

Scouting for tracks or tracking a Scout right here in the Hoed



Brenden Pienaar

Photo : Lowveld Trails Co.

David Batzofin

Brenden Pienaar, Lowveld Trails Co. Trails Guide, Mentor and Assessor achieves the highest tracking (Cyber-tracker) and Trails Guide (FGASA) qualifications.

Brenden chatted to the editor of Kruger2Canyon about his recent achievement.

I will never forget the words of our Head Lecturer in the first session of our Nature Conservation

Diploma, "If you are here because you want to work with animals, you are probably in the wrong class. Nature Conservation is about working with people".

At the time I thought "What rubbish"! Turn the clock forward 20 years and I could not agree with her more.

The fact that I am now one of only 10 who has attained this Scout qualification is still a bit of a surreal thought. One that I am ex-

tremely humbled by, especially if you read through the other nine names and their associated resumes on that list.

I feel a great sense of achievement considering the time (and failed attempts) it has taken me to meet the criteria, especially within the tracking component. Nevertheless, it has been such an enriching and valuable journey that I can highly recommend to all FGASA Field Guides. It genu-

inely transcends a qualification and flows into a set of skills, principles and values that will stand you in good stead no matter where you end up in life.

Although I feel a bit like a new Grade 8 student in High School, I must say that the structures and support are all in place and that the FGASA Scout qualification is completely achievable. It will however require some serious "dirt time".

After completing the the-

ory component (two years) of the Nature Conservation Diploma I was positioned in Skukuza (Kruger National Park) as part of our final experiential year. The exposure to conservation management practices I had during that year (and my adventures) was unmatched.

From early on in that year (2004), I knew that I wanted to stay. It would however prove to be a tough task to find work within the conservation sector of Kruger

National Park, primarily due to my lack of experience.

By the end of that year, however, I had all my FGASA requirements in place to take up a Junior Field Guide position in Olifants Rest Camp. I mostly conducted guided walks and mountain bike trails from the camp in 2005 while continuing with BTech Nature Conservation and relevant FGASA qualifications.

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Jason Jones - 083 267 4794

Web ref: 1443230

Spring has sprung



EDITOR

September 1st is a special day in South African and world history.

It will be DAY 523 of the current COVID-19 lockdown, with no end in sight as to when that will be lifted totally. However, we are nothing if not a resilient

nation and we have continued to survive (and thrive) despite all the challenges we have faced in the past 18 months.

As we await the official arrival of Spring, here are some interesting facts about this day over the years.

1853, the first postage stamp in Africa was released, and that begs the question; "When last did you purchase a stamp?"

1952: Afrikaans poet and lawyer. Mathews Phosa is born.

2004: the SASOL plant explodes...again.

2013: Ex-President Nelson Mandela was discharged

from a Pretoria hospital
2013: Prime Circle (remember them?) released "Hello Crazy World-10th Anniversary Special

1939: The beginning of World War 11 as Germany invades Poland

More importantly, 1st September is seen as the first official day of S.P.R.I.N.G. 2021.

Spring is traditionally a time for cleansing and rejuvenation of body mind spirit...as well as drawers, rooms and all those 'collections' that we have been saving for reasons long forgotten. Seeing that homes have been kept closed and insulated against the winter cold, Spring is the ideal time to clean out your

home from top to bottom. If it can be moved, lifted, repacked or donated, NOW is the time to do that. And remember that decluttering is part of this cleansing ritual! We have been locked in for too long, so use the time to freshen up both your surroundings as well as your mood. Much like preparing for that 'summer body' that some of us never attain, use that energy to get rid of the dust and gloom of the winter months. Remember that a good clean will improve the air quality in your home and by extension your health as well.

Did you know that Before Spring was called Spring, it was called Lent in Old English. Starting in

the 14th century, that time of year was called "springing time"—a reference to plants "springing" from the ground. In the 15th century, this got shortened to "spring-time," and then further shortened in the 16th century to just "spring."

As a species, our behaviour is bound to the cycle of seasons, and given the way the world has changed at least, we as humans can count on Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn coming around in that order and with regularity.

I know that this edition will hit the streets BEFORE 1st

September, but I hope that I have given you some ideas of what you can do to make the day special.

Last, but by no means least, if you are celebrating your birthday on the 1st, you are a Virgo and as such you are seen as intelligent with a way of taking what could be seen as complicated and hard to understand and reduce to terms that are easily understood. You are also a perfectionist, which can drive those who know and love you to the point of distraction. Happy Birthday! Till next time, stay safe and stay healthy.

David Batzofin

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor – August 27th 2021



Dear Ed

It was with interest that I read your lead stories about the Casketts Citrus debacle. It baffles me that conservation did not make more of a stink and really attempt to stop this infringement. The local authorities were clearly either too useless or

didn't really care much. I agree that there needs to be co-operation between farming and conservation – but surely this must happen within their allocated areas. It's when one encroaches/invades on the other that the problems start, and my view is that this is a blatant encroachment of citrus farming on and into the conservation area of the Greater Kruger. That this was allowed to happen is a travesty and a disgrace.

Regards
Deon



Dear Kruger2Canyon,

Thank you for going back to print for our oldies! My Wife and I wait in anticipation for the last Friday of the month to get our fix. We believe that the standard of journalism has improved, as has the paper. Congratulations and we wait for the next edition.

Fred and Karien

Dear Frank and Karien,

Thank you for your wishes; its great to have positive response, and we will continue to try and keep it interesting

Editor

SUDOKU

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A fond farewell to Rita Schoeman

Debby Thomson

How do I even start to say Goodbye to someone who has meant so much and done so much?

Rita, you were one of the first 5 volunteers who joined me when we set up the HOEDSPRUIT VICTIM SUPPORT UNIT in 2008 and you never wavered nor hesitated once to go out and help others in their time of need since then. You committed yourself to help others deal with their trauma, their loss and heartache.

You were the first to respond to some of the most heart-rendering and traumatic situations in town, to help give love and support and make the victims feel a little better, a little safer and to remind them of the warmth of love and humanity that still exists.

You have helped clean up some of the most gruesome and horrifying crime scenes that would break a normal person but you did so with love and compassion and just focused on making things just a little easier for the family and friends already battling with their loss. When asked us all if

anyone wanted to get involved and help set up Gracious Living for Hoedspruit's elderly members - you were the first to volunteer.

When the town almost drowned in the floods in 2012 you immediately reported to the airforce base to answer calls for help and ensure we could save anyone who was in need. When we found ourselves facing a social crisis at the start of lockdown last year and suddenly needed to feed almost 200 families - you opened your home to us so we could use it as an unofficial distribution hub and planning centre and

you and your girls personally took on the responsibility of looking after all the families in town. I could go on and on eternally if I were to continue listing every situation that you have opened up your heart, your home, your love and your compassion to.

You have been a living angel and a perfect example of what being a committed HOEDSPRUIT community member is all about. You are truly going to be missed more than you could ever imagine. We have worked together now for 13 years helping to help others where we can and now it's

your family that needs our support. My heart goes out to your family and your friends - For everything you have meant to us and the community - it is tenfold for them.

