

Rediscovered plant Species in Blyde River Canyon: A Victory for Biodiversity and Restoration



The rediscovered rare plant species *Thorncroftia coddii*.

Lauren Booth, Communications Officer
Kruger to Canyons Biosphere NPC

The Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region has long been recognised as one of South Africa’s most ecologically significant landscapes. Now, this richly biodiverse region has added a remarkable chapter to its conservation story with the rediscovery and protection of a rare plant species - likely new to science, found only in the Blyde River Canyon.

This rare species belongs to the genus

Thorncroftia, a lesser-known cousin of the more familiar *Plectranthus*, and is endemic to a narrow range within the Blyde River Canyon area. Characterised by striking purple and pink flowers and a distinctive floral structure, *Thorncroftia* species typically flower at the end of summer, lighting up the rocky hillsides where they grow.

From forgotten specimen to scientific curiosity

The story begins in 1954, when renowned botanist Dr Leslie Codd collected a specimen near Mariepskop, of what he then be-

lieved to be *Plectranthus succulentus*. Years later, in 1961, Codd reclassified it as part of the *Thorncroftia* genus, though no further sightings were confirmed. For decades, the plant’s fate remained a mystery.

The landscape surrounding Mariepskop changed dramatically in the decades that followed. The natural mosaic of grasslands and forest patches was replaced by commercial pine plantations from the mid-1960’s, followed by decades of abandonment and infestation by invasive alien trees. By the time negotiations to incorporate

these degraded slopes into the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve began in the 1990’s, much of the native vegetation, and the ecological balance it supported, had been lost.

Restoration clears the way for hope

It was only in recent years that the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere (K2C), through its Catchment Restoration work, began rehabilitating the area. Systematic alien clearing, particularly of invasive pine and gum trees, was carried out by local teams as part of broader landscape... *Cont. on page 3*



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From the Editors desk

Hi everyone – we are still following up (on last month’s lead story) on what could be catastrophic for our town and area if they are not stopped. I’m talking about the Zama Zama’s mining on the tributaries and the actual Blyde River. Let’s see what we can get in terms of news and revelations. We have a new viewpoint from Granny Zee (below) – we welcome her to our publication. Should get tongues wagging.

Some interesting dates in the month of July:

- July 1 1863: The Battle of Gettysburg began, a turning point in the American Civil War.
- July 3 1976: The raid on Entebbe airport in Uganda occurred as an Israeli commando unit rescued 103 hostages on a hijacked Air France airliner.
- July 3 1996: The Stone of Scone, also known as the Stone of Destiny, was confirmed to be returned to Scotland from Westminster Abbey
- July 4 1776: The United States Declaration of Independence accepted.
- July 4 1862: The tale of Alice in Wonderland was born on this day, when author Lewis Carroll first told the story to Alice Liddell.
- July 5 1687: The first edition of Isaac Newton’s great work, Principia, was published by the Royal Society in England.
- July 6 1885: Louis Pasteur unveiled his cure for rabies.
- July 10 1943: The Allied invasion of Italy (WW2) began with an attack on the island of Sicily.
- July 14 1789: The fall of the Bastille occurred at the beginning of the French Revolution.
- July 16 1945: The first atomic bomb was tested by the US in 1945.
- July 18 1918: Nelson Mandela was born the son of a Tembu tribal chieftain.
- July 20 1969: Neil Armstrong (on Apollo 11) became the first person to walk on the moon.
- July 25 1978: The world’s first test-tube baby, Louise Joy Brown, was born.
- July 25 1909: The world’s first international overseas airplane flight was achieved by Louis Bleriot in a small monoplane when he flew over the English Channel.

Granny Zee’s View

I heard there’s a new 5-star lodge on Hoedspruit Wildlife estate. Feathers have been ruffled, we all know where Tom Cruise stayed, but there’s a new high-end lodge. One of the owners is flamboyant and vociferous – I’m watching to see the longevity of the new kids in town. See ya’all next month!

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Hoedspruit Rotary Club Honoured with Three Prestigious Awards

Lovelle Henderson

The dedicated efforts of the Hoedspruit Rotarians have been recognized with three significant awards at the recent Rotary District Conference (DISCON 2025). President Christine du Preez proudly accepted the accolades on behalf of her hard-working team, highlighting the club’s impactful work and support within the community.

Christine attended DISCON 2025, where she was unexpectedly called upon to receive the awards. She was also given the honour of presenting to distinguished delegates on the critical issue of women with cancer in rural areas. This topic, she noted, perfectly aligned with the conference theme, “Breaking New Ground,” which focused on innovative approaches to health challenges in remote regions.



Christine du Preez receiving the awards at DISCON 2025
Image supplied

“The Rotary Club of Hoedspruit proudly received several prestigious awards at DISCON 2025, celebrating the impactful work of the club in various sectors,” Christine stated.

The first recognition was for the “Breaking New Ground” project, which celebrated the club’s innovative initiatives in disease prevention and treatment, particularly in rural communities. A key aspect of this award-winning work is the annual collaboration with Hlokomela, focusing on health awareness, specifically breast cancer and early detection. This successful partnership provides free health services, wellness check-ups, and educational materials to the community.

The club also received an unexpected second award in the “Water Hygiene and Sanitation” category. This acknowledged Hoedspruit Rotary’s commitment to improving water hygiene and sanitation systems. Notable projects included the installation of a borehole and the upgrading of toilet facilities at the Poulo Crèche, significantly enhancing health and hygiene for the children and staff. The Poulo Crèche initiative was spearheaded by Ole Ahrens, a friend of Rotary, with donations from his sister and other supporters. Rotarian Ulla Jansen from Copenhagen has also been instrumental in the Vision and Xilaveko projects. Hoedspruit Rotary actively fosters cooperative relationships with international Rotary Clubs, which provide crucial additional funding and support for local projects.

To Christine du Preez’s delight and surprise, the club received a third honour: the overall “Breaking New Ground” award. Upon her return to Hoedspruit, she shared the exciting news with club members, who are currently immersed in preparations for their major annual fundraiser, the tenth Rotary K2C Cycle Tour.

“The impact of this recognition at DISCON

2025 solidified our position as leaders in community-based health projects and underscored our ongoing commitment to improving the lives of rural residents, particularly women, children, and those without easy access to healthcare,” said Christine.

This success will serve as a powerful motivator for the Hoedspruit Rotary Club to continue “breaking new ground” in health, education, and sanitation. The club also aims to strengthen its partnerships with local and international Rotary Clubs, health organizations, and government bodies.

The Hoedspruit Rotary Club extends its gratitude to the Hoedspruit business community for their continued support in their various endeavours.

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Rediscovered plant Species in Blyde River Canyon: A Victory for Biodiversity and Restoration



Close-up images of the *Thorncroftia coddii*, named to commemorate botanist Dr Leslie Codd.

Images supplied

Cont. from page 1

Systematic alien clearing, particularly of invasive pine and gum trees, was carried out by local teams as part of broader landscape restoration efforts, and this critical intervention created conditions conducive for the return of indigenous plant life.

In September 2024, Professor Kevin Balkwill, together with K2C Project Manager Simon Attwood and the Mpumalanga and Limpopo Plant Specialist Group, retraced

Dr Codd’s steps using historic herbarium records and aerial imagery. Although the original collection site had been heavily affected by landslides and pine growth, the team’s persistence paid off. Against the odds, a few *Thorncroftia* plants were found clinging to life atop boulders on a slope where pines had been recently cleared.

If these alien trees had remained, the endemic plant would almost certainly have been shaded out or chemically suppressed by pine litter - a phenomenon known as al-

lelopathy. Thanks to the restoration work, light and resources were once again available for indigenous flora to thrive.

From mistaken identity to new species

Plectranthus succulentus, now *Thorncroftia succulenta*, is a species that is only known to occur in the Soutpansberg mountains. Until now, the Blyde population had been regarded as part of *T. succulenta*. However, there are no known populations

between the Soutpansberg and Blyde, and this geographic gap, along with distinct morphological differences, demonstrates that the Blyde plant is in fact a separate, overlooked species.

In April 2025, members of the K2C team returned once more to the site and found the plant in full, glorious flower. This confirmed its survival, and its distinctiveness from *Thorncroftia succulenta*, found further north in the Soutpansberg mountains.

