



KRUGER2CANYON

NEWS

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Rancher out on R100 000 bail after '26 unreported rhino carcasses', horns found on Limpopo farm



Image: Coultham - Canva

Tiara Walters

Derek Lewitton, a long-standing advocate for legalising international trade in rhino horn, was granted bail by a local magistrates' court on Wednesday, 10 January. Private rhino owners, argues a major sector association, are desperate to salvage their livelihood amid a tanking industry.

Accused of possessing 17 rhino horns

along with 16 "unlawful firearms" and ammunition, Derek Lewitton, a local rancher, has been granted release on R100 000 bail by the Namakgale Magistrates' Court in Phalaborwa, Limpopo.

The Limpopo rhino rancher, a prominent figure in the private sector, had appeared in court near Kruger National Park for a formal bail application.

Citing a need to verify Lewitton's residen-

tial address, marital status and citizenship, the State had previously requested a remand to keep him in custody.

On Wednesday, 10 January, however, the court granted the accused bail, stating that his details had been confirmed and reporting no further grounds for opposition.

According to a police statement, Lewitton was arrested on 22 December after a 16-hour investigation at a game farm near

the small town of Gravelotte, where law enforcement said they had found "26 unreported rhino carcasses".

The high-level operation, conducted west of Kruger, was overseen by Major-General Jan Scheepers, Limpopo's deputy provincial commissioner.

Launched after a tip-off by "a reliable source", the sting was executed by ...

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From the editors desk



Happy new year to everyone! I trust you have all had a wonderful holiday and are ready to embrace 2024.

2023 went by in a flash, but that is not news to anyone – the fact is that the older we get, the faster the time flies by. It is with that in mind that I encourage us all to live the present, and what better place to do that than in Hoedspruit.

That reminds me of what Eric Jorgenson once said, and we should take cognisance of it: *“When you’re young, you have time. You have health, but you have no money. When you’re middle-aged, you have money and you have health, but you have no time. When you’re old, you have money and you*

have time, but you have no health. So the tri-fecta is trying to get all three at once. By the time people realize they have enough money, they’ve lost their time and their health.” – The Almanack of Naval Ravikant: A guide to wealth and happiness.

So, as we step into the dawn of a new year, the horizon is painted with anticipation and the promise of fresh beginnings. It’s a canvas waiting to be filled with experiences, growth, and newfound joys. One can’t help but feel the excitement bubbling in the air, as if the universe itself is whispering secrets of unexplored possibilities.

In the new year, there’s always (and I’m not sure why it happens at the beginning of every year!) the prospect of personal transformation, a chance to embrace self-discovery and forge a path towards a better version of oneself. It’s an opportunity to set new goals, dream bigger, and pursue passions with renewed vigour. The clean slate of a new year invites us to leave behind the baggage of the past, offering a blank page where we can write our own stories.

On a global scale, the new year brings hope for positive change and unity. Heaven knows we need some sense and sensibility in the world today! It’s a time to look forward to

advancements in science, technology, and medicine, as humanity collectively strives to overcome challenges and build a brighter future. It’s a time to open our thoughts and principles to understand and accept, maybe even compromise in agreement with one another, ‘stepping off the high horse’ to bring peace and happiness to our species and the world at large. Whether it’s breakthroughs in sustainable practices, medical innovations, or cultural milestones, the new year holds the promise of progress. But there is a lot to be cleared up.

And of course, we have our elections in 2024 – please make sure you all register to vote – AND VOTE! By not voting nothing is achieved, and you’re basically throwing your hands up and accepting the current status as the norm, that seemingly is unchangeable. Let’s all hope and trust that it is changeable and that we can achieve that.

In essence, the new year is a palette of infinite possibilities, inviting us to paint our dreams, aspirations, and adventures. It’s a journey waiting to unfold, filled with the excitement of the unknown and the potential for extraordinary moments that will shape our lives in the days and months to come.

Here’s to a fantastic 2024 from all of us at Kruger2Canyon News!



Mark Bishop - Editor

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Love the Hoed® titbits

The new paddle courts

Good news – the **Hoedspruit Padel and Sports Bar** is opening soon. This is a new venue which will offer an exciting outdoor experience catering for all ages and offering its customers a new sport which is currently taking the world by storm - PADEL.

Two state-of-the-art Padel courts, installed by Padel Nation, will be erected during the month of February, and will be supported by showers, change rooms and a fully kitted Pro Shop with all the apparel that both advanced and beginner players will require. The facility will also have a large sports bar and pizzeria, as well as a beer garden with a kiddies’ playground, comfortably tucked under marula trees adjacent to the courts. Customers will be able to sign up for membership, and book time slots on the courts via the Playtomic app. The costs involved will be shared soon.

The Hoedspruit Padel team cannot wait to welcome the patrons of Hoedspruit to this epic facility in the coming months. Stay tuned!

Hoedspruit Private Hospital

There was a site inspection done by doctors, specialists, directors, and the development team. This all took place on Saturday 20 January and the feedback was very positive. There was a walkthrough of the facilities and an information session to highlight the commissioning process going forward.

Some 33 doctors and specialists from all over the country, who have committed to work at the hospital, either full time or through sessions also found out how they could request equipment and when senior staff will be appointed.

The schedule for a ‘soft’ opening at the end of October 2024 is still being met –

bearing in mind there are always possibilities of delay, through weather, Department of Health, etc. Everyone was impressed and excited about the progress.

It is very satisfying to see this project come to fruition and anyone travelling past the site can see for themselves the progress that has been made. Well done to the team!

Picky View and Veggie Diva

What more can we say but that both these parties are on extended holidays! Was 2023 that bad? Looking forward to touching base with them in February and for them to submit their wonderful articles again.

The new Korongo House in Zandspruit Boulevard

It seems like only yesterday that this centre turned the first sod of soil and here we are in January 2024, and it looks finished to me!

Offices, lifestyle, fine dining, and conference facilities all in one. Of the 36 units/spaces available, 30 have been rented out – retail on the ground floor and professional services above.

From a restaurant, spa, bakery, car rental, tattoo artist, furniture, jeweller, training, attorneys, accountants and tourism, there is a bit of everything for everyone in this new centre.

Should there be anyone out there wanting to get into the mix, contact Romano from RE/MAX Wildlife Properties on 082 055 9291, or 015 793 0108 – the centre promises to become quite a buzz.

Beautifying Hoedies!

An initiative driven by the CPF (Community Policing Forum) and with the help of the Mayor, the Municipal Manager, SAPS, the

Traffic Department of both Limpopo and Maruleng, and of course a massive community effort – a beautiful garden is being created at the La Bamba/PnP intersection.

The purpose is twofold: get the thatching trucks away from a potential fire catastrophe (PME yard, gas, wood, petrol station) and relocate them where they are happy and can conduct their services (they have now also officially applied for permits). Hoedspruit does not have a big fire engine – so any disaster of that sort would be a serious calamity. And, secondly to beautify the town – thatching trucks were not a pleasant sight at the entrance to town. The challenge was sent out to the community and there has been an overwhelming support for this project, which just goes to show the community spirit in ‘The Hoed’.

The second part of the project is to have wonderful murals done by nine professional, local artists.

The garden should be completed by the end of this week, and then the murals can be painted. The entrance will look great, and the murals will be colourful, and somewhat of a lowveld attraction.

Certainly seems like a win:win for all – well done to the CPF and everyone involved!

The ‘Love The Hoed’ titbits column was sponsored and brought to you by the ‘Love The Hoed’ brand.



The new paddel courts (artist impression) that are being built on Zandspruit Boulevard (above), Hoedspruit Hospital site meeting (below left) and the new Karongo centre. Images supplied



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Rancher out on R100,000 bail after '26 unreported rhino carcasses', horns found on Limpopo farm

Cont. from page 1

Launched after a tip-off by "a reliable source", the sting was executed by a multi-disciplinary task force comprising members of the Hawks, the South African Police Service's Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation; Visible Policing; the Polokwane Tactical Response Unit; the Firearms Unit and the local Criminal Records Centre.

"An investigation was registered, and a search warrant obtained. The operation commenced around 8am," noted Limpopo spokesperson Brigadier Hlulani Mashaba.

'Dead rhinos everywhere you looked'

Scheepers reported that a helicopter was dispatched to survey the property, uncovering a scene reminiscent of a "slaughterhouse".

"Everywhere you looked, there were rhinos lying dead," Scheepers said.

In addition to carcasses, some "unmarked rhino horns" were reportedly discovered in a safe "without paperwork".

Horns with a value allegedly totalling R10-million were seized by the Hawks while the raid also confiscated "unlawfully acquired firearms and hundreds of rounds of ammunition".