Rest peacefully Rita and know that you have lived a life well-lived. You have been a living and loving embodiment of what it means to live a life of compassion, love and humanity Thank you for all you did and for all the lives you touched in their time of need. Thank you for being a shining light in this mixed-up world HOEDSPRUIT is, without doubt, a poorer community

today. Rest in peace Rita and fly high with the angels. You have well earned your wings



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Scouting for tracks or tracking a Scout right here in the Hoed

Cont. from page 1

Somehow, towards the end of that year, I managed to participate in an activity that changed the way I thought of Trails Guiding. It was on the last night of the Olifants River Backpack Trail recce that I set my sight on a career in multi-day Trails Guiding.

Kruger National Park launched the Olifants River Backpack Trail in April 2006 and I had since handed in my resignation as a permanent guide at the rest camp and I became a stable fixture on the Backpack Trail roster. Two more Backpack Trails would be added to the activity list and I made sure that my name was on the schedule as frequently as possible for a total of 13 years (2006 to 2019).

I continued working through my FGASA and Cybertracker qualifications at the same time and also completed my Master of Science (MSc Ecology) at Wits in 2015. It was at the end of that year that a friend and colleague (Wayne te Brake) and I started looking into a Trails Guide business venture together.

I completed the FGASA Specialist Knowledge and Skills: Dangerous Game (SKS: DG) qualification in 2018 and the Cybertracker Trailing component in 2020.

Wayne and I started Lowveld Trails Co. in January of 2016 and thankfully things are going better than ever before. We are a FGASA Specialist Training

Provider that provides Trails Guide Training, Mentorship and Assessments. We also offer our own 'Primitive Trails' in Balule, Timbavati Private Nature Reserves and Makuya Nature Reserve (far northern Limpopo Province).

There's no 'typical' when it comes to full-time Trails Guiding and managing a business. Every day brings a new challenge, but we like it that way. I like to remind myself of the following now and then. "No amount of security is worth the suffering of a mediocre life chained to a routine that has killed your dreams" – Maya Men-doza

This qualification is a combination of two disciplines – Trails Guiding and Tracking. I chose to follow the Cybertracker qualification for the tracking component, but it is also possible to become a FGASA Scout by achieving the equivalent Tracker Academy qualification. These are the two tracker qualifications that have been recognized by FGASA.

Oh, it's achievable. It's not an honorary designation in any way. The roadmap is clear and transparent. The major cost is time, the amount of time it will take to log the minimum required walking hours (and potentially dangerous game encounters) and the time it will take to master the art of tracking.

The highlights have been spending time out in the field with mentors and other like-minded people. There



"I do not recall a specific point at which I chose to spend my working life outdoors, in my mind, it was just always going to be that way".

is a real sense of community within the Trails Guide and Tracker space that fuels the learning process. It's clear that the mentors are extremely passionate about the industry and they share their skills and experience with enthusiasm.

Eish, the lowlights. I attempted and failed the Specialist Trailing component (one of the two tracking disciplines) multiple times. It was tough not to meet the standard that has been set, especially as the evaluations at this level do not take place regularly. It was challenging to find the motivation to get back out there and keep improving after such great disappointment. Anyway, I ended up meeting the standard eventually and learnt a lot about myself and life in the process.

Many of the other Scouts have been my mentors over the years and it would be remiss of me not to mention and thank them. In no particular order - Robert

Bryden, Lee Gutteridge, Colin Patrick, Andreas Liebenberg, James Steyn, Juan Pinto, Adriaan Louw and my friend and colleague Wayne te Brake (he is the one that keeps me in check).

This achievement would have been impossible without family support, especially from my wife. Tamsyn must be the most patient person that I know. If I didn't have her support, this would never have been a possibility.

Our industry has been extremely hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has led to a loss of businesses and associated jobs. I suppose it has shown just how volatile an international market can be, which in turn has already created opportunities within the local market. We are therefore likely to see a more balanced market approach as we start rebuilding. Furthermore, I believe that a growing number of people will seek experience-based

travel (especially Trails and Tracking) than in the past. Guides are therefore well-positioned to add greater value to this 'new' travel model and its associated opportunities, especially with such a wide range of qualifications within the FGASA framework.

We are likely to see more guides become entrepreneurs. Hopefully, we will also see employers give more recognition to their guides moving forward, which will allow them to share in the benefits of a more dynamic and resilient industry.

Given the levels of guiding currently, it would be fair to say that it can be seen as a profession that can support a family, rather than a gap-year activity. Guides are becoming more qualified and more professional. There is a serious movement among guides that deserves recognition and appropriate remuneration. Institutions that employ Apprentice Field Guides at disrespectful rates will continue to experience high turnover and will start feeling the pressure from other establishments that invest in their Guides' development.

Guests don't know that they have had an average Guide until they have had a good Guide. That is when and where the pressure will become apparent. With the higher standard and level of professionalism in the guiding industry and a reduced market, guides are likely to be valued to the point

where they can support a family.

It's not unrealistic at all. Many have done it already. As an example, I have managed to turn Trails Guiding into something that pays for a house and our children's school fees. If I can do it, so too can others.

Is tracking a 'super-power'? It certainly is an exceptional skill. I remember seeing experienced trackers follow suggestions of tracks through the landscape only to connect with their quarry. It seemed like a type of superpower and something that you either have or you don't. However, it can be achieved with some dedication and a serious amount of practical application.

One of the things I love most about tacking is that there are no shortcuts. In a modern world of instant gratification and quick fixes, tracking has remained uncorrupted and true. It takes honest 'dirt time' to develop this ancient skill. You can only develop this "super-power" over many years, David.

Do I have any words of advice for those who are close to this qualification, yet are not certain if they can tackle the final hurdles? If I can do it, so can you. It's a long-term goal so don't be too hard on yourself and don't forget to have as much fun as possible along the way.

Contact Lowveld Trails Co.

Reservations@lowveldtrails.co.za

Wildlife trafficking and an innovative project in the Greater Kruger National Park

Roving Reporters

Roving Reporters is helping to spearhead an innovative journalism project in the Greater Kruger, including the iconic Kruger National Park. This area remains heavily affected by wildlife trafficking, in particular rhino poaching.

Wildlife trafficking is a complex matter with wide ranging impacts. It causes declines in wildlife populations, negatively impacts national economies and development, promotes corruption and undermines the rule of law in affected countries like South Africa.

It also affects the safety and security and wellbeing of the people who live in and around affected areas.

However, local perspectives are often absent from media reports on illegal wildlife trade.

The media is powerful in shaping the public's perception of various issues, including wildlife poaching and trafficking. The failure to include community voices in media reports on illegal wildlife trade will continue the negative public perceptions towards communities who are commonly perceived as being the source of poaching in nearby protected areas. Such perceptions undermine communities' ability to be regarded as important partners in efforts to stop wildlife poaching and trafficking.

WWF South Africa's Khet-

ha programme, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has now partnered with the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) and Roving Reporters to train reporters, communication officers and media practitioners from the Greater Kruger to better tell stories of wildlife trafficking, cutting through the old cliches and getting to the heart of the matter.

