



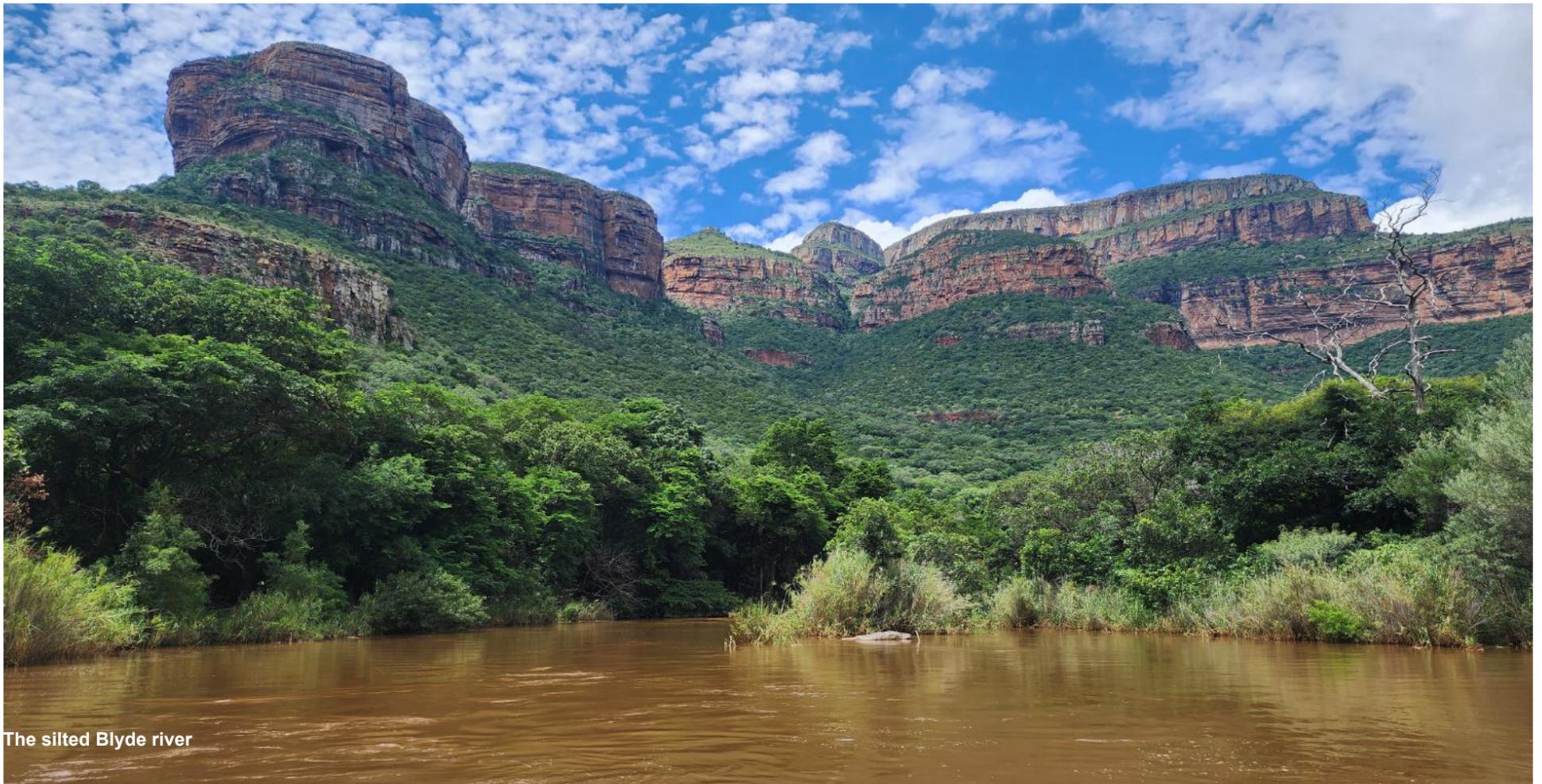
KRUGER2CANYON

NEWS

May 2025

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

The Blyde Dam is Choking: A Crisis of Sand, Silt, and Cyanide!



The silted Blyde river

Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region NPC

A Pristine River Under Siege

The Blyde Dam, a lifeline for communities and agriculture in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, is in critical condition, losing a staggering 20% of its water storage capacity in just two to three years. A recent survey reveals the dam is rapidly filling with sediment, a direct consequence of escalating illegal mining, deforestation, and rampant erosion in the Blyde River's upper catchment. This isn't just about water; it's about the survival of an entire region.

The Blyde River, a national treasure and historically one of South Africa's cleanest waterways, is now facing an unprecedented threat.

