



KRUGER2CANYON

NEWS

July 2024

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

The myth of 'too many elephants'



A herd of elephants

Photo: WL Davies Canva

Ross Harvey - Business Live

If you've had a conversation with anyone recently returned from the Kruger National Park (KNP), you're likely to hear: "It was lekker, but there are too many elephants! The damage to the trees is crazy." The idea is often linked to thinking that suggests we should cull elephants as a 'necessary evil' to manage numbers, and that we should reopen a global trade in ivory. I've written at length on why the latter is a poor policy idea. But there are three major problems with the idea of "too many elephants" that need to be addressed.

First, the idea that reduced poaching has exploded elephant numbers feeds a myth that the Kruger's "carrying capacity" has been exceeded and that "too many elephants" destroy big trees, especially knob thorn and marula. Incidentally, reduced poaching has had very little effect on population growth rates. But the myths persist because of historical thinking in conservation that idealises wild landscapes as static entities that must possess a certain unchanging proportion of beautiful old

trees to other plants and animals. But wild landscapes are not farms that must strike a balance between marauding elephants and old trees. Wild landscapes the size of the Greater Kruger – now nearly 2.5 million hectares – require heterogeneous, dynamic impact, which renders concepts like "carrying capacity" obsolete. In other words, the space is technically large enough to allow elephant populations to increase naturally and engineer the landscape the way they are designed to.

By way of evidence, a 2022 scientific paper indicates that there has been no decrease in heterogeneity within the Kruger Park since the 1990s, despite elephant populations having grown at just over 4.1% per annum on average post-culling. There are approximately 30 000 elephants now and KNP management has not suggested that this is 'too many'. A 2017 paper is similarly clear that elephants are important seed dispersal agents, able to carry seeds up to 65km away from the parent tree. They open thickets of invasive species and thin out trees that are too thickly concentrated. This creates habitats for a variety of other species to flourish. A

2019 review paper showed that "maintaining elephant numbers at a pre-determined carrying capacity level did not prevent the loss of large trees." My conclusion on this paper at time was that "in large ecosystems, managing elephant numbers so they don't exceed a certain threshold number is arbitrary".

Evidence for the importance of heterogeneity undermines the usefulness of the 'carrying capacity' concept. Scientists Phyllis Lee, Keith Lindsay and Katarzyna Nowak say: "Much of the research community, and many managers, accept that ecosystem structure and function are not about elephant numbers but instead about elephant distribution across a landscape and in relation to plant communities." Ian McDonald, similarly, has written that the idea of carrying capacity derived from an outdated Hwange Game Reserve management policy that had no scientific basis. Good management is, then, ultimately about dispersion and concentration. A high density of elephants in one area may result in some aesthetically undesirable impacts, but these are largely temporary.

It is true, however, that some vegetation

in the Greater Kruger has been unduly affected. However, this is not because elephants are arbitrary tree destroyers. Elephant density has increased in the Associated Private Nature Reserves (APNR), for instance, due to the high number of artificial waterholes. The elephant population within the APNR grew from 1 666 in 2012 to 3 144 in 2021. Inward migrations should be anticipated if artificial water sources are opened so that each fancy lodge can offer tourists their 'own' elephants. An abundance of artificial water sources also runs counter to the Kruger's own strategy. To KNP management's credit, their current elephant management strategy steers clear of controlling numbers and towards managing impact for maximum heterogeneity. A major strategy has been to close two thirds of the approximately 400 artificial waterpoints in order to manage the spatial distribution of elephants. The key point is that negative impact (where that actually occurs, not just where tourists perceive it occurs) is more a function of artificial waterpoint placement than of elephant density per se.

Cont. on page 3

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For those just wanting to log out of the office environment there are workstations and plug points for all those looking for a relaxing environment to work, whilst getting the caffeine count up.

The bar has a small, simple, but delicious menu that includes breakfasts, burgers and pizzas. There are also some kiddie’s options.

The padel courts are secured with gates leading to car parks to make it safe for the little ones, and there is an awesome, safe

play area for the kids (racetrack, log cabin, trampoline and sand pit).

On the padel side there is a fully equipped padel shop where you can find new gear, or you can rent equipment. Bookings to play are all made through the playtomic App, and you can get a game in before work as there are bathrooms with showers and changerooms so you can freshen up for the day ahead.

Membership options are available, and padel leagues are starting soon to bring the competitiveness out of people, but also to have fun and meet new friends. The leagues will be for mens, ladies and mixed.

The establishment hours are 06:00 – 20:00 Sundays through to Tuesdays, and 06:00 – 22:00 on Wednesday through to Saturday.

Coming soon: an upstairs viewing terrace with a great view of the mountains and the sunset!

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Will be published in next month’s edition of Kruger2Canyon News.

Farmwatch fund raising

Come on people! Powered by Love the Hoed[®] we are trying to raise money for this great cause. Thanks to those that have already donated.

Let’s not drop the ball now in ensuring a safe town for all. Thank you for your contribution and here’s to a safe future for us all.

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Emily Leuner

Emily Leuner, General Manger at Tintswalo Safari Lodge was recently shot by a disgruntled employee. She is in the Milpark Hospital ICU unit recovering from her serious injuries.

The impact of this violent crime has reverberated through the community and we as Kruger2Canyon News, and the whole local community, hope for a recovery. Our prayers and thoughts are with Emily, Alistair and family in this trying time, and we wish them strength.

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A packed padel crowd gathered for the Springbok rugby game recently, creating a fantastic atmosphere. Head over to the Hoedspruit Sports Bar for the best smashed burgers in town

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July Trivia questions

1. The milk of what creature will not curdle naturally?
2. Collective nouns - what are a group of apes called?
3. Where could you find a rundle?
4. Babies are born without what?
5. What animal holds hands with each other when asleep?
6. Enola Gay dropped the first A-bomb - which plane dropped the second?
7. Dr Spock's blood was green - but what group was it?
8. Sigmund Freud had a phobia - what was he afraid of?
9. In ancient Egypt what food was reserved for the royalty?
10. Noah's Ark had two of everything including what features?
11. The Invisible Empire is better known as what?
12. What is a male reindeer known as?
13. If you were caught pandiculating, what were you doing?
14. Persian Sultan Selim hanged two doctors for advising him to stop doing what?
15. What is Chinese white fungus?
16. What animal's head appears on the label of Gordon's Gin?
17. In Germany what can you not wear during a strike?
18. What colour toothbrush do most people have?
19. Who was Time magazine's person of the year 1952?
20. The word vinegar came from the French meaning what?
21. In ancient Rome by law prostitutes had to do what?
22. In Bavaria what is considered a staple food and is known as 'liquid bread'?
23. What did the word bald originally mean?
24. In what Hitchcock film does he NOT appear?
25. What colour is a grasshoppers blood?

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The myth of ‘too many elephants’

Cont. from page 3

Moreover, tourist experiences of the Kruger Park are necessarily biased, as they can only see roughly 20% of the Park’s entire vegetation range from the roads. Roads themselves tend to increase the “encounter rate” between elephants and trees, a scientific way of saying that elephants whack trees that are closer to roads more than those further away. Tourist roads also tend to run along rivers and close to waterholes, which naturally maximise the game-viewing experience, but the resultant negative impact on trees is predictable and can be managed.

Second, the myth of “too many” supports the logic of ‘harvesting’ “excess”, which rationalises trophy hunting (and even culling) today. But the term “harvesting” dresses these interventions up as legitimate, scientific conservation tools. Worse, it provides sanitised language for culling. The truth is

that culling elephants amounts to literal slaughter of families of sentient, long-lived beings. Elephants are so like humans in their mental and social capacities that it is highly subversive to liken them to inanimate crops that can be ‘harvested’.

Moreover, culling was implemented in the Kruger before the relationship between elephant density and large tree cover had been scientifically established. Ecologically, we now know that elephants start to disperse once they reach a certain density, and the population growth rate naturally starts to slow down. Ironically, culling prevents this threshold density being reached and caused abnormally high levels of population growth rates in Kruger; the population growth rate has since been successfully reduced (from above 6% to just above 4%) by the closure of two thirds of the artificial waterpoints.