Lewitton was taken into police custody shortly before midnight on the same day. His laptop and cell phone were also confiscated.

"The law is very clear," Scheepers said. "Once you find a rhino in the veld, no matter if it has been killed, or has died of natural causes, you are not allowed to remove the horns. You must report it to the South African police and to the department of nature conservation."

At the time of publishing, it was unclear how many surviving rhino remained on the property, and if more dead animals had been found.

'Dedicated, honest and fiercely courageous rangers'

Lewitton's website, however, claims the rancher and his wife, Xenja, are "responsible for hundreds of rhino on thousands of acres of wild African land" through Black Rock Rhino Conservation, a ranching business.

"We are very lucky to have a team of dedicated, honest and fiercely courageous rangers protecting the animals of Black Rock Rhino Conservation," according to the site.

The site also notes that Lewitton is a former senior executive who holds a law doctorate from Stanford.

The US-educated rancher is well known within the private sector to have fought unsuccessfully for several years to trigger international trade in rhino horn, which is currently banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites).

We could not reach the Lewitton family for comment.

However, a statement reportedly written by a family representative argues that the rancher was being unfairly persecuted.

"The salacious rumours which are currently circulating the press are wholly unsubstantiated and serve only to undermine the interests of justice," the statement says. "Allegations that the bush was littered with unreported carcasses, or that horns were hacked out of skulls and packed for shipping are demonstrably false, and if such statements had any veracity, Mr Lewitton would surely have been charged with those offences. He has not."

The statement claims that "Mr Lewitton's reserve has been violently assaulted by poachers for months ... but it is a tragedy that the police have opted to pursue the victim of a crime with more vigour than the true perpetrators."

Despite attempts, Daily Maverick could

not verify the authenticity of the statement, which goes on to suggest that "as many as eight rhinos" had been poached since Lewitton's detention.

Private sector 'heroes'

Since the start of the rhino poaching crisis in about 2007, more than 10 000 rhinos have been slaughtered for their horns in South Africa. With Kruger National Park and adjacent reserves recently dehorning rhinos, illegal demand for horn now appears to have shifted to other reserves and targets.

For instance, in the first quarter of 2023, South African environmental authorities reported that the epicentre of the bloodbath was now in KwaZulu-Natal, where 60% of poaching casualties for the period had been claimed. Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, which had not dehorned any animals, was among reserves in the province bearing the brunt of that shift.

Pelham Jones, director of the Private Rhino Owners Association, told Daily Maverick that Lewitton was not a member of the association and declined to comment on the charges brought against him.

Jones, however, pointed out that the private sector remained under great stress — a situation echoed by the landmark 2023 sale of rhino rancher John Hume's 2 000-strong herd to African Parks, which has earmarked the animals for rewilding over the next decade.

Hume's attempt to auction off his rhinos in April 2023 attracted zero bids.

Financial 'distress, desperation'

"Rhino owners are financially extremely distressed," said Jones. "We own over 8 000 rhino of the national herd of some 13 000 rhino."

Jones argued that "the private sector has carried out a heroic act in terms of looking after the species. We are growing our

population by some 7.2% to 7.6% year on year — that's after poaching losses, and we derive zero income through any kind of exploitation."

Jones said the value of privately owned rhino had "plummeted". Security expenses were "astronomical", costing the national, provincial, and private sectors around R2-billion per annum, he said.

"And so now we're in a situation of some degree of desperation on certain properties," he argued.

Jones added: "We certainly would not condone any individual who carries out any act which would be deemed to be unlawful."

Colin Bell, a South African conservationist, and prominent campaigner against legalising the international horn trade told us that "it was never going to happen, so I am surprised that people like Lewitton decided to invest in horn in the first place. The economics for trade just don't stack up."

Bell demurred that the "potential size of the market is way too large if demand was ever stimulated through legalised trade. The amount of rhino horn that South Africa could sustainably supply annually to the market is way too small."

The conservationist contended that this supply "would not be anywhere near enough to satisfy demand. If trade was ever legalised, the only winners would be the international poaching syndicates and maybe a handful of rhino horn speculators. History has proven that one can never trade the body parts of endangered species in the hope of saving them from extinction."

Lewitton's case has been postponed to Thursday, 7 March, according to Mashudu Malabi-Dzhang, a National Prosecuting Authority spokesperson. It is scheduled to be heard at the Namakgale Magistrates' Court.

This article was previously published in the Daily Maverick – Our Burning Planet

New year's trivia questions

- Who is Yogi Bears girlfriend?
- What famous brand uses the swan as a logo?
- 68% of Americans do what to try and be punctual?
- Where was volleyball invented?
- What is the traditional Japanese cooking ingredient called Miso?
- What is mosquitoes main food?
- What is the name of Superman's Supercat?
- What is the most common name in the Hebrew Bible?
- International dialing codes - where is +672?
- In Newspeak what is a portable handheld communications transcriber?
- Who is Dick Tracey's girlfriend?
- What was first man made object to exceed the sound barrier?
- What is the main ingredient of Heinz's 'mock turtle soup'?
- What would a German do with a Gravenstein?
- How many pints will the 27-inch Americas cup hold?
- Where would you find your purlicue?
- Who was Barbara Streisands' first husband?
- What is the name of Porky Pigs father?
- Nathan Burnbaum became famous under what name?
- In Japan what is Shogi?
- Who killed his grandfather with a quoit at the Larrisan games?
- Shaddock is another name for what?
- In Greek legend what was eaten on the Island of Jerba?
- Who was Dr Zhivago's love?
- What was the name of Australia's first girlie magazine in 1936?
- Luke wrote two Bible books Luke and what?
- What are the 3 only remakes to win the best picture Oscars?
- Prescribed as cure for Beri Beri, it also cured scrotal dermatitis – what was it?
- Colonel Tom Parker Elvis's manager had what earlier act?
- What are humans most scared of?



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Numiknow™ – aiming to improve mathematical proficiency – part 2

An ingenious mathematical game based on dominoes has been created and developed here in Hoedspruit by Thias Taute. This game will surely help bridge that gap for individuals, taking them from borderline mathematical illiteracy to mathematical proficiency – sorely needed in a country where almost 50% of learners are failing mathematics in Grade 12. Kruger2Canyon News reports, and is the proud media sponsor of this initiative.

Last month we discussed “*The lack of mathematical proficiency in our society today - a counter-cyclical twist in this struggle offers hope*”. This was the introduction to numiknow™ and the games that can be played. Part 2 will focus on explaining the games in more detail and equip anyone with a set of dominoes with the knowledge on how to get involved.

numiknow™ is not just a single game as one would think when playing dominoes, on the contrary, it is a compendium of games played with dominoes. The goal is to significantly improve mathematical proficiency skills.

The games are a collection of numeracy-enriching games that work on improving basic numeracy skills. *dotta* focusses on identifying the dots found on either side of the midline of the domino. Addition is practised with *adda*, and is played by adding the dots on the left and right sides of the midline. Subtraction or minus is played in the game, *mina*, and *multa* practices multiplication skills. Likewise *diva* instructs players to divide the numbers on the domino. The game *counta* involves reading the two sides of the domino as a number and counting further, which aids in number sequencing. *prona* assists students in pronunciation skills of greater numbers, such as when dominoes are placed side

by side, and the number is read as a 2- to 12-digit number. *fracta* focuses on fractions, while percentages are the focus of the game *perca*. Ratios are improved in *rata*. All dominos are used vertically or horizontally in the abovementioned games.

Then there are the R-Games. These are used to practice basic number sense, such as sorting numbers, colours, counting and matching using dominoes in the early childhood development phase. Gross and fine motor skills are also improved when the numbers on the dominoes are included in physical activities, such as jumping, throwing ball, or building structures. Memory games can also be played to ensure basic number sense is developed using the number of dots or colours.

These games can all be assessed with numiknow™ *splita*, which evaluates the participants performance using split sets. This is done by dividing the 91 tiles of the domino set (remember this is up to double 12) in 7 equal groups in 240 seconds.

Then there is the F-Game, which involves the whole family in a board game where multiple players can play the abovementioned games together.

Lastly, the numiknow™ team is continuously developing new games, some of which were incorporated in the numiknow™ competition that was held recently.

There are games that promote problem solving and strategic thinking - *Circle* is played when a single domino is placed in the centre, surrounded, in a smaller circle by various games or operations, and in the bigger circle are the answers to the operations. The participant then needs to use the provided domino and complete each of the equations in the spokes of the circle.

The *tower game* requires participants to build the tallest possible tower with the

provided domino blocks. One side of the tower is the *adda* side. On this side, the domino placed on top of the domino below must always have a higher value (when the dots are added) than the domino below it. The three other sides are *mina*, *multa* and *diva*, with the same ever increasing answer for the blocks added above, must follow in the making of the tower.