"Through this training we want to see more media reports beyond poaching incidents. We want to see reports on how wildlife trafficking affects people's lives, especially the people who live with wildlife. This training will give reporters

insight into what is driving wildlife trafficking and what conditions enable wildlife criminal syndicates to exploit people," says Lara Rall, Project Implementation Manager at WWF South Africa. "Most importantly, we want to see stories from the Greater Kruger that includes voices from the Greater Kruger told by people of the Greater Kruger."

The training application is open to reporters, journalists, media practitioners from local media outlets and communication officers in the Greater Kruger with all levels of experience. Only 20 positions are available for this course which will include a combination of online learning as well as

a three day in-person workshop with field trip in and around the Greater Kruger region. Trainees are expected to complete the course with a story for which they will receive financial, mentor and editorial support.

"The goal is to help journalists write compelling feature stories on the illegal wildlife trade, giving spaces to new voices, and highlighting fresh perspectives," says Fred Kockott of Roving Reporters. "We are looking for candidates keen to produce stories that go beyond the ordinary."

The project's editorial team includes Andre Wiesner, an award-winning feature writer and training consultant, who is working on an online guide for re-

porting on wildlife poaching and trafficking. It marries sound journalism with the art and craft of storytelling, all complemented with keen insights on wildlife crime and practical tips and guidance from a panel of guest speakers.

The training course will begin on 1 October 2021. Applications to take part in the course close on 10 September 2021. To apply, email your CV and a motivation to take part in the Khetha Journalism Project to vincent.shacks@wessa.co.za. Your applications should include an outline of a story idea that you would like to research and complete.

For more details call Shacks at 082 337 1273.

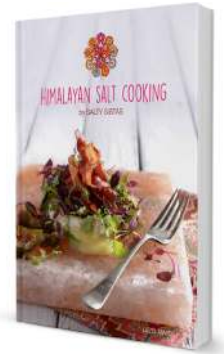
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Spice up - The Salty Sistas are here !



Salt, salt and more salt ! Liezel Maderal Maree brings a whole new method of cooking with salt to Hoedspruit.

Photos supplied by Liezel



Himalayan salt products

Correspondent

There is a hum in town about the new salt shop, The Salty Sistas, which has opened in The Bush Basket at the Kamogelo Centre. What many people do not know is that salt is the most popular seasoning in the world – but it is not a spice. Hoedspruit now has access to Himalayan salt!

Liezel Maderal Maree is the owner of The Salty Sistas and author of *Salty Sistas Himalayan Salt Cooking*. Liezel imports the pink Himalayan Salt that is mined in Pakistan, and is what is believed to be the

very purest form of salt. It has been preserved on volcanic lava and ice for millennia and does not need to undergo refinement – it is also free from pollutants and micro plastics.

She explains that salt has played an integral role in human history, and is a key ingredient in the contemporary human diet. White salt is the most commonly used salt, but it is refined, heated, bleached and often has iodine and anti caking agents added. As a result the human body does not know what to do with it and views it as a foreign substance. It can

take 25 times the amount of water to flush it out of our system. This often leads to high blood pressure and water retention.

Liezel goes on to explain that when one looks at Himalayan salt in its natural form, it contains the same 84 trace minerals and elements that are found in the human body. It is less refined, the fragments are larger, and one consumes less sodium per serving than regular table salt. It also supports heart health, promotes a stable body pH balance, strengthens bones, improves circulation, lowers blood pressure and helps

the body absorb nutrients. Himalayan crystal salt is also a natural disinfectant.

Cooking on salt blocks improves the flavour of food and adds more mineral content. Paging through Liezel's cookbook opens up a whole new world of cooking with Himalayan salt. It has around fifty easy to follow recipes, as well as tips on curing and cleaning your salt block, serving on salt blocks and in salt bowls, and simple tricks for cooking with salt slabs.

The Salty Sistas, with outlets in Johannesburg and Cape Town, now has a presence in Hoedspruit. A portion of

the product range includes items from Pakistan, India and Indonesia, as well as her local Shwe Shwe kids clothing range 'Sistas and Mistas'. There is a vast range of Himalayan salt products that need to be seen. These include salt cooking slabs, chopping boards, salt lamps, candle holders, massage stones, salt scrubs and soaks, inhalers, mud masks, and even animal salt licks. The list goes on.

Liezel is actively getting the word out about cooking with Himalayan salt. She is the guest speaker at the Vroue Landbou Unie gathering in October, and

Watermelon ceviche salad

she is available to book for events, team building, private functions and birthday parties.

There will also be Himalayan Salt Cooking demonstrations at the shop on the last Saturday of every month at 12:30, starting on the 25th September 2021.

Other courses have been scheduled for the 30th October and 27th November 2021.

The cooking experience is R450 per person and bookings are essential. Call **Liezel on 082 852 5925** to book your place.

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Kassava bush salad

Ingredients

Fresh nasturtian leaves
Fresh cannabis leaves
Fresh wild rocket
Fresh mint
Fresh basil
Cherry tomatoes
Sliced red onion
Fresh mixed berries
Roasted pumpkin seeds
Freshly made hummus
Red quinoa
Cassava crisps
Crispy bruschetta

Instructions

Rinse quinoa, sieve & simmer it for 20 mins. Add salt & pepper to taste then transfer your fluffy quinoa into a bowl to cool. Wash & dry fresh leaves (we use our salad spinner) then drizzle and massage olive oil & salt. Toast your home made ciabatta to make bruschetta. Toss the greens, berries & quinoa together.

To serve

Whisk all the dressing ingredients together & taste for your preferred balance. Pour onto the greens.

Plate and serve

Spread hummus on the plate, sprinkle pumpkin seeds and add salad next to hummus, Sprinkle cassava crisps on top & add bruschetta - bon appetite

Dressing

10g fresh herbs, 1 tsp Dijon mustard, 3 tsp olive oil, 1 tbsp lemon juice, 1 tsp honey, half tsp salt



Delicious Kassava bush salad

Photo supplied

The Hoedspruit Cafe - Falafel Salad Bowl



The next time you want to catch up on your work, enjoy great coffee, or grab a bite to eat, stop in to the Hoedspruit Cafe. They make the best Falafel bowl in town !

Hand-rolled falafels with mixed seasonal leaves, avocado, cinnamon roasted butternut, cherry tomato salsa, red-wine balsamic poached beetroot and a home-made hummus.

"It is our most popular selling item, because it's good !" says Shaun.

Jan Braai book review

Sannie Blomkool

It had to happen, the final carnivore cooking bastion has been usurped by those who promote a vegetarian way of life around a braai. September 24th is both National Heritage Day and National Braai Day, the latter being promoted by author and cook Jan Braai.

Finally giving in to pressure from friends, Book Storm has published his most recent book *JanBraai The Vegetarian Option*. The book includes his vegetarian dishes already published in his predomi-

nantly meat braaing books, together with fresh vegetarian recipes specifically created for this book.

Although the carnivores might shake their heads in despair, we vegans and vegetarians are jumping for joy at this most recent addition to his already extensive back catalogue of braai books. A book that is filled with braai recipes that DON'T rely on meat? Indeed! And Jan Braai proves that it can be accomplished without compromising on taste or visual aesthetics.