What is clear from the culling debacle (where 14 629 elephants were slaughtered

in South Africa alone between the 1960s and the 1990s) is that we destroy our own humanity by destroying elephants. For this reason, it is likely also “inhumane and illegal” under South African law. South Africa ended culling in the 1990s because it lacked scientific justification, generated international opprobrium, and caused long-lasting trauma both to orphaned elephants and to the human executioners. Or, in the words of a paper by Hennie Lötter: “We have a prima facie case not to kill elephants, as all humans have both a moral reason not to kill, as well as an absence of economic or survival reasons to kill.”

Third, the idea that there are “too many elephants” betrays an ignorance of the nature of elephants in maintaining healthy ecosystems. They are not just one modest component of a habitat – they often create that habitat, provided heterogeneity is maintained. Elephants are a ‘keystone’ species and their population health in the

landscape positively affects the health of interconnected and dependent species. We should not be slaves to static subjective aesthetic preferences but instead committed to ensuring long-term, dynamic ecological sustainability. Putting elephants at the centre of that is scientifically and morally desirable.

Earlier this year, the government released an updated Biodiversity Economy Strategy, which envisages a massive revenue increase from trophy hunting (“harvesting”) of Big-5 animals. For the reasons outlined above, and others, this kind of policy thinking needs to be reversed.

Original source: <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2024-07-02-ross-harvey-the-myth-of-too-many-elephants/>
Previously published in The Conservation

Safari Guide of the Year 2024: a close competition



2024 winner, local hero, HJ Esterhuizen of Royal Malewane (above left). The five finalists Themba Mabunda (Lion Sands Private Game Reserve), Phillip Wessels (Cheetah Ridge Lodge), Tracey Bruton (Thorybush Game Lodge), HJ Esterhuizen (Royal Malewane) and Ashley Meintjes (Lalibela Game Reserve). VIP guests, Solomon Ndlovu (FGASA Director and Head Guide Sngita Lebombo), Marks Thibela (CEO CATHSSETA), his partner Mildred and Michelle du Plessis (FGASA Managing Director).

Images: Armadillo Media

Louise Pavid

The prestigious Safari Guide of the Year competition was held recently in the Welgevonden Game Reserve, a stunning wildlife sanctuary nestled within the Waterberg mountains. This picturesque location provided the backdrop for the finalists to test and showcase their exceptional skills and knowledge.

The five finalists were some of Southern Africa’s top guides. HJ Esterhuizen (Royal Malewane), Ashley Meintjes (Lalibela Game Reserve), Tracey Bruton (Thorybush Game Lodge), Phillip Wessels (Cheetah Ridge Lodge), and Themba Mabunda (Lion Sands Private Game Reserve) all competed in eight categories: hospitality and professionalism, storytelling, track and sign, guided game drive, guided photographic experience, guided bushwalk, bird slide and sound, and advanced rifle handling.

The host lodge sponsor for the Safari Guide of the Year 2024 was the fantastic Mhondoro Safari Lodge nestled in the reserve within the rugged Waterberg Mountains – a pristine wilderness gem. Here all staff, competitors, judges and guests were accommodated, fed and looked after by the amazing staff for the duration of the competition.

Winter in the Waterberg tests resilience;

cold grips valley dips while the sun beats the high ridges. Bitterly cold in the mornings and evenings, but warm during the day - Ruggedwear, the main prize sponsor, and a proudly South African apparel provider, kitted everyone out in various top-quality items of clothing, from pants to insulated jackets, vented safari shirts and hoodies, ensuring comfort for VIP’s, finalists, guests, and staff throughout the competition.

The competition was not just about winning, but also about celebrating the dedication and passion of the guides who devote their lives to nature. The event aimed to show appreciation for their career achievements, motivation for development, and unwavering commitment to the environment.

In a very closely fought competition where all competitors showcased their skills, and clinched the title of Safari Guide of the Year 2024, taking home a trophy and the cash prize sponsored by Ruggedwear, and presented by MD Howard Rogerson. HJ impressed the judges with his expertise and won the guided bushwalks, track and sign identification, advanced rifle handling, and storytelling categories. He was runner up in the guided photographic experience and hospitality and professionalism categories.

Ashley Meintjes took the runner-up honours and accepted that trophy and the cash

prize from WISE’s (Women In Safari Excellence) Candice Pretorius and Jody Cole. He captivated the judges with his warm personality and won the guided photographic experience and hospitality and professionalism categories. He was runner up in the guided bushwalk, storytelling and the advanced rifle handling categories.

Phillip Wessels brought deep wisdom, insightful commentary and philosophy to this year’s competition. He went on to win the guided game drive and the bird slide and sound categories.

Themba Mabunda, whose infectious smile and tracking expertise shone through, earned him the runner-up spots in both the track and sign and the guided game drive categories.

Tracey Bruton deserves recognition for her unwavering spirit and dedication as a guide. Her meticulous attention to detail and determination secured her a runner-up position in bird slide and sound category.

Lewyn Maefala, the invitational candidate, deserves special mention. She leads the Bush Babies Environmental Education Project, inspiring hundreds of children to become conservation ambassadors. Her participation rekindled her passion for guiding, and she’s now pursuing further qualifications.

The Safari Guide of the Year event would

not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of all the guides involved, FGASA (who powered the competition) as well as all the judges who gave of their time. All their efforts must be complemented for ensuring a world class event.

It is important to remember that the competition is a celebration of excellence within the guiding profession. It recognizes the dedication, knowledge, and passion that guides bring to their work, ensuring unforgettable experiences for safari-goers, while fostering a deeper appreciation for the natural world. The Safari Guide of the Year competition is a testament to the remarkable talent and dedication of these individuals. Each guide competing was a winner in their own right, and their efforts were greatly appreciated by all involved.

As the sun sets on another successful, world class Safari Guide of the Year event, the participants can bask in the knowledge that their passion and commitment to nature have been acknowledged and celebrated. The competition not only showcases the incredible talent present in Southern Africa’s guiding community but also serves as a reminder of the important role guides play in conserving and protecting our natural environment. Thank you to all the sponsors involved and congratulations to all the finalists - thank you for your dedication to the wild places we all cherish.

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Mhondoro Safari Lodge and Villa – host sponsor of Safari Guide of the Year 2024



Spectacular sunset views in the south of the Welgevonden Game Reserve (left) and special Mhondoro sundowners (above)



One of the private suites at Mhondoro



Mhondoro main lodge and pool area (left) and the on-site vegetable garden supplying the lodge and reserve with fresh produce (above) All images supplied

Local correspondent

Being the host sponsor of the weeklong Safari Guide of the Year 2024 competition was an amazing experience for everyone at Mhondoro Safari Lodge and Villa. The lodge and all its staff found it to be inspirational to be involved so intimately with the competition which was superbly complemented by the venue provided. This is a short insight into this magnificent lodge.

Located in the Welgevonden Game Reserve in the Waterberg Mountains (Limpopo), Mhondoro Safari Lodge and Villa is a luxury safari destination of note. A mere 2h45 drive from Johannesburg, the landscape is breathtakingly rich and diverse, stretching across almost 40 000 hectares. The reserve is home to the Big 5, including a large white rhino population that is protected within the malaria-free reserve. The lodge offers guided walks which are popular with guests, as is watching a 'resident' herd of elephants who visit the waterhole at the lodge several times a week and who love a drink from the natural, salt-water swimming pools.

The superb wildlife experience is complemented by Mhondoro's luxurious accommodation, indulgent spa treatments, fine cuisine and passionate service. Dutch-owned, Mhondoro is a fusion of African chic and edgy European influences. The exclusive 5-star lodge sleeps 24 guests, with accommodation that includes two child-friendly family suites, a romantic honeymoon suite, and a 2-bedroom executive suite. Guest suites are spacious with full bathrooms, outdoor showers, private decks and most have private plunge pools.

