

## Some vets not only work in the field of wildlife conservation, they also run for conservation

Posted on **March 10, 2022**



*In 2021 Marion was the overall winner of the Rhino Peak Challenge. Photo: Bruce Leslie.*

Dr Marion Leiberich, veterinarian and postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Veterinary Wildlife Research of the Faculty works in the field of wildlife research & conservation and she also loves running. What then is better than to combine her two passions and to run for conservation?

Marion, who is currently researching options to improve the wellbeing and welfare of rhinos during translocations says that her love for the outdoors, for adventure and our natural world led her to the sport of trail running. "Today, I can't imagine my life without my daily dose of trail running/exploring/hiking anymore. In the mountains, together with my trail hounds, I feel most alive and find strength, resilience, peace and happiness," she adds.



*Above: Marion and her dog, Malaika, “the best mountain goat and trail buddy”, often roam the mountains together whenever they can. Photo: Marzelle van der Merwe.*

According to Marion she was fortunate to join the Rhino Peak Challenge 2021 as an ambassador for the second year in a row and to help raise much needed funds for rhino, blue crane and vulture conservation projects carried out by Wildlife ACT, the Endangered Wildlife Trust and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW).

“The Rhino Peak Challenge is a conservation fundraiser taking place in the Maloti Drakensberg World Heritage Site each year. Everyone with a passion for wildlife conservation and our natural heritage can apply to become an ambassador,” Marion explains. The challenge unites like-minded people to raise awareness about the dire situation of our wildlife, to raise funds and to challenge themselves.

The successful 44 candidates committed to raise R20, 000 each and completed their ascent of the mighty Rhino Peak on 6 November 2021. This iconic mountain with its summit at 3056m above sea level got its name from its rhino horn-like shape. It is a breathtakingly beautiful, fun and technical 21km route in some of South Africa’s most fascinating mountains.

After a challenging, fun and adventurous day in the mountains, Marion not only got to celebrate her second win, this time around she also crossed the finish line first overall after she was the first female runner in 2020. All the participants also celebrated reaching the overall fundraising target of R1 Million.

For Marion running to raise money and awareness about the alarming plight of some extraordinary wildlife species is the perfect combination of her passions. “I love running and now I can run for what I love and what I want to protect, but there is no doubt, rhinos and Rhino Peak hold a very special place in my heart.”

[More information on the Rhino Peak Challenge](#)

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