Lastly there is *M&M (Mix & Match)*. This involves providing 10 dominoes, 10 games or operations and 10 answers. Participants need to identify which of the dominoes, operations, and answers, can be combined to formulate 10 correct equations.

In the next article (part 3 – February 2024), preliminary results of the numiknow™ competition that took place at the Hub will show that several of the participants’ game and mathematical proficiency skills have improved.

There is an interschool numiknow™ competition planned for International Pi Day on 13 March 2024. More information will be available on the Facebook and Instagram pages of Hoedspruit Hub from 1 February 2024 (www.facebook.com/hoedspruithub).

To contact Thias Taute about numiknow™ you can do so through the Hoedspruit Hub: 079 502 4727 or on email thias@hoedspruithub.com



The different games of numiknow from the top: Layout for the F game (top), matching pairs (middle), tower game (above) and Numiknow circle (left) Images supplied

CAMPUS COUNTDOWN: first year checklist to hit the ground running at university

The clock is ticking for the Matric Class of 2023 students who are set to start their higher education journey in the coming days. Starting university is exciting and challenging, but visions for this major next step in life and towards adulthood are often tempered by uncertainty. New students will feel a mix of emotions, such as curiosity, enthusiasm, nervousness, and anxiety. Students (and their parents) also have many questions about what to expect and how to cope with the new academic and social environment.

Dr Linda Meyer, Managing Director at IIE Rosebank College, a brand of The Independent Institute of Education, SA’s leading private higher education provider, says it is natural and appropriate to feel overwhelmed during this time, but says there are a few guidelines that can assist new students to ease the transition.

Making the most of orientation opportunities

“Orientation is a great opportunity to get familiar with the campus, meet new people, and learn about the resources and services available to you. It is also a chance to have fun and make friends before classes start,” Dr Meyer says. “Try to attend as many orientation events as possible, and don’t be afraid to ask questions or seek help if needed. Orientation is designed to help you transition smoothly and successfully to university life.”

Taking time to understand your universities systems logistics

University systems and logistics will differ significantly from what you were used to in high school. For example, you may have to register

for courses online, use a student portal to access your grades and assignments, or follow a different academic calendar. You may also have to deal with financial matters, such as paying tuition fees, applying for scholarships, or managing your budget.

“To avoid confusion and stress, ensure you understand how these systems and logistics work, and keep track of important dates and deadlines. You can also consult your academic advisor, student services, or other staff members about any issues or concerns.

“Additionally, get a good understanding of the physical campus environment. Make sure you know where the buildings and classes are located and additional services you may need to access.”

Getting to grips with the tech environment

Technology is an essential part of university education, notes Dr Meyer. “You will need to use various devices, software and platforms to complete your coursework, communicate with your lecturers and peers, and access online resources. You may also have to adapt to different learning modes, such as online, hybrid, or blended courses. To prepare for this, ensure you have the necessary tech equipment, and familiarise yourself with the tech tools and platforms your university uses, such as email, learning management systems, video conferencing, and online libraries. If you encounter any tech problems or need any tech support, find the support you need to iron out these issues as soon as possible.”

Managing expectations

University expectations are different from what you experienced in high school. You will

have to deal with more academic rigour, more independence, more responsibility, and more diversity. You will also need to carefully balance your academic, personal, and social life and cope with various challenges and pressures.

“To meet these expectations, you need to develop skills and strategies, such as critical thinking, research, writing, time management, self-motivation, self-care, and stress management. You should also set realistic and achievable goals, seek feedback and guidance, and celebrate your achievements and progress. Don’t stress about academics too much in the first week or two. Everyone is still finding their feet. Just ensure you get to grips with your new environment and keep putting one foot in front of the other.”

Developing time management strategies

Time management is one of the most important skills for university success.

“You will need to manage your time effectively and efficiently and prioritise your tasks and activities. You will also have to deal with multiple and competing demands, such as assignments, exams, extracurriculars, work, and social life,” says Dr Meyer.

“To improve your time management, plan ahead, create a schedule, use a calendar or a planner, set reminders and alarms, and stick to your routine. Remember you are now accountable to yourself, and your success will depend on your ability to be disciplined and consistent.”

Joining cultural clubs and sports teams

Joining clubs or sports teams is a great way to enrich your university experience. You can

pursue your interests, hobbies, passions, or talents or discover new ones. You can also meet new people, make friends, network, and socialise.

“Joining clubs or sports teams can also improve your physical, mental, and emotional well-being, and provide much-needed balance to your academic work.”

Finally, it is important to know that help is available, and to seek support timeously, whether it be for academic or personal reasons.

“University can be challenging and stressful, and you may face various difficulties or problems along the way. Most good higher education institutions will have the necessary support services in place, to assist you with challenges you face,” says Dr Meyer.

“If you feel overwhelmed, confused, stuck, or unhappy, don’t hesitate to seek help timeously, whether it be academic or mental wellness support. Seeking help timeously is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength and courage.”

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Web Site : www.century21wildlife.co.za



SOLE MANDATE

N'TSIRI, GREATER KRUGER, BIG 5 R 5 500 000
Beds 3 | Bath 2 | Floor size: 120 m²

50% Share - This is your perfect bush hide-away! N'tsiri Nature Reserve is a private use, 2 500 hectare Big Five reserve. Here wildlife roam freely across unfenced borders with Kruger National Park. Conduct your own game drives any time, day or night, in an open game viewer.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2174061



SOLE MANDATE

NDLOVUMZI R 4 458 000
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | Floor size: 300 m²

This tranquil home's is situated overlooking the Olifants River and is surrounded by large riverine trees and rocky outcrops. The open plan living, dining and newly fitted kitchen are all under high vaulted ceilings that make this home light and bright, which makes the home appealing.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2152063



SOLE MANDATE

RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 5 300 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3.5 | Floor: 396 m²

Architect-designed home boasting unique character not typically found in Raptors View. Notable features include a new thatch roof, fresh paint, updated light fixtures, and a rentable cottage complete with a bedroom, kitchenette, and bathroom. VAT inclusive, no transfer duty applicable.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2194742



SOLE MANDATE

HOEDSPRUIT TOWN R 1 400 000
Bedrooms 2 & loft | Bathrooms 2 | Floor: 104 m²

This townhouse is an ideal investment property or a great option for first time home buyers. The unit comprises an open plan living area with kitchen, lounge and cosy patio. Both bedrooms have built in cupboards and ceiling fans. Additional features include air conditioning throughout.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2208429



DUAL MANDATE

RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 5 600 000
Beds 4 | Baths 4 | Floor: 484 m²

The home is beautifully set with a view on to the river with lovely trees, and is in a peaceful and quiet area, deep into the estate. It comprises large open plan living area with lounge, dining area and kitchen with scullery. The large covered patio with boma and pool has a beautiful river front view.

Michelle Severin - 083 468 3821 Ref: 2209448



SOLE MANDATE

MAFUNYANE, KARONGWE R 12 000 000
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | Traverse: 8,000 ha

This property is stunning and has a wow factor that will take your breath away! Very exclusive, modern bush home, overlooking a seasonal river bed, located in a Big 5 reserve with 8,000 ha traverse. Sold furnished & including game viewer.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2107650



SOLE MANDATE

GUESTHOUSE IN LIVERPOOL R 4 512 000
Beds 6 | Baths 3 | Floor: 289 m² | Land size: 21 ha

This property is now commercially rezoned and operational presenting an array of possibilities. The property boasts a prime location, with the guesthouse overlooking a perennial water source attracting wildlife, complemented by a tranquil garden with expansive lawns and large trees.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2206695



SOLE MANDATE

KHAYA NDLOVU RESERVE, BIG 4 R 10 900 000
Beds 4 | Baths 4.5 | Floor: 450 m²

This spacious home set along a dry riverbed offers a large entertainment area, with dining room, lounge and open plan kitchen. Additional features include two patios, boma area, built-in braai and pool. Khaya Ndlovu is a low density residential reserve with only 35 stands on 1,307 ha.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2209629



SOLE MANDATE

HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 550 000
Beds 3 | Baths 2.5 | Floor: 240 m²

This home features a double volume, open plan kitchen with lounge and loft. The covered patio looks out onto the fenced garden and pool. There is a double garage with staff bathroom and two store rooms. The estate offers secure living with state-of-the-art access control.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2209653



SOLE MANDATE

MODITLO WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 500 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 3 | Floor size: 275 m²

This family home is well located with lovely bushveld and mountain views. The home features a dining area, lounge, kitchen with scullery, and bar area. The living area leads out to the covered patio, deck and swimming pool. A braai area is tucked away in the corner of the garden.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2203063



SOLE MANDATE

SELF-CATERING GUEST HOUSE, HOEDSPRUIT R 5 690 000
Beds 7 | Baths 7

The owner's home has a kitchen, family room and private braai area. 6 Guest bedrooms are located around a central pool area and surrounded by an established garden. A communal lapa provides braai and kitchen facilities for the guests. The sale includes all fittings & furniture for guest house.