Mhondoro Villa is the ultimate in luxury and privacy for families or friends travelling together. It features a magnificent master suite and two additional bedrooms and comes with a private gym, yoga or massage room and a heated swimming pool, a game-viewing safari vehicle with personal guide, and the services of a chef, butler and housekeeping staff.

Unique features at Mhondoro include the ultimate photographer's dream: a waterhole with an underground hide that is connected to the main lodge by a tunnel. There is also a star deck and heated swimming pools with an infrared sauna. The Spa offers

facials, manicures and pedicures, as well as a private, outdoor spa deck overlooking the reserve to offer the ultimate relaxation experience.

"Besides a luxury, 5-star product offering to our guests, we are proud of the fact that everything we do here at Mhondoro is based on environmentally safe principles. Internationally there is a lot of talk about so-called greenwashing, but the capital investment in our solar plant, that takes care of all our power requirements, is another tangible example of the vision of the Dutch owners, Frank and Myriam Vogel, to further reduce the carbon footprint of the lodge," says Ronel Breytenbach, Marketing Manager.

Various other eco-friendly initiatives have also been put in place at Mhondoro, including the installation of a grey water filtration system for irrigation around the lodge, and a water purification plant that produces drinking water fresh from the surrounding Waterberg mountains. The lodge uses glass decanters and personalized steel water bottles for guests to minimize the use of single-use plastic water bottles. All glass, paper and plastics are recycled, and Mhondoro has an agreement with Nespresso to recycle used

coffee pods and grinds. Furthermore, guest check-in is being done digitally to reduce the use of paper and re-usable leather wallets are used for staff gratuities - that alone saves using more than 2000 paper envelopes per year!

Mhondoro has embarked on producing as much of its own fresh produce as possible. The owners purchased two farms adjoining Welgevonden Game Reserve, a section of which is utilized to grow fruit, vegetables and herbs in two greenhouses. A chicken coop has been successfully established to supply farm fresh eggs for use at the lodge. The balance of the 2400 hectares of farmland is being rehabilitated and over time will become protected wilderness areas.

Mhondoro Safari Lodge and Villa – an honestly sympathetic 'eco lodge', environmentally savvy and concerned.

Truly a dream destination, in a dream environment, for the discerning traveller.

Mhondoro Safari Lodge and Villa contact details: Tel +27 87 150 2314, Email: res@mhondoro.com, www.mhondoro.com, FB: [mhondorosafarilodgeandvilla](https://www.facebook.com/mhondorosafarilodgeandvilla), Instagram: [mhondorosafarilodgeandvilla](https://www.instagram.com/mhondorosafarilodgeandvilla).

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SOLE MANDATE

RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 6 500 000
Beds 3 | Baths 2 | Floor size: 272 m²

Traverse right onto Khaya Ndlovu included in this purchase. The living area promotes indoor-outdoor living, comprising an open-plan lounge and dining area with a semi-separate kitchen. The spacious patio features a boma overlooking the riverbed, swimming pool and built-in gas braai.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2259705



SOLE MANDATE

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

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

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2203063



SOLE MANDATE

JEJANE, GREATER KRUGER, BIG 5 R 10 850 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor: 363 m²

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

KAMPERSRUS R 2 450 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor: 120 m²

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 m²

The expansive property comprises main house and separate cottage. The main house features an open plan living area with lounge, kitchen and loft area. The covered patio has beautiful mountain views. A well-established garden, a large pool and built-in braai are also found in the outdoor area.

Michelle Severin - 083 468 3821 Ref: 2238263



SOLE MANDATE

KAMPERSRUS R 2 800 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: 220 m²

This charming thatched home has lovely views of the Drakensberg mountain, especially from the patio on the top floor which is lived in by the owner. The lower floor is currently separated from the top and leased. A separate cottage on the property is also leased for additional income.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2253232



SOLE MANDATE

HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE R 5 100 000
Beds 6 | Baths 5 | Floor size: 234 m²

In a private location, the main house comprises 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, open living area with lounge and kitchen with separate scullery. A free standing cottage comprises 2 bedrooms, bathroom, open plan living area and kitchenette. Double garage, 6 carports and storage room.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2258641

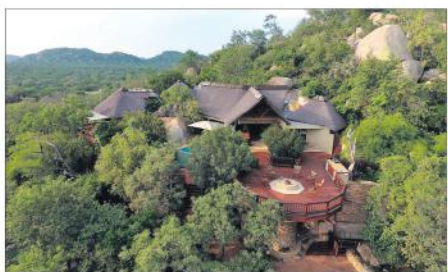


SOLE MANDATE

HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 350 000
Beds 4 | Baths 3 | Floor size: 335 m²

The modern, open-plan kitchen with breakfast nook has plenty of cupboard space and a scullery that opens to a courtyard. The lounge and dining area open to the covered patio with pool and braai area. Other features include a single carport, office, storeroom, and established fenced garden.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2214688



LEOPARD ROCK NATURE RESERVE R 10 300 000
Beds 5 | Baths 5.5 | Floor: 468 m²

Spectacular bush home, nestled into a granite rocky outcrop features a main home with open plan lounge, dining room and kitchen, with pantry and laundry, patio with bar area and pool, as well as the master suite. The four separate guest suites can be reached via wooden walkways.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2257358



SOLE MANDATE

HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 800 000
Beds 4 | Baths 4.5 | Floor: 286 m²

COMMERCIAL - This fully furnished and recently renovated guest house offers an open plan living, dining and kitchen area, leading to a patio with a raised viewing deck. Two carports, swimming pool and a fire pit area add to the features.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2255810



SOLE MANDATE

KAMPERSRUS R 2 200 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor: 140 m²

This quaint property in Kampersrus features a main house and a guest cottage with a separate entrance. There are two large tanks for backup water, a double carport at the main house, a parking area at the guest cottage, two separate storage areas, and a covered outdoor workspace.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2266388



SOLE MANDATE

COMMERCIAL LODGE R 11 000 000
Beds 8 | Baths 8 | Floor: 980 m² | Land size: 21 ha

This lodge consists of a main owner's house, central lodge area and 5 luxury treetop chalets. Sold as a going concern; this lodge has bounced back after Covid and has great potential. There are future bookings and well-trained staff. Movable items and furniture included, as well as a bakkie.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2160187



RENTAL

HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE R 14 000 pm
Beds 2 | Bath 1 | Floor: 72 m²

Available immediately, unfurnished, not pet friendly - This modern, newly built cottage has a separate entrance from the main house. It has an open plan lounge/dining area and kitchen. The kitchen is equipped with a gas stove and oven. There is a fire pit area to the side of the cottage.

Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140 Ref: 2267362



RENTAL

KHAYAGELO VILLAGE, HOEDSPRUIT R 14 000 pm
Beds 2 | Baths 2 | Floor: 104 m²

Available immediately, unfurnished, not pet friendly - The unit has been newly renovated and painted. It has an open plan living area with kitchen, lounge and cosy outdoor patio. In addition, there is a huge loft area which can be used as a study and/or extra bedroom. Communal pool and braai.

Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140 Ref: 2259760



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South Africa's contradictory plan to open rhino horn trade will encourage poaching

Adam Cruise

Legalising trade will remove the stigma that rhino horn is illegal and could entice many more consumers into the market. The demand will then outstrip the legal supply and poaching will increase. This will push security measures beyond breaking point.

The South African government is hoping to open up international trade and develop the domestic trade in rhino horn. This could have dire consequences for the future survival of the species.

In the recently released Draft Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) for black and white rhinos, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) states that "South Africa will work with range states and potential destination countries to support a proposal for international commercial trade in rhinoceros' horn from protected wild rhinoceros, for conservation purposes, when conditions become favourable."

The aim is if rhinos are given a commercial value, it will "shift the pressure off them" as there will be a greater incentive to protect them.

This proposal raises several serious red flags and is full of contradictions.

The BMP envisions reduced rhino poaching, reduced trafficking in rhino horn, secured stockpiles, and a "significantly mitigated" risk from demand, yet conversely, it proposes a suite of commercial trade actions at both the domestic and international level, which by their very nature will increase demand and the associated risks of poaching and illegal trade.

