massive potential in monitoring the global ecosystem.

The CyberTracker has also been used to fight crime in South Africa, recording vital information about crime scenes and reducing the amount of paperwork involved with each case.

Story Tools