The Blyde River has been considered as one of the cleanest and least disturbed rivers in South Africa. It remains officially classified as a "Class A" river under the Department of Water and Sanitation's Ecological Classification, meaning it is "near natural." Until recently, surveys (1974, 1979, 1999)

showed virtually no sediment in the Blyde Dam. However, a groundbreaking bathymetric survey conducted by the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region (K2C), the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), and Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) has exposed a shocking reality: the dam is rapidly succumbing to massive sediment deposits. Sonar technology revealed huge sand and silt banks at the dam's inlets, particularly where the Blyde and Ohrigstad Rivers meet. The increasing turbidity and visible sand-

banks over the past two years have now been confirmed by this hard data.

This means the dam supporting Hoedspruit's water supply, irrigating over 8,000 hectares of high-value citrus and mango farms, and sustaining areas of the Kruger National Park, is on the brink of collapse.

The Alarming Causes

The culprit behind this environmental catastrophe is the perfect storm of human activity: Cont. on page 3

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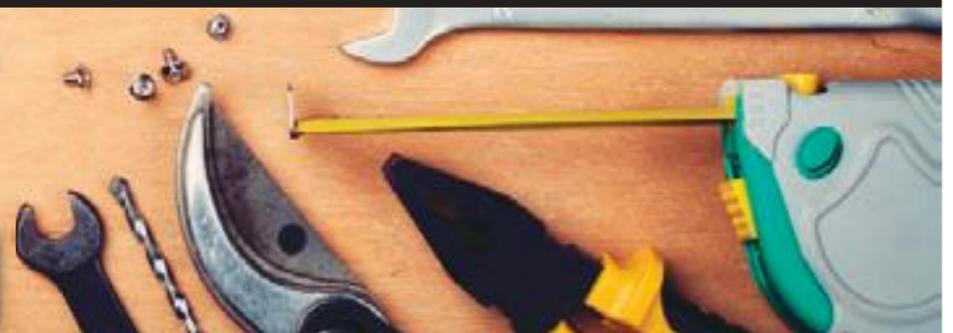

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From the Editors desk

We all went down to Durban's Indaba tourism trade show two weeks ago. It seemed to be well supported, but oh my dear, it was not at all well organised. This is a direct slight on the Department of Tourism – exhibitors, buyers and visitors had complaints about not being able to get hold of the organisers either by mail or telephone! I arrived at a stand from the eastern Cape, they had only a small table and two chairs – that was that – no pictures, couches, signage ... nothing! Courtesy of the Deputy President arriving (the cavalcade careering down the highway!) the organisers closed the parking (!) so exhibitors and buyers/visitors had to park some way from the ICC – and then the queues to register were long and very slow – four registration pods for exhibitors and ONE for buyers and visitors! When are we going to get things right – it certainly is not rocket science? And they had a year to organise! Oh well it was worth the journey.

Lead story comment

It has come to our attention as we were going to print that in a progressive development to the lead story, there was a combined operation conducted by SAPS and Farmwatch to the illegal mining sites where they had had limited interaction with the miners. There is no doubt that the mining is illegal and causing great harm to the environment and the Blyde River.

Love The Hoed® Titbits

Wine tasting

Harvest House hosted a wonderful wine tasting evening organised by Vinimark. What a fabulous turnout of people, and all experienced a variety of wines from numerous vineyards. Delicious snacks were supplied by Harvest House, and all patrons could be seen enjoying themselves, learning about the wines and many went on to purchase the wines of their choice. From Alto, Bosman, Ernie Els, Muratie and more – there were some 15 vintners on 'display' with 66 wines on offer.

The event really got 'going' at about 16:00 and it is true to say that there were some stragglers, wallowing in the eruption of flavours and nose, right through to the bitter end! Bound by our privacy rules we are sadly not allowed to mention names.

All in all, a fantastic event, great venue, great food and wonderful hospitality (not to mention the superb wines on offer). Well done to all. We look forward to the next event, in 'antici pation'

Captured moments at the fabulous wine tasting evening. Images by Reinholdt Deacon



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Get Ready for the 10th Annual Rotary K2C Cycle Tour – 21st June 2025!

Lovelle Henderson

The excitement is building as Hoedspruit gears up for the 10th edition of the iconic Rotary K2C Cycle Tour, taking place on 21st June 2025. Now a much-anticipated fixture on the local calendar, this prestigious event continues to unite and energise our community, drawing cyclists, and supporters from near and far.

In keeping with our tradition of celebrating local talent and wildlife, we're thrilled to once again collaborate with internationally acclaimed local artist Warren Cary of the Warren Cary Wildlife Gallery. Since launching the exclusive collector's edition cycling gear in 2023, Warren's incredible artwork has become a highlight of the tour. From the Dung Beetle to the Pangolin, each jersey has told a story - and they've quickly become must-have collectibles among riders.