Legal trade = increased demand = more poaching

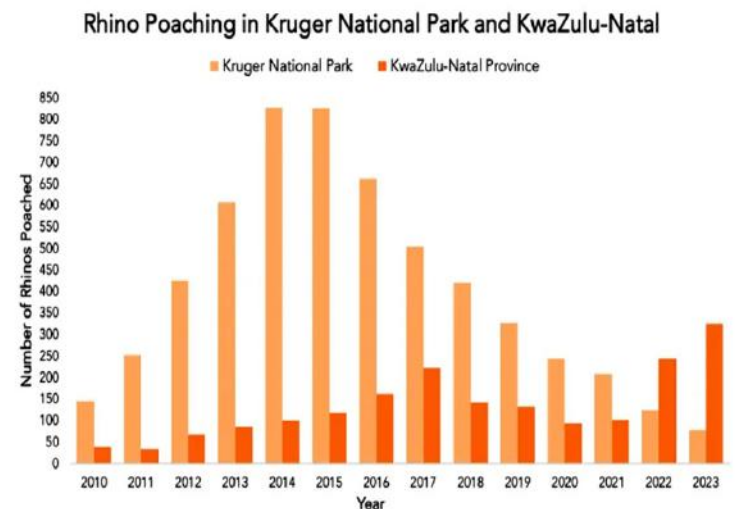
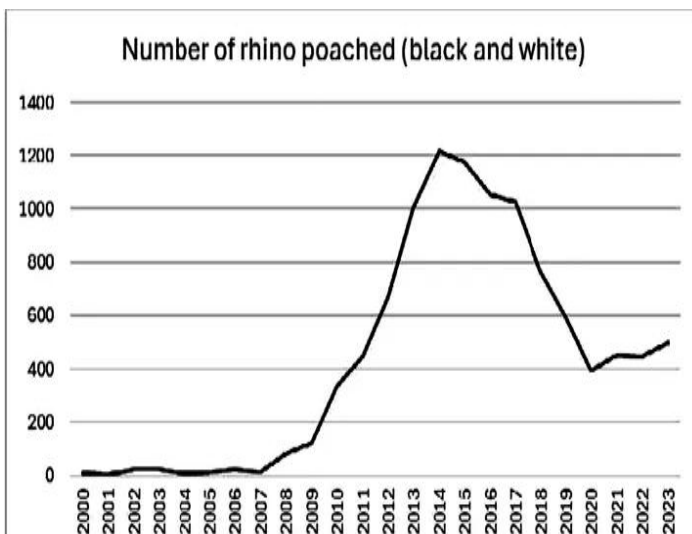
This is precisely what happened to African elephants when South Africa, along with Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, legally offloaded over 100 tonnes of ivory onto the Chinese and Japanese markets in 2008. The move was supposed to relieve the pressure on poaching of elephants but instead created the opposite effect.

During the seven years after that sale, the poaching of elephants for their tusks saw one-third of the savannah elephant populations disappear, while forest elephants lost two-thirds of their population over the same period.

Since that disaster, a ban on trading ivory from elephants has been resolutely enforced under the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), while domestic ivory markets in China, the USA and Europe were shut down.

The closure of the legal trade has since seen elephant poaching decline and demand for their tusks reduced.

Opening up a legal international trade will undoubtedly see something similar happen with rhinos. Legalising the trade will remove the stigma that rhino horn is illegal and could entice many more consumers into the market. The demand will then outstrip the legal supply and poaching will increase. This will push security measures beyond breaking point.



Unlike elephants whose continent-wide population is around 400 000, rhino numbers are considerably less. Black rhinos have a population of only 6,500 individuals. White rhinos are faring marginally better, with around 20 000 individuals left in the world. About 80% of the total population is found in South Africa, making the country crucial for the future survival of the species.

Poaching for their horns remains by far the biggest threat to the survival of both species. Since 2008, around 8 000 rhinos have been poached in South Africa.

The international trade in rhino horn is banned under CITES regulations. It seems unlikely that CITES members – even if South Africa elicits support from its neighbours and potential destination countries – will open an international trade in an endangered species that has been protected from trade in their horns since 1977.

The spectre of the domestic trade

However, South Africa is playing a long game. While the plan is to pursue international trade at CITES in the future, there is a domestic trade in rhino horn already in place, and the BMP hopes to ramp it up.

South Africa has allowed the domestic trade in rhino horn since 2017 after the High Court overturned a moratorium to trade rhino horn on a technicality when the DFFE (then called the DEA) didn't follow the correct procedures.

What makes the plans for domestic trade so concerning is that South Africa can do it unilaterally. There is no need to lobby the world to support a listing proposal at CITES to allow trade and persuade "consumer" countries to pass new domestic legislation.

The plans to promote domestic consumption of rhino horn are especially alarming and build on the equally alarming proposal in the draft National Biodiversity Economy Strategy to create a tourist market for rhino horn consumption, including "health clinics to administer traditional remedies using rhino horn for health tourists from the Far East".

By the government's own admission, there is currently no domestic demand for rhino horn in South Africa. Instead, South Africa would

have to create new markets by generating new demand and a new domestic consumer base to sell horns commercially.

Confusingly, this goal is included under the objective to "effectively manage and reduce demand for rhino derivatives". The BMP is simultaneously calling for reducing and stimulating demand for rhino horn. This, of course, is nonsensical.

Another contradictory proposed action in the BMP is to "develop and implement a Demand Management Strategy which has mechanisms to overcome potential tensions between demand reduction and trade promotion".

South Africa is yet to meet the findings set out by a Committee of Inquiry in 2016, which stated that continued interactions with consumers within known consumer and range states need to be implemented "to better understand consumer patterns, attitudes and behaviour".

A monitoring system was also meant to be developed and implemented to gather information relating to prices paid to poachers and the quantity of horns traded. However, none of this has taken place almost 10 years later. Whoever has the misfortune to develop this contradictory plan now has a deadline of just two years.

Community benefits?

One primary objective cited in the BMP is "to advance transformation and community empowerment". It appears to be well-intentioned, but how exactly will the DFFE be able to transform community land into wild rhino habitats where they can be safely and viably protected? The BMP makes no mention of any means to carry this out.

Also, the incentive would be for new owners to breed rhinos intensively to achieve maximum profit. This has already been evident with many existing private rhino owners who have, until now, been breeding rhinos for the express purpose of profiting off future sales of rhino horns.

Bizarrely, this comes at a time when the DFFE has conversely stated in their latest Draft Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhinoceros

(2023) that intensive farming and breeding of rhinos is to be phased out and domestic stocks rewilded – a process that has already begun with African Parks rewilding some 2 000 rhinos from a breeding farm in North-West.

This effectively means that any future rhino horn harvesting must come from "wild" rhinos. Rhino owners, under this policy, would need to be monitored against intensive breeding and their activities enforced, meaning that more resources, which the DFFE lacks, would be required.

Furthermore, as existing private rhino owners will attest, keeping rhinos is an expensive business with the above concomitant enforcement and security problems. Who is going to finance this and provide adequate security measures?

The push for international and domestic trade in rhino horn – while South Africa remains mired in a rhino poaching crisis – is incredibly reckless. KwaZulu-Natal has experienced two consecutive years of record-breaking rhino poaching.

Enforcement measures – domestically and internationally – remain inadequate; rhino horn is being stolen from government stockpiles, and countries still aren't collaborating on joint, intelligence-led investigations to address organised rhino horn trafficking and other wildlife crimes.

Clear demand-reduction measures and ensuring that a ban on the sale of rhino horn remains firmly in place, are the only means of securing the future survival of South Africa's rhinos.

The biodiversity management plan is now open for public comment for 30 days.

Dr Adam Cruise is an investigative environmental journalist, travel writer and academic. He has contributed to a number of international publications, including National Geographic and The Guardian, covering diverse topics from the plight of elephants, rhinos and lions in Africa to coral reef rejuvenation in Indonesia. Cruise is a Doctor of Philosophy, specialising in animal and environmental ethics, and is the editor of the online Journal of African Elephants.

