

## Traveling 'Into the Pride'

**CatChannel's Nikki Batalis blogs about a new Animal Planet series in which a man lives among lions in Africa to help save them.**

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Brutus is the dominant male in his pride at the Erindi Private Game Preserve. Photo courtesy Animal Planet. One man, one pride of rogue lions.

Can the man — in this case big-cat expert Dave Salmoni — get the lions accustomed enough to humans so that they will be allowed to live in a game preserve in Namibia?

That is the premise of "Into the Pride," a new five-part series on Animal Planet that premieres at 8 p.m. EDT Aug. 13. The pride — whose cast of characters includes the dominant male, Brutus, a protective lioness, Cleo, and cubs Rough and Tumble, among others — has been known for cattle raiding and aggression toward humans. If the big cats can't just get along in the Erindi Private Game Preserve, where there are certain to be humans traipsing about as eco-tourism increases in the area, they will be destroyed, Salmoni tells us.

Dave Salmoni lived for six months among the lions so they would become accustomed to humans. Photo courtesy Animal Planet. As part of his plan to help the lions, Salmoni says he must live in the bush for six months so that they become accustomed to him, and therefore, other humans.

It's a fascinating venture. We get to watch Salmoni sleep, eat and cook in the starkly beautiful African landscape as he makes his approach to the lions. We also learn that in a pride, it's females who run the show, and if Salmoni is going to make any headway with this group, he's got to get the approval of the fierce and huge Cleo.

It's a wonder to see the lions in their natural environment; and it's amazing to see how much of their behavior is similar to their little cousins, housecats: the cubs roll around with each other as they play; a lioness licks her paws as she cleans up; a mother lion gives a plaintive call to tell her errant babies to come home.

If you love big cats, spend some time with "Into the Pride." You will see stunning images you won't soon forget.