For 2025, we're proud to unveil this year's star: the southern yellow-billed hornbill (Tockus leucomelas). This striking bird - known for its vivid plumage, bright yellow curved beak, and inquisitive beady eyes - takes centre stage on our beautifully de-

signed navy and terracotta cycling jerseys and jackets. With their blend of comfort, style, and storytelling, these garments continue to win praise across the board. Many riders join the tour just to add another piece of wearable art to their collection!

As always, Warren has also created a stunning commemorative poster, with the charismatic hornbill providing the perfect subject for his brush.

Beyond the beauty and camaraderie, the K2C Cycle Tour remains rooted in purpose. All funds raised go directly to conservation and community upliftment initiatives. This year is shaping up to be our biggest yet, with an expanded field of 120 riders thanks to the addition of a new peloton. We're also proud to support the APNR Southern Ground-Hornbill Project, further deepening our commitment to protecting the region's unique biodiversity.

Join us as we celebrate a decade of cycling, conservation, and community. The countdown to K2C Cycle Tour 2025 has begun!

See Page 11 for the Advertisement and details.



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CELESTIAL EVENTS SA

The Blyde Dam is Choking: A Crisis of Sand, Silt, and Cyanide!



August 27, 2024

Litter and mining equipment refuse

All images supplied

Cont. from page 1

- **Illegal Mining Boom:** Aerial surveys in August 2024 revealed over 50 active illegal mining sites in the upper catchment – a dramatic surge from fewer than 10 just two years prior. These operations are not only destabilizing the landscape but are reportedly using toxic chemicals like cyanide, posing a severe contamination risk to the river.
- **Rampant Deforestation:** Commercial plantation felling has left vast hillsides bare and vulnerable to erosion, washing tons of loose soil directly into the river system.
- **Unchecked Erosion:** Overgrazed communal lands and poorly maintained rural roads are contributing significant quantities of sediment, further exacerbating the problem.

Add to this the social pressure and environmental impact of the influx of an estimated 2,000 illegal miners, known as Zama-

Zamas ('take a chance' in isiZulu), into the nearby communities. The accumulation of these factors is a cause for great concern.

More Than Just Water: An Ecological Disaster is Unfolding

The Blyde River Catchment is a vital strategic water source, supplying over 385,7 million cubic meters of water annually and forming part of the Mpumalanga Drakensberg Strategic Water Source Area, which provides over 50% of South Africa's river water.

Beyond water supply, these catchments play a crucial role in flood regulation, water purification, and supporting a rich biodiversity. Already, the impact is being felt. Officials from MTPA have reported that this year marks the first time that crucial populations of Lowveld largescale and bushveld smallscale yellowfish have failed to breed, their eggs smothered and killed by the relentless sediment build up.

If unchecked, this degradation of the environment, primarily through illegal mining, threatens not only the region's water security but also its unique ecosystems and the

livelihoods dependent on them.

Urgent Action Demanded

The call is for three immediate and decisive actions:

- **Comprehensive Sedimentation Survey:** A national-level response is urgently needed, guided by a thorough survey to confirm and expand on these alarming findings.
- **Immediate Land Management Interventions:** Investigations to pinpoint the exact sources of sedimentation, aggressive erosion control measures, and large-scale reforestation are critical.
- **Enforcement of Environmental Laws:** The government must act swiftly and decisively to halt illegal mining operations and enforce existing environmental regulations.

However, the speed at which the illegal mining has progressed, and the rapid deterioration of the river condition indicates that very urgent, coordinated government action is needed to halt illegal mining op-

erations and prevent irreversible damage. This national treasure, a shared legacy, is at risk. Now is the time to act before it's too late.

The plea is to sign the petition and demand immediate action from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, together with the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy and local authorities to protect the Blyde River Catchment. You can do so by scanning the QR code below and follow the steps required. SCAN AND PROTEST



August 27, 2024



Visible mining operational damage (left) and an open unlined cyanide pond, used to process gold (above). Part of the mining operations along the Blyde river (below).



84 Endangered Vultures Saved in Largest Anti-Poisoning Rescue in Southern Africa

Martial Rappo - Manager Moholoholo Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre

In one of the most dramatic races against time, and an unprecedented coordinated wildlife rescue mission southern Africa has ever seen, 84 vultures have been pulled back from the brink of death after a massive poisoning event in Kruger National Park.

The tragedy, discovered on May 6th in the Kruger National Park's remote Mahlangeni Section, has sent shockwaves through the conservation world - both for its scale and the evident escalating threat, and the swift, heroic response that followed from conservation teams around the country.