Colleen Berrange - 083 468 2338 Ref: 2194726



SOLE MANDATE

RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 3 870 000
Beds 4 | Baths 3 | Floor size: 293 m²

This neat and cosy, well-kept property is located deep in the estate in a quiet and peaceful location. The home is sold furnished barring a few personal items. The home comprises open plan living area with lounge and kitchen with dining nook and scullery. A covered patio leads to pool and boma.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2209787



SOLE MANDATE

JEJANE PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE R 1 470 000
Beds 4 | Baths 2 | Reserve: 2,070 ha

20% SHARE - Recently upgraded internally, the fully furnished house offers an open plan kitchen and living area. The expansive patio invites you to unwind amid the bush. The viewing deck is the perfect spot for sundowners. Enjoy game drives and enjoy the Big 5 only 15min from Hoedspruit.

Colleen Berrange - 083 468 2338 Ref: 2186239



SOLE MANDATE

MODITLO WILDLIFE ESTATE, BIG 4 R 4 750 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3.5 | Floor size: 325 m²

This modern house boasts luxury and comfort, with top-of-the-line finishes. Exceptional indoor and outdoor entertaining areas. The outdoor space features a covered patio with built-in braai, a pool and a low maintenance garden, perfect for relaxation and enjoying the outdoor lifestyle.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2157623



SOLE MANDATE

KAMPERSRUS, BEDFORD ESTATE R 3 850 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor size: 260 m²

This home offers an inviting open plan lounge and dining area with separate kitchen that has been well thought out. Leading from the lounge sliding doors open to the garden area with a pool. This home includes a full solar system connected to an inverter and completed by a double garage.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2199589



SOLE MANDATE

KAMPERSRUS, ESCARPIA ECO ESTATE R 2 850 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2

Inside this charming home you will find a modern, open plan living area and kitchen, complete with a separate scullery. Abundant natural light creates an airy and pleasant atmosphere throughout the house. The garden features a boma area nestled under the shade of beautiful trees.

Colleen Berrange - 083 468 2338 Ref: 2197031

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Beneath the buzz – the wonderful paper wasp



Tim Baynham
Wildlife Safety Solutions

Paper wasps are social insects commonly found around homes and other buildings, constructing their distinctive nests under the eaves of roofs, in trees and shrubs, under decking, in pipes and in other suitably sheltered locations. They are most active and prolific during the summer months.

There are a number of species found in South Africa, including an invasive species,

the European paper wasp (*Polistes dominula*). The different species vary in size and colouration. Like bees it is only the females that have the ability to deliver a painful sting. When a nest is disturbed the wasps often react by vigorously vibrating their wings as a warning. If further approached or provoked they may launch a squadron of aerial defenders to 'encourage' the 'threat' to rapidly vacate the immediate area. Fortunately though, and generally speaking they are docile creatures and will not chase you. They are unlike bees, who



Paper wasp nests

Images supplied

can only deliver a single sting - their barbed stinger remains embedded in their victim, the bee thus makes the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the colony. Paper wasps on the other hand can sting repeatedly with no ill effect. The level of pain experienced varies from species to species. Some species can deliver an extremely painful sting while others are only moderately painful. Most stings only result in pain and localized swelling, however there is always a risk of an allergic reaction in sensitive individuals. The pain usually subsides within 10 to 15 minutes whereas the swelling may persist for a number of days.

The nests of the paper wasp are made from chewed up plant fibers mixed with saliva, which produces a tough, light weight and water resistant papery material, hence the common name 'paper wasp'. The colony is usually started by a single female, the queen; she begins by constructing a strong stalk attached to the underside of a branch or under the eaves of a roof. The hexagonal cells are added as the colony expands, and the nests regularly form into an umbrella shape. The stalk is smeared with a dark coloured ant-repellant secretion produced by the queen's abdominal glands. This serves

to help protect the nest from raiding ants who would happily feast upon the developing larvae.

The life cycle of the wasps are divided into four phases or stages: egg, larva, pupa and adult. The immature stages are passed in the protective confines of the cell. A single egg is laid in each cell. The egg hatches after a number of days and the larva feed on chewed up soft bodied insects such as caterpillars, until they are ready to pupate and then finally emerge from the cell as winged mature adults. The female workers are responsible for foraging for caterpillars and feeding the larvae. The queen never leaves the nest and is also fed by her daughters.

These fascinating insects are great to have around as they serve as the perfect natural eco-friendly pest control agents. So please think twice before you reach for that can of doom!

For more information on venomous animals, awareness training and talks as well as a professional 24hrs problem snake rescue service, contact the author at Wildlife Safety Solutions: 073 934 6156; info@wildlifesafetysolutions.co.za; www.wildlifesafetysolutions.co.za, FB Wildlife Safety Solutions

The 'Year of the wood dragon': navigating the peaks and valleys of 2024 according to the Chinese calendar

AI perspective 'correspondent'

As the 'Year of the wood dragon' unfolds on the Chinese lunar calendar (beginning on February 10th, 2024 (Chinese New Year) and concluding on January 28th, 2025 (Chinese New Year's Eve)), 2024 promises to be a year of dynamic energy, marked by both triumphs and challenges. Drawing inspiration from traditional Chinese astrology, the celestial influence of the wood dragon is expected to bring about significant changes across the globe.

In the realm of global politics, the dragon's influence appears to foster a spirit of assertiveness and innovation. Nations are compelled to re-evaluate their geopolitical strategies and forge new alliances to adapt to the evolving landscape. China, in particular, finds itself at the forefront, leveraging its economic prowess to strengthen diplomatic ties and shape the narrative on the world stage.

Economically, the Wood dragon ushers in a period of growth and expansion. Emerging technologies and sustainable practices take centre stage as countries strive to balance economic development with environmental responsibility. Renewable energy initiatives gain momentum, leading to breakthroughs in clean energy sources that have far-reaching

implications for the planet's future.

However, the dragon's breath is not without its challenges. Economic disparities persist, with some regions struggling to keep pace with the rapid changes brought about by technological advancements. The quest for innovation sometimes overshadows the need for inclusive growth, leaving vulnerable populations grappling with the consequences of progress.

In the realm of health, the Wood dragon's influence prompts a renewed focus on holistic well-being. Traditional Chinese medicine experiences a resurgence, with more individuals embracing alternative healing practices. Mindfulness and mental health take centre stage, as societies grapple with the impact of a fast-paced, interconnected world on individuals' psychological and emotional states.

Yet, the dragon's shadow looms over health as well. The year 2024 witnesses new challenges in the form of global health crises, necessitating swift and coordinated international responses. As nations grapple with the complexities of managing public health emergencies, the importance of global cooperation becomes more evident than ever.

Culturally, the Wood dragon fosters a climate of creativity and artistic expression. Traditional and contemporary art forms converge



as artists draw inspiration from the past while pushing boundaries with innovative works. Cultural exchange flourishes, as societies seek to understand and appreciate the diversity that defines our global community.

However, cultural tensions also come to the forefront, as differing worldviews clash in the face of rapid change. Navigating this cultural landscape becomes a delicate balancing act, requiring open dialogue and a willingness to appreciate the richness of diverse perspectives.

On the environmental front, the wood dragon encourages a heightened awareness of ecological responsibility. Governments and businesses alike strive to implement sustainable practices, with a collective focus on

preserving the planet for future generations. Conservation efforts gain momentum, but the battle against climate change remains an uphill struggle that demands unprecedented global cooperation.

In summary, the 'Year of the wood dragon' in 2024 unfolds as a tapestry of highs and lows, successes and challenges. As nations grapple with the dragon's dynamic influence, the key lies in fostering collaboration, embracing innovation, and finding common ground amidst diversity. The story of 2024 is one of adaptation and resilience, as the world navigates the twists and turns of a year shaped by the celestial energy of the Wood dragon.

Credit: ChatGPT, chat.openai.com

The southern vine snake - *Thelotornis capensis*



BEADED
BAGS
r 1000

Southern vine snake (above and below)

Image :Johan Marais

Luke Kemp
African Snakebite Institute

The southern vine snake or twig snake is a widespread snake throughout the warm eastern parts of southern Africa.

