



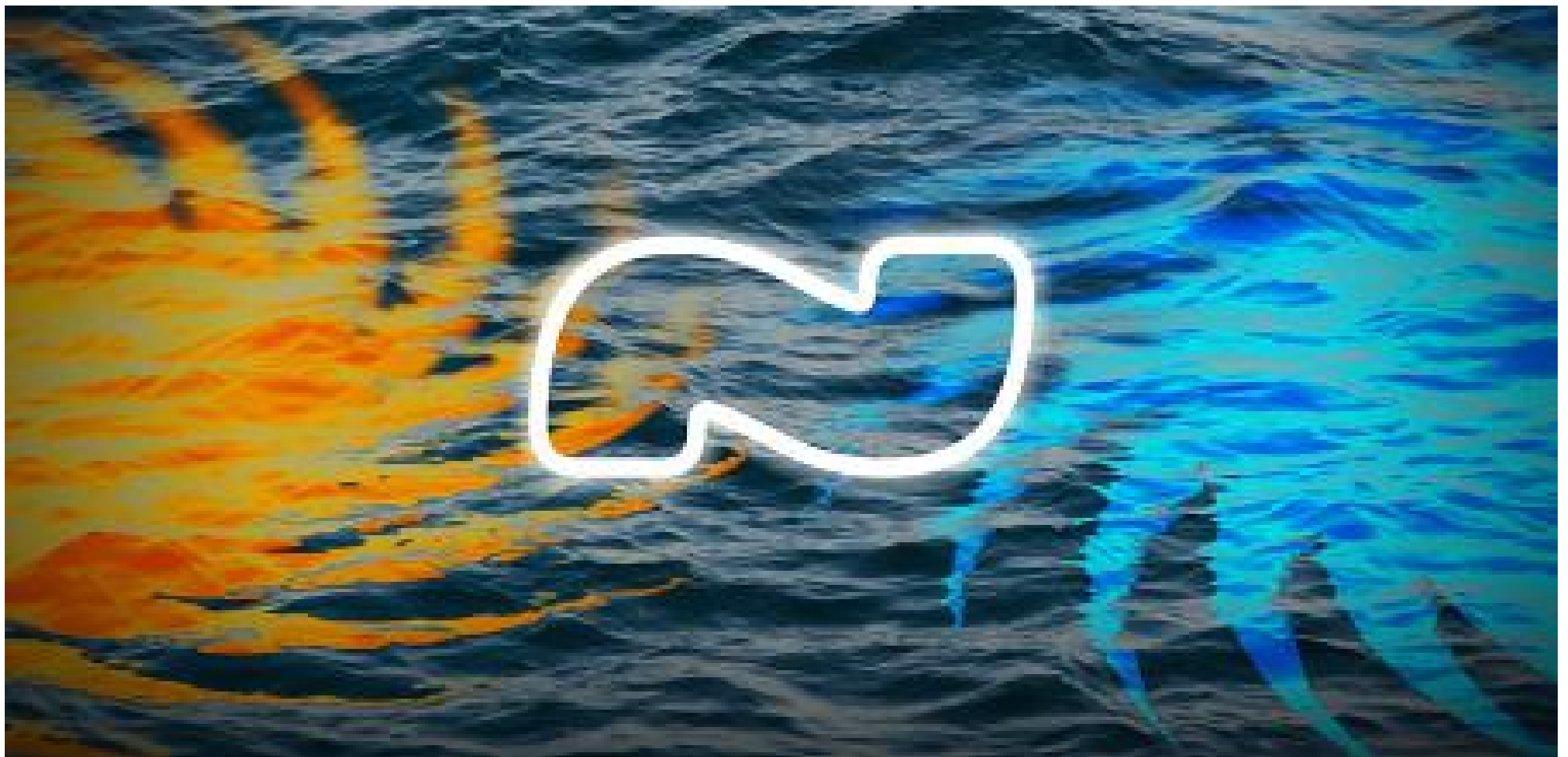
# KRUGER2CANYON

## NEWS

May 2024

The Farm House, R527, Zandspruit, Hoedspruit, Limpopo email: editor@kruger2canyon.co.za

## Explainer - El Niño's impact and what to expect from La Niña



The El Niño weather pattern has faded and its polar opposite La Niña, is widely expected to re-emerge as soon as the surface temperatures in the eastern Pacific cool  
Illustrative image photo : Paola Mier Unsplash

Ed Stoddard

The El Niño weather pattern has faded and its polar opposite, La Niña, is widely expected to re-emerge soon as the surface temperatures in the eastern Pacific cool. Here are a few points about these phenomena, the consequences of the latest El Niño and the anticipated effects of La Niña.

### The turning tide of the ENSO cycle

El Niño and La Niña form part of what is

known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle – a meteorological mouthful.

This cycle is natural and linked to westward trade winds along the Pacific in equatorial latitudes. When they weaken, warm water flows to the east, giving rise to El Niño (Little Boy in Spanish). South American fishermen first noticed this pattern in the 17th century and since it typically peaks in December, the reference is to the Christ child.

La Niña (Little Girl) is triggered when trade winds are stronger than usual and channel

warm water towards Asia. In the eastern Pacific, this causes cold water to “upswell” to the surface.

These events usually last nine to 12 months but can linger for years. Both patterns typically have impacts which vary from region to region and include drought, deluge, and more intense hurricanes.

In between this little lad and lassie, the ENSO is in a neutral phase, which is the current stage of the cycle. El Niño recently faded, and La Niña is seen forming by the

Austral spring, perhaps as early as July, according to some forecasts.

### How did El Niño affect southern Africa?

El Niño usually brings drought to southern Africa and the most recent version was true to form. Scorching heatwaves seared South Africa’s grain belt, with the harvest of the staple white maize 25% lower in 2024 compared with last year.

South African farmers’ intentions to plant winter wheat are down 3% compared with the size of the area ...Cont. on page 3

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# From the editors desk



As we stand on the cusp of a new era for the Kruger2Canyon News, I am thrilled to share our excitement as I give you some feedback on our continued transformative journey into the digital realm. The decision to transition from print to digital is not made lightly, but rather with careful consideration of the evolving landscape of news, more especially community news consumption, and the changing needs of our audience. We would like to think that we will be at the forefront of the digital wave when it comes to community papers in South Africa – in fact it may well morph into something far greater than that.

One of the most exhilarating aspects of going digital is the unparalleled access it affords to our readers. No longer bound by the constraints of a once-a-month physical distribution, our stories can now reach anyone, anywhere, at any time. Whether you're sipping your morning coffee in New York City or catching a late-night train in Brussels, or simply sitting under a tree in the bush, our digital platform will ensure that you have instant access to the latest updates – which will be on a day-to-day basis.

We will be keeping you informed and engaged like never before. Whether it's a major regional or national story, or a local community initiative right in our neighbourhood, our digital platform will enable us to cover a diverse range of stories and events with speed and accuracy. There will be no wait for a weekly or monthly publication. Let's face it – times have changed!

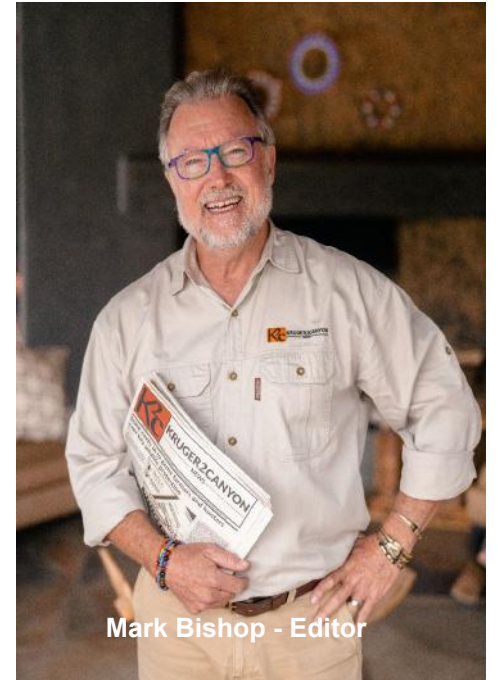
But perhaps most exciting of all is the extended reach that digitalization offers for our advertisers. With targeted advertising algorithms and advanced analytics, we will now be able to connect businesses with their target audience more effectively than

ever before. As a local business looking to reach customers in our area (and beyond) our digital platform will provide unparalleled opportunities for reaching and engaging your target market and extending the reach to that market.

Of course, embracing the digital age also comes with its own set of challenges. We are acutely aware of the importance of maintaining our journalistic integrity and upholding the highest standards of accuracy and ethics in everything we do. As we transition to a digital-first approach, we remain committed to these core principles and will continue to strive for excellence in everything we publish.

There is still some way to go, but the wheels are in motion and progressing forward. We have had fantastic feedback from numerous people and businesses, which warms our heart – this is something new in this landscape and as we move on this journey with you, valued readers, and partners, we hope you will trust us and support us in this awesome undertaking to put us on the map as a real 21<sup>st</sup> century publication.