The crisis was triggered when the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) picked up suspicious activity deep in the park. What they found was horrifying: an elephant carcass intentionally laced with deadly agrochemicals, surrounded by dozens of poisoned vultures. Within hours, a rapid-response coalition - including SANParks rangers, Moholoholo Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, Briner Veterinary Services, WildScapes Vet, and Hope for Wildlife - was deployed to the scene.

The intent was clear: poachers had poisoned the elephant carcass to eliminate vultures, which serve as natural alarms for rangers. Tragically, 123 vultures were found dead, including 102 white-backed vultures (critically endangered), 20 Cape vultures (vulnerable), and one lappet-faced vulture (endangered). Some may also have been targeted for the illegal trade in vulture parts used in witchcraft practices.

What followed was an unmatched, world-class wildlife emergency response. For the first time ever, SANParks helicopters - including one from Hope for Wildlife - were deployed in an anti-poisoning mission of this scale. The surviving birds were swiftly airlifted and rushed to safety in the EWT's vulture ambulance. Through the night, vets and rehab teams at Moholoholo worked tirelessly, achieving an extraordinary 96% survival rate.

This incident marks one of the worst vulture poisoning events ever documented in the region but also the largest, most coordinated response and rescue operation to date. Already, 48 of the rescued vultures have been released back into the wild. An-



Release of some of the vultures. Staff members of Moholoholo Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre (MWR), Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), SANParks, Hope for Wildlife (Pilot).



Satellite Transmitter being fitted on the vulture by EWT Staff.



other 33, still recovering, are expected to be released in the coming days after weeks of intensive care. It is critical to ensure that the vultures are ready to return where they belong - in the wild. It is also important to return the vultures at this time so that they may also participate in the breeding season currently underway.

These efforts and the release of the vultures, has seen some of the rehabilitated tagged birds already having moved back into the Kruger National Park where they are busy maintaining their nests and preparing to breed.

Moholoholo has praised the Hoedspruit community and expressed heartfelt gratitude to everyone for rallying behind the cause during this crisis. But the threat remains. Conservation groups are calling on the public to support continued efforts, with donations going directly toward medical care, rehabilitation, and critical equipment for future emergencies.

The community as a whole has to understand

that this is not an isolated tragedy. It is not the first and sadly nor will it be the last. Africa is losing up to seven percent of its vulture population every year to poisoning - a silent crisis that threatens the entire ecosystem. In just the last few years, Moholoholo has treated over 230 poisoned vultures, with an impressive survival and release rate of more than 95 percent.

Now, in a vital step forward, the EWT in collaboration with Briner Veterinary Services are sharing their proven treatment protocols across southern Africa, thereby equipping veterinarians and licensed rehabilitators with the tools empowering them to save lives of these wonderful creatures when every second counts.

Sadly, the horror hasn't stopped. Just two weeks after this incident, another grim discovery was made: over 100 vultures found dead around a poisoned warthog carcass in the Lionspruit Reserve. Not a single bird survived. No body parts were removed.

Horror scene found of vultures poisoned (left). SANPark Ranger and Dr. Ben Muller (WildScape VET) giving first aid treatment in the field. Images supplied

The message? The threat is growing - and the need to act has never been more urgent. This is more than a wildlife crisis. This is a battle for the survival of one of nature's most vital clean-up crews - and a powerful reminder of what's possible when science, passion, and community unite.

Should anyone wish to contribute by donation please do so through the following banking channels:

Moholoholo Wildlife and Rehab NPC, Standard Bank, Account: 012746517, Branch: 051001, Swift: SBZAJJ

The Endangered Wildlife Trust, First National Bank, Account: 50371564219, Branch: 253305

**** Both can issue Section 18A certificates for donations.**

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Main Road (R527),
Hoedspruit

Contact Information:

Business : +27 15 793 1534
E-Mail : hoedspruit@century21.co.za
Website : www.century21wildlife.co.za



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

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

COMMERCIAL: Hoedspruit R 8 470 000
Wildlife Estate Beds 6 | Baths 6 | Floor: 780 m²

Guest house with 6 spacious en-suite guest rooms and owner's quarters. Colonial-style home with wrap-around patio, pool, bar, central lounge, and dining area. Rooms include bath, shower, aircon, minibar, and DSTV. Sold fully furnished as a going concern, without liabilities. Backup power & water.
Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2380743



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

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



SOLE MANDATE

LISSATABA NATURE R 2 600 000
RESERVE Beds 2 | Baths 2 | Floor: 140 m²

Lock-up-and-go home with **great views!** Overlooking the Olifants River this property features a main unit with bedroom, open plan kitchen, living and dining area, leading to a covered patio. A spacious stand-alone chalet with en-suite bathroom and a storage area overlooks a waterhole.
Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2355906