Original source: Daily Maverick - Opinionista. This article was previously published by Conservation Action Trust

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The candelabra euphorbia - *Euphorbia ingens*



The Candelabra euphorbia flowers
Image: Randon Harvest Nursery

Mark Bishop

This tree belongs to the family Euphorbiaceae. This family has about 275 genera and 7 500 species with a very wide distribution. In South Africa, there are 50 genera and 484 species. Members of this family are present on all continents except for Antarctica!

This sturdy tree can grow up to 11m high, and in rare cases may reach as high as 15m, with its massive, single, rounded and succulent crown. It has grey bark that is roughish to the touch. These plants are succulent and only cactus-like, as true cacti lack the paired spines and the toxic latex that is present in the *Euphorbia*.

The tree is monoecious (meaning it has both male and female reproductive organs on the same plant). Individual flowers occur in an inflorescence called a cyathium – and what appears to be a single flower but is, in fact, a collection of male and female flowers. Each flower has no sepals and petals.

The individual flowers are unisex – either male or female. Many male flowers surround the single female flower. Pollinators such as butterflies, bees and other insects, are lured by the coloured nectar glands and modified bracts (that resemble petals) and pollinate them whilst gathering pollen and nectar. The abundance of nectar, and the resultant poisonous honey produced, known as ‘noors’ honey, causes a burning sensation in the mouth and throat which is intensified by the drinking of water, and may be accompanied by nausea.



The Candelabra euphorbia - *Euphorbia Ingens* fruiting

Image: Randon Harvert Nursery Carol Knoll

The fruit is reddish-purple and may colour the tree slightly. When mature, it becomes purplish and woody.

These plants usually occur at an altitude of between 300m and 1 500m. They are common on rocky outcrops, in deciduous woodlands, flat bushveld, hills and savannah. They often occur close to termite mounds. They are found on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast and northwards to Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and Limpopo. They also occur in Swaziland, Zimbabwe, northern and southern Mozambique and northwards into tropical Africa.

These trees can conserve water and their lack of leaves is compensated for by its stems which are photosynthetic. They are one of the few plants that use all three dif-

ferent photosynthesis mechanisms (creating oxygen and energy from carbon dioxide). These mechanisms are sunlight, water and an unusual one, CAM photosynthesis (crassulacean acid metabolism). Here the stomata, control the gaseous exchange (release of oxygen and take-up of carbon dioxide) between the plant and the surrounding atmosphere – photosynthesising during the day, but only opening at night to exchange the gases, thereby preserving moisture.

Birds, like the bulbuls, crested guineafowl, doves, and franklins feed on the fruit. Old wood is used by woodpeckers for nesting. The roots are eaten by porcupines and cane-rats. Flowers, including buds, are eaten by vervet monkeys.

In all *Euphorbias*, the latex like sap is very

poisonous – causing intense irritation and blistering to the skin and mucous membranes. If the latex comes into contact with the eyes, it can cause temporary or even permanent blindness. A bundle of grass soaked in the latex and then thrown into water is used to stun fish. Prior to cutting, the tree is often subjected to fire which decreases the effect of the toxic sap. The tough wood from the main trunk, which has a low density, can be used for making canoes, planks and doors.

This plant has been used medicinally as a purgative or for ulcers. The Venda and Sotho people have been known to use it against cancer.

So don't fiddle around with the latex, and rather observe this beauty from a distance.

How do birds know where to go when migrating?

Birds have built-in compasses - thanks to the presence of iron rich magnetite at various places in the head - and they make use of the earth's magnetic field and can easily start out in the correct direction when beginning to migrate (called orientation or direction-finding). Thereafter, they make use of a number of different techniques to find and maintain their way to the end destination (called navigation or route-finding). The most common of these is use of the sun by day and stars and the moon by night (called astrocues). Other cues maybe prevailing winds, sounds (many birds can hear infrasound), smells (the nostril nerves are rich in magnetite and assist with orientation) and the shape of the land (mountain ranges, rivers, coastlines, etc). Experience of undertaking the migratory route is also beneficial as young birds learn where to go from older birds. Young birds learn how to deal with differing conditions and how to counter them. In other words, they know when to turn and how long to fly in one direction.

Birds spend the last few weeks prior to migration eating excessively (called hyperphagy), fattening themselves up for the trip by a process known as hyperlipogenesis. They spend more time each day feeding

and become less active. This enables them to build up fat reserves that will be burned as fuel when travelling hundreds of kilometres without food or stops. The duration or number of rest stops varies considerably between species, resulting in the overall trip being long, although total flying time is only a few days.

Route selection is based upon food requirements, resting places, landmasses and prevailing winds. Big birds that prefer to soar (to save energy) will rely on thermals. These only occur over land, and these birds will therefore avoid big water masses, even if it means taking an indirect route. Those with large fat reserves can fly further in a single flight and will cover distances quicker than those with smaller fat reserves that need to stop frequently to acquire energy. Indirect routes may also be chosen to make use of energy-saving prevailing winds. Single flights of up to 6500 kilometres can be accomplished where birds are flying for up to 40 hours non-stop.

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



The fascinating sex lives of insects



The Japanese rhinoceros beetle has a sinister looking horn
Image: TogoTV Hateka

Louise Gentle
Principal Lecturer in Wildlife Conservation,
Nottingham Trent University

Some insects have detachable penises, others produce sperm that is 20 times the size of their own body. Others have evolved with special equipment to help them tear rivals off potential mates. Insects can be creepy, promiscuous or murderous – but they are rarely dull.

The stag beetle male – Europe’s largest beetle has huge jaws known as antlers designed for prising mating pairs apart. This behaviour is seen in numerous beetles, with horns of various shapes horns that have evolved to lever males off females. The Japanese rhinoceros beetle has a horn resembling a fork. Antlers are also used in battle to wrestle other males over access to

females.

In many of these species, smaller males don’t stand a chance of winning a fight, so instead have evolved sneaky mating tactics. They wait for males to fight, then slink in and copulate with the female while the males are distracted. Small male dung beetles slip past large males that guard entrances to tunnels containing females and dig secret passages to find the underground females while the larger males’ backs are turned.

Sperm competition

In addition to the physical contests between males, competition to fertilise an egg also happens between sperm. In the animal kingdom, females are rarely faithful to their mates, so there is probably sperm from a number of males inside a female reproductive tract. Males have evolved several ways

to counter this, such as producing large sperm. Fruit fly sperm is almost 6cm long when uncoiled, around 20 times the size of the fly.

But, perhaps the most extraordinary method to win the sperm competition is seen in the odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) who have evolved ornate penises. These come complete with hooks and whips, to dislodge the sperm of rival males and pack the male’s own sperm into the far corners of the female reproductive tract, away from other male penises.

And it’s not just the males that have elaborate penises. The female cave insects of Brazil compete for access to males. The insects have sex-reversed genitalia, where the males have an opening, and the females have a spiky erectile organ. The female uses her “penis” to suck sperm out of the male, and she can even decide which of two chambers in her body to store the sperm in. It is thought that this behaviour evolved as an adaptation to a limited food supply as the females gain energy from feasting on the seminal fluid acquired during copulation, which can last up to 70 hours.

Butterflies only live for a few weeks, so if males are going to father any offspring, they can’t hang around. Except, some do. Many butterflies are sexually mature as soon as they emerge from their chrysalis. So, in some species the males emerge a few days before the females, then sit and wait, copulating with the females as soon as possible.

More disturbing behaviour is seen in the bed bug. Males simply pierce a female’s abdomen then inject sperm through the wound into her abdominal cavity. As insects have an open circulatory system without arteries and veins, the sperm can easily migrate from the abdominal cavity to the ovaries for fertilisation.

Sexual cannibalism

Probably the most famous of the insect sexual behaviour is that of the praying mantis, where the female bites the head off her partner during or after sex, gaining nutrients for herself and her offspring. This behaviour increases the number of eggs that males fertilise. Recently, scientists found that males also attack females. They don’t eat the females although they sometimes seriously injure them. Males that won fights with females were more likely to go on to mate rather than just get eaten.