Thank you for your continued support.



Mark Bishop - Editor

## Disclaimer:

The opinions expressed in the Kruger2Canyon News are strictly those of the authors. Opinions are based on information that the authors consider to be reliable. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the Kruger2Canyon News or its publisher, editor, staff, or members. The designations employed in this publication and the presentation of material therein, do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever, nor do they warrant completeness and accuracy, on the part of the Kruger2Canyon News, the publisher, or editor.

# Letter to the editor

At long last I got a letter in Afrikaans – its about time!

I have undertaken to publish the said letter just as I received it – who am I to edit? Here goes, and thank you Oupa Bobbili:

## Die mag van die kruisie – my 5 sent

Ons weet almal dat kersfees die tyd van wonderwerke en “magic” is, hier in Suid Afrika gebeur dit met verkiesing tyd ook. Skielik kry almal t-hemde, slaggate word reg gemaak en selfs die president praat Afrikaans. Kos word uit gedeel sonder dat dit gesteel word (dit is 'n groot prestasie), en almal gaan een van die dae werk hê. Jitte maar dit is darem net te wonderlik.

Ek kyk glad nie nuus nie, en my kontak met die negatiewe wêreld is maar wat rond gegooi word op die sosiale media, wat ook maar beperk is. Oggende se radio is Martin en sy span, want dit is nog positief. Daar is nog lag en mense doen nog daaglikse goeie dade. Maar mens, dan kom die nuus en die advertensies. Die negatief en die leë beloftes van die arme mense wat nou hunker na 'n kruisie.

Kyk, as jy almal werk belowe net as jy aan bewind kom, gaan van jou beloftes net 'n wind kom. As jy die leier van die land wil wees dan moes jy reeds 'n voorbeeld ge-

wees het. As jy die land wil reg ruk as jy dalk aan bewind kom, gaan dit ook nie gebeur nie. En liewe Goewerment, as jy nou kastig vir mense wil kos gee, moes jy eerder werk skepping begin doen het 30 jaar terug. Vir ALMAL, nie net vir jou tjommies nie. En nee kwagga BEE is nie werk skepping nie, julle probeer net ly gatte se diefstal regverdig. Want om 'n man wat hard gewerk het om sy besigheid op te bou, die beherende aandeel aan iemand te gee wat niks gedoen het om dit te verdien nie. Is blatande rasistiese diefstal, en glad nie demokrasie nie.

So luister ek rustig radio oppad werk toe, en “BAM” is ek in die ‘twilight zone’ en skrik ek my bloedgroep van O+ na O jitte toe. Ou Cyriltjie praat wraggies Afrikaans. Nog 'n verkiesings wonderwerk. Ek moes aftrek om geite mooi te luister. Ek konsentreer so hard op sy Afrikaans dat ek nie 'n koekenclue het wat die arme ding sê nie. Vir die radio stasies, julle moet ons waarsku voor julle die goed op die lug sit. Ons sal 'n ongeluk maak jong.

Maak jou beloftes, kry jou kruisie, weet net eendag gaan jou verantwoording baie groot wees. Niemand word gevrywaar daarvan nie. Lewe in jou eie hoender hemel waar jy elke dag net loop en pik om jou eie pens vol te maak. Onthou jy steel nie net van die mens nie, maar jy steel die siele van jou aanhangers, wat jou so blindelings volg.

Al wat “magic” is van alles, na die verkiesing verdwyn al daai beloftes soos mis voor die son. Die enigste wonderwerk is, ons wonder wie gaan nog werk na die verkiesing. Die mag van X op 'n stuk papier van kastige beloftes.

Groete - Oupa Bobbili

Dear Kruger2Canyon News team,

Firstly, thank you for a great publication. You guys have really taken it onto another level – good, interesting and an educational read. It is good that you concentrate on wildlife matters – that why we all live here.

Secondly, interesting that you are considering going digital. A friend of mine owns a community paper and going digital for them was a gamechanger – they became far more current. You just have to make sure you have a good platform on which to publish.

Hoedspruit is really growing since I started coming here. I am a swallow, so I notice changes every time I come here.

My concern is that it seems the town is growing so fast that it is starting to lose its integrity. By that I mean there are some things that are not great – signboards everywhere, the dread of a possible mall, the shantytown at the railway bridge, the litter

in town, and of course the traffic – more especially the trucks. If these matters were dealt with in a forceful, constructive manner, the town would regain its ‘shape’ again – leave it, and you are destined to become another sad tale of degradation.

Anyway, what will be will be – but I truly enjoy your publication, I read it when I am not here, and in fact have a group of friends back home that read it too! Well done and keep it up.

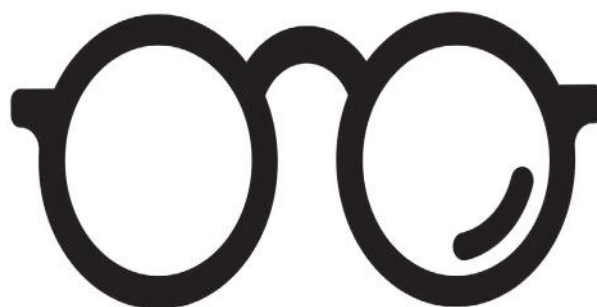
Regards Tom

Ed: Dear Tom, thank you for the praise, much appreciated and long may it last. Your concerns are real, and I believe that the powers that be are all trying to do their best to address the situation. I know it requires cooperation, and a will to make the change and work on it, which sadly is not always forthcoming. But points noted, and maybe, just maybe, those that can initiate the change read this letter!

# KYK

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# Explainer - El Niño's impact and what to expect from La Niña

Cont. from page 1

South African farmers' intentions to plant winter wheat are down 3% compared with the size of the area of the crop last year.

Neighbouring countries have been hit harder, not least because small-scale subsistence farming accounts for most of their agricultural production. Zimbabwe's maize crop is forecast to be 72% lower, Bloomberg reported.

Zambia has declared a national disaster and appealed for close to \$1 billion in aid following its driest summer growing season in more than 40 years.

The Kariba Dam is less than 14% full, creating power shortages in Zimbabwe and

Zambia.

Some agricultural sectors have emerged relatively unscathed. South Africa's citrus growers are forecasting record exports of 181,7 million cartons in 2024, a roughly 10% increase from last year's historic high of 165.1 million.

Elsewhere, the latest El Niño slammed citrus, cocoa and coffee crops, sending futures prices for all of these commodities soaring – a trend reflected in retail prices.

**What to possibly expect from La Niña**

The Little Girl, by contrast, typically heralds good rains in southern Africa, and the previous prolonged one helped South African maize farmers produce three straight bumper harvests.

So, the 2024/25 summer should be wet-

ter than 2023/24, and that should be favourable for maize and other summer crops, while dam levels should replenish.

But there is also a risk of too much rain, which is not good for grain.

Elsewhere, La Niña can lead to more intense Atlantic hurricanes which menace the east coast of North America and the Caribbean during the northern hemisphere's summer and early autumn. But it tends to take the wind out of hurricanes in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

**The effects of climate change**

The ENSO cycle is natural, but it has gone on steroids since South American fishermen first observed its consequences in the 17th century.

Human-caused greenhouse gas emis-

sions are making both patterns stronger and more frequent, research has shown.

Hopefully for southern Africa, La Niña will produce a wet summer this year, because the region will need plenty of moisture in the soil and topped-up dam levels to help it weather the next El Niño.

*This article was previously published by the Daily Maverick – Our Burning Planet: Weather woes*

## “Old specs help someone to see into their future ...”



Rotary and Tshemba teams at the equipment handover

Image supplied

This is the slogan created by the Rotary Club of Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr in North Wales. They collected hundreds of pairs of pre-loved glasses from the public and sent them to the Rotary Club of Hoedspruit.

Here Rotary donated to the Tshemba Foundation, a non-profit medical volunteer organization that is dedicated to improving the quality of health in rural communities. Hundreds of pairs of prescription glasses have been painstakingly sorted by optometrist, Leoni Joubert, a volunteer at Tshemba, ready for distribution to those who need them.

The Tshemba Foundation's eye care programme is one of the lead components of Tshemba's agenda. It is divided into hospital-based and outreach-based initiatives. In the hospital programme, which takes place

at Tintswalo Hospital, they conduct cataract surgery drives once or twice a month, in their fully equipped and stocked operating theatre. This is done in partnership with the Tintswalo Hospital management and theatre staff. Additionally, they support prevention, correction, and referral systems in the fully equipped Tintswalo Hospital eye clinic. They truly do help people see their future.

Their outreach programme sees volunteer doctors and optometrists, Tshemba staff, new partner Onesight, and school health nurses from the Department of Health involved in screening the vision of schoolchildren.