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



ORCHARD HILLS from R 2 650 000 excl
New Development Beds 2 | Baths 2

These off-plan, full-title luxury farmhouse-style homes feature an open-plan lounge, dining area, and kitchen with a separate scullery/laundry. The lounge extends onto a spacious covered terrace with a built-in braai, perfect for outdoor living
Calin Leppan - 082 824 9482 Ref: 2269562



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. Sale excludes transfer duties and fees.
Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2380743



SOLE MANDATE

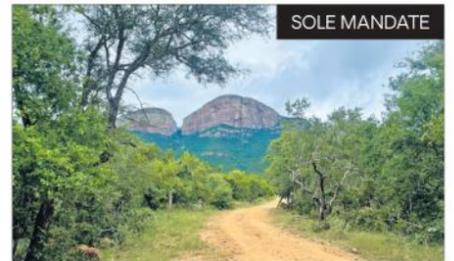
HARMONY - 50% SHARE R 4 400 000
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | Farm size: 342 ha

50% share in unspoiled wildlife farm with no visual pollution. Includes exclusive use of 2 houses, bush camp, stables (max 6 horses), and build rights for private home or lodge. Features include staff housing, shared infrastructure, dams, granite koppie, and diverse game. No hunting permitted.
Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2380828



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 Ref: 2384460



SOLE MANDATE

CANYON GAME RESERVE R 550 000
Stand size: 10,000 m² | Reserve size: 424 ha

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Calin Leppan - 082 824 9482 Ref: 2362894



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RENTAL

KAMPERSRUS R 22 000 pm
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Furnished

Available immediately, pet friendly - Wooden stilt home with stunning views, lush bird-friendly garden, boma, jacuzzi deck, and walking paths. Open-plan living area, fans in all rooms, separate study, storeroom, two greenhouses, solar power, and water tanks. Wifi available at tenant's cost.
Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140 Ref: 2384901



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



The Debt Science Owes to a Brilliant Greek with Insatiable Curiosity



'He drew down the stars into the realm of reason and taught the winds and stones to speak the language of cause and form.' ~ Anon

Don Pinnock

The man is strolling along the shoreline regarding with intense interest every life form in the pools, molluscs that appear as waves recede and life on the pebbly beach. He's not an ordinary man but possibly one of the most intelligent, inquisitive humans to have ever lived.

It's not an ordinary beach, but one on the volcanic Aegean Island of Lesbos with crystal-clear waters, phenomenal marine and bird life and many hot springs.

He stoops to pick up what we would see as a starfish. What he's seeing is a system of interconnected structures within a unique form perfect for its function in the fabric of life in the ocean.

On the basis of his exploration of that seashore and more, he'll arrive at conclusions about all life and develop systems of thought that enable humans to move from superstition and abstract conjecture to a practical understanding of living things.

He will not get everything right - this is 345 BC after all - but his systematic probing of marine life in the Pyrrha lagoon (the modern Gulf of Kalloni) will lay the foundation for his pioneering work in biology.

He will go on to classify animals, plants

and natural phenomena in a methodical way, laying the groundwork for biology, zoology and meteorology and his ideas will dominate Western thinking for nearly 2,000 years. Through the scholars Avicenna and Averroes, they will also deeply influence the Islamic world.

Aristotle, the man on the beach, will be considered the father of natural science. He will diverge from his teacher, Plato, for whom the visible world is only a shadow of a higher, unchanging reality of perfect Forms or Ideas that can be apprehended through Reason.

Aristotle's ideas are almost exactly the opposite. For him reality is found in the observable world where all things have a purpose (telos) and knowledge comes from empirical observation and rational analysis of cause, effect and substance. Plato's ideas will be grounded in philosophy, Aristotle's in natural science.

Where Plato sought universal truths in abstract realms, Aristotle wanted to count frog toes and dissect molluscs. In Aristotle's mind, truth didn't hover in the ether; it strutted and clucked and occasionally laid an egg.

Scientific inquiry

After studying under Plato in Athens for 20 years, Aristotle eventually parted

ways with his teacher. He would go on to identify about 500 species of birds, mammals, fish, insects and other invertebrates. Among these, he dissected about 35 species to study their internal anatomy.

He wasn't just curious about what things were, he wanted to know how they worked and why they were the way they were. He believed that no structure existed without a reason tied to its function within an organism's survival or reproduction.

His method - combining empirical observation with theoretical reasoning - remains central to scientific inquiry today. His recognition that organisms could be grouped based on shared characteristics foreshadowed the work of Carl Linnaeus in taxonomy and Charles Darwin in evolutionary biology.

Aristotle didn't just document species. He explored biological processes such as metabolism, reproduction, inheritance, embryogenesis and temperature regulation. His concept of teleology was central to his understanding of anatomy. In the specialised world of science today, such breadth of inquiry is almost unheard of.

To modern readers, some of Aristotle's conclusions seem wildly off.