"Because everything tastes

better when braaied, I know you'll enjoy it." says Jan.

Although his previous books did contain vegetarian options, they were scattered amongst the various titles and Jan decided that rather than have them buy all the books, he would produce one specifically with vegetarians in mind.

Thus, this book was created. One look at the contents will have you salivating...and perhaps hoping that someone other than YOU will prepare the dishes so that all you have to do is sit back and enjoy.

Starters, mains, desserts,

soups, curries and even mielie pap and bread are covered. And my personal favourite chapter? Awesome Ideas that contains a braai pizza and the ULTIMATE braai potato potjie.

"Once he sat down to tackle the task, he realised that his books have loads of great vegetarian recipes, but it isn't fair to make the vegetarians buy all the books to find them.

To quote his publishers; "Jan collected all his best vegetarian recipes together, and then added a whole lot more. If you're looking for a meat-free Monday option, have to cater for your son's new vegetarian girlfriend or

the grandchildren, or have even decided to take the vegetarian plunge yourself, there's no reason to neglect your braai – Jan has you covered. Find delicious burgers, braai broodjies, potjies, curries, bread and side dishes to keep you in vegetarian options for months."

I am hoping that my review and the words of his publisher as a reason to purchase a copy of this book well before September 24th for you to enjoy as many of the recipes as possible on Heritage Day

For those who don't know who the man behind the pseudonym is...His real name is Jan Scannell and he lives to braai. He is the man

behind National Braai Day on 24 September, now a firm national fixture to create a national celebration of the one activity all South Africans have in common, regardless of race, language, gender or wealth: cooking over a fire. His TV series *Jan Braai vir Erfenis* runs annually on kykNET and is now in its 11th season. With a signature familiar style of sharing braai knowledge in his books, on television, on social media and in interviews Jan Braai has become a household name around the fire. For more about Jan Braai visit www.braai.com or follow him on Instagram or Facebook.



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Community business training initiative



Rifumo Mathebula

The Kruger to Canyon Biosphere collaborated with SocioNext and Maruleng Municipality to host a business showcase at the Worcester Industrial Hall. August 20th saw the culmination of a week long business training program with presentation of certificates to the participants.

The week long program was facilitated by SocioNext which is an organization that helps unemployed youth to understand and start businesses. This organization's main objective is to fight unemployment by creating entrepreneurs that can develop their own



@WILD SHOTS OUTREACH

businesses, and through that, employ and empower others within their very own communities. "What SocioNext does is show people that to start a business you don't need to wait for funding, you can start with the available resources around you," said Iqbal Thokan.

Participants in the training

ranged in age from 25-60 years old. The participants were a targeted group of people called Waste Pickers. These people have been collecting waste to generate income and support their families within the community for years.

The training covered subjects such as teaching people to start businesses with

no capital, writing a business plan and proposals, pitching, and making sure that any business started had all the required documents.

Pheon, who is an Environmental Monitor from the K2C Biosphere, stated that the training was to enlighten participants about business. They had no prior

knowledge about business, and the hope was that they would progress to formalising and having their own waste center, that could help them to recycle and possibly sell to larger markets.

After the training every person that attended was presented with a certificate of completion. For many



Participants on training
Photos by Wildshots Outreach



of the older attendees this was the first time that they had received any kind of accolade. "I'm so excited to have attended this training in my own community and thanks to Kruger 2 Canyon for this. I have learnt a lot about business. I'm going home with this knowledge which is really great and I will be sharing it with my grandchildren" said Ana Malatjie.

"A huge thank you to Kruger 2 Canyons and SocioNext for this great partnership of empowering local people with business skills. I wish this can continue and involve others that didn't have the opportunity to attend" said Mathipa Masia Occasio from Maruleng Municipality.

The Kruger to Canyons Biosphere will endeavour to continue to collaborate with interested parties to uplift communities and people within those communities in the future.

Starry starry night - Constellation of the month - Pavo

Ben Coley

Mythology:

Pavo, the Peacock, was first introduced by Plancius after it was documented by Dutch explorers, de Houtman and Keyzer during their exploration of the southern hemisphere. It was likely named after the Javan green peacock of the East Indies. It can be found in the southern skies close to the other avian constellations, Grus (The Crane) and Tucana (The Tucan)

The Greeks also recorded mythology, however. The peacock was said to be Hera's (Zeus' wife) favourite bird, and that her chariot was drawn through the air by a flock of peacocks, although at this time their tails were plain, lacking the beautiful patterns we know today.

Zeus was well renowned for his relations with mortal women and began courting

a maiden named Io. Hera became suspicious and sought the services of the giant, Argos, to watch over her. Argos had 100 eyes and was, therefore, a great choice for a guard!

Zeus changed Io into a cow for her protection but Hera ordered Argos to tie the cow to an olive tree. Seeing this, Zeus sent his messenger, Hermes, to free her. Hermes disguised himself as a shepherd and spent the day telling Argo's stories and playing his pipes. Eventually, the many-eyed giant fell asleep and Hermes killed him, freeing Io. To honour Argos, Hera placed his eyes on the tail of the peacock.

Notable Stars:

Alpha Pavonis is also known as The Peacock Star and is one of the last stars to be officially named. This blue-white giant star was included by the UK's Nautical Almanac Office as one of the bright stars required

to be known by RAF pilots in case of instrumentation failure. However, at that time, the star had no official name and was thus labelled 'Peacock' after its parent constellation. They also christened Epsilon Carniae

in Carina, as 'Avior'.

The Peacock Star is situated 180 light-years from Earth and is a spectroscopic binary star, although the system cannot be resolved with amateur equipment. It is at least 6 times bigger and

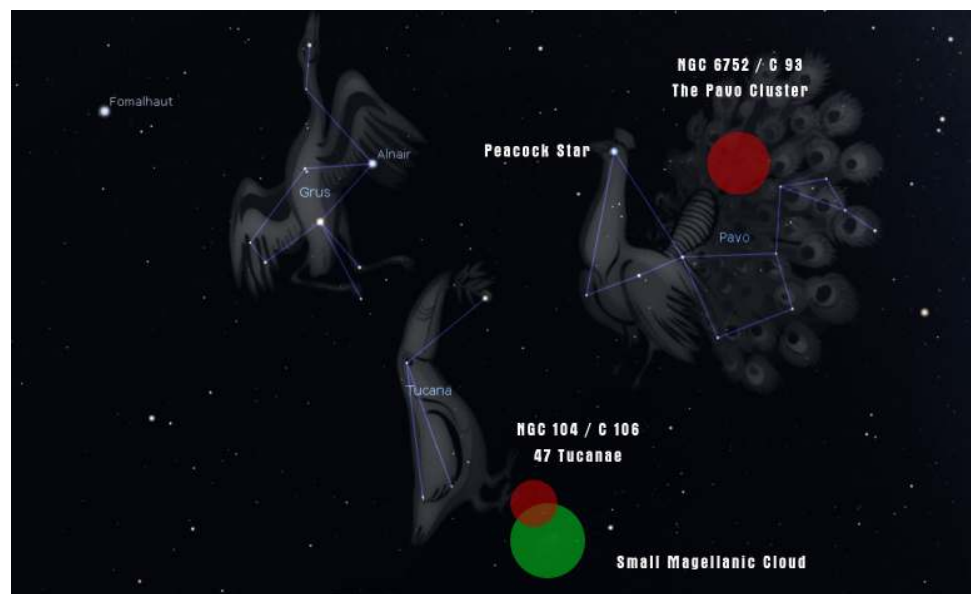
over 2000x brighter than our Sun.