Staff members at Tshemba identified an urgent need for two specialist pieces of equipment to help them in their outreach work: one, a portable tonometer, which is

used to measure pressure within the eye, thus flagging possible glaucoma. This is an issue in the local population, but a preventable disease when caught in the early stages. The other piece of equipment, a vertometer or lensometer, is designed to measure the power of a spectacle lens. Leoni says, "This equipment is enormously helpful with the sorting of the pre-loved spectacles enabling us as accurately as possible assign them to the correct patients".

Hazel Partington, President of the Rotary Club of Hoedspruit explains: "As a part of the Vision Outreach Project, our club has linked up with Tshemba Foundation to offer support by buying these two important ophthalmic instruments".

A very exciting handover and demonstration of how the instruments work took place February at the Tshemba Volunteer

Centre Moditlo, and the instruments were immediately put to use in a week-long vision outreach program in Acornhoek.

An important message conveyed to Rotary during this handover was the additional need for ordinary sunglasses and ready-made readers for some of the patients who undergo eye surgery. The appeal to our community is to collect unused non-prescription sunglasses and ready-made readers for us to donate to this important cause.

**For any extra information regarding donations contact: Michael Henderson on email: [clauss@iafrica.com](mailto:clauss@iafrica.com)**

**People donating sunglasses/readers for this project can do so at Keystone Café, Shop 15 Kamogelo Centre or at KYK Optometrists, Shop 1, Leadwood Centre (Spar centre)**

# numiknow™ feedback of participants in the SEF Project



The learners working and learning outside in the garden, learning new skills

Images supplied

Thias Taute

Each group gave feedback on the program activities: F-Game, R-Games, splita, numiknow™ club, ICAM clubs, environmental monitoring, garden support and training. Most groups experienced similar positive outcomes while participating in the program, and sharing this information with others not only underscores the importance of the program but instills the sense of achievement in the communities where it was implemented.

The feedback summary reveals the significant impact of these sessions had on the community, particularly in terms of enhancing their numeracy skills and fostering a more environmentally-conscious lifestyle. The program has undoubtedly improved their ability to work with numbers, and has also heightened their awareness of their surroundings and the importance of preserving natural resources.

**F-Game: (The numiknow™ board game for families and groups)**

Families enjoyed playing the games to-

gether and improving their numeracy while doing so. The feedback also showed that students enjoyed including the elders in the games, and it broadened their knowledge while having an enjoyable time playing the games together with their loved ones. Interaction is one of the noteworthy points, as learning together is more fun than having to do it alone. The players enjoyed solving problems while playing games and learning valuable problem-solving skills. It was found that keeping score helps motivate players to improve.

**R-Games: (Domino games for children in ECD and Grade R)**

Here the main feedback we received was that educators enjoyed instilling a love for numbers in their children, and motivating them to come to class, due to the fun nature of these R-Games. It was also found that the R-Games are not only for preschool learners but older people can also play these games. It was found that smaller groups playing for shorter times are more effective for the R-Games, as preschool children essentially have a short attention span. The games also motivated more chil-

dren to participate, and some described it as an unforgettable experience.

**splita: (An assessment game for basic operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentage, ratios and fractions)**

split-7 was a good challenge for most students as they found that it improved their numeracy and time management without using calculators. The feedback showed that players enjoyed having the games available on their cell phones for practising their skills on the numiknow™ app.

**numiknow™ clubs: (After-school clubs facilitated by volunteers)**

Most learners enjoyed being part of a club, participating in competitions and improving their numeracy. Using games to learn also improved learners' participation and enjoyment. Some participants also testified that practicing and playing splita 7 improved the learners' marks in school.

**ICAM Clubs: (Environmental clubs)**

Students learned about the environment and, as a group, have begun taking better

care of it. They learned in a practical and fun way, which resulted in improvement in their related school subjects.

**Environmental monitoring**

The participants learned a lot from the environmental monitoring. They became more aware of their surroundings and realised the importance of keeping their environments clean and safe from pollutants. It has been reported that littering has decreased, especially near local rivers, and they have monitored water quality to ensure the safety of their water consumption. The locals also enjoyed learning about indigenous plant species and how to reduce alien species in their environments.

**Garden support and training**

Participants enjoyed working outside in the gardens and learning new gardening skills. They enjoyed seeing how their gardens were growing and utilising the vegetables from the garden. The theory of looking after vegetable gardens helped the communities get better harvests as they could better care for their gardens. Participants learned to conquer various challenges to ensure successful crops and use their harvest for feeding schemes in their communities. An offshoot was improved knowledge on nutritional awareness.

After receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback, the numiknow™ team is more motivated than ever to continue implementing some of these programs and making a difference in our communities. There is a possibility of receiving funding for a follow-up SEF project, which will ensure that this good work will continue. The announcement about the possibility of a follow-up project will hopefully be made next month.

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

## Preparing for final exams: a 5-month guide for matric students

Matric students from the Class of 2024 have roughly five months left to prepare for their final exams. While this is a tight timeframe for those who have not yet tracked and prepared their final strategy, it is possible - with dedication and motivation - to still lay a solid foundation before the first paper, an education expert says.

"Five months might feel like you still have plenty of time, but the reality is that if you aren't yet in a comfortable habit of studying based on a revision plan, time is going to catch up with you," says Peter Kriel, General Manager at The Independent Institute of Education, SA's leading private higher education provider.

"Matric exams are crucial as they often determine your overall academic performance and can significantly impact your future educational and career opportunities. These exams not only test your knowledge and understanding of the subjects studied throughout the year but, directly or indirectly, also develop important skills such as critical thinking, time management, and problem-solving."

Kriel says adequate preparation for these exams - starting right away - is essential because it will boost students' confidence, reduce stress and ensure they can perform to the best of their ability, thereby securing the grades required to pursue their desired

academic and career paths.

He advises students to immediately implement a five-month plan to organise their study routine and help them stay on track so that they will be ready and confident by the time the final exams arrive.

**JUNE: ORGANISE AND PLAN**

"With five months to go, you still have time to set clear goals and understand your objectives. You should use this time to identify the grades you want to achieve and the subjects you need to focus on. Create a study schedule to ensure that you plan your time effectively and develop a realistic study schedule that covers all subjects, balancing schoolwork and personal time," says Kriel.

"The most important approach however is to stick to the schedule as at this stage consistency is crucial. You should also use this time to gather resources and materials. This may include all necessary textbooks, notes, and any additional resources such as past papers. It is also crucial that you seek help now if there are topics you find particularly challenging."

**JULY: BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION**

With only four months to go, you should focus on active learning techniques such as writing down key concepts and points in your own words to reinforce learning,

says Kriel.

You can also consider study groups since studying with peers can provide new insights and make learning more enjoyable.

"Regularity, consistency and sticking to your plan are key. It is also now a good time to complete past papers or sample questions to get familiar with the exam format and timing and to help you focus on aspects that you have not yet mastered."

**AUGUST: DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING**

With three months to go, and if you met your deliverables in the previous month, you would now have a good idea as to where the gaps are, notes Kriel.

"The time is now to focus on weak areas to regularly assess your progress and keep identifying areas where you struggle. Spend extra time on these weak areas and use a variety of study methods like flashcards, mind maps and educational videos to keep things interesting and deepen your understanding."

**SEPTEMBER: INTENSIVE REVIEW**

The preparation pace must now increase and become laser-focused on the exams which are two months away.

"It would be a good idea to practice and review by taking full-length practice exams under timed conditions, as this builds exam stamina and time management skills.

Critically go through your answers to understand what you did well and where you can improve and focus on these areas now."

**OCTOBER: FINAL PREPARATIONS**

It is the big month and time for final revisions. This month you must focus on reviewing the most critical concepts and information in each of your subjects. However, avoid overloading yourself. Short, focused review sessions are more effective at this stage.

"As your first paper approaches, you need to sort out the actual exam logistics as well," says Kriel.

"Get a good idea of your exam schedule and plan your exam days to avoid last-minute stress. Ensure that you have all necessary supplies such as pens, pencils, calculators, and your ID. If you put in the work over the past five months as outlined above, you can be confident that you have prepared to the best of your ability, so aim to keep a positive mindset and belief in yourself."

**The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is a division of the JSE-listed ADvTECH Group, Africa's largest private education provider. The IIE is the largest, most accredited registered private higher education institute in South Africa and is accredited by The British Accreditation Council (BAC), the independent quality assurance authority that accredits private institutions in the United Kingdom (UK).**

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SOLE MANDATE

**GUESTHOUSE IN LIVERPOOL R 3 800 000**  
Beds 6 | Baths 3 | Floor: 289 m<sup>2</sup> | 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

**OLIFANTS GAME RESERVE, R 6 500 000**  
BIG 5 Beds 4 | Baths 4 | Traverse: 9,000 ha

50% share in a furnished bush home with full ownership of a Land Cruiser. Spacious lounge and living area leading to covered patio deck with phenomenal views! Braai and boma area set off the deck. A well-designed kitchen with a breakfast nook also enjoys the views. Excellent condition!