He believed, for instance, that eels emerged spontaneously from mud and that bees collected their young from flowers. He wrote that when beavers were threatened, they bit off their testicles.

But these inaccuracies don't diminish his achievements. Given the tools of his time - which mostly consisted of eyeballs, crude knives and a willingness to get dirty - his record of anatomical and behavioural observations is astonishing.

His works, particularly *History of Animals*, *Parts of Animals*, and *Generation of Animals*, remained the gold standard in natural science for centuries. In medieval Europe, his ideas were considered so authoritative that to question them was akin to heresy.

Early years

Born in 384 BCE in Stagira, northern Greece, Aristotle was deeply influenced by his early exposure to medicine through his father Nicomachus, who served as a physician to the Macedonian king. This familial connection probably sparked Aristotle's interest in biology and natural sciences.

After spending about two years on Lesbos, Aristotle was invited by Philip II of Macedon to tutor his son, Alexander (later known as Alexander the Great), in 343 BCE. This invitation led Aristotle to leave Lesbos for Pella, the Macedonian capital, to begin his role as Alexander's tutor.

Done tutoring (art and science would flourish in the wake of Alexander's many conquests), Aristotle returned to Athens in 334 BC to establish what for him was his dream project, the Lyceum.

It was to become a pioneering institution, combining teaching, research and the development of a large library. It served as both a philosophical school and a centre for systematic research across disciplines such as zoology, physics, political theory and aesthetics.

As a result of anti-Macedonian sentiment following Alexander the Great's death in 323 BCE, Aristotle was forced to flee Athens to avoid the fate of Plato's teacher Socrates: death by poison as a form of execution. He died a year later on the island of Euboea. Did the poisoners follow him? History does not tell.

Legacy

Aristotle left a great body of work, perhaps numbering as many as two hundred treatises, from which, sadly, only about 31 survive.

He viewed biology as inseparable from psychology. In his treatise *On the Soul*, he explored the relationship between body and soul using biological principles. He argued that the soul is the essence that gives life to matter, comparable to how form defines substance.

Aristotle wasn't just a philosopher. He was an adventurer in science driven by insatiable curiosity about the natural world. His enthusiasm for discovery resonates even today among biologists who share his passion for unravelling life's complexities.

His motto seems to have been: observe, question, classify, understand. No microscope, no DNA sequencing, no carbon dating - just a reed basket, an inquiring mind and an irrepressible urge to make sense of the messy, magnificent variety of life.