Chastity belts

Many male insects only get to mate once, even when they aren’t eaten by their part-

ners. For example, male bees ejaculate with such explosive force that it is loud enough for humans to hear. This ensures the sperm is passed to the female, but it results in paralysis of the male, which kills him. So, males need to make the most of their exploits.

One way of preventing other males from mating with a female is to produce a copulatory plug – something that will prevent a different male from inserting his sperm inside a female to fertilise her eggs. The European dwarf spider produces a plug by secreting a liquid during copulation that hardens over time. Researchers have found that longer copulations result in larger plugs which are more difficult for other males to remove.

In order to ensure that nobody else mates with his female once he is dead, the male orb-web spider has evolved an extreme copulatory plug. He has a detachable penis that remains inside the female once copulation is over. Although it is common for the tip of a spider’s penis to break off inside a female, preventing other males from entering, the orb-web spider’s detachable penis has an additional function as it continues to transfer sperm on its own - for over 20 minutes – increasing mating success.

So, you see, insects are, in fact, amazing.

Louise Gentle works for Nottingham Trent University. Nottingham Trent University provides funding as a member of The Conversation UK.

The Conversation is funded by the National Research Foundation, eight universities, including the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Rhodes University, Stellenbosch University and the Universities of Cape Town, Johannesburg, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Pretoria, and South Africa. It is hosted by the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Western Cape, the African Population and Health Research Centre and the Nigerian Academy of Science. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is a Strategic Partner.

This article was previously published by The Conversation.

Dragonflies have evolved elaborate penises (bottom left). Male bed bugs have a brutal approach to mating

Images: Canva Pro



The brown house snake - *Boaedon capensis*



Luke Kemp
African Snakebite Institute

The brown house snake is one of the most widespread and common snakes across southern Africa. They have adapted well to urbanisation, taking advantage of the abundance of skinks, geckos and rodents that utilise human dwellings. They are nocturnal and although very common, can be quite cryptic, and may remain undetected around a house for a number of years.

As the name suggests, they are various shades of brown from dark brown to reddish-brown. The belly is pearly-white and in the lowveld area, the belly colour often extends slightly up the lower sides of the

body. There is a white or pale stripe above each eye, which is a distinct feature for the harmless house snakes. The eyes are large and have vertical pupils like a cat, which allows them to see better at night. They may reach up to 1,5 meters in KwaZulu-Natal but seldom exceed 80 cm in most other regions.

Although largely nocturnal they may be uncovered during the day under boxes or equipment in a garage, workshop or store-room. They may also be found under pots in the garden or logs and rocks. They are frequently seen crossing roads at night and unfortunately often killed by passing vehicles.

These are efficient hunters, ambushing

prey items and grabbing them before constricting them. They are well-known for eating rodents and may be good at controlling pests around agricultural set ups. They will also eat geckos, lizards and occasionally frogs.

Having small, sharp teeth used for hunting, these snakes can deliver a sharp bite if handled. The bite from these harmless snakes may bleed slightly but no other effects should occur. They are quick to tame down if handled.

Brown house snakes lay around 8-18 eggs in early summer and the eggs take around 70 days to hatch. The young will measure around 19-26 cm after hatching and are perfect replicas of the adults. Females may

The brown house snake with pale stripes above the eyes (above left and right)

Image: Johan Marais

produce several clutches of eggs in a season.

These little snakes are commonly encountered and easy to identify with the pale stripes above the eye. They are completely harmless and useful to have around the house or lodge.

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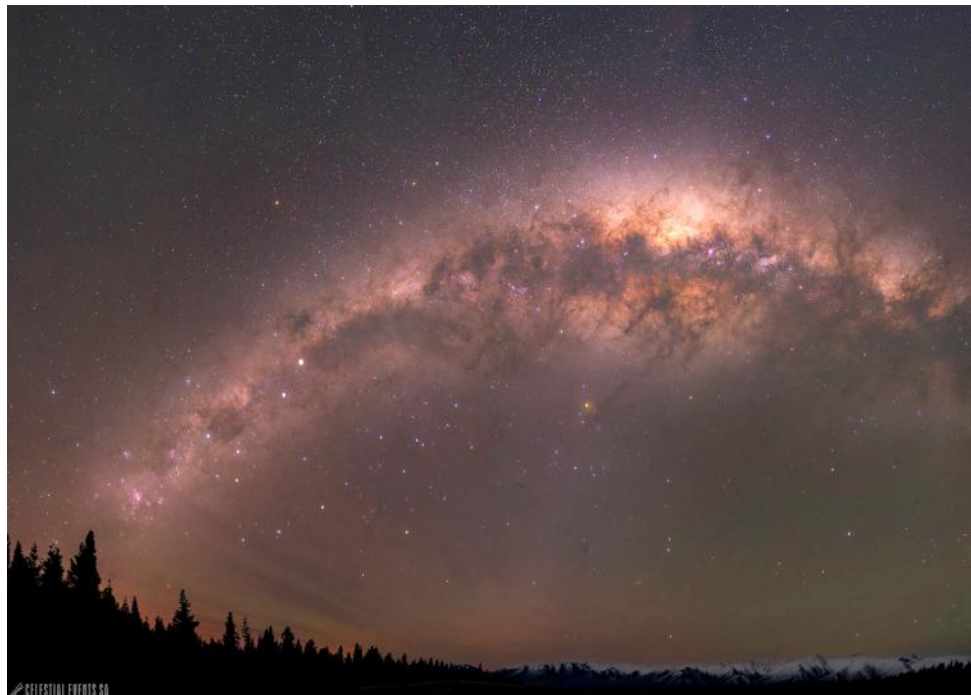
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Centre of attention



Ben Coley

The winter months in South Africa offer the perfect time for stargazing. During this time, a high-pressure cell sits above the country preventing warm, moist air from rising and clouds from forming, meaning unobstructed views for weeks at a time. The associated drop in humidity also equates to less water vapour in the atmosphere, which would otherwise disrupt the starlight, manifesting in crystal clear skies that shine with enhanced vibrancy.

Not only are conditions ideal, but the Earth's position during its endless circumnavigation of the Sun means that during this part of the year, the centre of the Milky Way arcs high overhead. Away from light polluted areas, the spiral arms of the galaxy are clearly visible as a snaking pathway of diffuse light. The light itself comes from billions of distant stars, too far away to be resolved by the naked eye, but whose combined light merges into a milky river flowing across the heavens.

Ancient civilisations have long since marvelled at this sight, each culture attributing the phenomenon to reasonings based on their belief systems. Some Bushmen tribes saw the beacon of light as the bellies of a great herd of celestial springbok traversing the sky, whilst others considered it the ashes of a campfire scattered into the sky by a young girl trying to guide her father home after he failed to return from a hunting trip.