Professor Balkwill has now formally drafted a scientific paper describing this Blyde endemic as a new species named *Thorncroftia coddii*. “This is to commemorate Codd’s contribution to the taxonomy of the genus and his role in collecting the first herbarium specimen of the species,” says Simon Attwood. “This discovery is an apt symbol of nature’s resilience and the importance of long-term ecological restoration being done by organizations like K2C and their partners.”

Restoration makes the difference

The rediscovery is not just a botanical milestone; it is a powerful reminder of the value of conservation work. It illustrates how restoring degraded habitats can make the difference between extinction and survival, and why protected areas like the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve must be nurtured and expanded.

As part of the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region’s mission, initiatives like these safeguard biodiversity and secure ecosystem services that benefit communities, water security and tourism. This rare *Thorncroftia* now faces a far brighter future, rooted in a landscape that is slowly healing. Its survival is a triumph of science, persistence and the power of restoration.

Note: Urgent Attention Needed - if you are a Trustee of a Trust in South Africa!

Marteen Michau

Amendments to the Trust Property Control Act and new reporting requirements introduced by SARS and the Financial Intelligence Centre to enhance transparency, reporting and compliance, and to comply with recommendations from the Financial Action Task Force to eventually get South Africa off the grey list, mean an onerous and huge burden on trustees.

Firstly, trustees must collect, store and maintain information on all beneficial owners of the trust. “Beneficial owner” has been defined to include the founder of the trust, all trustees of the trust, as well as all beneficiaries named in the trust deed and beneficiaries who have received or accepted benefits from the trust. Other than natural persons, for legal persons the natural persons who effectively control or own the entity must be included. This information must be kept up to date in a register by

each trustee and reported onto an online facility at the Master of the High Court from 1 April 2023.

Secondly, trustees are required to lodge a beneficial ownership register with SARS. A new more comprehensive tax return for trusts is in place on which details of the founder, each trustee, each beneficiary, and a representative of a trustee must be disclosed. Various other questions now asked on the trust tax return would have to be answered very carefully, as the answers may have unforeseen negative consequences for the trust and trustees.

Thirdly, trustees must do third-party declarations to SARS from September 2025 and declare in whose hands the taxable income of the trust is taxed. SARS used to only require this information from banks, financial institutions, medical schemes, attorneys and estate agents, and then pre-populated this information on taxpayers’ annual income tax returns. Trustees must now report hereon on an annual basis before the end

of September each year, for SARS to add to the pre-populated information on trust beneficiaries’ e-filing profiles.

In addition to the above, trust asset registers and registers of accountable institutions that each trust deals with, must be kept by the trustees. The trustees must sign a resolution as to who will deal and communicate with each accountable institution and that specific trustee must then sign a letter addressed to that accountable institution placing it on record. Trustees who manage trusts as part of their business operations must register as an accountable institution with the Financial Intelligence Centre and failure to do so may expose all trustees to a fine of up to R10 million and/or imprisonment. The FIC has already issued fines in line herewith.

Trusts remain a flexible and efficient estate planning entity, with many potential advantages to trust beneficiaries. Delays in the winding up of deceased estates are at the order of the day in South Africa. By

holding your assets in a trust structure, you keep them out of your estate and the long process of winding up the estate.

Growth in assets can take place in trusts and not in your personal name and thus would not be subject to capital gains tax, estate duty and executor’s fees on your death in your estate. Trustees can look after elderly family members with dementia, without the need for the appointment of a *curator bonis*, which can be a costly and lengthy application to court. Bequests to minor children can be protected for their benefit in a trust, while their education and general welfare costs are covered by the trust.

If you need any assistance with or more information on any of the above, kindly contact Marteen Michau at marteen@fidelisvox.co.za.



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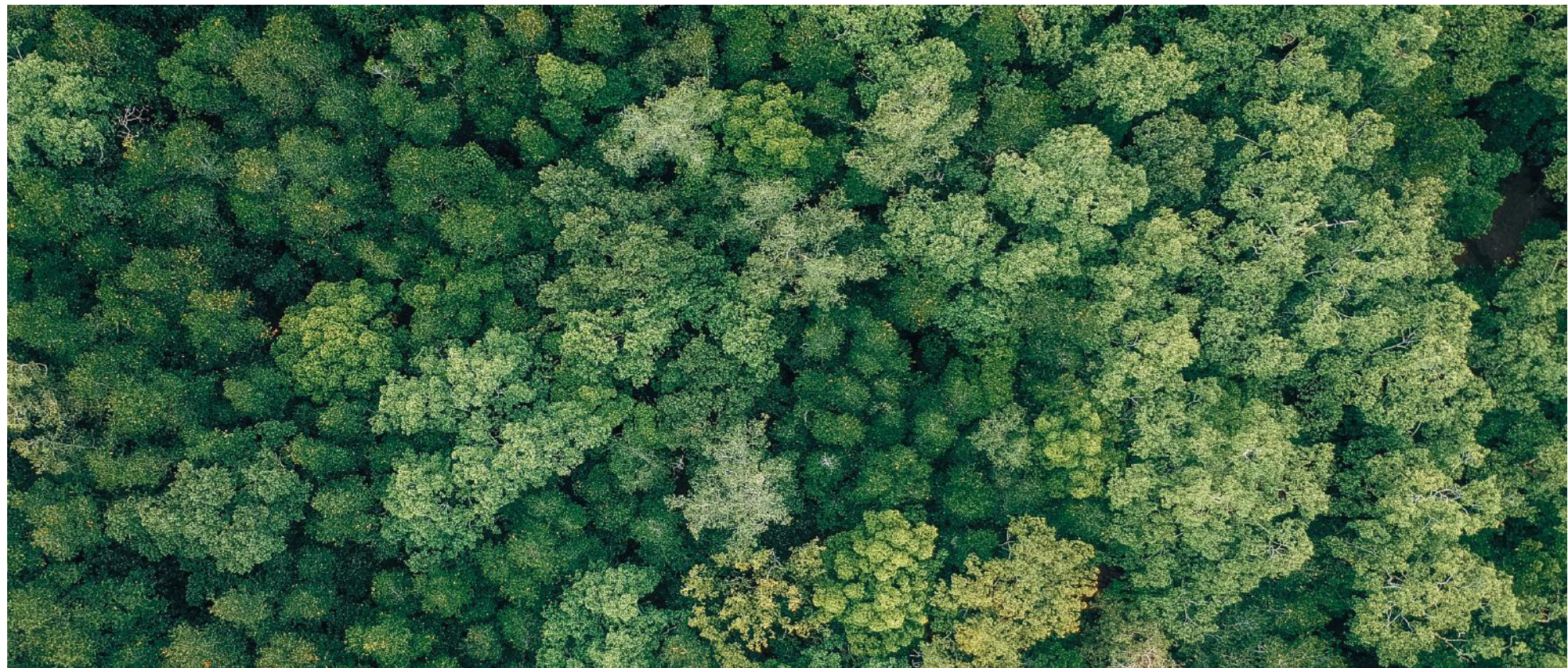
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Wits researchers help create ‘most accurate maps yet’ of where reforestation can best fight climate change



New research from the Future Ecosystems for Africa programme at the University of the Witwatersrand has created the most accurate maps yet of where reforestation can effectively combat climate change. Image: Canva-Pok Rie

Ethan van Diemen

The study has strong implications for Africa where natural grasslands and savannas are often misguidedly and inappropriately converted to forests, which can actually harm biodiversity and even exacerbate global warming.

A new study, published in the journal Nature Communications, has identified land roughly equivalent to the combined area of South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe where reforestation can deliver optimal climate benefits while supporting wildlife habitat, food production, and freshwater availability.

It identifies an area for reforestation that can net 2,225 TgCO₂e (teragrams of carbon dioxide equivalent) or roughly 2.2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide per year total in net mitigation potential. That’s roughly five times South Africa’s annual emissions.

Though global in scope, the study has strong implications for Africa where natural grasslands and savannas are often misguidedly and inappropriately converted to forests, which can actually harm biodiversity and even exacerbate global warming.