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2211900



SOLE MANDATE

**JEJANE, GREATER KRUGER, R 10 850 000**  
BIG 5 Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor: 363 m<sup>2</sup>

Enjoy over 2,700 hectares of Big 5 traverse! This stunning home has an open plan kitchen with lounge area that leads to a large covered patio and open boma braai. The home also features a separate scullery, laundry and a studio which could easily be converted to a fourth bedroom.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2238309



SOLE MANDATE

**RAPTORS LODGE R 2 800 000**  
Bedrooms 2 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: 84 m<sup>2</sup>

This unit is currently rented out on a self-catering, short-term basis, and has an established monthly income. It has an open plan lounge, well equipped, renovated kitchen with pantry and linen cupboard, and a covered patio with built in braai. The bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms with outdoor showers.

Michelle Severin - 083 468 3821 Ref: 2232710



SOLE MANDATE

**OLIFANTS GAME RESERVE, R 5 900 000**  
BIG 5 Beds 4 | Bath 4.5 | Traverse: 9,000 ha

50% Share in a beautiful bush home within Greater Kruger. This share is inclusive of a Land Rover game viewer. An open plan kitchen leads to a lounge and dining area, opening onto a large covered deck. An open boma and braai area allows for many a night under the African skies.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2203910



SOLE MANDATE

**RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE R 4 950 000**  
ESTATE Beds 3 | Baths 3.5 | Floor: 396 m<sup>2</sup>

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

**NDLOVUMZI NATURE R 4 458 000**  
RESERVE Beds 4 | Baths 4 | Floor size: 300 m<sup>2</sup>

This tranquil home 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

**KAMPERSRUS R 2 450 000**  
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor: 120 m<sup>2</sup>

This home is a great option for first-time home buyers or those looking for an investment opportunity. The home has an open plan living room with the kitchen set to the one side. Above the kitchen is a loft area which can be utilised in various ways. Property is fenced and pet friendly.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2247851

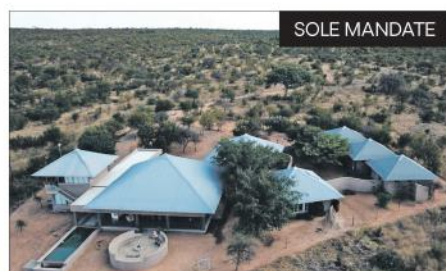


SOLE MANDATE

**BLYDE WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 950 000**  
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 3 | Floor size: 310 m<sup>2</sup>

This property has a main house and separate 1-bedroom cottage. The main house has an open plan living area with lounge, kitchen and loft. A covered patio, pool, built in braai area, laundry and covered parking area complete the property.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2238263



SOLE MANDATE

**MAHLATHINI PRIVATE GAME R 5 450 000**  
RESERVE Beds 5 | Baths 6 | Floor size: 715 m<sup>2</sup>

The main house on this 21-ha property features 2 bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, an open plan living area, kitchen with scullery and pantry, a covered patio, pool, boma, observatory and triple garage. There are 3 chalets located separately from the main home for visiting family or guests.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2249548



SOLE MANDATE

**MODITLO ESTATE, BIG 4 R 8 990 000**  
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 3.5 | Floor size: 420 m<sup>2</sup>

Fully furnished house with modern open-plan kitchen, dining room and lounge. Outdoor entertainment area with a covered patio, pool and boma overlooking the riverbed. The triple garage, two carports, back up power and Harvey tiled roof adds practicality and durability to the property.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2232056



SOLE MANDATE

**BLYDE WILDLIFE ESTATE R 2 999 000**  
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: 155 m<sup>2</sup>

Set in a quiet area, this newly built home features an open plan kitchen with breakfast seating area, and a living room with natural wood, open truss ceilings. There is also a built-in braai area and a double latte carport to keep vehicles protected. The estate is pet friendly.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2248707



RENTAL

**RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE R 18 000 pm**  
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# Hadedas' 'sixth sense' works best in wet soil: wading birds



A hadeda ibis foraging

Image: Canva Pro Nico Smit

Carla Jacquelyn du Toit  
Newton International Fellow, University of Cambridge

**Hadedas (Bostrychia hagedash) are one of the most familiar species of birds across sub-Saharan Africa. They are large, long-legged birds with long, thin beaks for probing invertebrates out of soil, and though they appear dull brown at a glance, they actually have beautiful iridescent feathers on their wings. But they are best known for their loud, laughing calls, which often ring out early in the morning, winning them the title of "African alarm clocks".**

They can be found across much of sub-Saharan Africa, with a range extending from the Cape all the way to Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan. In South Africa, they were historically confined to north-eastern regions of the country. But in the past century they have experienced a significant range expansion, now inhabiting many a golf course and garden from Johannesburg to Cape Town.

Various ibises and shorebirds (like sandpipers) are able to use the "sixth sense" of remote touch. This allows them to detect vibrations in soil and water and use this information to locate invisible buried prey items. When they hunt for soft-bodied prey (such as earthworms), these vibrations result from the movement of prey in the soil. The birds can sense these vibrations using a special sensory organ in their beaks, called a bill-tip organ, which evolved during the time of the dinosaurs.

Recently published research from my PhD at the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology shows that hadedas have this sixth sense too – something that had been assumed based on the anatomy of their beaks but never tested. In addition, my co-authors and I discovered an added twist to their sixth sense – their ability to use it is closely tied to the amount of water in the soil. This has likely played a role in hadedas' range expansion and has global implications for key groups of wading birds.

## Testing hadedas' 'sixth sense'

Based on the birds' beak anatomy, my co-authors and I knew it was likely that hadedas used remote touch while foraging. To confirm this, we used a series of sensory assays – a type of experiment testing how different sensory cues (such as sound or smell) affect how quickly an animal can detect a stimulus.

We tested hadedas housed in free-flight aviaries at a bird sanctuary. We presented them with trays filled with soil, in which we buried several worms. We knew the birds couldn't see the buried worms, but we also needed to make sure they weren't using hearing or scent to find them. We masked any sounds the worms made by playing white noise from a speaker next to the trays. To ensure the hadedas couldn't smell the worms, we mixed crushed worms into the soil.

Neither of these affected how quickly hadedas found their prey. So, we concluded that they weren't using hearing or scent to locate the worms in our experiments.

To test whether hadedas were able to use remote touch, we gave them either live worms (which moved around and produced vibrations) or dead worms (which did not produce vibrations). The birds were able to find the moving worms significantly faster than the dead ones, indicating that they are able to sense vibrations, and use them to find prey in the absence of all other sensory information.

## Why soil water matters for remote touch

The mechanical waves (vibrations) that the bird's sense are transmitted better in liquids than in gases, so we predicted that hadedas would be more successful at detecting vibrations (and finding prey) in wetter substrates. Once we had established that hadedas could use remote touch, we tested how adding different amounts of water to the soil affected how quickly they located their prey, as this could be a factor that affects where they are able to forage.

When they were using remote touch, the birds located the worms significantly



A hadeda ibis taking part in a foraging experiment, searching for buried worms in a tray filled with soil

Image: Carla du Toit



Other remote touch foraging birds likely rely on soil water to find prey, such as the critically endangered spoon-billed sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*)

Image: Daniel Field

# new research is a wake-up call for survival of with this superpower

faster in wetter soils, supporting our prediction. If they were given dead worms (no vibrations), adding water to the soil had no effect on their prey capture rate, so it wasn't simply because the wetter soils were easier to dig around in. If the soil was too dry, hadedas lost their ability to sense living worms faster than dead ones. This indicates that they could not use remote touch in dry soils, and were instead having to rely on random probing to find prey.

In the wild, this would mean taking twice as long to find the same amount of prey, or ending the day with less than half the amount of prey as they would have if they could use remote-touch.

## Effects of remote touch and soil water on hadedas

Our findings shed new light on the range expansion of hadedas in South Africa. Previous studies have shown that their range expansion matches with increased areas of artificial irrigation – particularly around farms and large suburban areas. Our research suggests that one of the driving factors is that hadedas need soil with enough water to be able to sense their prey. This could in part explain why they aren't found in more arid areas of the country.

Their dependence on moist soil could have significant effects on their population in periods of prolonged drought. Dry soil would mean that birds like hadedas would struggle to find prey. The predicted trends in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that droughts and heatwaves will become more frequent and last longer as a result of climate change. Thus, even common garden birds like hadedas may be threatened in decades to come.

## The bigger picture: a global warning?

Although hadedas need water in soils to use remote touch, they actually tend to forage in drier soils than most other remote touch foraging bird species. Their bill-tip organ anatomy indicates hadedas have more sensitive bill-tip organs than ibises that forage in wetter substrates.

Coupled with our new findings, this likely means that other remote touch probing birds would be even more vulnerable to decreases in substrate saturation. Several species, such as the spoon-billed sandpiper, are already critically endangered.

