

Young volunteers get stuck in during elephant collaring adventure

Brett Marnewick and Shaun Griesel, pupils from Southern Cross School, had a life-changing experience on Tuesday June 5 when they had the rare opportunity to participate in a research programme and get up close and personal with Africa's heaviest land mammal.

The two boys were invited to participate in the collaring of three elephant bulls in the Timbavati Game Reserve, together with the Save the Elephants Transboundary Elephant Research Programme. Both boys are grade nine pupils from Johannesburg, and the

school felt that it was best to give children from the city the opportunity. A production team from the SABC1 children's wildlife programme, Team Wild, also filmed the collaring.

The two boys were put to work and assisted Nelspruit-based vet Dr Cobus Raath and the leaders of the research programme, Drs Steve and Michelle Henley, in making tooth moulds to determine the age of the bulls. They used a specially formulated dental putty, called coltene speedex, which was donated from Switzerland.

To Shaun, the experience was "the most amazing thing I've ever done," and Brett felt that "it was a life-time experience, the best thing I've ever done."

The Henleys wish to thank the wardens of the Klaserie and Timbavati who participated, and also Olifants River Game Reserve and Brian and Claire Makare who sponsored one of the collars. The other two collars were funded by the Wildlife Society of South Africa. The production team for Team Wild was put together by Jacques and Antoinette Goosen.



(left) Brett Marnewick and Shaun Griesel coming up close to the giants during the collaring session

(below) Dr Cobus Raath explaining the procedures to the Team Wild production team



(left) Tooth moulds made from a special dental putty