It also holds the potential to better inform and operationalise the nature-based solution’s potential on the continent, which faces disproportionate climate impacts despite contributing very little to human-induced climate change.

The study, in part from the University of the Witwatersrand’s Future Ecosystems for Africa (Fefa) programme, saw the creation of what it described as “the most accurate maps” of 195 million hectares globally where tree restoration will deliver “maximum climate benefits”.

Professor Sally Archibald from Wits’ School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Science, who leads the Fefa programme, explains that “previous studies often failed to address how afforestation could have negative effects on biodiversity and human well-being, especially for poor people living in remote rural areas often targeted for reforestation”.

“The drop from previous estimates is due to layers that previous maps haven’t been able to incorporate, because the research was still nascent at the time.”

Archibald explains that the research “accounts for the albedo effect, for example, which means restoring tree cover can, in some locations, actively heat the Earth rather than cool it by affecting how much

sunlight is absorbed or reflected. It also excludes native grasslands and other ecosystems where carpeting the land with trees would harm biodiversity and exacerbate fire regimes.”

This aspect of the research accords with the findings of another, earlier study, led in part by Emeritus professor of biological sciences at the University of Cape Town (UCT), William Bond.

Daily Maverick reported at the time that the Bond study bust the myth that planting trees everywhere is the silver bullet to slowing global warming, and explained why we need areas like open grasslands in the savannas.

Africa contains more grasses than any other continent. According to the South African National Biodiversity Institute, the savanna is the biggest biome in southern Africa, covering 46% of its area.

Bond explained at the time that savannas – characterised by grasslands – are an open habitat peppered with a handful of trees, and that in a healthy grassland ecosystem there is a very delicate balance between trees and grasses that needs to be maintained for the diversity of animal species that it supports to survive and thrive.

Tree-planting plans to offset carbon

threaten the ancient grasslands and everything it supports, he said.

“What many don’t realise is that grasslands store carbon in their soils and reflect more sunlight back into space than forests, playing a very important part in cooling the Earth.”

Dr Susan Cook-Patton, at The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and a senior author of the latest study, told The Guardian that “reforestation is not a substitute for cutting fossil fuel emissions, but even if we were to drive down emissions tomorrow, we still need to remove excess CO₂ from the atmosphere.

“As the number of climate-fuelled disasters stack up worldwide, it’s increasingly obvious that we can’t waste time on well-meaning but hazily understood interventions,” Cook-Patton said.

“We must fast-track our focus toward the places with greatest benefits for people and nature and the fewest downsides, the places most likely to be win-win. This study will help leaders and investors do just that.”

This article was previously published in the Daily Maverick/Our Burning Planet/Trees of Life

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SOLE MANDATE
CANYON GAME RESERVE R 2 800 000
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | Floor size: 290 m²

The main house comprises 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, open plan lounge, dining area and kitchen. A covered patio and decked area is found off the living area with a pizza oven and pool. The self-contained cottage comprises lounge, dining area, kitchenette and two en-suite bedrooms.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2345896



SOLE MANDATE
COMMERCIAL: Hoedspruit R 7 850 000
Wildlife Estate Beds 7 | Baths 7 | Floor: 433 m²

Luxury thatched guest lodge sold as a going concern with all movables. Includes 5 guest rooms, owner's unit, pool, bar, dining areas, fitted kitchen, staff room, garage, and 6 guest carports. Lodge leased until Feb 2028 - rental income in place.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2385693



SOLE MANDATE
BLYDE WILDLIFE ESTATE R 5 500 000
Bedrooms 5 | Bathrooms 4 | Floor size: 450 m²

Well-maintained property with panoramic mountain views from patio, pool and boma area. Main house with 3 bedrooms and a guest unit with 2 bedrooms. Paved driveway and entrance, double garage, double carport, storage facility, laundry room, staff room and enclosed courtyard.

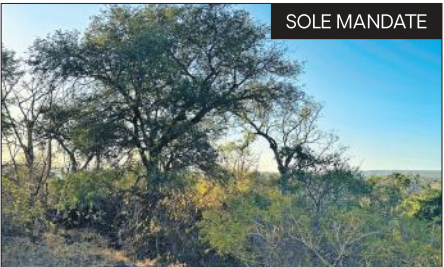
Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2343311



SOLE MANDATE
THE VILLAGE, HOEDSPRUIT R 2 400 000
WILDLIFE ESTATE Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2

This lovely 255m² townhouse is set amongst beautiful trees and has a lovely fenced garden area. The home features kitchen, courtyard and lounge with aircon that leads to the covered patio and garden. Great investment option or an opportunity for first-time home buyers.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2370806



SOLE MANDATE
ELEPHANT ROCK ECO ESTATE R 750 000
Stand size: 2,400 m² | Estate size: 240 ha

Lovely stand with mountain views, natural shade, and cul-de-sac privacy. Pet-friendly estate with 5-year build window and no transfer duty. Building packages available. Secure eco-estate with outdoor activities and wildlife.

Calin Leppan - 082 824 9482 Ref: 2388805



DUAL MANDATE
RAPTORS VIEW WILDLIFE R 4 900 000
ESTATE Beds 4 | Baths 2 | Floor size: 306 m²

Spacious home in a private setting with mountain views and mature bushveld trees. Features open-plan living, large patio, loft, laundry area, and aluminium doors/windows. Main bedroom includes indoor/outdoor shower; second bathroom also has an outdoor shower. Double carport.

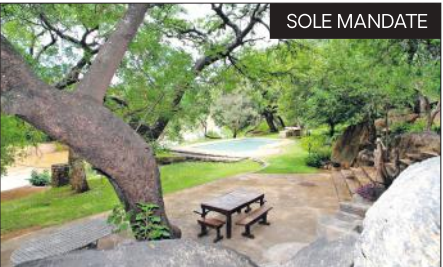
Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2386256



SOLE MANDATE
LISSATABA NATURE R 4 950 000
RESERVE Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor: 252 m²

Newly renovated bush home with mountain views. Includes 2-bedroom main house with wraparound deck, TV lounge, kitchen, scullery, and dining area. Guest cottage with kitchenette, and private patio. Boma, inverter, solar, gas stove, double carport, storeroom, and game vehicle. Partially furnished.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2392842



SOLE MANDATE
NDLOVUMZI NATURE R 4 458 000
RESERVE Beds 4 | Baths 4 | Floor: 176 m²

This tranquil home on a 21 hectare property overlooks the Olifants river and is surrounded by large riverine trees and rocky outcrops. The open plan living, dining area and newly fitted kitchen are all under high vaulted ceilings that make this home light and bright, adding to the appeal.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2152063



NDLOVUMZI NATURE R 4 860 000
RESERVE Beds 8 | Baths 7 | Floor: 420 m²

Riverfront property with stunning Olifants River views. Includes main house, 3 river-facing chalets, pool, braai area, and elevated patios. Features storeroom, staff quarters, borehole, water storage, river pump, and Eskom power. Peaceful setting with possible commercial potential (subject to approval).

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2369777



SOLE MANDATE
COMMERCIAL: Hoedspruit R 10 835 000
Wildlife Estate Beds 6 | Baths 6 | Floor: 480 m²

Luxury guest lodge with 3 bedrooms in main lodge, and 3 private chalets (all en-suite), pool, view deck, boma, and spacious central living area. Features private patios, aircon, and more. Includes staff, vehicle, liquor license, bookings, solar power, water storage, and surveillance. Sold as a going concern.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2393114



LEOPARD'S LANE R 2 850 000
New Development Beds 2 | Baths 2

Modern, off-grid 2-bedroom home with open-plan living, patio and built-in braai. Features guest toilet, single garage (convertible to a third bedroom), gas stove, solar power system, and water tank. The listed price includes VAT, no transfer duty applicable.

Calin Leppan - 082 824 9482 2384460



HOEDSPRUIT CENTRAL R 4 250 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: 200 m²

Versatile home with main en-suite bedroom, and 2 additional bedrooms. Features open-plan living, separate kitchen, aircons, ceiling fans, covered patio, pool, landscaped garden, and built-in braai. Includes separate building with bedroom, bathroom, storerooms, and triple carport.