Our results therefore suggest that it's important to consider birds' sensory requirements from their habitats, particularly regarding levels of water in the substrates waders forage in.

So, while the hadedas' raucous calls may be annoying at times, it's a sombre thought that Africans could lose the sound of our natural alarm clocks. We hope that our study will highlight this overlooked aspect of wading birds' ecology, and that we don't oversleep this particular alarm call from nature.

*Carla Jacquelyn du Toit currently receives funding from The Royal Society (UK). The work presented in this article was funded by GENUS DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences (South Africa). During the time of this work, she was a doctoral student at the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology (University of Cape Town). University of Cambridge provides funding as a member of The Conversation UK. This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license.*



A hadeda ibis carries a worm it has just caught from an irrigated lawn (top) and shows off its red beak and iridescent wing feathers (above and below)

Images: Carla du Toit



Sensing a different perspective - the author and one of the hadeda ibises (above left) and the new study shows hadeda ibises rely on water for more than just drinking to survive

Image: Carla du Toit



## Trivia questions

- 1 What animal could be Siberian or Caspian?
- 2 The Mariner's Compass or Pyxis is what?
- 3 What is the National Bird of India?
- 4 What is the last book of the Bible?
- 5 What historical event was referred to as Black 47?
- 6 What colour is the cross on the Greek Flag?
- 7 Lack of vitamin B1 causes what condition?
- 8 Parsley is a member of which family?
- 9 Which car company produced the first front wheel drive 1934?
- 10 The name of which country's capital means good air or fair winds?
- 11 Which record label signed the Rolling Stones in 1991?
- 12 Who was the first gymnast to score a perfect 10 in Olympics?
- 13 What bird is sacred in Peru?
- 14 What tanker caused a severe oil spill in 1989?
- 15 Which soul singer was 'Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay'?
- 16 In which city would you find The Blue Mosque?
- 17 What ship was scuttled in Auckland harbour in 1987?
- 18 A myologist studies what?
- 19 Who might wear a wimple in today's world?
- 20 What is the largest country in Africa?
- 21 According to the proverb which fruit tastes the sweetest?
- 22 What animal's name literally translates as earth pig?
- 23 What country was once named New France?
- 24 Name ship sunk by the submarine HMS Conqueror in the Falklands War?
- 25 What is the main flavour of aioli?

# Imphepho, the liquorice plant - *Helichrysum odoratissimum*



*Nature correspondent*

**There are about 240 species of *Helichrysum* that are indigenous to South Africa! The name *Helichrysum* is derived from the Greek words *helios* meaning sun, and *chrysos* meaning gold, referring to the many species with yellow flower heads.**

*Helichrysum odoratissimum*, as its name implies, is a strongly aromatic herb, much branched, perennial, with small silvery leaves and small yellow flowerheads borne in groups at the tips of the branches. It can reach 1,75 m high.

The leaves vary, but are greyish-white, woolly on both surfaces, but sometimes without wool. The plant flowers throughout the year.

The 'main attraction' of this herb is that it is culturally, spiritually and medicinally very significant in African cultures.

Several species of *Helichrysum* are used in traditional medicines, but *H. odoratissimum* is widely used as a perfume. The southern Sotho women make a perfumed ointment from this plant. Essential oils are extracted from this plant. The leaves and stems are widely used as incense to connect with the ancestors, appease them and invoke the goodwill of them, and to clear stagnant energy. The smoke is also used as a sedative and helpful for insomnia. In the Eastern Cape people inhale it as a protective cleanser and it is also used medicinally for coughs and

colds. Xhosa healers, burn imphepho to induce and clarify dreams while Zulu diviners smoke or chew the stems and leaves of the plant to remove pollutants from their minds. Some people boil the plant and use it as a facial ointment for pimples. In Lesotho the plant is burnt to fumigate sick rooms. It is also effective in repelling parasites and insects thus ensuring a good night's sleep. The Khoisan anoint their bodies with this herb for its antimicrobial benefit. The herb can also be used as an aromatic and insect repellent stuffing for mattresses - giving rise to the Afrikaans name of '*kooigoed*'. Various parts of the plant are prepared into decoctions, poultices, balms and ointments. It is used in cases of acne, arthritis, boils, burns, asthma, backache, colds and flu, cough, fever, headache, menstrual cramps, scars, and sprains, as well as for wounds and burns. It is widely used in several more African countries, including Kenya and Zimbabwe where it is common.

When you come across this little herb, take a minute to look at it and ponder, that this relatively small indigenous plant is so revered, and used in so many ways by traditional healers, and communities for its medicinal properties. It is widely celebrated for its spiritual significance in cleansing rituals and for its calming effects on the mind. What a wonderful plant!

## Why do primates groom each other?

Primates, like all animals, including humans, have their fair share of external parasites that they acquire during daily movements and activities. They do not groom only to rid themselves and one another of these, but also to clean and comb the fur. They also remove and eat scabs, flakes of skin and salt deposits left by perspiration. Grooming is also a form of social bonding and a reassuring and confidence building behaviour for juveniles.

Of the local species, the baboon is probably the most prodigious and conspicuous groomer. For diurnal species, early mornings, heat of the day and late afternoons, prior to moving to sleeping areas, are the times when this activity is most common. In monkeys and baboons, grooming is done with the hands that are moved methodically through the fur. Interestingly, the galagos (bush babies) groom not with their hands, but with their mouths. The lower front tooth row consists of 6 teeth, four incisors and two flattened canines that face forward in a crested comb-like line. The fur is combed (mostly when matted) by rhythmic movements of the lower jaw, and the tongue also then comes

into play, licking the fur like cats do. There is a 'secondary' tongue with projections just behind the tooth row that can be manipulated to remove hair stuck between the teeth. Galagos also use the claw on the second toe of the foot (all other toes have nails) to groom themselves.

In monkeys and baboons, lower ranking individuals groom more than they are groomed, except for juveniles who are constantly groomed by mothers or equal ranking family members. Grooming is solicited by either party. Mature males, in my experience, approach females to be groomed more often than they are approached. Two or three individuals may groom an individual (especially a big male), or it could just be one-on-one. Mutual grooming of each other at the same time is also common. That is, of course, one of the most important forms of socialising for strengthening bonds, alliances, and the general cohesion of the group, as well as reinforcing hierarchies.

## Why are the genitals often brightly coloured?

Bright colours on the genitals of many primate species are used to convey dominance status (males) and sexual status (females) and are a clear indication that primates, like humans (we are a primate), have colour vision. The powder blue scrotum and bright red penis of the vervet monkey male indicates maturity and status, dominant males sitting with legs open to advertise themselves. The massive red swellings of the female baboon backside and genital area are visual signals to males that they are coming into heat. There is usually an established hierarchy among the males in the troop, but females in this condition elicit a lot of aggression among males - the dominant males sometimes even being deliberately distracted, while younger males sneak a visit with the female. Because baboons do not have a set breeding season, the condition can be observed at any time of the year, especially in large troops. Once the female has conceived, or the oestrous cycle is completed, the swelling and bright colour fades



**Baboons grooming each other**  
Image: Canva Johan63

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

## Trivia answers

- |   |                                    |                           |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Tiger   | 10 Argentina - Buenos Aires        | 19 Certain orders of nuns |
| 2 A small faint constellation in the southern sky | 11 Virgin Records                  | 20 Algeria                |
| 3 Indian peacock                                  | 12 Nadia Comaneci                  | 21 Forbidden fruit        |
| 4 Book of Revelations                             | 13 Andean condor                   | 22 Aardvark               |
| 5 Worst year of the Great Hunger in Ireland       | 14 Exxon Valdez (off Alaska)       | 23 Canada                 |
| 6 White   | 15 Otis Redding                    | 24 General Belgrano       |
| 7 Beriberi  | 16 Istanbul                        | 25 Garlic                 |
| 8 Carrot  | 17 Rainbow Warrior (of Greenpeace) |                           |
| 9 Citroen   | 18 The muscular system of the body |                           |



## The brown button spider - *Latrodectus* sp.



Tim Baynham  
Wildlife Safety Solutions

The brown button spider is one of our more common medically significant spider species. Belonging to the genus *Latrodectus* is its more notorious and infamous "cousin" the black button spider or black widow.

Brown button spiders are widely distributed throughout much of South Africa and introduced populations are found in many parts of the world. It is however believed that they were originally native to Africa.

Very commonly found around buildings and other man-made structures, typically taking up residence under windowsills, tables, chairs, and other items of furniture. They may also be found in dark secluded corners in storerooms, garages, and ware-

houses. They are "web bound spiders", meaning they live their lives in the confines of their web. They construct three dimensional rather messy webs and often the egg sacs or cases are clearly visible. The round eggs sacs are characterized by having spikey projections, unlike the black button spiders which have smooth round eggs sacs. Each egg sac may contain up to 150 eggs which hatch after approximately 20 days. A single female can produce as many as 20 egg sacs throughout her life span.