Deep Sky Objects NGC 6752 / C 93 – The Starfish Cluster The Pavo or Starfish Cluster is the 3rd brightest globular cluster in the night sky, after Omega Centauri

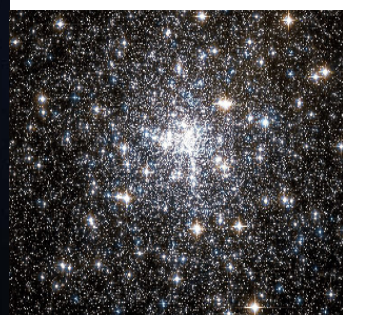
(Centaurus) and 47 Tucanae (Tucana), containing more than 100,000 stars.

It is situated 13,000 light-years from Earth and can be seen with the naked eye under dark skies close to Alpha Pavonis, Pavo's brightest star.

The cluster contains many binary stars and is one of the oldest globulars known, estimated to be around 12 billion years old. It also has a large number of Blue Stragglers, young stars formed from collisions within the cluster.



Pavo
Images supplied by Celestial Events



Pavo cluster

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Spring is in the air - everywhere you look around



Red-headed Weaver feeding on the Weeping boer bean

Lee Gutteridge

The initial transformation of the Lowveld bush from a dry, dead-looking wintry state is quite a gentle thing. In fact, some of the early events are so low key, that if you are not a very observant naturalist you might just miss them altogether! Our spring, a princess amongst seasons, is not gaudy and blatant, like a New England fall, where a showy dazzle of red, orange and yellow festoons the trees across a whole region. Our flowers are oftentimes very inconspicuous and small, hiding from the sight of all but the specific insects like the birds and animals that play the role of pollinating them. But inevitably, the bush is coming back to life.

The insects and spiders have overwintered, some in burrows or tunnels. Others in clumps of leaf-strewn web or under a stone. Other creatures die off as adults after laying their eggs, with only a distant memory of them being carried in the genetics of their near-microscopic offspring. But some of them live through

the winter time, and survive the cold temperatures, becoming more active in the waking spring. Some, like the Vespidae wasps, may hibernate in hollow trees, aggregating in large numbers. Scale insects have overwintered against the trunks of trees and other egg-laying creatures such as the praying mantis create large foamy ootheca's, or egg-cases.

The trees are often the first sign that I see of an impending change of season. It is the time of year when the red spike-thorns begin to flower. The subtle yellow-green reproductive parts of the tree, clustered along the branchlets are attracting hundreds of tiny insects - the early hatches, who take advantage of this spring bounty. Spiderlings hunt along the miniature bouquets, catching the tiny gnat-like insects which are the only things smaller than themselves. Knobthorns are one of the first Lowveld trees to flower. Their blooms are present from as early as mid-July onwards, and the trees are alive with the buzzing and droning of

insects. Even the clicking flight of the large blue-black spider hunting wasps can be heard as the adults feed on the pollen from the flowers. It is only in the larval maggot-like stage that the spiders it is famed for subduing, are considered a good and tasty meal.

Knobthorns being one of the early flower bounties of the bush are much favoured. Birds such as the grey go-away bird gorge themselves on the pale-yellow catkins. Recently I have noticed the regurgitated clumps of flowers, presumably from overzealous go-away birds, who simply eat more than their crops could handle. Perfect pink stems are clearly visible in the pellets! Squirrels and giraffes are two of the mammalian pollinators, playing an important role in the security of the species future.

Weeping boer-bean trees flower a little later, but the developing deep red-pink buds taunt and tantalize the sunbirds, not quite ready for consumption but clearly visible. Once they open up in early August, there is a bounty for the scarlet-

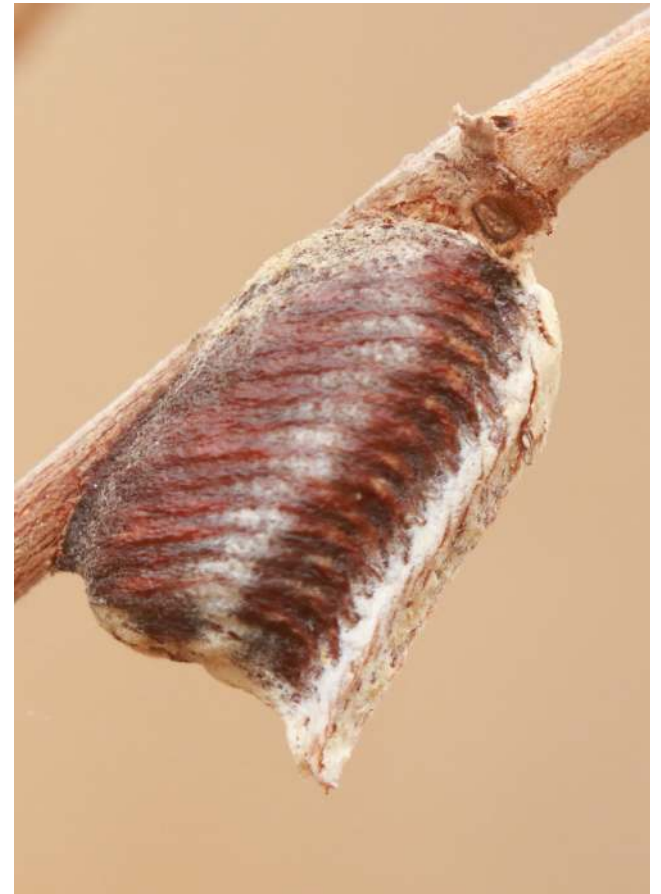
ched and white-bellied sunbirds, the red-headed weaver and the black-headed oriole. The weaver male at this time of year is still yellow headed, but has spots of red coming through as he moults into his vivid breeding colours in time for the new summer. He also takes the time to strip the leaflets off of the boer-bean, using the central vein of its compound leaves as his nesting material. These stick-like pieces are what will be woven into his fantastic, long-turreted nest.

The toxic tamboti tree has finally stopped dropping its old orange, yellow and red leaves, and has a good flush of new greenery. The fact that its spike-like red flowers are starting to bloom is demonstrated by the continuous hum of bees in the branches, collecting the pollen for their honey production.

Birds are becoming more vocal too. The tiny Stierling's wren-warbler's have begun to call, here and there, just a few notes of its du-dudu-du-dudu call. Hoopoes too, long silent are now vocalising to attract partners, and the duet of the black-collared barbets can be heard. The mis-timed duets of new barbet couples can also be heard. The newly forged first-timers need some time to learn to duet perfectly in harmony it would seem. The local lesser striped swallows came back a little later this year. Usually, they arrive in the last week of July, but my resident pair only came home from north-central Africa to nest after the first week of August. Their strange call over my house is always a welcome sound, as they certainly intimate an impending change.