Judy Born - 082 728 8177 Ref: 2388191



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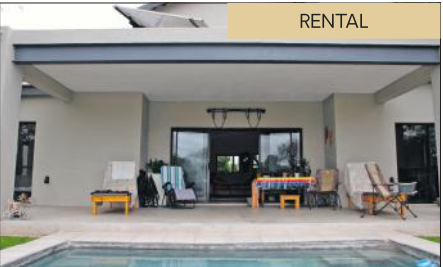
Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140
Rental Agent (Candidate Property Practitioner)



RENTAL
BLYDE WILDLIFE ESTATE R 34 000 pm
Bedrooms 5 | Bathrooms 4 | Furnished

Available immediately, pet friendly - House with 3 bedrooms and a guest unit with 2 bedrooms. Paved driveway and entrance, double garage, double carport, storage facility, laundry room, staff room and enclosed courtyard. Air-conditioners and ceiling fans in all bedrooms.

Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140 Ref: 2389565



RENTAL
MODITLO WILDLIFE R 26 000 pm
ESTATE Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Furnished

Available from 1 August, not pet friendly - Home with patio, pool, boma, and views of the Mbezi River. Open-plan living, scullery, pantry, laundry, courtyard, storeroom, outdoor shower, double carport. Solar-powered with 15 panels, 2 batteries, 5kVA system. Linen and towels not included.

Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140 Ref: 2381925



Safari Guide of the Year: An Iconic Event and the Ultimate Accolade



Mike Karantonis, founder of the event (left) Jason Gipson, the 2025 winner (middle) and Kalie Otimile, runner up. Jason Gipson lifting the trophy Images Armadillo Media Event Correspondent

The Safari Guide of the Year – an annual event powered by the Field Guides Association of southern Africa (FGASA) – was held recently at Kariiega Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape. This was the first time the event has been held in that province, and it acknowledges and confirms the strides FGASA has made as the golden standard in nature guiding in southern Africa and beyond, more particularly the progress made in the Eastern Cape.

The event had five finalists from around South Africa: Cameron Schmidt from Pumba Private Game Reserve, Jason Gipson from Lion Sands – More Family Collection, Kalie Otimile from Tswalu, Matthew Derry from Kwandwe Private Game Reserve, and Megan Heramb-Smith from The Great Outdoors; all of whom applied themselves to the categories examined with great enthusiasm and professionalism. Each one of the finalists had this event on their bucket list for some time, and their participation and enthusiasm in the event was testament to that desire.

Finalists were tested in eight categories: game drive, track and sign, birds’ sight and sounds, hospitality, storytelling, game walk, advanced rifle handling, and photographic guided experience. At the end of the week,

points were tallied and the runners up and winners of each category, and the overall runner up and winner were announced at an Awards Dinner.

All categories were difficult but keenly contested, and the going was tough. The Albany thicket is not to be laughed at. The rewards of the venue were varied and amazing, especially a 45-minute viewing of a caracal, for the fortunate ones that were on that particular game drive.

All finalists were winners at the end of the day. To put ones’ hand up to be counted takes courage, and all finalists displayed that innate courage, humility and professionalism – a testament to their training, mentorship and own guiding experience.

Kariiega Game Reserve hosted the event on another level. We were all accommodated in the Main Lodge and wined and dined like kings and queens. All the staff were amazing and everyone welcomed us with open arms and could not do enough to ensure that our stay was superb. The warmth of the hospitality certainly combatted the ‘nip-in-the-air’ that was prevalent in the early morning, and once the sun set behind the Eastern Cape hills.

The results

The awards were given out at the Awards Dinner on the Saturday night, after a hard week of work.

Hospitality – runner up Kalie Otimile, winner Jason Gipson.

Photographic drive – runner up Matthew Derry, winner Jason Gipson.

Storytelling – runner up Matthew Derry, winner, Kalie Otimile.

Birds sight and sound – runner up Kalie Otimile, winner Megan Heramb-Smith.

Game walk – runner up Jason Gipson, winner Megan Heramb-Smith.

Game drive – runner up Jason Gipson, winner Kalie Otimile.

Track and sign – runner up Jason Gipson, winner Matthew Derry.

Advanced Rifle Handling – runner up Megan Heramb-Smith, winner Cameron Schmidt.

Overall runner up of the Safari Guide of the Year 2025 - Kalie Otimile.

Winner of the Safari Guide of the Year 2025 - Jason Gipson.

Once again, the training and dedication of all finalists and the alignment to the FGASA standard (and their own personal growth) was so evident to all that were there. It encouraged the local guides to persevere and attain their own ‘greatness’. It was also an inspirational spark to the finalists who all stated that it was the event of a lifetime, and was a spark to progress onwards and upwards in their training and perseverance

to attain the next designation in their career path.

Well done to all finalists – as stated, they are all winners. A big shout out to the judges – all of whom give of their time for free, to ensure the standard and credibility of the event remains intact.

Thanks must also be extended to the CEO of South African Tourism, Ms Nombulelo Guliwe, whose presence and opening address – a message from the Minister of Tourism, Ms Patricia De Lille – hit home to all those present. Ms Guliwe stated that she wanted to celebrate everyone in the sector “for their unwavering commitment to ensuring that professional field guides meet the highest standards of training and ethical conduct”. She went on to congratulate FGASA and its team, on behalf of South African Tourism, “for over 30 years not only serving as a cornerstone of our tourism but actively shaping the heart of the South African visitor experience – thank you we are grateful”. She also thanked Mr Mike Karantonis for his vision in creating the Safari Guide of the Year event some 13 years ago.

Thanks must go out to the unbelievable hospitality of Kariiega Game Reserve, to the local and international sponsors, media partners and again, the judges, and finally to the guests and everyone that was very privileged to witness and take part in this iconic event.



Kariega Game Reserve: A Vision of Conservation, Legacy and Luxury



Travel Correspondent

Just a short drive from Port Elizabeth and nestled along South Africa’s celebrated Garden Route, Kariega Game Reserve has become a beacon of conservation success and luxury eco-tourism. This malaria-free, family-owned Big-5 reserve spans an impressive 11,500 hectares of diverse wilderness, making it one of the Eastern Cape’s most remarkable private game destinations.

Over the years, Kariega (whose name means “steenbok” in the Khoikhoi language) has grown organically into a flagship model of sustainable wildlife management and habitat restoration. Its location forms a natural extension for those travelling from Cape Town and through the Garden Route (in the Eastern Cape), offering a seamless bush-and-beach experience.

The history

Founded by the late Colin Rushmere, Kariega began its transformation in 1989 when the Rushmere family purchased the first piece of unspoiled land along the upper reaches of the Kariega River. At that time, the land that now forms the reserve was divided among 24 different farmers. Over the next three decades, the Rushmere’s, driven by their deep respect for nature, methodically assembled the parcels necessary to realise their dream of restoring the land and its wildlife.

A pivotal moment came in 1998 when neighbouring farmer Tony Fuller partnered with Rushmere, combining their properties and purchasing a key adjoining farm. This expanded Kariega to 2,000 hectares, incorporated the Kariega River, and allowed for the reintroduction of species like the white rhino. It also laid the foundation for Kariega’s eco-tourism offerings, with Main Lodge opening in 1999, followed by the more intimate Ukhozi Lodge in 2002.

Kariega’s Big 5 journey truly took shape in 2003, with the addition of 3,500 hectares of land bordering the Bushmans River. In 2004, the first elephant herd and lion pride were introduced, marking a signifi-



cant milestone in the reserve’s conservation efforts.

Expansion continued rapidly. In 2006, a further 500 hectares were acquired across the Bushmans River, paving the way for the opening of River Lodge and the restoration of a 1908 farmhouse into The Homestead, a private-use lodge. In 2007, Kariega grew again with the acquisition of the historic Harvestvale property - 4,000 hectares owned by the same settler family since 1823. This spectacular landscape became home to Settlers Drift, a five-star luxury tented lodge that opened in 2014, completing Kariega’s portfolio of five distinctive lodges ranging from four to five stars.

A major conservation milestone was reached in 2021, when Kariega received a donated tract of critical habitat in the Bushmans River Valley, expanding the reserve to 11,500 hectares. This strategic addition preserved 25 km of tidal estuary, increased habitat for elephants, white and black rhino, and created opportunities to reintroduce endangered apex predators like the cheetah. It also supports the broader goal of establishing connected wildlife corridors across the Eastern Cape.