It is a slender snake and very cryptically coloured in ash grey or grey-brown with lighter patches and dark markings across the body. The head is green above with a rich brown Y-shape on the crown. A brown band extends across the eye, which has a distinct horizontal key-hole shaped pupil. The upper lip is white with black speckles. Despite being widespread and abundant, it is rarely seen, relying on its fantastic camouflage to avoid detection. This snake can sit motionless for hours in a bush or tree, waiting for prey to come past.

Prey includes lizards such as agamas and chameleons as well as a variety of smaller snakes and frogs. The bright red tongue may be waved around slowly to attract the attention of passing lizards, probably confusing it for a worm, drawing them in until they are within striking range.

Being a back-fanged snake, this snake chews on the prey, applying pressure to the primitive venom glands forcing venom to trickle down the grooved fangs and into the prey. Bites to humans, usually snake catchers, are often mild, as this snake gives a quick warning bite with limited, or no venom injected – this is termed a “dry

bite”.

It is a slow-acting haemotoxic venom, very similar to boomslang venom, but not as potent. Bite victims start haemorrhaging in the body, with blood moving under the skin, dripping out of the nose and internal bleeding on the organs and through the urine. There is no antivenom for this snake and bites are treated symptomatically – usually with blood transfusions or clotting management. There has never been a death in southern Africa from this snake, however bites from larger species in central Africa have killed humans. Bites are very rare as this snake is docile and avoids humans.

If harassed, this snake may massively inflate the throat region as a warning gesture. It is likely to bite out at this stage. The vine snake may be confused with young boomslang, which have similar colours in their juvenile phase. The young boomslang has a more rounded head and massive emerald-green eye.

The vine snake is active during the day, usually perched in a bush or low tree. It may also be found threaded through wire fences or gates, looking just like a vine. It is incredibly hard to detect these snakes and the best way to find them is to listen to the alarm call of birds.

Birds like bulbuls, sunbirds and white-eyes will often surround this snake and chirp excitedly, warning other birds of the snakes’ presence. It is often attacked by



the grey-headed bushshrike or spookvoel, which will peck at the snake with its sharp beak, often causing severe damage to the snake.

Despite being a highly venomous snake, the vine snake is placid and can be appreciated from a few meters away in a safe manner. The camouflage is easily appreciated whilst watching this snake as your eyes struggle to identify the body from surrounding branches and twigs.

Check out the website on www.africansnakebiteinstitute.com – get your FREE App on the link <http://bit.ly/snakebiteapp>



Vine snake in defence Image supplied

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The magnificence of the sjambok pod (long-tail cassia) - *Cassia abbreviata*



The leaves of the sjambok pod (above left) and the tree adorned with elongated pods (above right)

Images supplied

Nature correspondent

This graceful, unarmed tree is sadly often overshadowed by more well-known species. It is one of the prettiest and most striking trees in the bushveld.

This tree is deciduous and is easily identified by two main characteristics: firstly, it is often regarded as one of the first signals of spring, as its beautiful bounty of dark yellow flowers, produced at the ends of branches in large, loose sprays, make their appearance. The second characteristic is its exceptionally long tail-like seedpods.

These trees occur throughout eastern Africa down to Mpumalanga - the southern edge of its range. It is found naturally in low altitude arid bushveld, open woodland, in the vicinity of termite mounds, and

at times on riverbanks. It is widespread in Limpopo and Mpumalanga. There are about 30 Cassia species worldwide, but this is the only one found naturally in South Africa.

The sjambok pod has a slender to medium-broad trunk which is covered in bark, ranging from dark brown to grey and black. In old trees the bark is often deeply furrowed.

The flowers usually precede the leaves and come into bloom in early spring (from August) and continue through to October. If the flowers occur before the leaves, the sweet scented flower display is outstanding, although (sadly) only lasts for about a 4-5 week period. The tree, interestingly, is a food plant for the emperor butterflies - coppers of the genus *Charaxes*, and the

white Pieridae.

The distinctive pod-like fruits, resemble elongated leather straps, which dangle from the branches. These appear soon after the flowers. The pods are the source of the tree's colloquial name and have a tough, leather-like texture that protects the seeds within. Pods can measure up to 1 metre in length! They can have a velvet touch. The pods ripen from a light green to a dark brown and take up to a year to ripen (in autumn or spring)!

The tree is one of the first to shed its leaves in late summer or early autumn.

This tree is popular with both animals and humans. Various birds from parrot species to the grey go-away bird eat the fruit pulp and seeds. Animals such as nyala, giraffe and kudu browse the leaves. Elephants are

also said to eat the leaves and the young branches of the tree. Baboons and monkeys feed on the pods that are rarely utilised by browsers.

Traditionally various parts of the tree are used for medicine, treating everything from abscesses, bilharzia, blackwater fever, toothache, and stomach-ache, to using it as a natural abortion agent. Headaches are cured by inhaling the smoke from burning twigs. An infusion is made from the root and taken as an aphrodisiac. The seed is also known to be used as a tonic.

This again is one of nature's beauties - the sjambok pod is a noteworthy botanical marvel, boasting versatile applications, therapeutic potential and of course, its magnificent spray of yellow beauty in early spring.

Why do some birds flock?

Many birds tend to flock in winter, either in single- or multi species groups, because they are making use of a food source that is unpredictable and concentrated at scattered localities and therefore undefendable as individuals. In summer, when food is plentiful everywhere, birds split up and invariably become territorial. Finding food is also possibly another major reason for moving in flocks. In this way, the collective instincts and senses of the group can be used, with inexperienced birds then able to derive benefit and advantage from those that have more experience in finding food.

Information on food concentrations can be obtained at communal roosts. This is one of the ways that seabirds find food in the open ocean, resulting in flocks descending in one place. Gannets, gulls and cormorants can be seen following shoals in this way close to the shore.

Winged termite (alates) irruptions during the spring and summer also result in temporary flocks of many species (including eagles), concentrating so that they take advantage of this rich but temporary food source. Most birds will probably flock for the principal reason of safety - having strength in numbers, more eyes and ears for danger and an intimidating effect on enemies. This enables them to effectively

mob enemies and to create the **dilution effect** (the more individuals, the lower the individual risk) and the **confusion effect** (too many for predators to choose from allows them all to get away). Migrating birds, especially, tend to fly in flocks and this probably has the advantage of offering guidance to inexperienced migrants in the flock as well as giving reassurance to all present when crossing over or stopping in unfamiliar territory.

Many water birds, including ducks, geese, and grebes, will undergo a seasonal simultaneous moult of their flight feathers, confining them to the water for a few weeks where they concentrate in numbers for safety. Large birds can often be seen flying in flocks that are turning in circles. This is a behaviour called soaring and is utilised by a number of species for energy-efficient flight. They are using rising currents of warm air called thermals to get to a height in the quickest time so that they can start searching for scattered food supplies. Some species will form small flocks because they are what are referred to as **co-operative breeders**. These small flocks - usually not numbering more than about 10 individuals - are family units with a single breeding pair (the parents) and previous offspring. By consolidating their efforts at territorial

defence, they are able to secure enough resources to ensure the survival of the entire group.

Why don't they fly into each other in flocks?

Flocks of larger species usually only number a few individuals flying at a leisurely pace on a direct and fairly constant flight path, and they are consequently not in serious danger of flying into one another. Smaller bird species tend to flock in much bigger numbers with erratic flight paths, and the attacks of predators, such as falcons, make collision likely. In autumn to early winter, when grasses are receding, red billed queleas take this to extremes with dense flocks numbering millions, resembling swarms of locusts.

Birds have excellent vision and can detect even the most subtle changes in space and movement. Each bird, whether at rest or in flight, has an exact personal space or 'zone' around its body in all directions - called the 'individual distance'. They don't like the space being encroached upon. Smaller birds are at higher risk to predation than larger birds and their eyes are placed on the side of the head so they can see all around themselves for danger. When an



individual within the flock moves towards and encroaches on the personal space of the bird next to it, the neighbour immediately (within milliseconds) detects the closure of space and moves in the opposite direction to open the gap again. In so doing, it then encroaches on another bird which reacts in the same manner, and this goes through the entire flock in a chain reaction that from the outside makes it look like the flock is moving in waves. Because individual birds towards the edge of the flock are more at risk to the influence of predators and wind, they are the ones that are prone to erratic movements and ultimately, therefore, determine the direction of movement of the entire flock.

Excerpts from 'Beat about the Bush - Mammals and Birds' by Trevor Carnaby, Published by Jacana Media, Second Edition reprint 2018.

South Africa cited in global report that seeks to end captive tiger breeding



Image :Canva

Don Pinnock

Leading environmental organisations, including the WWF, Environmental Investigation Agency, Panthera, Wildlife Justice Commission and Four Paws, have produced a roadmap to end the captive breeding of endangered tigers. The report shows how South Africa, a major breeder, could exit tiger farming.