Spring, in all its covert forms, slowly spreads its warmth and colour over the land, its flowers and insects, its trees and birds. It builds up into a veritable riot of colour in the later months of the year. Its crescendo is a summer, with busy nature doing all her tasks in this bountiful but busy time. Summer is less subtle than spring, with scorching temperatures and afternoon rainstorms, but also beautiful in its own way.

Spring, with her temperate climate, subtle changes and gorgeous nature is a treat after the cold of winter, and I welcome her home.



A Mantis ootheca or egg-case



The flowers of the Red-spike thorn (above)

A beautiful Scale insect on a thorn tree (right)



All photos: Lee Gutteridge

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Help Selati protect the Martial Eagle



Fledgling Martial Eagle

Martial Eagle

Photo's: Lindsay Jones

Lindsay Jones

The SELATI Martial Eagle project was launched in July and we are raising funds to acquire and set up specialized camera recording equipment to monitor a breeding pair in real-time and also to protect their nesting site on Selati Game Reserve.

It is believed that this will be the first time a pair of breeding Martial eagles will be recorded in a non-invasive way.

The current nest on the 28,000Ha Selati Game Reserve, situated in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, offers an excellent opportunity to document and research the breeding biology of this, Africa's largest eagle.

This Martial Eagle pair has successfully bred on Selati for several years and the purpose of placing a real-

time camera at the nest is to document their breeding biology including, behaviour, incubation, chick development and fledging, prey selection, and post-fledging dependence on the nest. Incidental nest observations have been recorded previously but thorough documentation of a breeding cycle from nest reconstruction to post-fledging has not been undertaken anywhere.

A significant advantage of the technology to be used to collect images is that there will be no disturbance at the nest during the breeding/fledging period. All images are collected by the camera controlled by a Raspberry Pi computer programmed to send the images remotely by Wi-Fi. This camera will be powered by a solar-charged battery which will not need to be visited for the duration of the breeding event. The

nest is vulnerable to predation even though it is 24m up in a Knob-thorn tree. It will be necessary to protect the solar panels, battery, and computer equipment from possible damage by inquisitive elephants, rhinoceros, buffalo, lions, and the chick from leopards. To prevent this, a perimeter electric fence around the tree is envisaged.

Christiaan Brink, Raptor and Large Terrestrial Bird Project Manager at BirdLife South Africa said, "BirdLife South Africa welcomes the Selati Wilderness Foundation's plans to install a live-streaming camera on a Martial Eagle nest on their reserve. This project will help create awareness for the conservation plight of one of Africa's most iconic eagles."

"The Martial Eagle population is declining rapidly throughout its range in Africa and is now classified as endangered"

Given the recent up-listing of Martial Eagles to Endangered, there is an urgent need for well-informed and effective conservation action. The proposed camera can assist in this by providing the opportunity to gain new insights into the breeding biology and general ecology of this species."

The Martial Eagle, *Polemaetus bellicosus*, is a large powerful eagle (78-83 cm) and weighing 3.3 to 4.7 kg with the females being considerably larger than the males. Martial Eagles can easily be identified by their dark backs, throat neck and head, contrasting with the white underbelly which is spotted. The largest eagle in Africa, they occur throughout

sub-Saharan Africa excluding the lowland forests of West Africa. Although they may be encountered anywhere in South Africa they are more frequently found in protected areas, especially the Transvaal Lowveld and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Outside protected areas, their territory sizes can vary between 300 and 1000 sq. km. while in Kenya there have been territories as large as 130km sq recorded. Although research by Tarboton and Allan in 1984 suggested that there might be about 1000 mature individuals in Gauteng (formerly Transvaal) with 137 pairs in the Kruger National Park, the current numbers are considerably less.

A 2012 survey by Murn et.al. (2012), estimated a breeding population of 110 mature individuals in the Kruger National Park based on an aerial

survey of nests, a decrease of at least 50%.

The Swaziland population has dropped from 40 mature pairs in 2011 to 14 mature individuals in 2008, this decrease is attributed to habitat and land-use change as well as persecution. Martial Eagles have disappeared from much of their former range and are now categorized as "endangered" in southern Africa.

The images collected will be analysed and interpreted by specialists. In addition, the environmental students visiting the Eco-training centre on the Selati reserve will be able to study the images during their training. The results of the research will be made available through the Selati Wilderness Foundation NPC social media sites.

For more information on how you can donate, contact **Lindsay Jones 076 314 6842**

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Buzz, buzz, Spring is sprung...

Andrew Kearney

Do me a favour, before you finish that mouthful of food you're busy with, take a quick look at it. Have you ever wondered how it ended up with you. Chances are what you have eaten today would not be with us, in fact, we would not be here without them... if it were not for our fabulous insects.

As we head into spring, I am eagerly awaiting the background hum of the elusive cicada to fill my ears. I will then know I am in the lowveld on a hot and glorious day. However I cannot help but think of the importance of all the insects and why we are, where we are, because of them!

Back to your food to help explain. If any of the list of the following foods are on your plate - guess what; it was pollinated mostly by bees! Oranges, apples, avocados, almonds, macadamias, eggplant, kiwi fruit, tomatoes, limes, squash, watermelon, cauliflower, broccoli, blueberry and the list goes on and on. Even the egg and bacon on your plate ... no, the chickens were not pollinated by bees, but the fact is that most of the commercial livestock around the world is fed on supplement feed which contains, teff, lucerne (Alfalfa) and even soya beans to help livestock get protein to grow. Without that, productivity would be way lower and the costs way higher, and probably unaffordable to most of us.

Yes, all affordable because the humble honey bees are working constantly to



Photo supplied : MDP

gather pollen and nectar out in the fields. The byproduct of all that hard work is pollination. Pollination happens when pollen which contain the male gametes are transferred from the anthers of the flower to the female part of the flower, known as the stigma. This may be of the same plant or same species of plant, or male and female found on separate trees like in marula trees. This results in fertilization and ultimately seed production.

The seeds are key to the survival of a species, but it needs to entice the planting or dispersal of those

seeds in order for the species to spread and increase in number... and normally fruits and nuts are that enticing nugget. We are so reliant on insects that over 100 crops or foods consumed by humans are perpetuated in this way. Surprisingly not all plants are pollinated by bees.

Ever heard people say, "what's the point of flies? I wish they never existed"... whoosh, just like that you we would have no more chocolate. That's right people, midges are mostly responsible for pollinating the cocoa tree, which gives us coco beans! No more

midges- no more chocolate! What about saffron? This is the most expensive herb in the world and it comes from a flowering plant called *Crocus sativus* pollinated by bees. And coffee? Pollinated by bees. Can you see where this is going?

It's not only food for humans that insects contribute to, things like silk for example, has been produced in China from as early as 2600 BC. They produce over 30 000 tons of silk annually, which is about 80% of global output, and all from the spun silken cocoons of the silkworm moth or *Bombyx mori*. Think of the financial

implications of that when one meter of silk will set you back around 100 US Dollars. That's a lot of money being made from insects.