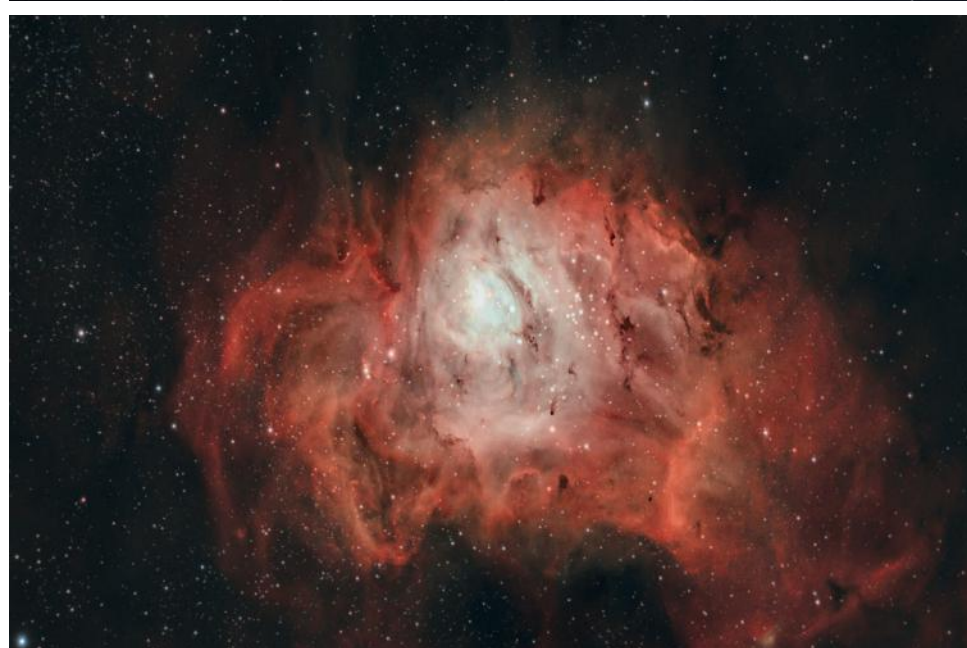
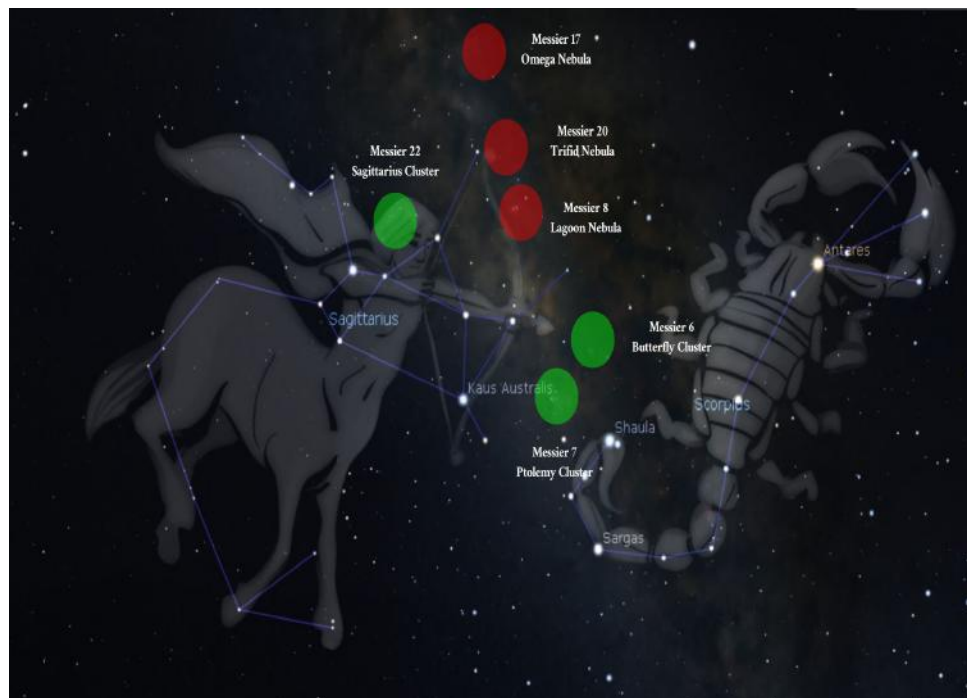
The name Milky Way has its origins in Greek mythology. Zeus fathered the great hero Hercules after an extra marital affair with a mortal woman. In an attempt to bestow more godly powers to his son, Zeus tried to suckle him at the breast of

his wife, Hera, whilst she was sleeping on Mount Olympus. Unsurprisingly, Hera woke up and pulled Hercules away in disgust. The milk from her breast sprayed down from Mt Olympus, staining the sky below. The Romans built on this idea and adopted the phrase 'Via Galactica' meaning 'The Way of Milk', or 'Milky Road'. In time, this became known as the Milky Way.

The brightest part of the Milky Way can be found at the convergence of the zodiacal constellations of Sagittarius and Scorpius. Our galaxy is shaped a bit like two fried eggs placed back-to-back. The yolk is known as the 'Central Bulge' and is made up of countless old stars, while the egg whites are the thin spiralling arms that encircle it. They are formed due to the movement of our galaxy which is spinning at a breakneck 220km/sec, throwing off dust and gas along its axis of rotation, and creating a disc of hot, vibrant, young stars. At the centre of it all lies the heart of our galaxy, a super-massive black hole dubbed Sagittarius A - the epicentre of the Milky Way.

Due to the sheer number of objects between us and the galactic core, the night sky between Sagittarius and Scorpius is a magnificent sight through binoculars. A simple sweep of this area resolves thousands upon thousands of stars that would otherwise be invisible to our primitive eyes. I cannot encourage you enough to explore this region while it is high in the sky and marvel at the sheer number of stars glistening in the darkness. Upon closer inspection, tight-knit groups can be seen, as well as hazy clouds silhouetted against the blackness.

Some of the best star clusters in the galaxy can be seen here. The Ptolemy Cluster (M7) and the Butterfly Cluster (M6) can both be found close to the stinger of the great cele-



Milky way (above left), Galactic centre (top right) and Lagoon Nebula (above). Images: supplied by Celestial Events

tial scorpion. These 'open clusters' are groups of baby stars, travelling through space together, just beginning their stellar journeys. At the opposite end of the spectrum lie the 'Globular Clusters', cosmic old age homes containing hundreds of thousands of related, ancient stars. The third brightest in the entire night sky, M22, can be found close to Sagittarius's bow and is resolved as a cloudy spot in binoculars.

The real gems however are the emission nebulae; cosmic incubators within which new stars are being born. These great gas clouds are predominantly made up of hydrogen, and glow vivid shades of pink and red thanks the youthful energy of their offspring shrouded deep within. To fully appreciate these incredible objects, long exposure pho-

tography is needed, but even with 'backyard' equipment, their beauty is unparalleled. The Lagoon Nebula (M8), the Trifid Nebula (M20) and the Omega Nebula (M17) are just a few of the exquisite sights that populate the area around our galactic core.

The best way to find these objects is to use a star app. Many are free to download and ultimately all do the same thing. Which one is 'best' boils down to personal preference. The next time you are under dark skies, I encourage you to use your phone for something different, grab your bino's, and take yourself on a tour of the centre of the galaxy that is guaranteed to leave you starstruck!

See Celestial Events SA advert for contact details

Trivia answers

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Camel | 8 Pteridophobia, a fear of ferns | 15 Tremella mushrooms | 22 Beer |
| 2 A shrewdness | 9 Mushrooms | 16 A boar | 23 Having a white spot |
| 3 A ladder step - a rung | 10 A door and a window | 17 A mask or face covering | 24 Lifeboat (1944) |
| 4 Kneecaps - form around 6 months | 11 The Klu Klux Klan | 18 Blue | 25 It appears clear |
| 5 Sea otter | 12 A bull | 19 Queen Elizabeth II | |
| 6 Bockscar | 13 Stretching and yawning | 20 Sour wine | |
| 7 T negative | 14 Drinking coffee | 21 Dye their hair blonde | |

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Sac spiders - *Cheiracanthium sp.*

Tim Baynham
Wildlife Safety Solutions

South Africa is home to a large number and diversity of spiders, with well over 2 000 species recorded, the vast majority of which are completely harmless to humans. This month we will take a closer look at the sac spiders of the genus *Cheiracanthium*.

Sac spiders are small to medium sized spiders that can measure up to 25mm across. They are characterized by their very dark, almost black mouth parts, the body and legs maybe brown, creamy white or pale yellow in colouration. The abdomen may also be a pale green colour in some specimens.

They are free ranging or free-living spiders and as such do not build a web to capture prey. They are nocturnal and actively move around hunting their prey. The common name is derived from the silk sac which they construct to function as a place to shelter or a place to lay their eggs. These silk sacs are frequently found in the folds of curtains. Their range extends throughout much of South Africa, only being absent from parts of the dryer western regions of the country. They are one of our more prolific spider species and are often found in and around buildings as well as in suburban gardens.