Kariega remains a family-run reserve, proudly operated by the Rushmere and Fuller families, including Colin and Tony’s children and grandchildren. Their commitment to conservation and community continues to shape this extraordinary legacy, proving that with vision and care, humanity can restore what it once nearly destroyed.

A Tapestry of Ecosystems

With its breathtaking vistas, diverse topography, and the inclusion of both the Kariega and Bushmans rivers, the reserve is celebrated as one of the most beautiful in the region.

What truly sets Kariega apart is its extraordinary ecological diversity. The reserve encompasses five distinct ecosystems, which support high game densities and a rich variety of birdlife. This abundance ensures that game drives and guided walks consis-



The spectacular Kariega River (top), game viewing by vehicle and boat (above left) and the Main lodge. Images supplied

KARIEGA

GAME RESERVE

Eastern Cape · South Africa

tently deliver exceptional wildlife encounters - frequently including lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo, and leopard, as well as hippo, giraffe, zebra, and numerous antelope species.

Adding to the reserve’s natural splendour are two majestic rivers: the Kariega River and the Bushmans River, both of which are seamlessly woven into the guest experience. These waterways offer activities such as scenic river cruises, canoeing, and fishing, adding a unique aquatic dimension to the traditional safari.

Accommodation for Every Type of Traveller

Kariega offers five distinct lodges, each tailored to suit different traveller profiles - from romantic getaways to family holidays and private group retreats. All lodges are beautifully integrated into the landscape and designed to enhance, not disrupt, the surrounding wilderness.

Settlers Drift – Wilderness Reimagined in 5-Star Luxury

Located in a remote and untouched part of the reserve, Settlers Drift is the crown jewel of Kariega’s offerings. This ultra-luxurious tented lodge comprises nine 110m² suites, each featuring a spacious bedroom, elegant living area, full bathroom with indoor and outdoor showers, and a private deck with sweeping views. The lodge delivers an exclusive safari experience where comfort and wild Africa meet. *(No children under 10.)*

River Lodge – Tranquil Riverside Escape

Perched on the banks of the Bushmans River, River Lodge is a thatched retreat offering 10 spacious suites with direct river views. Guests can enjoy boat safaris and daily cruises to the beaches of Kenton-on-Sea, blending game-viewing with coastal charm. *(No children under 10.)*

Ukhozi Lodge – Romantic Soul of the Safari

Carved from stone, glass, and timber, Ukhozi Lodge captures the spirit of Africa with bold, stylish architecture and

breathtaking views. Ten private suites offer seclusion and luxury, each with its own plunge pool and private deck overlooking the valley below. The rim-flow pool at the main lodge is an iconic feature, perfect for watching wildlife on the plains. *(No children under 10.)*

The Homestead – Exclusive-Use Privacy and Comfort

For families or private groups seeking ultimate flexibility, The Homestead offers a fully serviced, private safari experience. With seven en-suite bedrooms, a dedicated team, and complete exclusivity, this remote lodge is perfect for up to 14 guests looking to tailor their safari on their own schedule. *(Children of all ages welcome.)*

Main Lodge – Family-Friendly Bush Adventure

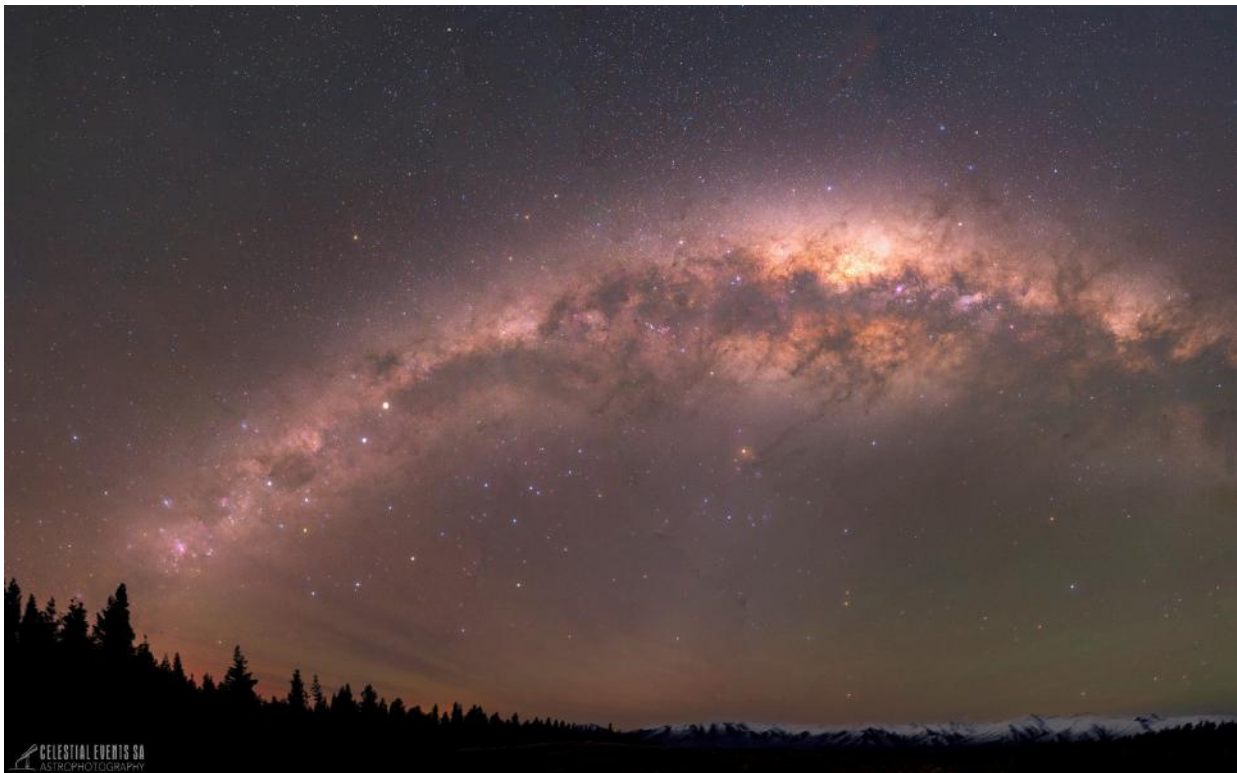
Main Lodge offers a warm, welcoming environment for couples, groups, and especially families. With 24 well-appointed chalets designed to blend seamlessly with the natural surroundings, this lodge offers panoramic views and a laid-back atmosphere. The “Kids on Safari” programme provides educational and fun bush experiences for younger guests. *(Children of all ages welcome.)*

A Vision Fulfilled

Kariega Game Reserve is more than a premier safari destination - it is a living example of how visionary conservation, responsible tourism, and family stewardship can restore land, protect wildlife, and enrich communities. From its multi-ecosystem richness and riverine beauty to its world-class accommodations and deeply personal guest experiences, Kariega invites travellers to connect with the African wilderness in a truly meaningful way.

Whether you’re looking for romance, family bonding, riverside serenity, or private bush luxury, Kariega delivers it all - with authenticity, heart, and a deep commitment to the wild.

Milky Way Season



Dullstroom Milky Way (top left) desert nights (above) and The Arch (left)



Ben Coley
Celestial Events SA

Winter is here! Not only does winter mean a break from the cripplingly oppressive Hoedspruit heat, but it also means, Milky Way season! What better way to take advantage of the cloudless winter conditions than to capture your very own photo of our galaxy's great spiralling arms reaching into the sky like a cosmic ladder to the heavens.

Look to the East an hour after sunset on a dark night, and you will see the distinctive glow of the centre of our galaxy. Its core dominates the constellation of Sagittarius, the Archer, and its current low position on the horizon offers some of the best photographic opportunities of the year.

Thanks to modern day technology, a relatively basic camera is capable of capturing awe-inspiring images of the Milky Way that will reveal glistening star clusters and areas of glowing nebulosity. However, getting your settings right is paramount.

Here are the top tips for stunning Milky Way photos this winter.