The next time you eat a red coloured food, (and even in some lipsticks), have a look at the ingredients. If it says natural dye #4, carminic acid, carmine, or cochineal extract, the colouring is made from cochineal scale insects or *Coccus cacti*. The cacti part is reference to their host plant being prickly pears. Next time you drive through the Karoo or Eastern Cape and see a prickly pear with white fluffs or marks on the

leaves, that's them - the cochineal bug.

There are over 900 000 named species of insects globally. Modern science thinks that we have only discovered one third to one half of what is actually out there. Insects make up 80% of all living things on earth. Some have spectacular facts related to them: a queen of termites can live for 30 to 50 years and produce up to 30 000 eggs per day! A cicada can be heard over 400m away by humans. A golden jewel beetle is thought to live the longest, at 51 years. The smallest butterfly in Africa is found in the lowveld, called the Dwarf Blue, measuring in at a little over 10mm wingspan! Dragonflies are the fastest fliers at over 90km/h – the cheetah of the air!

There are so many remarkable insects and the list just goes on and on. One thing remains though, these creatures are so important and integral to the survival and health of any ecosystem and to the survival of us as a species, that we need to respect and look after them.

As we look forward to moving into spring and the explosion of life that is about to bless us again, with all the colours of the rainbow, lets look about us. Colours in patterns of wings, and the constant hum of a busy little bee, and the whine of a miggie. Remember the next time you have a chance to spray it, squash it or swat it - rather just open the window or scoop it outside. They are important and your meal will taste so much better if you do!

USA kids jump in to save the Rhino in South Africa

Staff reporter

Patrick and Brigitte Daly, longstanding members of Olifants River Game Reserve (ORGR) have grandchildren who run an NPO in Tampa, Florida.

KIDS 4 A CAUSE, as the organisation is known, raises funds for numerous causes and has very strong ties to ORGR. Their July project was a particularly poignant one as they set up Back-a-

Buddy funding for people to donate funds for our Anti-poaching Unit in the fight against rhino poaching.

The dynamic young men raised enough in US\$ for us to purchase seven more cameras which are vital in the process of detecting incursions and human activity, to catch poachers!

We have to expand our already extensive network of these AI cameras on an ongoing basis to assist



Dominic & Sheldon Fouche and Michael & Christian Kuhn

the AP teams. Using these cameras, coupled with our team, the K9 operatives, our night vision capabilities and a never-give-up attitude, we endeavour to save the Rhino species and the gift of these seven new cameras will go a very long way to making this happen. We are incredibly grateful, impressed and blown away by the superb efforts of this dynamic young team. Hopefully, they will inspire other

youngsters abroad and locally to do the same.

The fantastic four, namely Dominic & Sheldon Fouche and Michael & Christian Kuhn are committed to continually raising funds for this cause. Take a look at their website and their Facebook page to watch their inspiring video, featuring the ORGR APU team.

<https://www.facebook.com/kids4acause888>

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Howard Rogerson

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A journey of hope and determination for Vusi Sibuyi

Susan Harwood,
Balule Outreach Trust

Vusi Sibuyi, an employee of Olifants River Game Reserve (ORGR) in Balule, who started a six week Field Ranger's training course at the SA Wildlife College on 17th May, passed with flying colours and stood out above the rest with top marks. Needless to say, he is one extremely happy young man!

Vusi was first noticed whilst employed at the main gate at ORGR as a guard. His "cando" and "on the ball" attitude impressed the ORGR management team and was invited to join ORGR as a junior ranger. In this position, Vusi further impressed both the Warden and head of the Anti-poaching Unit, mainly due to his enthusiasm and work ethic. Vusi was keen to further his qualifications so approached the Warden for a loan to study at the college, at which time the

board suggested approaching the Balule Outreach Trust (BOT). Vusi's course was funded entirely by the BOT, without hesitation – and the rest, as they say, is history!

Says Vusi, "I feel this career was a calling. I am passionate about nature and determined to preserve the wonderful flora and fauna we are gifted, currently and for the generations to come. I hope to inspire my two brothers into following in my footsteps and thank everyone involved for giving me this hand-up to making a difference in the area of conservation".

The Balule Outreach Trust was established in February 2012 to raise funds and engage in community development programs in the Hoedspruit and Phalaborwa communities of Limpopo Province in South Africa. The Trust is registered as a non-profit organisation with the Dept. of Social Develop-

ment and with the South African Revenue Service as a Public Benefit Organisation. Says John Anderson, Founder and Chairman of BOT, "From small beginnings in 2013 we have established a firm relationship over several years with our two major beneficiaries – Southern Cross School in Hoedspruit and South African Medical Expeditions (SAME) through their After School Child Care Centre in Sigagule Village. Covid-19 has, without warning, brought with it different challenges for which solutions have been urgently sought and we are currently concentrating on providing funds for much-needed food, masks and sanitization within the communities. In addition to SAME, we are supporting Nourish, an NPO operating in Sigagule with funds for making masks, and the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Maseke Community with funds for food

parcels, both of whom operate in communities within the Phalaborwa region".

"Our thanks to all donors who have supported us over many years, and for your continued support in our mission to uplift families and individuals within the communities of the greater Balule area. The valuable support from our community and external sources, is the lifeblood which determines our success, both now and into the future".

Those who would like to donate to this organisation (and receive a tax certificate), can do so by depositing into the **Balule Outreach Trust** account, referencing EFT payments with their name.

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"As the breadwinner of his family Vusi is delighted that he will soon be able to fulfil his dreams of protecting wildlife, and becoming more effective in providing for his family".

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Zingela Ulwazi empowers the Permaculture Explorers

Staff Reporter

Permaculture Explorers is a hugely successful permaculture project launched in March 2019 in the RDP (Government Reconstruction and Development Program) village in Acornhoek.

Each year since its inception, there has been an intake of approximately 20 women who live well below the international extreme poverty line (about R28/day). Zingela Ulwazi, a local NPO, provides resources and opportunities for the women to lift themselves above the line of extreme poverty by combining permaculture gardening education with small enterprise development training.

Initially, the women receive a 50 sq. meter fenced garden plot topped with shade netting to protect their plants against the fierce African sun, and to keep out the free-range goats and chickens wandering around this rural area. The women also receive a rainwater catchment sys-

tem and a 2.400-litre storage tank to catch rainwater, which is used to irrigate their gardens and for household consumption. Usually, the RDP only gets municipal water 4 days per month.

Each woman is taught how to grow food for her family according to permaculture principles, without pesticides and chemicals, in harmony with nature. If she produces in excess, she benefits by selling her produce to neighbours as well as small enterprises in the area, receiving additional income and slowly moving "above the line".

The women also receive extensive training in small enterprise development so they can start small businesses that fill a need in community and bring in extra income.

The project has had a huge impact on many areas of the women's lives: household income, health, family and emotional support. Their own words best describe how their lives have changed since starting Permaculture Explorers.