Studies have shown that sac spiders are equipped with cytotoxic venoms and a number of species are considered to be

medically significant. Bites are however generally mild in nature; an itchy welt will typically form at the bite site. Other symptoms may include localized pain, swelling and redness that should resolve in a few days. In some cases, a necrotic wound may develop however reports of severe necrotic lesions forming as a direct result of sac spider venom are largely unfounded and are mostly likely due to a secondary infection.

It is important to note that in reality it is impossible to accurately diagnose a spider bite unless the offending spider is seen biting the victim or the bite is felt, and the spider found in the immediate vicinity. The spider also needs to be correctly identified by an expert to determine if it was in fact a medically significant species that was responsible for the bite.

Due to the fact that they are free ranging spiders they do occasionally find their way into clothing and bedding. Most bites occur when the spider is accidentally squashed against the skin. Shaking out clothing and bedding will greatly reduce your risk of a bite. Although sac spiders have relatively large fangs it is not easy for them to actually penetrate human skin.

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



Sac spiders (above), you can clearly see the dark mouth parts. Images Andrea Myburgh

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DR R van Berge	015 793 0845	
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Unveiling dysfunction: signs of organizational turmoil

AI perspective 'correspondent'

In the labyrinthine world of corporate entities, the telltale signs of dysfunction often lurk beneath the surface, imperceptible to the untrained eye until they manifest in visible and impactful ways. From communication breakdowns to leadership crises, these symptoms can destabilize even the most robust organizations. Today, we delve into the subtleties and stark indicators that signify an organization in turmoil.

Communication Conundrums

Effective communication forms the bedrock of any successful organization. When communication channels falter, misunderstandings breed, and productivity suffers. Signs of communication breakdown include unclear directives, rumours spreading unchecked, and departments working in silos. In dysfunctional organizations, emails go unanswered, meetings lack actionable outcomes, and crucial information gets lost in transit.

Leadership Lapses

Leadership sets the tone for organizational culture and direction. Dysfunctional organizations often exhibit leadership failures such as micromanagement, lack of vision, and inconsistency in decision-making. When leaders are inaccessible, fail to inspire, or prioritize personal agendas over organizational goals, employee morale plummets, and trust erodes. The result is a workforce adrift, lacking motivation and clear direction.

Toxic Work Environment

A toxic work environment is a breeding ground for dysfunction. Signs include high turnover rates, unresolved conflicts, and pervasive negativity. In such environments, employees may feel undervalued, unsupported, or subjected to favoritism. This toxicity stifles creativity, diminishes collaboration, and undermines overall performance. Moreover, a culture of blame rather than accountability prevails, impeding growth and innovation.

Lack of Adaptability

In today's dynamic business landscape, adaptability is paramount. Dysfunctional organizations often struggle to pivot in response to market changes or internal challenges. Signs include rigid hierarchies, resistance to change, reluctance to critical feedback, and outdated processes that hinder efficiency. Without adaptability, organizations risk stagnation and eventual irrelevance, unable to meet evolving customer demands or capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Financial Instability

Financial instability can be a glaring indicator of underlying organizational dysfunction. Signs include recurring budgetary crises, unsustainable spending patterns, and failure to meet financial targets. Dysfunctional organizations may also exhibit poor resource allocation, lack of financial transparency, or overreliance on short-term gains at the expense of long-term sustainability. Such practices jeopardize fiscal

health and erode stakeholder confidence.

Erosion of Trust

Trust is the glue that holds organizations together. In dysfunctional environments, trust erodes due to broken promises, lack of transparency, or perceived favoritism. When employees distrust leadership or each other, collaboration falters, innovation stagnates, and loyalty wanes. Restoring trust requires genuine efforts towards open communication, fairness in decision-making, and consistent demonstration of integrity.

Inefficient Decision-Making

Effective decision-making is pivotal to organizational success. Dysfunctional organizations often exhibit decision-making paralysis, indecisiveness, or a culture of consensus-seeking at the expense of timely action. Without clear decision-making processes or accountability for outcomes, initiatives languish, opportunities are missed, and organizational agility suffers.

Employee Burnout

Employee burnout is both a cause and consequence of organizational dysfunction. Signs include chronic stress, decreased productivity, and increased absenteeism. Dysfunctional organizations may perpetuate burnout through unrealistic workloads, lack of work-life balance initiatives, or failure to address systemic issues contributing to stress. Addressing burnout requires proactive measures to promote wellness, foster a supportive culture, and



re-evaluate workload distribution.

Conclusion

Identifying and addressing signs of organizational dysfunction is crucial for sustained success and employee well-being. By recognizing communication breakdowns, leadership lapses, toxic environments, and other indicators early on, organizations can take proactive steps towards realignment and improvement. Cultivating a culture of transparency, accountability, and adaptability fosters resilience and ensures organizations can thrive in an ever-evolving business landscape. As stakeholders and leaders navigate these challenges, vigilance and responsiveness are key to mitigating dysfunction and steering towards a path of organizational health and prosperity.

Credit: ChatGPT, chat.openai.com

My 5 sent

Oupa Bobbili

Seisoene – winter het aanspraak gemaak op sy posisie in die natuur. En dit hoort so, ons het dit nodig. Die natuur gaan deur 'n sekere proses om die lente en somer sy beste te kan gee. Net so het somer en herfs hulle pragtige doel sodat winter sy beste kan gee. Die kringloop is eintlik fenomenaal, maar ons as burgers van die land het gemengde gevoelens, en soek altyd iets om oor te kla.

Op sosiale media kla die volk oor die koue, maar die sitrus boer glimlag breed, daar is 'n oes op pad. Ek persoonlik geniet glad nie die winter nie, want dit gaan gepaard met baie klere. Ek is gemaklik in 'n kort broek, T-hemp en plakkies dankie. Maar ek geniet die winter vir twee redes alleenlik. Vir een daar is weer lemoene en nartjies. En tweedens daar is minder goggas, veral muskiete. Niks wat 'n nagrus opfoeter soos 'n muskiet nie. En hier by ons in die bosveld is hulle so groot hulle gooi 'n skadu-

wee soos 'n arend. As hy bietjie vinnig kom land, gee hy jou sommer 'n blou kol.

Seisoene in die natuur kom geluidelik en is nie 'n oornag gebeurtenis nie. Dit is om ons en die natuur voor te berei vir wat gaan kom. Die heelal beweeg in harmonie met die tyds berekening van ons natuurlike seisoene. Al wat stilstaan is die son. Die natuur gryp elke geleentheid aan, want groei is die hoofdoel. Die wilde diere ken ook die seisoene, en die natuur beter as die mens. Hulle weet wat gebeur, en wanneer dit gaan gebeur, terwyl ons 'n knaap op TV sit met 'n duimsuig vooruitsig van die weer.

Seisoene in ons lewens kom skielik, ongenadiglik en sonder waarskuwing. En ons het dit nodig. Ja ek weet 100% van die mensdom stem nie saam nie. Wel stagneer waar jy is, dit is ok. Onthou 'n groef word 'n graf. Groei moet soos 'n natuur vir ons wees. Mense wat heelyd streef na beter en werk daarvoor ervaar seisoene soos almal, maar hulle verkies die glas half



vol. Dit los spasie vir groei en skep geleenthede. Vir hulle bestaan daar geen 'comfort zone' nie.

Vir die persoon wat die glas half leeg sien, is die seisoene hard en ongenadiglik, behalwe as dit 'n goeie seisoen is. Dit is gewoonlik mense wat emosionele besluite neem. Geen wilde dier in die veld neem 'n emosionele besluit nie. Hulle leef elke dag voluit, want om te sterf is nie 'n opsie nie. Die glas half vol se inhoud gaan een of an-

der tyd dood en beteken niks. Want daar is niks wat inkom om dit vars te hou nie. En gewoonlik is dit die verlede wat mense so vashou. Ek weet ek was een hulle.

Ons moet elke seisoen koester. Ons moet ook in harmonie beweeg met ons persoonlike seisoens verandering, al wat moet stil en sterk staan is ons geloof. Elke oomblik is 'n geleentheid om die half vol glas te laat oorloop.

Groete.

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