Composition

With the Milky Way stretching up from the

eastern horizon, it is a great time to frame it against some interesting terrestrial features. Photography is art and thus there are endless options, but look for a dead tree, some interesting geology, a building, or even a burnt-out car as a foreground subject.

Equipment

Any DSLR or Mirrorless camera (and even some of today's modern cell phones) can take amazing photos of the Milky Way. A good tripod is needed to keep the camera steady during long exposures, and a ball head mount will allow you to compose the shot. A remote trigger can also be beneficial, to minimize vibrations when the shutter is depressed. If you do not have one, the camera's self-timer can also be used.

Camera Settings

In night photography, we are taking the camera out of its comfort zone, and we must tell it what it needs to do. Ensure that you are shooting on manual, in order or to give yourself full control over the settings.

Shutter Speed

We are asking our camera to capture distant and faint specs of light, so we need to give it ample opportunity to do so. However,

the Earth is constantly turning and thus we cannot expose too long, otherwise the stars will move, creating trails and not pinpricks of light. As a general rule, divide your focal length into 300 – this will give you your maximum exposure time before 'worming' in the stars becomes apparent. If you are shooting at 20mm, your maximum shutter speed should not exceed 15s (300/20). Remember to consider your crop factor if you are not shooting with a full frame sensor.

Aperture

Aperture refers to how much light the lens will gather. Since we are photographing faint objects, we need the lowest f-stop available. This will be dictated by your lens, but the lower the number the better. If you have a fast lens (f1.8 or f2) it is advisable to shoot one stop higher, in order to maximize quality.

ISO

For all photos, work off the premise of 'as much as necessary and as little as possible'. Higher ISO settings make the camera sensor more sensitive to light, but also more prone to noise. Ultimately, the strength of your ISO will be dictated by your camera model but for many DSLRs, around ISO 2500 should be

a good starting point.

Focus

Cameras cannot accurately auto-focus on a star, so put your camera on manual focus. Find a bright star on the screen and zoom in. Then adjust the focusing ring until the star is as small as possible. You could tape the focus ring to stop it shifting throughout the night.

Advanced Equipment

If you plan on taking longer exposures, then a star-tracking mount is essential. These are aligned to celestial south (the axis of Earth's rotation) and allow for exposures of up to 2 or 3 minutes if aligned accurately. This means the camera can capture lots of faint information and enables you to shoot at lower ISOs and thus have less noise in your photos. These are not cheap but are an essential item if you want to take your Milky Way photography to the next level!

Good luck and we would love to see your results!!

See Celestial Events SA advert for contact details.

Fangs and Flirtation - Black Mambas and Puff Adders Turn Up the Heat in Winter



Puff adder basking (top), black mamba swimming (above) and side view of a black mamba on a branch (above right) Images supplied

Tim Baynham
Wildlife Safety Solutions

When most people think of snakes, especially the infamous black mamba and the cryptic puff adder, they envision stealthy predators slithering through the undergrowth. However, beneath the surface of their unwarranted fearsome reputations lies a lesser known but equally fascinating aspect of their lives: their breeding behavior during the cooler winter months.

Southern Africa’s winter, from May through August, is typically a time of reduced activity for reptiles. As ectothermic creatures, snakes rely heavily on environmental conditions to regulate their bodily functions. Yet, this period of relative calm marks the beginning of an extraordinary cycle in the lives of the black mamba (*Dendroaspis polylepis*) and the puff adder (*Bitis arietans*) - the mating season.

The black mamba, one of Africa’s most feared yet misunderstood snakes, becomes notably active during the early part of winter. Despite the cooler temperatures, males enter a phase of heightened activity as they search for receptive females. Males have been observed traveling several kilometres during this time, following pheromone trails left by females. It is not uncommon for me

to encounter more than one snake together when responding to mamba callouts at this time of year.

When two males encounter one another in pursuit of a female, a ritualistic combat dance may ensue; these confrontations rarely if ever involve biting. Instead, the snakes engage in a wrestling match, intertwining their muscular bodies, each trying to pin the other’s head to the ground. The victor earns the right to court the nearby female. This behavior is often mistaken for mating, however courtship and copulation is subtle and gentle affair. The male aligns his body alongside the female, flicking his tongue to read her chemical signals and gently rubs against her. If receptive, the female allows copulation, which can last for some time. After mating, the male leaves in search of other opportunities, while the female goes on to seek a safe, warm location to lay her eggs, usually a few months later.

Interestingly, this timing offers several advantages. The eggs are typically laid in early spring when temperatures begin to rise, allowing the warmth of the new season to incubate them. Hatchlings emerge in summer, when prey is plentiful and conditions are ideal for growth.

In contrast to the sleek and speedy black mamba, the puff adder is a master of ambush and camouflage. This thick-bodied

viper spends much of its time motionless, relying on its cryptic colouration and patterning to blend into the surrounding environment. However, during the first few months of winter, male puff adders become uncharacteristically mobile in their quest to locate a mate.

Using a powerful sense of smell, males detect the pheromone trails of females and follow them persistently. When the male encounters a receptive female, he will stroke the female’s body with rhythmic motions, attempting to align their cloacae for copulation. Unlike the egg-laying black mamba, the puff adder is ovoviviparous, meaning the eggs develop inside the female, and she gives birth to fully formed live young. This strategy provides an advantage during winter, as developing embryos remain protected within the mother’s body, kept at a relatively stable temperature.

The winter breeding behaviour of these two iconic snake species highlights the remarkable adaptations southern Africa’s reptiles have evolved to ensure their survival. While the environment seems dormant, a hidden drama of life and reproduction plays out across the veld, unseen by most.

Snake populations are under pressure from habitat loss, road mortality, and persecution by humans. Knowing when and where snakes breed allows for better protection

of critical habitats and a deeper appreciation of their ecological roles. Moreover, this knowledge helps dispel long-standing myths and fears. Black mambas, despite their reputation, are shy and avoid confrontation. Puff adders, while responsible for a number of bites each year, strike only when stepped on or provoked. Recognizing their roles as predators of rodents and pests can shift perceptions from fear to respect.

While the African winter may appear to slow nature’s rhythm, it is, in truth, a vital season of preparation and renewal for snakes like the black mamba and puff adder. Their winter breeding behaviour is both strategic and biologically brilliant, ensuring the continuation of their lineages in an often harsh and unpredictable environment. By peering into this secret world, we gain not only scientific insight but also a profound respect for the resilience and complexity of these misunderstood reptiles.

For more information on scorpions, snakes, spiders and other 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@wildlifesafety-solutions.co.za; www.wildlifesafety-solutions.co.za, FB Wildlife Safety Solutions, Instagram [wildlife_safety_solutions](https://www.instagram.com/wildlife_safety_solutions)

Koru Camp Reopens: A Celebration of Community, Conservation and Connection



The opening of the newly renovated Koru Camp, attended by supporters, conservation leaders, partner NGOs, and local champions

Images supplied

Emily Whiting

The dust rose in golden swirls as the convoy of vehicles wound through the warm embrace of the bushveld, sunlight bathing the bush in gold. It was as if nature itself was rejoicing. The air was alive with the sound of rhythmic drumming and joyful voices. Against a crisp blue sky, over 100 guests arrived to celebrate a long-awaited milestone in conservation: the grand reopening of the newly renovated Koru Camp.

Welcomed with cool drinks and warm smiles, the visitors included supporters, conservation leaders, partner NGOs, and local champions - all drawn together by a shared passion for people and wildlife. The atmosphere was electric with excitement as the Djembe Drummers from Southern Cross School set the tone for a day of celebration, connection, and purpose.

Tours of the upgraded camp were led by the Koru team, giving guests a glimpse of the new facilities while young finalists from the Rhino Art competition settled under a tree, busy with crayons, paper and imagination. Conversation buzzed around them - part inspiration, part reunion.

Then, like a match to dry kindling, the Roots of Rhythm dance troupe ignited the open-air classroom and dining area with

a burst of colour and soul. Their vibrant performance lifted the spirit of the day, culminating in a collective cheer, the perfect crescendo to a morning filled with anticipation.

As the final drumbeat faded, a hush descended on the attendees. Dressed in traditional Zulu attire, Richard Mabanga of Project Rhino stepped forward. A long-time friend of Koru founder Peter Eastwood and a tireless rhino ambassador, Mabanga's message was clear and powerful: that people and wildlife are deeply, emotionally intertwined - and it is only by honouring that bond that we can move forward.