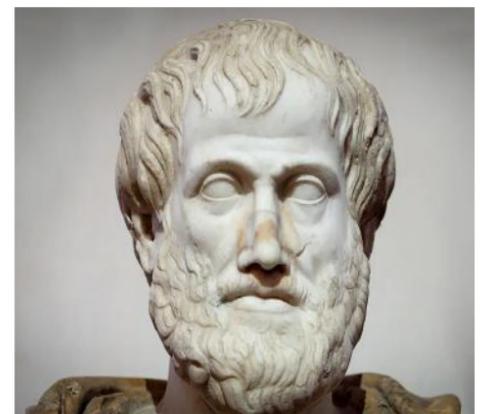
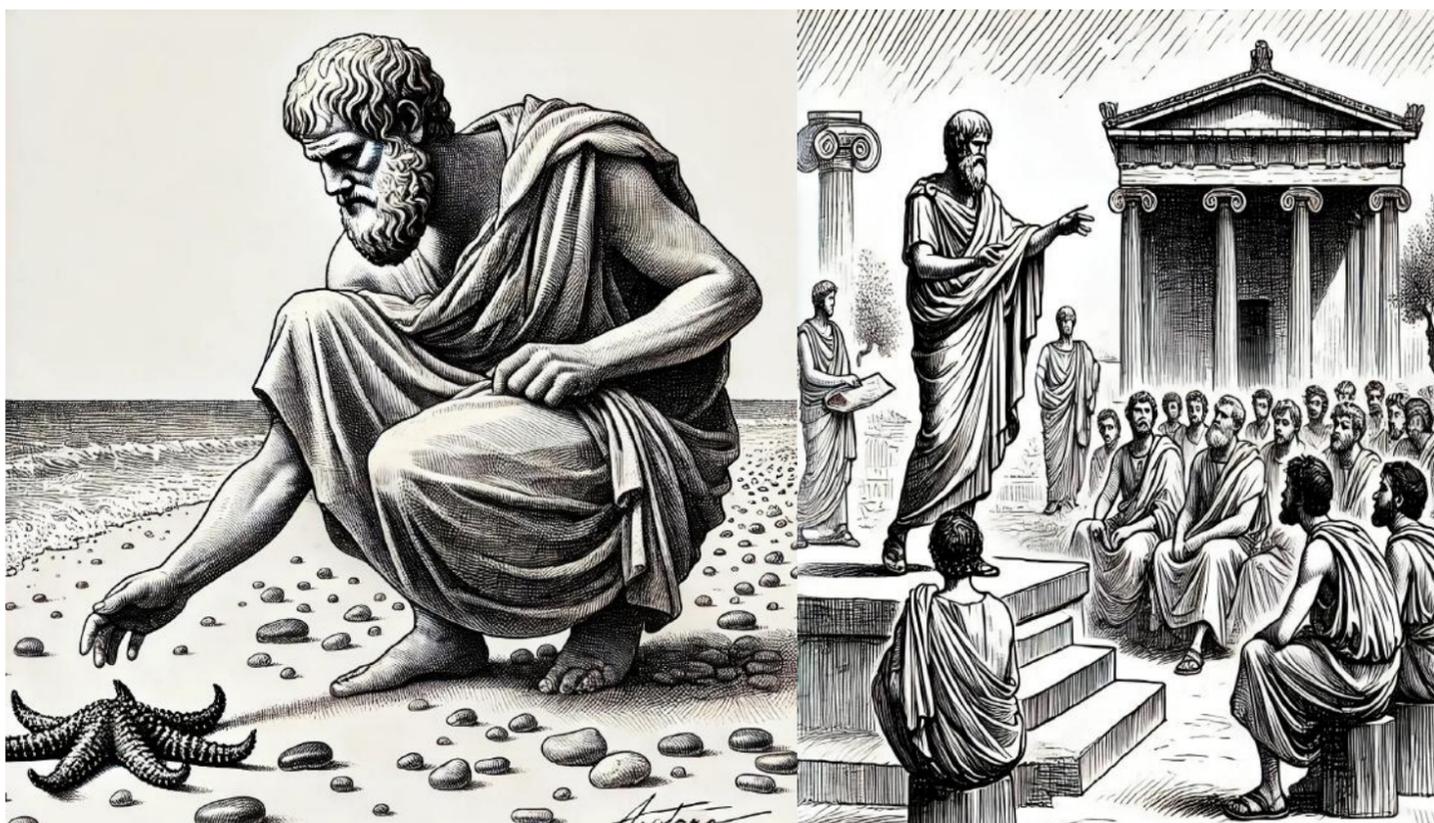
In a letter, Darwin referred to him as "a marvellous thinker", remarking that "Linnaeus and Cuvier have been my two gods, though in very different ways, but they were mere schoolboys to old Aristotle".

This article was previously published in the Daily Maverick/Our Burning Planet/Father of Natural Science

Aristotle with a starfish (far left).
Image: Sketchy

Aristotle teaching at the Lyceum (left)
Image: Sketchy

Aristotle (below).



Safari Guide of the Year 2025 – Meet the Finalists



Mark Bishop

It's that time of year again - the spotlight turns to the unsung heroes of the African wilderness they gear up for the prestigious Safari Guide of the Year 2025 competition, powered by the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA).

After a rigorous nomination and interview process, five outstanding finalists have emerged, each representing the very best in field guiding. This year, for the first time, the competition will be held in the Eastern Cape, at the spectacular Kariega Game Reserve, from 16th June to 22nd June, 2025.

To be eligible, guides must hold FGASA certifications and prove themselves through demonstrated competence and extensive experience. Over the course of a week, finalists are assessed in eight demanding categories: hospitality, storytelling, advanced rifle handling (ARH), walking safaris, driven safaris, track and sign identification, birding by sight and sound, and guided photographic experiences. Each category carries a certain weighting, and after the scores are tallied, one deserving guide will walk away with the title.

Let's meet the finalists - through a light-hearted lens - and explore what makes each one of them a standout.

Matthew Derry: The Watchful Owl with a Wicked Sense of Humour

At just 33, Matthew Derry has packed in 12 years of bush experience. Based at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve, he hails from Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) and describes himself as someone who's never really left the wild — even on holiday. Fishing, family, and the bush fill his time, and his love for nature was sparked early by his mother, a travel journalist. From the tracker seat at Addo Elephant Park to guiding in the Eastern Cape's diverse biomes, Matthew's passion has only grown stronger.

He cherishes the low vehicle density at Kwandwe, which allows guests intimate experiences without queues, and delights in swapping stories with travellers from across the globe. His biggest advice to safari-goers? Come with no expectations - the bush will paint its own picture.

Friends might liken him to an owl - wise, observant, and occasionally a bit of a hoot. For Matthew, winning would be an emotional tribute to the hard yards and long hours that go into pro-

fessional guiding. He'd see it not just as a personal win, but as a victory for the profession, showcasing that guiding is a career, not just a hobby.