Nearly 9 000 tigers are being bred in more than 300 facilities in Asia for the commercial sale of their cubs, skins and body parts as well as adult tigers. The numbers for South Africa’s “tiger farms” are unknown as tigers are considered exotic in SA and do not fall under protection legislation, but they are believed to be considerable.

The scale of South African “tiger farms” can be gauged from trade figures. Between 2011 and 2020, South Africa exported 358 live tigers and 93 tiger body parts. Most of these went to Vietnam, China and Thailand. During that time, 54 tiger “trophies” were exported - 27 to China, the rest to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Poland. These statistics, compiled by Four Paws, show that tigers are being bred for both hunting and commercial exploitation.

In answer to a question in Parliament in

May 2022, Environment Minister Barbara Creecy said her department estimated there were 70 facilities in SA keeping tigers. However, a year later, she denied that tigers were being exported for commercial purposes.

The previous environment minister, Edna Molewa, flagged the problem in an answer in 2017, saying tigers were alien to South Africa and not regulated by biodiversity or protected species regulations. The department therefore did not keep statistics on tiger or breeder numbers or hunting.

In a report titled Roadmap to Closing Captive Tiger Facilities of Concern, leading environmental organisations, including the WWF, Environmental Investigation Agency, Panthera, Wildlife Justice Commission and Four Paws, produced a roadmap to end the captive breeding of endangered tigers. The report shows how South Africa, a major breeder, could exit tiger farming.

The report says, “There are significant concerns around captive tiger facilities and their role in the tiger trade in Myanmar, South Africa, and some EU Member States, as well as the large captive tiger population in the United States.”

According to the document, tiger farming is a significant animal welfare problem, with issues including indiscriminate

breeding, overcrowding, inappropriate housing systems, genetic abnormalities causing acute suffering, cruel practices perpetuated to better control animals, inhumane slaughtering practices, poor diet and the early removal of cubs from mothers.

Tiger farming also stimulates demand, posing a threat to wild tigers.

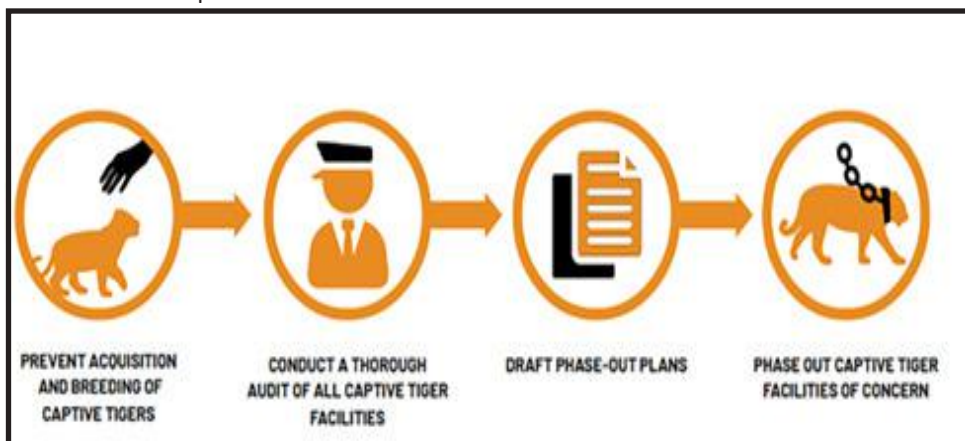
“Given the illegal activities and conservation problems attributed to such operations,” says the report, “we recommend that States phase out captive tiger facilities of concern, whilst preventing the creation or growth of further such facilities.” It sets out the steps to do this:

- End the commercial trade in tigers
- End the illegal trade in tigers and their parts and products
- Take action to immediately prevent the continued acquisition and breeding of captive tigers
- Ensure that jurisdiction over captive tiger facilities is vested with central or federal-level authorities
- Make a central authority licence required to own captive tigers
- Institute effective management and monitoring systems

- Make frequent and unannounced inspections by relevant authorities
- Ensure rigorous enforcement of laws prohibiting the ownership of tigers of illegal origin or without registration
- Ensure no captive breeding facilities are established primarily for commercial purposes masquerading as scientific or conservation entities
- Conduct a thorough audit of all captive tiger facilities
- No compensation to be given to tiger breeders, as a compensation package could potentially be a financial incentive encouraging further breeding
- Draft phase-out plans, and
- Put in place a clear timeline

South Africa’s Department of Environment is in the process of phasing out captive lion breeding. These steps provide useful guidelines for this process as well as for winding down tiger breeding.

This article was previously published in the Daily Maverick – Our Burning Planet



Phase-out planning for captive tigers

At least **8,900** captive tigers are estimated to be held in East and Southeast Asia

New Year rising



Matariki (above), Stonehenge (above right), Adams calendar (below) and Zodiac (bottom)



Images supplied: Ben Coley

Ben Coley

This month sees us welcome in 2024 and like many countries, the 1st of January marks the commencement of Earth's annual journey around the Sun.

But have you ever wondered why we celebrate New Year on that given date? After all, in a planet's orbit, there is no beginning or end. By definition, an orbit is circular (or elliptical in most cases) and thus has no starting point, so why does one specific date hold any more significance than another?

The origin of a 'year', like every measurement of time, has its roots in the people's observations of the stars. Millennia ago, time as we know it, did not exist. The language we use today – years, months, seasons, days, hours, etc., had not been defined. The only way to mark the passing of time was by observing the movement of celestial phenomena.

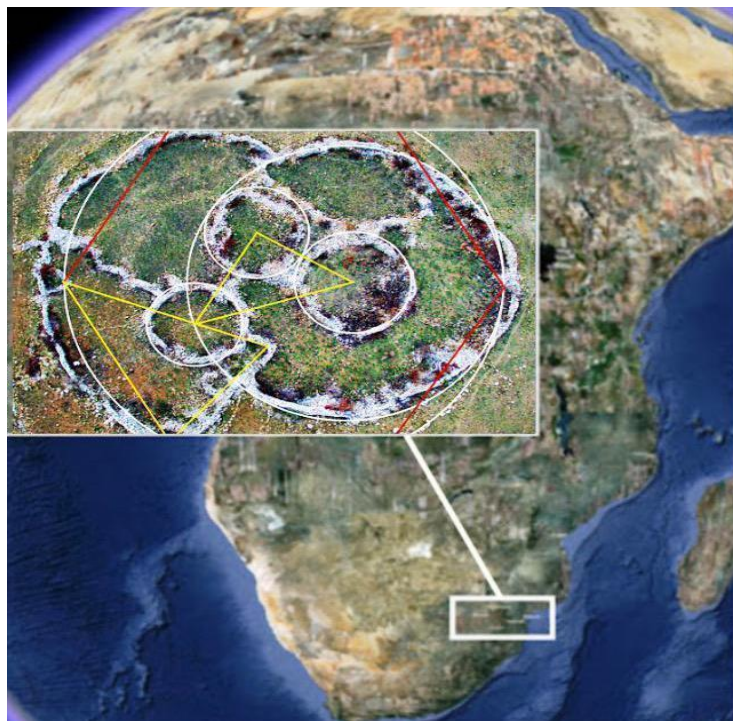
People looked to heavens and noted particular objects and bright stars, and treated them like beacons to recognise the passage of time. However, there were only two real points of reference available: sunrise and sunset.

Sunrise received particular attention since the dawn of a new day brought heat and light, extinguishing the cold darkness and its associated dangers. Many early cultures worshipped the Sun as a deity, and rejoiced at its daily appearance in the east. They watched intently as the sky slowly brightened, and paid particular attention to objects visible above the horizon just before sunrise. This was known as their 'heliacal rising'.

Heliacal risings of an object only appear at one-year intervals. For it to be visible again, the Earth has to complete a full rotation around the Sun, lining up the background stars from our perspective. The different stars and constellations we see at different times of the year illustrate this perfectly – as we circle the Sun, our view of the Milky Way galaxy, and the stars within it changes, giving us a full 360° view of our stellar neighbourhood each year.

Many ancient cultures based, and continue to base, the start of the new year with the heliacal rising of certain objects that held significance to them. Two of the most famous examples can be found in Egypt, and Māori tribes in New Zealand.

The Pleiades star cluster (better known colloquially as the seven sisters) is revered amongst Māori's and is called Matariki. Its heliacal rising each year signifies the start of their new year. Each of the stars represents a different god in Māori culture responsible for different aspects of the world: the wind, the forest, the dead, fresh water, sea water, and more. It, along with the neighbouring constellations of Taurus and Orion, form a great canoe with a net, that scoops up the souls of those who lost their lives dur-



ing the previous year, and carries them into the heavens to become stars.