Brown button spiders are medium sized spiders, measuring between 30 to 40 mm across, legs included. Males are smaller than females. The legs are typically brown in colour with darker bands on the joints of each leg. The abdomen is large, bulbous, and maybe grey, white, light brown or black in colour, with several geometric spots and patterns on the dorsal surface. The char-



Brown button spider Images: Supplied

acteristic reddish orange hourglass shaped marking is found on the ventral side (underside) of the abdomen.

They feed on a variety of insects that may fall victim to their tangled web. They possess neurotoxic venom which quickly immobilizes prey items. If disturbed these inoffensive spiders will form a tight ball and drop to the ground, feigning death. Bites on humans are rare, particularly when one considers how common these spiders can be, and bites usually occur when the spider is accidentally squashed. The bite is painful and will be immediately noticeable.

The bite site turns red and often a localized rash will form. Symptoms may include pain, nausea, shortness of breath, abdominal pain, and cramps, painful and enlarged lymph nodes, sweating, muscle stiffness, restlessness and raised temperature. It is advisable to seek medical attention if bit-

ten. Bites are treated symptomatically, and, in most cases, symptoms resolve in a few days. No deaths have been recorded from this species.

As the saying goes prevention is better than cure and general situational awareness will go a long way in preventing any bites. Take particular care when moving any furniture, pot plants or any item in storerooms, workshops, and warehouses. Always thoroughly check the underside of furniture and be careful where you place your hands.

**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, Instagram wildlife\_safety\_solutions**

## The East African shovel-snout - *Prosymna stuhlmanni*

Luke Kemp  
African Snakebite Institute

The East African shovel-snout is a small snake that is seldom seen. This snake averages around 20 - 25 cm in length but can reach 35 cm total. The East African shovel-snout is light greyish blue in colour, often with pale-centred scales. There may be faint pale flecks that form two indistinct lines running down the back. The belly is cream to white in colour which may extend slightly up the sides of the body. The head is small with large dark eyes and a distinct hardened snout, which is rounded and usually distinctly yellow. The tip of the tail is stubby and ends with a terminal spike, which may be pressed into an attacker or someone holding the snake. This does not cause any damage but may give the handler a fright.

The snout may assist the snake in burrowing into leaf litter and soft sand but is also used during feeding. This snake is a specialist feeder, feeding on reptile eggs such as soft-shelled lizard eggs or the small hard-shelled gecko eggs. Often the eggs are stuck together, and the hardened snout of the snake allows them to pry the eggs apart. The eggs are then swallowed whole, and the digestive juices break them down. Juvenile lizards may also form part of the diet. Termite alates (flying ants) have been reported to be eaten by these snakes.

These are secretive snakes which live underground, under logs and rocks and in

thick leaf litter. They may emerge at night, especially after decent rains, and may be found around the house or camps or if you have keen eyes, spotted crossing the road at night.

They are inoffensive and harmless to humans. Like most shovel-snout snakes, they may hiss and curl and uncurl whilst flattening out the body. This is a defensive behaviour hoping to scare off an attacker. They can also lift the head off the ground and partly flatten out the neck region, possibly mimicking a small cobra. They may hiss quite a bit, but never attempt to bite and are completely harmless little snakes.

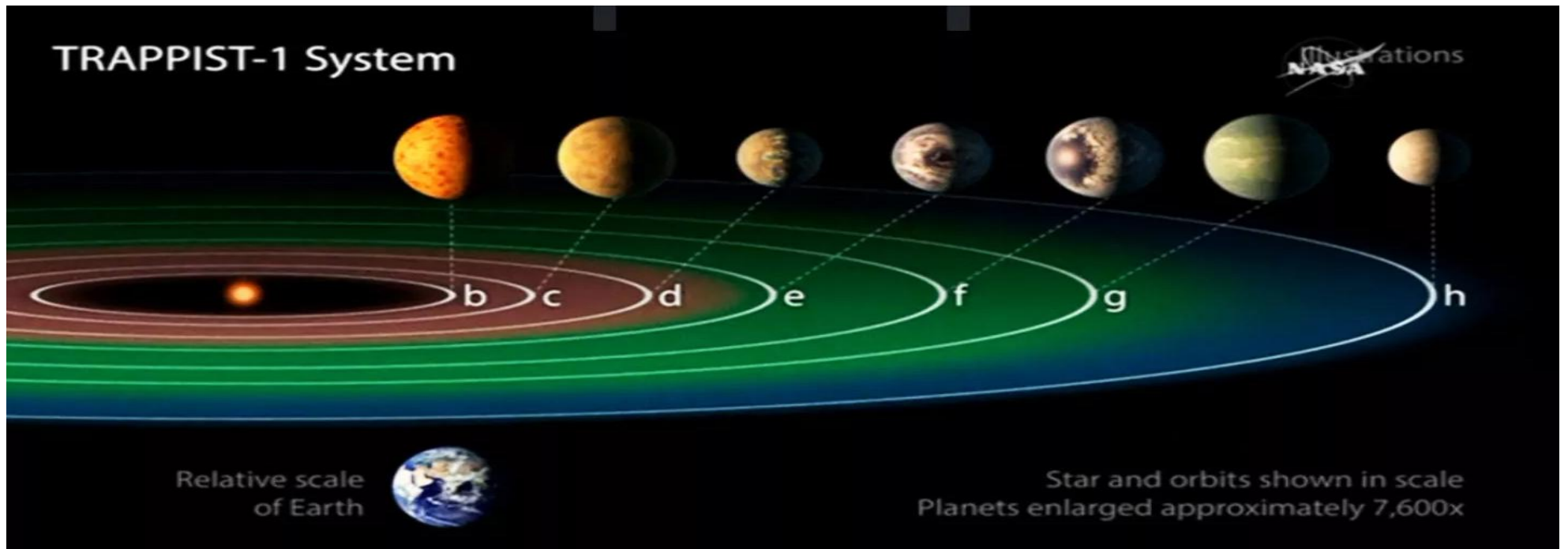
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East African shovel-snout  
Image: Johan Marais



# Strange New Worlds



Trappist system (above) Exoplanet types (below), spectroscopy (bottom middle) and exoplanets micro-pensing (bottom) Images supplied: Ben Coley

Ben Coley

In 1966, the Starship Enterprise first detailed its mission ‘... to explore strange new worlds, seek out new life and new civilisations...’ At the time, this was of course nothing more than science fiction but 60 years on, we are closing in on its ambitious plan. Whilst the wait for space ships with warp speed capacity may still be some time off, the idea of at least identifying ‘strange new worlds’ has long-been a reality.

People have been positing the idea of worlds orbiting other stars since the 1500s; a sentiment even echoed by the great Sir Isaac Newton. Considering the vastness of space, it seems a ridiculous presupposition that our Sun and its collection of worlds is unique, and it was just a matter of time (and technology) until it could be proven. The inevitable finally happened in 1992 when 2 planets were discovered orbiting a rapidly spinning neutron star known as a pulsar. Three years later, astronomers found the first evidence of another world orbiting a star, 50 light years away in the constellation of Pegasus. The large world, now classified as a ‘Hot Jupiter’ was massive enough for its gravity to cause its parent star to exhibit a ‘wobble’ that was picked up by our instrumentation.

Thanks to new and improved telescopes on the ground and in space, we have now discovered close to 5000 new worlds scattered throughout our galactic neighbourhood, with thousands more to be verified. Astronomers have various means of finding exo-planets

### Radial Velocity

A planet can exert enough of a gravitational pull to cause the parent star’s light to be stretched and squeezed as it is emitted. These spectral gyrations can be measured from Earth and allow astronomers to infer the mass and orbit of the planet causing them

### The Transit Method

If a planet’s orbital path causes it to pass between the star and the Earth, there is a noticeable dip in the star’s brightness. By monitoring the frequency and intensity of the events, a planet’s mass and orbit can be determined.

### Gravitational Microlensing

Thanks to gravity’s ability to bend and distort space, a nearby star can act as a lens to magnify objects passing behind it. If the lensing star also has a planet, its additional gravitation disturbance causes distortions in the background object being viewed.

### Direct Observations

Exo-planets do not give off much light and are lost in the glare of their natal star, but we can use equipment to quell the star-light, allowing sensitive, infrared-seeing telescopes such as James Webb to pick up the heat energy given off by planets.

When light from a star passes through the atmosphere of an exo-planet on its way to us, the elements within it block out certain wavelengths. These ‘holes’ look like barcodes on a rainbow, with each element causing specific patterns that can be interpreted. This allows us to create a chemical map of the atmosphere and see exactly what gases are present. These techniques have enabled us to see intricate properties of these exotic new worlds and the results are the stuff of science fiction (even if the naming scheme needs some work!!)