His words gave way to Koru Camp CEO Corné Havenga, who spoke with heartfelt gratitude and a powerful reminder of the magic in meaningful collaboration.

"The No Coincidence Theory suggests that when the right moments and the right people come together, extraordinary things can happen," Havenga said. "It's a reminder that sometimes, events align beyond our understanding, guiding us toward growth, change, and opportunity. I believe it's no coincidence we are here together today. We are united in our mission to create change rooted in connection, community and conservation."

That theme was the golden thread throughout the day, especially during a moving address by Peter Eastwood himself. His belief in the transformative power

of nature's ability to shift mindsets and change lives and community was the original spark for Koru Camp. It was also the beginning of a friendship with humanitarian explorer Kingsley Holgate, a bond that inspired the launch of the Rhino Art project in 2013 — an idea Eastwood seed-funded into reality.

Fittingly, Holgate took the stage with his unique warmth, to honour the *Rhino Art Competition* finalists, chosen from more than 350 entries submitted via 10 partner NGOs. Each child used colour and creativity to speak up for wildlife, with the top three submissions receiving certificates, art supplies, books, and school essentials - and a coveted return trip to Koru Camp for a two-night conservation experience for all finalists. As their names were called, their faces lit up with pride, proving that when given a platform, young voices can rise.

Celebrations continued with a vegetarian feast prepared by Head Chef Tinyiko and her team. Guests moved between interactive conservation exhibits, educational games, and storytelling sessions under the trees. It was a blend of laughter and learning, curiosity and connection - the very heartbeat of Koru's mission.

The day closed with a symbolic tree-planting ceremony, representing hope, growth, and long-term impact. Holgate then raised his iconic calabash to toast the journey ahead - an expedition to Gorongosa National Park in Mozambique

— but not before the ceremonial ribbon was cut, officially opening the new chapter for Koru Camp.

This is, however, more than just a camp. For the many communities and NGOs involved, Koru is a promise: a safe, inspiring space where underserved local communities can fall asleep to the sound of lions, wake up with curiosity, and fall in love with the wild. With expanded accommodation, upgraded classrooms and dedicated activity areas, Koru is now more equipped than ever before to welcome thousands more participants and inspire a new generation of conservationists.

"At the new Koru Camp," Havenga concluded, "the magic of falling in love with wildlife can continue - where our communities and partners can feel at home, and where those once excluded from these landscapes can now belong."

The celebration was a testament to the vision of Peter Eastwood, the passion of the Koru team, and the collective will of every person who believes in a more inclusive, community-centred future for conservation.

As Corné Havenga so perfectly said in her closing remarks: "Thank you for your continued support in our shared mission - because we are stronger together. May the seed we plant here continue to grow in many future conservationists."

Here's to the next chapter - one rooted in purpose, community, and lasting change.

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Hoedspruit Medical Rescue 072 170 0864
Hoedspruit Paws 078 431 3161
Hoedspruit Town Watc 072 812 2172
Hoedspruit Farm Watch 082 683 2835
Hospital Hoedspruit Pvt Hospital 072 310 0032
Hospital Emergency 012 000 1111/2/3
Hospital Nelspruit Mediclinic 012 000 1254
Hospital Tintswalo 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
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Med Centre Emergency No 084 770 1743
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Month Overview

July 2025 will be dominated by Mercury Retrograde in Leo (July 17th - August 11th), leading to communication issues and a need for review, especially in self-expression and creative projects. The month also sees Venus in Leo from July 11th, boosting passion in relationships. The full moon in Capricorn on July 10th emphasizes practical goals, while the new moon in Leo on July 24th encourages new beginnings in personal expression. Expect a blend of introspection and bold energy.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

It's your season! Embrace confidence, deepen connections, and allow for emotional processing, especially as past feelings may resurface.

Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Venus brings a glow-up to your love life, but Mercury Retrograde in your sign demands self-reflection and careful expression. Tech issues possible.

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Balance health and hustle, focusing on refining plans rather than pushing new initiatives. Watch for misunderstandings in daily routines.

Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Relationships may be tested, and truths revealed. Navigate social dynamics carefully, as communication could be tricky.

NOTICE IN TERMS OF SECTION 52(2) FOR A RE-ZONING APPLICATION IN SECTION 23 OF THE MARULENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY SPLUMA BY-LAWS, 2016

I Vukosi Ndalama Shimange of Tushiya Town Planners and Architects, being the Authorised Agent of Venren Boerdery BK hereby give notice in terms of Section 23 of the Maruleng Local Municipality SPLUMA By-Laws, 2016, for the Rezoning of Portion 5 (a Portion of Portion 2) of the Farm Southampton 213, Registration Division K.T. from "Agricultural" to "Public Garage" as formalization of the existing fuel depot.

The application lies for inspection and/or for any objection(s) and/or comment(s), including the grounds for such objection(s) and/or comment(s) with full contact details, shall be lodged with, or made in writing to, Manager: Department of Spatial Planning and Economic Development, Maruleng Municipality, 65 Springbok Street, P.O. Box 627, Hoedspruit, 1380 for a period of 30 Days from 27 June 2025.

Address of applicant (physical as well as postal address): Tushiya Town Planners and Architects, P.O. Box 139, Giyani, 0826. Tel.: 0658269251, Email: tushiyatpa@gmail.com.

KENNISGEWING INGEVOLGE ARTIKEL 52(2) VIR 'N HERSONERING AANSOEK IN ARTIKEL 23 VAN DIE MARULENG PLAASLIKE MUNISIPALITEIT SPLUMA VERORDENINGE, 2016

Ek Vukosi Ndalama Shimange van Tushiya Stadsbeplanners en Argitekte, synde die Gemagtigde Agent van Venren Boerdery BK gee hiermee kennis ingevolge Artikel 23 van die Maruleng Plaaslike Munisipaliteit SPLUMA-verordeninge, 2016, vir die Hersonerig van Gedeelte 5 ('n Gedeelte van Gedeelte 2) van die Plaas Suid-Afrika Afdeling K.T Registrasie van "Landbou" na "Publieke Garage" as formalisering van die bestaande brandstof depot.

Die aansoek lê ter insae en/of vir enige beswaar(s) en/of kommentaar(s), insluitend die gronde vir sodanige beswaar(s) en/of kommentaar(s) met volledige kontakbesonderhede, moet ingedien word by, of skriftelik aan Bestuurder: Departement Ruimtelike Beplanning en Ekonomiese Ontwikkeling, Maruleng Munisipaliteit, Springbok Straat 65, P.O. Box 627, Hoedspruit, 1380 vir 'n tydperk van 30 Dae vanaf 27 Junie 2025.

Adres van aansoeker (fisiese sowel as posadres): Tushiya Town Planners and Architects, P.O. Box 139, Giyani, 0826. Tel.: 0658269251, E-pos: tushiyatpa@gmail.com

Lady Godiva and your July 2025 horoscopes

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

Expect intensity, potential travel, and inner shifts. Financial matters take the spotlight; review and revise plans carefully.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

Finances and future planning are prominent. Take time to re-evaluate goals and avoid overspending during the retrograde.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

The Full Moon in your sign on July 10th emphasizes achievements and practical outcomes. Focus on stability and consistent effort.

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

Mid-year brings renewed energy for projects and community engagement. Be mindful of potential miscommunications in group settings.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

This month brings introspection and transformation. Prioritize rest and emotional healing, especially if old issues resurface.

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Focus on career and personal growth, but exercise patience with communication and potential delays due to Mercury Retrograde. Love life gets a fiery boost.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Emotional growth and relationship clarity are key. Finances may see positive shifts, but be mindful of unexpected expenses during the retrograde.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Your ruling planet, Mercury, retrogrades, so expect communication shifts and a need for careful wording. Opportunities for intellectual growth and ideas are strong.