Lillian Ndlazi in her garden

"I used to be very lazy and would just sleep after eating or even just hang around with other ladies not doing much. But now I am a busy woman, I work hard, I am disciplined and more focused." RM (Her income has increased by 92% per month since starting the programme).
 "I was suffering because I used to ask my neighbours for even 1 tomato to eat. They would give me a beetroot leaf. Now I can go in my garden and harvest. Now I am eating healthy vegetables and I am stress-free". WS (Her income has increased by 194% since starting the program)

"Eating healthy changed my life. Getting together with other ladies makes a difference. I am a woman who didn't go anywhere. But now I know how to communicate with other ladies and other people". PM
 Their graduation ceremony was supposed to be held on July 3rd but had to be postponed due to lockdown. We'll report on the graduation once it is rescheduled. It promises to be a "WOW" day!

You can contact Stella Horgan, Director at stella@zingelaulwazi.org.za or 076-885-8168 or check out their website at www.zingelaulwazi.org.za



The Permaculture Ladies

Photos supplied

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| Drakensig Pre-primer | 015 793 2401 | Eastgate Airport | | 015 793 3681 | |
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| Lowveld Academy | 015 793 3750 | Hds Endangered Species Centre | | 015 793 1633 | |
| Mariëskop Laerskool | 079 529 6071 | Jabulani Elephant Interaction | | 015 793 1265 | |
| Mariëskop Pre-primer | 082 880 7069 | K2C Biosphere Region | | 015 817 1838 | |
| Perspective Training College | 082 787 4471 | Sky-Way Trails | | 013 737 8374 | |
| Southern Cross Schools | 015 793 0590 | VEHICLES, SPARES & REPAIRS | | Laeveld Trekkers | |
| EMERGENCY - HELP LINES | | Laeveld Trekkers | | 087 806 5616 | |
| After Hours Emergency Doctors | 084 770 1741 | Supa Quick | | 015 793 0176 | |
| Air Force Base Hoedspruit | 015 799 2911 | HDS Number Plates | | 082 807 4757 | |
| Africa Safe - T | 010 590 6313 | | | | |
| Ambulance AFB | 015 799 2065 | | | | |
| Alcoholics Narcotics Anonymous | 082 258 4602 | | | | |
| Ambulance Airforce Base | 015 799 2065 | | | | |
| Ambulance Services Limpopo | 015 793 1581 | | | | |
| Ambulance Tintswalo | 101 77 | | | | |
| Ambulance Services Swift | 060 528 2784 | | | | |
| Farm watch/ Plaaswag | 072 310 0032 | | | | |
| Fire Brigade AFB | 015 799 2172 | | | | |
| Fire Brigade Maruleng | 015 793 0536 | | | | |
| Fire Dpt Hoedspruit | 015 793 0728 | | | | |
| GKEPF Greater Kruger Enviro | | | | | |

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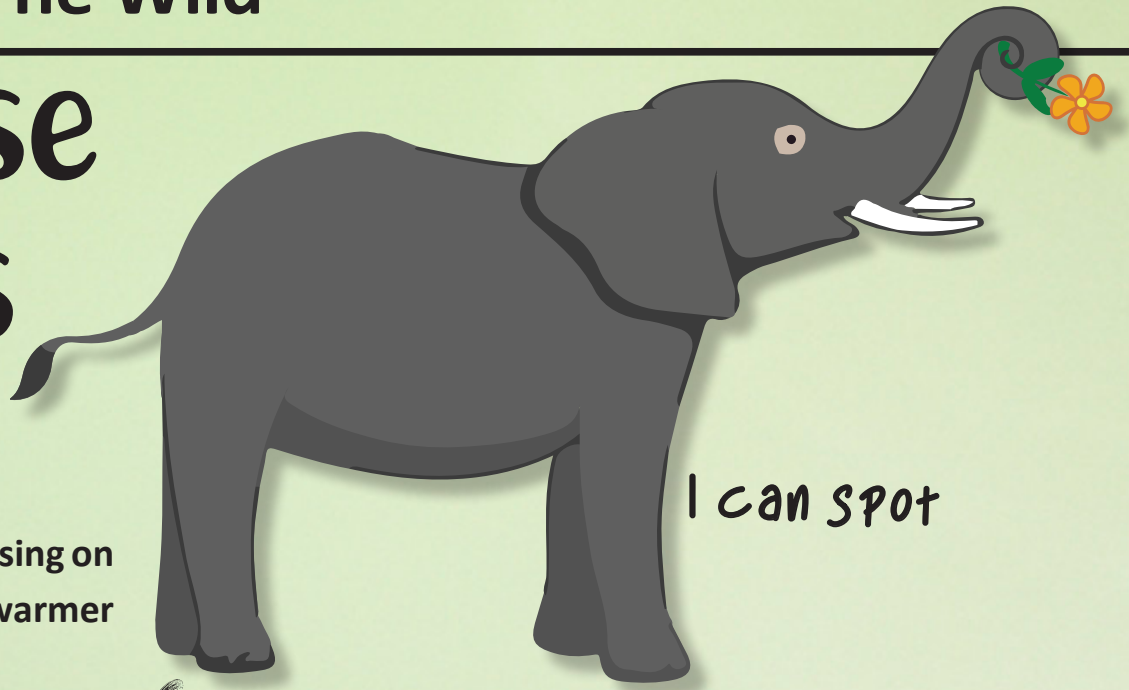
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Let's Get those BUSH BRAINS working!



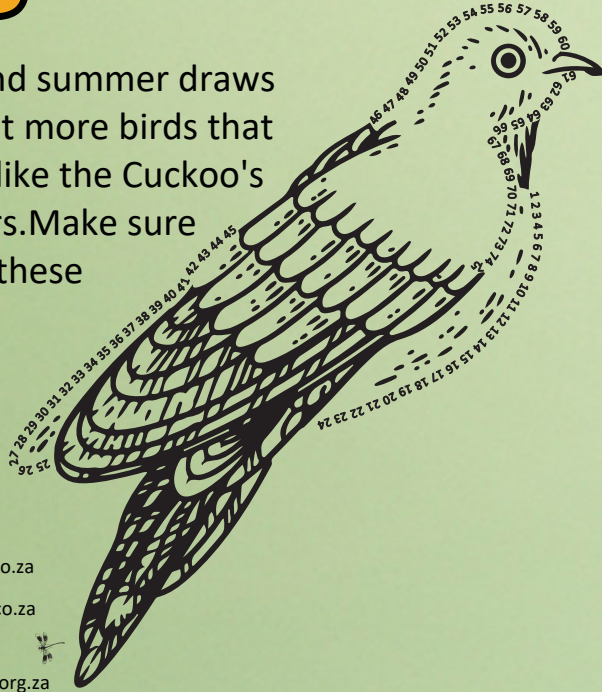
I can spot

Spring has sprung and we are going to be focusing on all the wonderful things that come with the warmer months.



As the season changes and summer draws closer you will notice a lot more birds that start arriving back. Birds like the Cuckoo's and Woodland Kingfishers. Make sure you start looking out for these birds. Another migrant bird is...

A _____
Kite.



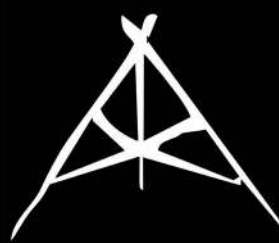
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