Here are five of the weirdest exoplanets found to date:

#### HD189773 b

This cobalt-blue marble world is the closest Hot-Jupiter to Earth. It orbits its star in just 2.2 days but forget about having 150 birthday’s a year... The stunning colour comes from reflected silica in its atmosphere, where wind speeds of 8,700km/h create horizontal glass rain that would shred anything in its path.

#### 55 Cerci e

This planet could be the most valuable ever discovered. Under a global lava-ocean, it is a rocky Super-Earth, thought to be made up of carbon-based material (as opposed to oxygen-based like our own), meaning up to a third of the entire world could be solid diamond. If true, its GDP would be around 385 quadrillion times that of the Earth.

#### Wasp 76b

Tidally locked to its star in the constellation of Pisces, Wasp 76b’s near side reaches searing temperatures of over 2500°C; hot enough to evaporate iron on its surface. As this atmospheric iron passes into the permanent night-time side of the planet, it cools and condenses into clouds that precipitate liquid iron rain.

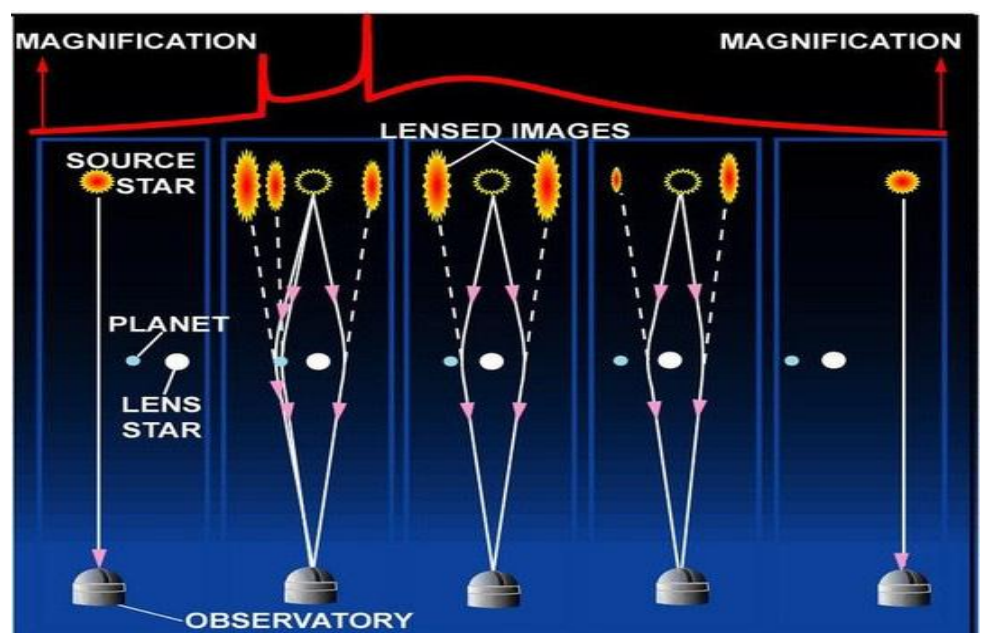
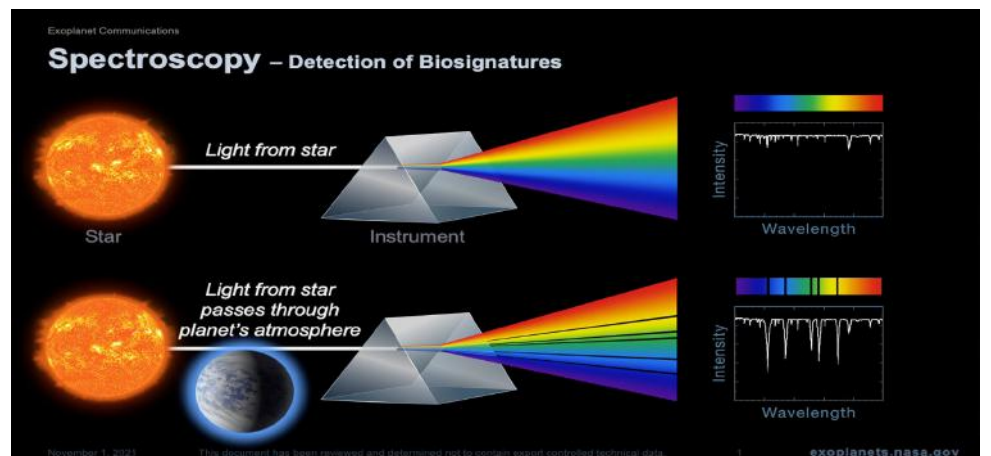
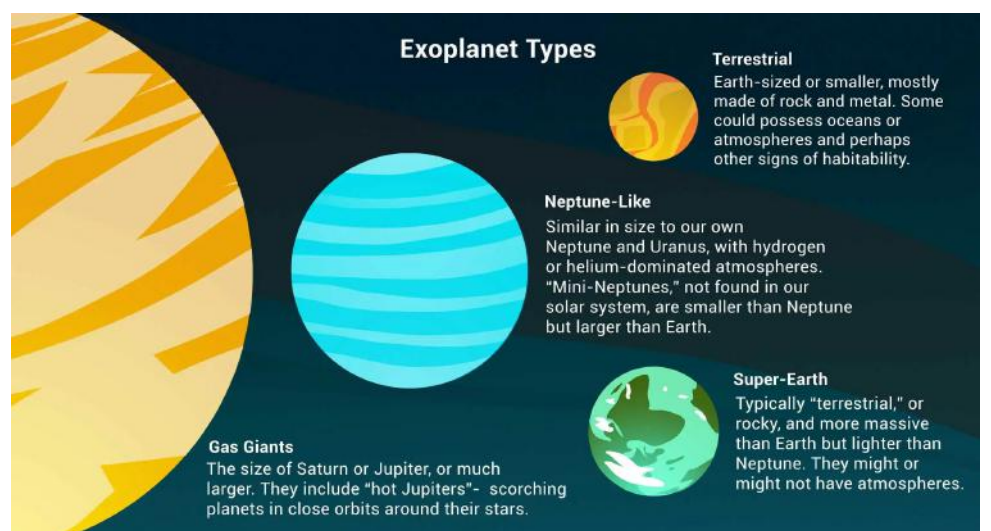
#### Gillette 1132 b

Astronomers believe that this planet started out as a gas giant but slowly had its atmosphere stripped away by the radiation from its star, leaving only a rocky core behind. Since then, the gravitational pull of the star has flexed the rock so wildly, that gases trapped within have been released, creating a new, resurrected atmosphere.

#### Upsilon Andromeda b

In a true case of ‘Fire and Ice’, the 2 sides of this exoplanet sit at wildly differing temperatures. The half permanently facing its star roasts at a searing 1600°C while the dark side is a teeth chattering -200°C. Crossing the boundaries between the two would be like jumping into a volcano!

The ultimate goal, of course, is to find a planet similar to our own that could host life, as we know it at least. A world situated in the habitable zone of its parent star (not too close and not too far) that would allow for liquid water, and that has a similar atmospheric composition to Earth. There are candidates, such as some within the



TRAPPIST system; a solar system comprising at least 7 rocky planets that could all potentially mirror the Earth in terms of their composition, size and water content. But there is a big difference in finding a suitable world, and finding one with life. For this we will need pretty strong evidence of bio-signatures: byproducts that could only be created from life, be they past or present. Or perhaps in an extreme case, we may even

find signs of industry pollution in an alien atmosphere!

For now, we must be satisfied with the first part of the Starship Enterprise’s mission plan; to merely ‘...explore strange new worlds’, but as we peer deeper into the cosmos, we may yet have the chance to ‘seek out new life, and new civilisations’ and who knows, one day ‘to boldly go where no man has gone before’!

# Democracy: unveiling the duality of its pros and cons

AI perspective 'correspondent'

In the tapestry of political systems that have shaped human governance throughout history, democracy emerges as a prominent thread, celebrated for its promise of equality, freedom, and representation. Yet, beneath its idealistic veneer lie complexities and challenges that demand scrutiny. As societies worldwide navigate the intricacies of democracy, it is crucial to unravel both its virtues and vices, understanding the nuanced interplay between its pros and cons.

## Pros

At its core, democracy embodies the principle of popular sovereignty, empowering citizens to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This inclusivity fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, as leaders are held to answer for their actions by an informed and engaged electorate. Through mechanisms such as free and fair elections, democracy offers a platform for diverse voices to be heard, ensuring representation for minorities and marginalized groups.

Moreover, democracy serves as a bulwark against authoritarianism, safeguarding individual rights and civil liberties against encroachments by the state. By establishing checks and balances through independent judiciary systems, constitutions, and separation of powers, demo-

cratic societies mitigate the risk of tyranny and abuse of power. The presence of a free press and robust civil society further reinforces transparency and government accountability, bolstering the resilience of democratic institutions.