SUDOKU ANSWERS

9	1	3	8	4	5	2	7	6
4	2	6	1	3	7	5	9	8
8	5	7	2	6	9	1	4	3
6	9	8	3	2	4	7	1	5
5	7	1	6	9	8	4	3	2
2	3	4	5	7	1	6	8	9
1	6	9	7	5	3	8	2	4
7	4	5	9	8	2	3	6	1
3	8	2	4	1	6	9	5	7

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What Would Stop AI from Developing Incurable Diseases in the Future?

AI perspective ‘correspondent’

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping modern life - from how we work and communicate, to how we diagnose illness, grow food, and explore space. But as AI systems become more sophisticated, even integrated into biological systems and health care, a provocative question arises: could AI, or AI-linked technologies, ever develop or contribute to incurable diseases? And more importantly, what would prevent it?

While AI itself, as a software-based entity, doesn’t get “sick” in the way humans do, it can be used in contexts that deeply affect human health. As AI gets embedded in medical diagnostics, biotech, and even synthetic biology, there’s growing concern about the unintended consequences of such powerful tools. In a world where machine learning designs drugs, gene therapies, or even interacts directly with our bodies via implanted devices, could a software error or malicious code result in incurable conditions?

AI and Human Disease: The Interface

AI is already assisting in drug discovery and disease modelling, sometimes predicting how proteins fold or how cancer might mutate. But the flip side is that these same tools could be misused - intentionally or accidentally - to design harmful biological agents or flawed treatments.

A 2022 experiment by biosecurity re-

searchers, for example, demonstrated that machine learning models could be repurposed to generate the structures of thousands of potentially toxic compounds in a matter of hours. It was a chilling example of how easily AI could be twisted from cure to curse.

Moreover, the increasing integration of AI into wearable health tech, neural implants, and prosthetics opens up the possibility of physical dependency on intelligent systems. If these systems are corrupted, outdated, or mis-programmed, they could malfunction in ways that cause long-term damage - perhaps even irreversible or “incurable” conditions in the human body.

So, what would stop it? There are three primary barriers that could prevent AI from causing or contributing to incurable diseases in the future: governance, design ethics, and biological safeguards.

Strong Governance and Regulation

Global frameworks for AI safety and bioethics are still in their infancy. But growing recognition of AI’s dual-use nature - where one technology can be used for both healing and harm - has prompted calls for tighter regulation. The World Health Organization, for instance, has urged nations to implement safety testing, auditability, and ethical oversight in AI-based health systems.

To prevent the misuse of AI in disease creation or unsafe biotech, governments must enforce stringent approval processes, continuous monitoring, and severe

penalties for malicious use. Just as nuclear technology is tightly controlled, high-risk bio-AI applications must be as well.

Ethical-by-Design Development

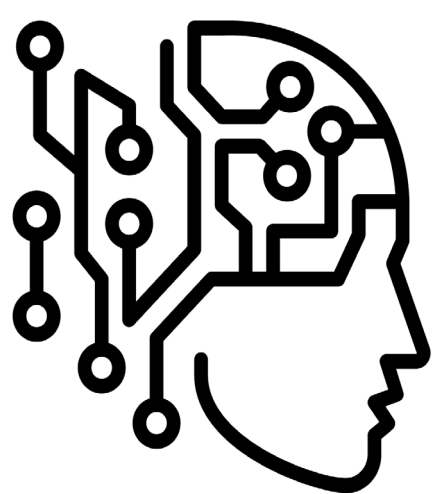
Engineers and researchers are increasingly embracing “ethical-by-design” approaches, ensuring that AI systems are built from the ground up with safety and transparency in mind. This includes limiting access to sensitive models, embedding kill-switches or fail-safes, and programming AI to recognize and reject certain dangerous patterns.

In drug design, for example, this could mean AI is trained to flag or avoid compounds with high toxicity risk, even if they meet other efficacy criteria. In neural tech, it means designing devices that can’t be reprogrammed remotely or without consent.

Biological Firewalls

As AI moves closer to the human body, literal biological safeguards become essential. This includes using genetic kill switches in synthetic organisms, designing therapies that degrade over time unless renewed under supervision, and employing CRISPR “brakes” to stop unintended gene edits.

The concept of “containment” isn’t new to bioengineering, but with AI in the picture, it needs to be more robust. Just as cybersecurity protects networks, “bio-cybersecurity” will need to guard against rogue AI-influenced biology.



A Cautionary but Hopeful Future

It’s worth remembering that AI doesn’t have intent - it reflects the data and design given to it by humans. The real risk lies in human misuse, negligence, or overconfidence. However, with international cooperation, rigorous oversight, and ethical foresight, the benefits of AI in health could far outweigh the dangers.

Preventing AI from contributing to incurable diseases isn’t about banning innovation - it’s about building responsible systems. We’re at the threshold of a future where machines help cure the incurable. But that same door, if left unguarded, could let in new kinds of biological threats.

The question isn’t whether AI *can* develop incurable diseases, but whether we’ll be wise enough to stop it from ever trying.

My 5 Sent

Oupa Bobbili

So is die 98ste Comrades oor en verby. Die organiseerders werk vir maande om die dag perfek te laat verloop. Kom die weg spring tyd dan begin die harde werk af te betaal. Televisie mense orals om die hele dag op skerm te kry. Die voorste hardlopers kry die meeste aandag en hulle verdien dit. Net soos die organiseerder het die mense ook baie hard gewerk om die prys geld te probeer inpalm.

Daar is verkillende kategorieë van hardlopers. Die goues, die silweres en dan kom die agter os ook by. Nou daardie is my mense. Hulle mors nie die organiseerders se tyd nie, hulle gebruik al die tyd wat vir hulle gegee word. Net so voor die afsny tyd dan storm daar nog brawe manne en manninne oor die lyn om hulle medalje te kan kry. As

jy nog nooit die wedloop gedoen het nie, dan sal jy dit verstaan nie. As daai rewolwer skoot afgaan en jy is nie oor die lyn nie, dan is dit ‘n teleurstelling wat nie in woorde om gesit kan word nie.

Ek het self die jaar 2000 my tekkies op daai teerpad geplak. Die gees en die kameraadskap op die pad sal jy nooit vergeet nie. Die mense ken nie kleur, taal, kultuur of politieke party nie. Dit is een groot “happy family” en almal oud en jonk staan saam. Dit is by die agter os waar die kameraadskap lê, daar waar almal mekaar moed in praat. Die ondersteuners langs die pad skroom nie om ‘n happie wors, sluk vars Coke en of toilet papier te deel nie. Nee daar is alles in oorvloed.

Dit is hoe ons in die lewe ook moet wees. Maar ons kan nie eens in kerke saamstaan nie wat staan nog met die lewe. Kerke is verdeel, mense is verdeel, politiek is verdeel maar ons is so dom ons self ‘n nasie te noem. Nogals die reënboog nasie. Non-

sens man, die reënboog is sewe kleure in ‘n eenheid wat ‘n pragtige belofte uitstraal. Ons kan nie eens met ons eie kleur en ras oor die weg kom nie wat staan nog met mekaar.

Die Comrades is nie net die grootste wedloop in die wêreld nie. Dit is die grootste les vir ons as mens. Ons voorste hardlopers, dit is nou ons kastige leiers, kry ook baie aandag. Hopeloos te veel na my sin, hulle verdien dit nie. Ons wat belasting betaal hardloop die wedloop en die regering moet ons ondersteuning wees, maar dit gebeur nie. Hulle lieg, bedrieg en bevark ons net. Die regering werk eintlik vir ons. Ons betaal belasting sodat hulle ‘n diens kan lewer. Nou betaal ons hulle om ons, die volk te besteel.

Maar daar gelaat. Ek wil vir elkeen wat die Comrades gedoen het sê “knap gedaan” julle verdien meer as net ‘n medalje. Ons wat die lewens wedloop saam hardloop, ons prys kom nog. Aanhou, uithou, moedhou en behou. Julle is ysters. Groete.

SUDOKU ANSWERS

1	3	8	7	9	6	4	2	5
2	9	6	3	4	5	1	7	8
5	7	4	8	2	1	3	6	9
7	2	3	9	6	4	5	8	1
6	1	9	5	7	8	2	4	3
4	8	5	2	1	3	6	9	7
8	6	7	1	3	2	9	5	4
9	4	1	6	5	7	8	3	2
3	5	2	4	8	9	7	1	6

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