In Egypt, the heliacal rising of the brightest star in the sky, Sirius, heralded the start of the new year. It coincided with the summer solstice and the annual flooding of the Nile River, bringing ideal conditions to the land.

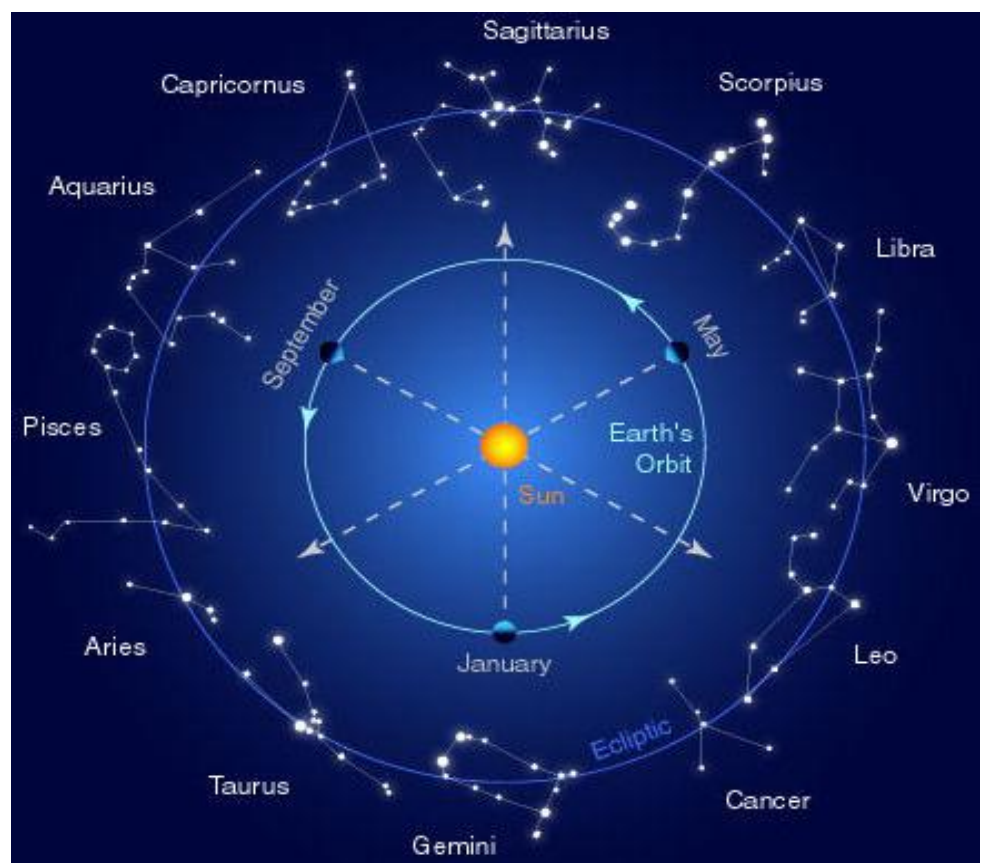
Due to Earth's axial tilt, the position of the Sun at sunrise and sunset changes throughout the year, influencing its height in the sky, and its associated temperatures. The two extremes marked the summer and winter solstices, the longest and shortest days of the year. People's observation of this cycle can be seen in many examples of early architecture such as the solar calendars at Chankillo in Peru, and more famously, Stonehenge in England.

Many ancient cultures, such as the Babylonians, celebrated the start of the new year in March with the arrival of the spring equinox; when the days became longer than the nights. The Babylonians also created the first zodiac signs, and this is why horoscopes always start Aries (March 21st – April 19th).

The months of January and February were only added by the Romans around 700 BC, and it was only much later that they introduced the 1st of January as the official start of the year.

For decades after, most of Christian Europe still adhered to the equinox cycles, celebrating new year on March 25. But when the Roman Catholic Church adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1582, most European countries slowly began to change: Scotland in 1660, Germany and Denmark in 1700, England in 1752 and Russia as late as 1918.

Here in South Africa, the traditional Zulu new year is celebrated on the first new moon of September, signifying the spring equinox in the southern hemisphere, and the start of the farming season. In 2003, an ancient solar calendar was discovered in Mpuma-



langa that tracked the movement of the Sun throughout the year. It is considered by some to be over 75 000 years old, and one of the oldest manmade structures ever built. It is by African elders, as the "The Birthplace of The Sun" or "Inzalo y'Langa", but commonly known as Adams Calendar.

Festivals throughout the world are celebrated for a myriad of different reasons, but almost all of them fall on significant times based upon early astronomical observations. Astronomy is the oldest science of them all and it is amazing how much of our society is based upon it, and a crying shame that these

skills, and our appreciation of them, have been lost over the years. There is a reason that astrotourism and stargazing is becoming ever more popular - watching the stars is in our DNA.

In light of this, it seems absurd to attribute a single day to mark a new revolution of our home planet around our parent star. Perhaps we should rather treat every sunrise like new year's day, wishing good will to all and making new resolutions every day?

With that in mind, regardless of when your 2024 started, I hope that it is filled with great joy, prosperity, and opportunity!

Hoedspruit chamber revitalisation – a proven success story

Lizmari Wolmarans

Looking back at 2023, one of the great success stories was the revitalisation of the chamber of commerce. In 2022 efforts and research was done to get the Hoedspruit Chamber of Commerce revived and so the Hoedspruit Chamber/Sakekamer was born. The management committee was elected by the community and work started in the beginning of 2023.

It was a deliberate choice by the committee to concentrate on the two most important factors that continue to impact the lives of Hoedies - Public Policy and Municipal Policy. The committee was aware that doing this would mean that traditional chamber functions relating to business would be impacted. That is why the conscious decision was made to open the chamber to residents as well. This decision was extremely well received, and most of our members turned

out to be residents.

By no means did we hit all our targets for work that we aimed to perform in 2023, but we did pretty darn well. The chamber managed to attend 98% of all municipal meetings and provided feedback to the community via summary minutes, press releases or update posts on social media. It launched some initiatives to highlight Hoedspruit business, did fundraising to assist with regeneration projects, and supported community initiatives in terms of general safety, road safety and self-sustainable development. There were also some fun projects like the burger challenge, remember that one?

Our annual report will be released shortly and contains more information about everything we have tackled, our finances, highlights, and the way forward. The chamber will make sure to post this far and wide for everyone to see, and will also post a copy on our website: www.hoedspruitcs.com.

The first annual Golf Day will be held on the 27 January. All funds raised will be used for other regeneration projects in town. At the time of going to print there were 18 teams playing and amazing prizes were donated from multiple generous sponsors in town. The golf will be played at the Drakensig Golf Club and the prize giving ceremony will take place at Ini Gat. There will also be a SUPER AMAZING prize up for raffle and tickets will be sold for R100. That gives one a chance to win a safari prize for two to the value of R 40 000. It is hoped that this initiative will be well supported.

Nominations for the new management committee are now open, and these can be submitted via email hoedspruitcs@gmail.com. anyone being nominated has to give consent, and the nominee contact details have to be included in the email. Towards the middle of February, the community will be invited to vote for their new manage-

ment committee and a public announcement will be made detailing the members of the new committee. Positions open for nomination are: Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Steering committee Managers (5). The steering committee managers will manage the following portfolios: Trade and Competition, Public Policy (Water & Electricity), Municipal Policy, Community Services, Marketing and Public Relations.

The Chamber would like to take this opportunity to thank our valued members who saw potential in what we are trying to achieve, and supported us no matter what the outcome. You know who you are. We invite the rest of Hoedspruit to get on the 'band wagon' and join the Chamber – we want to make our chamber the best in the country and our town the best in the world! "All the best for 2024, we've got your back!"