Economically, democracy has been linked to prosperity and stability, as it promotes competition, innovation, and the rule of law. By fostering an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and investment, democratic nations often experience higher levels of economic growth and development. Furthermore, the prevalence of peaceful transitions of power in democratic systems reduces the likelihood of political instability and violence, contributing to long-term social cohesion and prosperity.

## Cons

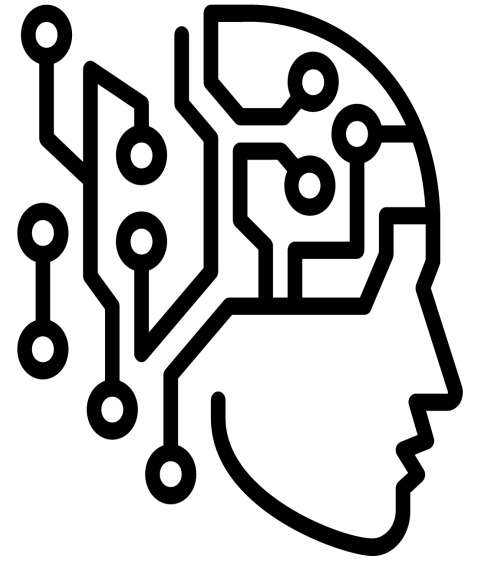
However, the democratic edifice is not impervious to cracks, as evidenced by the persistence of challenges and shortcomings. One of the foremost criticisms levelled against democracy is its susceptibility to populism and demagoguery, where charismatic leaders exploit public sentiment for personal gain, often at the expense of democratic norms and institutions. This erosion of democratic values poses a threat to the very foundation of the system, as institutions designed to uphold the rule of law become vulnerable to manipulation and erosion.

Moreover, the pursuit of short-term electoral gains can lead to policy paralysis and gridlock, hampering effective governance and impeding progress on pressing issues. The prevalence of polarized political discourse exacerbates this gridlock, as ideological divides deepen, and compromise becomes increasingly elusive. In such environments, the needs and interests of the electorate may be overshadowed by partisan agendas, undermining the legitimacy of democratic governance.

Furthermore, democracy is not immune to the influence of money and special interests, as the rise of corporate lobbying and campaign finance loopholes can distort the democratic process. Inequities in political participation, such as voter suppression and disenfranchisement, undermine the principle of equal representation and perpetuate systemic injustices. Additionally, the tyranny of the majority poses a threat to minority rights, as vulnerable communities may find themselves marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes.

## Conclusion

Democracy stands as a beacon of hope and aspiration, embodying the ideals of liberty, equality, and justice. Yet, its realization is tempered by the inherent complexities and challenges that define its existence. As societies grapple with the duality of its pros and cons, it becomes



evident that democracy is not a static destination but a dynamic journey, requiring constant vigilance, adaptation, and renewal.

By acknowledging the limitations and vulnerabilities of democracy, while also harnessing its transformative potential, societies can navigate the turbulent waters of governance with resilience and fortitude. In doing so, they honour the enduring promise of democracy: to empower individuals, uphold fundamental rights, and forge a more just and equitable future for all.

Credit: ChatGPT, chat.openai.com

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Coastal Hire	015 793 0971
Mopane Group	015 781 1571

## SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

Drakensig Laerskool	015 793 3756
Drakensig Pre-primer	015 793 2401
Hoedspruit Christian School	015 793 2067
Lowveld Academy	015 793 3750
Mariepiskop Laerskool	079 529 6071
Mariepiskop Pre-primer	082 880 7069
Perspective Training College	082 787 4471
Southern Cross Schools	015 793 0590

## EMERGENCY - HELP LINES

After Hours Emergency Doctors	084 770 1741
Air Force Base Hoedspruit	015 799 2911
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 Protection Foundation	065 743 2224
Hoedspruit Clinic	015 793 2342
Hoedspruit Medical Rescue	072 170 0864
Hoedspruit Paws	078 431 3161

Hoedspruit Town Watch	072 812 2172
	082 683 2835
Hoedspruit Farm Watch	072 310 0032
Hospital AFB Drakensig	015 799 2065
Hospital Nelspruit Mediclinic	013 759 0645
Hospital Tintswalo	013 795 5000
Hospital Sekororo Gvt-The Oaks	015 383 9400
Hospital Tzaneen Mediclinic	015 305 8536
Maruleng Municipality	015 793 2409
Medical Rescue	072 170 0864
Med Centre Emergency No	084 770 1743
Protrack	015 793 2585
SAPS Station Commander	082 565 8253
SAPS General	101 111
SAPS	015 799 4000
SPCA Phalaborwa	071 519 7044
Victim Support Unit	082 940 0651

## MEDICAL & VETERINARY SERVICES

Counselling Ronelle Joubert	082 787 4471
DR Van Eeden (Dentist)	015 793 1876
DR D Verhagen	015 793 0606
DR A Polley	015 793 0606
DR Shivambu	087 260 1537
DR Werner Muller (Dentist)	015 793 1894
Hlokomela	072 698 6538
Hoedspruit Clinic	015 793 2342
Hoeds Wildlife Est Pharmacy	015 793 1427
J Coetzee (Clinical Psychologist)	015 781 0012
Kyk Oogkundiges (Optometrist)	060 548 5387
Med Centre (Dentists)	015 793 0845
ProVet Veterinary Hospital	015 793 0797

## REAL ESTATE & PROPERTY

Century 21	015 793 1534
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## TOURISM & THINGS TO DO

Eastgate Airport	015 793 3681
Hds Endangered Species Centre	015 793 1633
Jabulani Elephant Interaction	015 793 1265
K2C Biosphere Region	015 817 1838
Sky-Way Trails	013 737 8374



## Southern Cross SCHOOLS

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# Our community built a garden



The garden being landscaped

Images: supplied

*Community correspondent*

For years, the entrance to Hoedspruit via the R40 was an eyesore. The area near PME Supplies Hoedspruit (PME) had become a chaotic staging and storage space for thatch grass trucks, blocking the view of the intersection and creating a serious safety hazard. But overnight on December 28, 2023, Farmwatch, in collaboration with Maruleng Municipality, Limpopo Traffic, and SAPS, transformed the space by installing concrete barrier posts, preventing truck access, and mitigating the risk of accidents.

The next challenge was to repurpose the area. On December 29, 2023, Farmwatch posted a call to action on the Hoedspruit Town Facebook page, seeking volunteers to beautify the space. Without fully knowing what lay ahead, Arda van Dongen put up her hand and said: "I'll do it!"... and so the project began.

Little did Arda know this would spark a heart-warming display of community spirit. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024, a request was posted on Hoedspruit Town Facebook page, which resulted in a flood of positive responses. While a few naysayers appeared, the focus was on demonstrating the community's power rather than engaging in online disputes. Businesses from Hoedspruit and surrounding areas, along with residents, rallied together, offering their time, materi-

als, and money. It was a true cross-section of the community - locals, foreigners, long-term residents, newcomers, tourists, white, black, English, and Afrikaans – all coming together with a shared purpose. Even the displaced thatch truck operators supported the project, relocating their operations to a more suitable location across the road and next to the R40.

The initial task was clearing the site and bringing in dirt and rocks for landscaping. Designing and planting the garden followed, a herculean effort, made possible by Kobus and Dalien Muller from Appelblaar Nursery. Kobus initially promised 50 plants but ended up donating hundreds, along with the requisite labour for much of the work. Volunteers toiled in 40-degree heat, moving dirt, rocks, and planting trees - a testament to their dedication and affinity for our town.

Simultaneously, discussions were held to improve the PME wall. PME management generously allowed for the painting of the wall. Local artist and gallery owner, Warren Cary, stepped up to lead this portion of the project. Artists from Hoedspruit and surrounding areas were offered the opportunity to paint sections of the wall with pictures of animals that are representative of the Hoedspruit area. The results are just stunning. All paints and materials were supplied by Lizelle and Craig Bigalke from



Paintsmiths.

New trash bins were installed at the garden and the R40/R527 intersection to keep the area clean, with Maruleng Local Municipality staff regularly emptying the bins and maintaining the area.

None of this would have been possible without the support of local businesses and residents. Volunteers were honoured with a stone bearing their name, arranged around one of the leadwood trees. Help came from many sources: Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate provided initial and ongoing watering; numerous individuals and families donated plants and trees (particularly the Craucamp family); water donations came from Mzansi

Water, Pick & Pay, and Le Bamba; Keystone Café provided lunch; and Pala Pave created the pathways. The support from this wonderful town was overwhelming.

This is a good-news story that began with an idea, a call for help, and an outpouring of community support. A huge thank you to everyone involved - businesses, volunteers, painters, Maruleng Municipality, the Mayor's office, SAPS, and Farmwatch. You all know who you are.

And so, after months of hard work, Hoedspruit now boasts a beautiful mural and garden welcoming all visitors. Well done Hoedspruit, and here's to the next project!!

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