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

BUSINESS / SHOPS / SERVICES		Hoedspruit Paws	078 431 3161
Celestial Events	079 575 0900	Hoedspruit Town Watch	072 812 2172
Chic Shack	084 381 7071		082 683 2835
FGASA	011 886 8245	Hoedspruit Farm Watch	072 310 0032
FreeGo Outdoor & Canvas	064 532 2057	Hospital AFB Drakensig	015 799 2065
Fruitful Living	015 793 3703	Hospital Nelspruit Mediclinic	013 759 0645
Kruger2Canyon News	082 330 6060	Hospital Tintswalo	013 795 5000
Kuku Interiors	079 503 0151	Hospital Sekororo Gvt-The Oaks	015 383 9400
Love the Hoed	082 330 6060	Hospital Tzaneen Mediclinic	015 305 8536
Oasis	073 892 4944	Maruleng Municipality	015 793 2409
SPAR Hoedspruit	015 793 2305	Medical Rescue	072 170 0864
Tops @ SPAR	015 793 2069	Med Centre Emergency No	084 770 1743
Vehicle License Department	015 793 0838	Protrack	015 793 2585
		SAPS Station Commander	082 585 8253
		SAPS General	101 111
		SAPS	015 799 4000
CONSTRUCTION & INDUSTRIAL		SPCA Phalaborwa	071 519 7044
BUCO	015 793 0560	Victim Support Unit	082 940 0651
Coastal Hire	015 793 0971		
Mopane Group	015 781 1571		
		MEDICAL & VETERINARY SERVICES	
SCHOOLS & EDUCATION		Counselling Ronelle Joubert	082 787 4471
Drakensig Laerskool	015 793 3756	DR Van Eeden (Dentist)	015 793 1876
Drakensig Pre-primer	015 793 2401	DR D Verhagen	015 793 0606
Hoedspruit Christian School	015 793 2067	DR A Polley	015 793 0606
Lowveld Academy	015 793 3750	DR Shivambu	087 260 1537
Mariepiskop Laerskool	079 529 6071	DR Werner Muller (Dentist)	015 793 1894
Mariepiskop Pre-primer	082 880 7069	Hlokomela	072 698 6538
Perspective Training College	082 787 4471	Hoedspruit Clinic	015 793 2342
Southern Cross Schools	015 793 0590	Hoeds Wildlife Est Pharmacy	015 793 1427
		J Coetzee (Clinical Psychologist)	015 781 0012
EMERGENCY – HELP LINES		Kyk Oogkundiges (Optometrist)	060 548 5387
After Hours Emergency Doctors	084 770 1741	Med Centre (Dentists)	015 793 0845
Air Force Base Hoedspruit	015 799 2911	ProVet Veterinary Hospital	015 793 0797
Africa Safe -T	010 590 6313		
Ambulance AFB	015 799 2065	REAL ESTATE & PROPERTY	
Alcoholics Narcotics Anonymous	082 258 4602	Century 21	015 793 1534
Ambulance Airforce Base	015 799 2065		
Ambulance Services Limpopo	015 793 1581	TOURISM & THINGS TO DO	
Ambulance Tintswalo	101 77	Eastgate Airport	015 793 3681
Ambulance Services Swift	060 528 2784	Hds Endangered Species Centre	015 793 1633
Farm watch/ Plaaswag	072 310 0032	Jabulani Elephant Interaction	015 793 1265
Fire Brigade AFB	015 799 2172	K2C Biosphere Region	015 817 1838
Fire Brigade Maruleng	015 793 0536	Sky-Way Trails	013 737 8374
Fire Dpt Hoedspruit	015 793 0728		
GKEPF Greater Kruger Enviro			
Protection Foundation	065 743 2224		
Hoedspruit Clinic	015 793 2342		
Hoedspruit Medical Rescue	072 170 0864		

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TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Cindy Bear
2. Swarovski
3. Set their watches ahead
4. Holyoke, USA
5. Fermented soybean paste
6. Nectar-like juices from plants
7. Streaky
8. Zechariah
9. Antarctica
10. A Pencil
11. Tess Trueheart
12. Tip of a bullwhip
13. Calf's Head
14. Eat it – it's an apple
15. None - its bottomless
16. Distance between extended forefinger and thumb
17. Elliot Gould
18. Phineas
19. George Burns
20. Japanese chess
21. Perseus
22. Pomelo
23. Lotus
24. Lara
25. Men
26. The Book of Acts
27. West Side Story, The Departed, Ben Hur
28. Marmite
29. 'Col Parker's Dancing Chickens'
30. Public speaking

Important Notice

Anyone that has had dealings with a Mr Gerhard Meyer from a solar company, **Ergoflex**, are asked to please make contact with Mark on email mbishk2c@gmail.com

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Phases of the Moon

The lunar cycle is the recurring sequence of changes in the Moon's appearance as seen from Earth. This lunar cycle completes in approximately 29.5 Earth days.



NEW MOON

The moon is not visible from Earth because the illuminated side is facing away from us.



WAXING CRESCENT

A small sliver of the illuminated side of the moon is visible on the right side.



FIRST QUARTER

The right half of the moon appears illuminated and visible, while the left half appears dark.



WAXING GIBBOUS

A large portion of the illuminated side is visible on the right side, appearing to grow larger.



FULL MOON

The entire illuminated side of the moon is visible from Earth, appearing as a complete circle.



WANING GIBBOUS

A large portion of the illuminated side is visible on the left side, appearing to shrink in size.



THIRD QUARTER

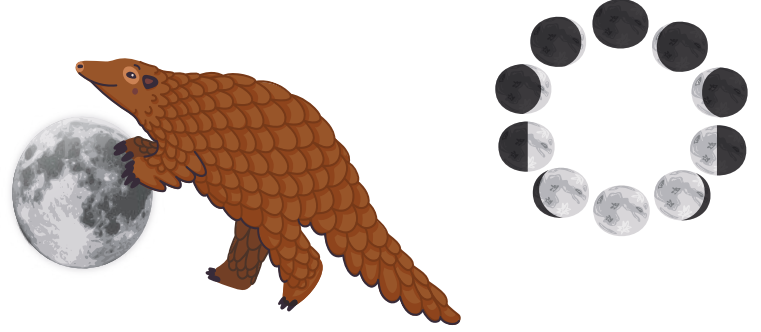
The left half of the moon appears illuminated and visible, while the right half appears dark.



WANING CRESCENT

A small sliver of the illuminated side of the moon is visible on the left side, appearing to shrink in size.

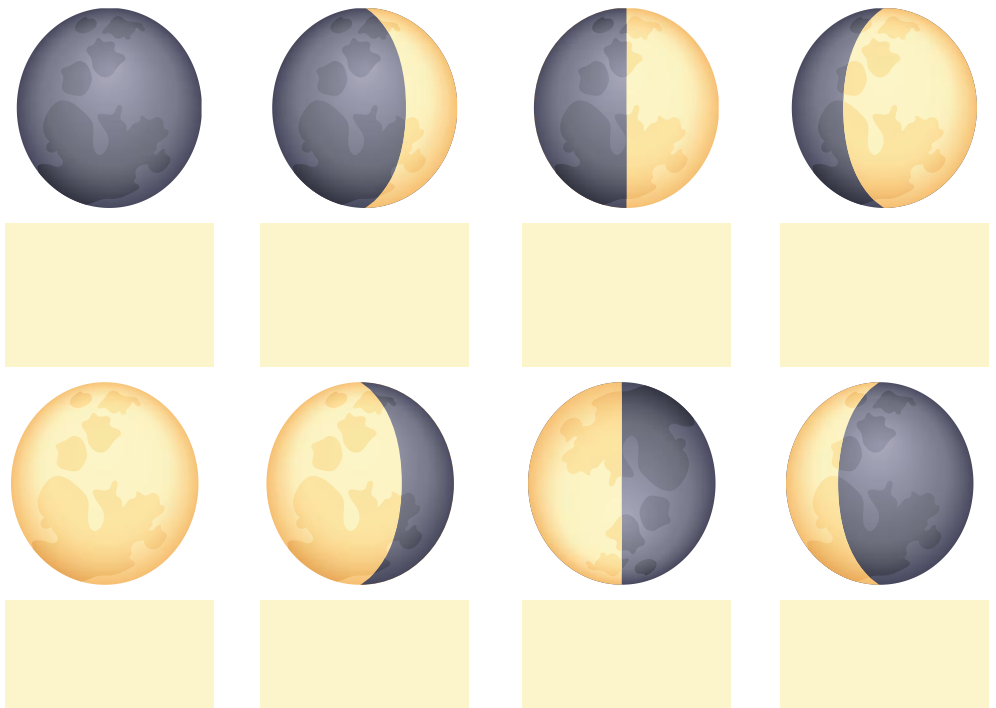
When you look into the sky, you may notice that sometimes the Moon may be different shapes. This is because the Moon goes through different phases



The Moon does not produce its own light. We see the Moon by the light that is reflected off it by the Sun. As the moon travels in orbit, different parts of it are lit up by the Sun, which changes the Moon's appearance.

Label the moon phases below using the clues in the table:

full moon	waxing gibbous	new moon	waning crescent
waning gibbous	first quarter	waning gibbous	third quarter



WAXING and WANING

When the Moon moves from a full moon to a new Moon it is called **waning** and from new to full it is called **waxing**. After the Moon gets to its full phase, we start to see less and less of the Moon. This is called **waning**.



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