His favourite animal is the leopard, his favourite bird the secretary bird, and his favourite colour? Blue. And if you're wondering who's been sneaking the leftover date balls on morning game drives - it's Matthew!

Jason Gipson: The Energetic Rhino Charging Ahead

At 27, Jason Gipson brings an unstoppable energy to the field. Based at Lion Sands in Sabi Sands, he's as comfortable tracking leopards as he is paddle boarding, fishing, or competing in ultra runs. A proud product of holidays at Mabula with his parents and grandparents, Jason's love for the bush started young and never faded. Creepy crawlies caught his early fascination, thanks to his relative Jonathan Leeming.

Jason thrives on guest reactions - the wide eyes and joy of first-time sightings never get old. But he's quick to clarify — he's not a lion whisperer. While he'll always do his utmost to provide unforgettable experiences, he hopes guests understand that the wild doesn't take requests.

Friends say he channels the black rhino - usually quiet and elusive, but capable of quick, decisive action. Jason feels deeply honoured to be a finalist. He sees the competition as a recognition of years of hard work, passion, and purpose, and is using the pressure to sharpen his knowledge even more.

His dream win would be dedicated to his mentors, many of whom helped shape the guide he is today. His favourite animal is the wild dog, favourite bird the narina trogon, and his colour of choice is, surprisingly, grey. His secret indulgences? Those peanut butter cookies (on drive) in the morning and biltong in the afternoon.

Kalie Otimile: The Kalahari Cat with a Heart as Big as the Sky

At 41, Kalie Otimile is a seasoned guide, a devoted husband, and father to six boys - almost enough for a full football team. When he's not out in the bush, you'll find him farming or playing with his kids. Originally from the village of Tsunyanne near Mafikeng, Kalie grew up tending livestock, his bush instincts honed from a young age.

Though he initially pursued a National Diploma in Tourism, it wasn't until he discovered guiding - and the mentorship of Sakkie van Aswegen -

that he found his true calling.

Today, Kalie guides in the remote wilds of Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, a place he calls home. He sees the Kalahari as a canvas for unique guest experiences, where time bends and the sand whispers stories.

Guiding, for Kalie, is an act of deep sincerity - something he lives from the heart. Like a leopard, he might seem reserved at first, but once he opens up, the experience is unforgettable.

He feels honoured, a little exposed, but mostly grateful to be in the finals - it's a milestone marking years of patience, passion, and progress. Should he win, he'd bow in gratitude to everyone who believed in him, and carry the torch proudly for future guides.

Kalie's favourite animal is the white rhino bull, his bird of choice the woodland kingfisher, and he's partial to turquoise blue. His secret snack? Kalahari truffles - sandy, round, spongy, and uniquely delicious.

Megan Heramb-Smith: The Calm Force of the Lowveld

A 40-year-old mother, wife, teacher and bushwoman, Megan Heramb-Smith has spent 16 years carving out a respected name in guiding. Working with Manukuza Wilderness Safaris in Balule, Limpopo, she takes guests deep into untouched wilderness, often on foot. Her love for the bush started in her youth - her parents would whisk her away from their home in Paarl into the wild during school holidays.

Now, as a freelance trails guide, she relishes the chance to walk the raw Lowveld, and can't get enough of guests' reactions to wildlife encounters - and the magic of fireside reflections at day's end.

She compares her guiding style to that of a black rhino: preferring the cool shade, moving when it matters, and bringing power in presence. For Megan, being a finalist isn't about pressure - it's about joy and recognition for the path she's walked. If she wins? She'll crack a beer, call her mentors, and thank them one by one.

Her favourite animal is, no surprise, the black rhino, her bird the southern white-faced owl, and she loves all things blue. Her hidden vice? Gummy worms and jelly babies - anything sweet and sugary.

Cameron Schmidt: The Leopard Who Listens First, Then Leaps

Confident and composed at 30, Cameron

Schmidt is a family man through and through. Married to Denise and based at Pumba Private Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape, he's been guiding for nearly seven years in the region he calls 'a biodiversity dream'. Cameron grew up in King William's Town and East London, and it was his father's leatherwork - embossed with animal prints - that first sparked his fascination with wildlife.

A graduate of Olovane Environmental Training, Cameron credits his wife for encouraging and motivating him to take his career seriously, and for helping him rise through the ranks. He now delights in shifting guest focus from the Big 5 to the micro-marvels of the bush, and he gently warns Eastern Cape visitors to dress warmly - those 4°C mornings can be biting!

His guiding style mirrors a leopard - patient, observant, and purposeful. Being a finalist is a dream realised, a culmination of countless hours of study, effort, and ambition. His plan is to absorb everything he can during the event - learning from industry legends and having mentors like Schalk Pretorius, while giving it his all.

If he wins? He says he'll cry like a baby, thank the judges, sponsors, and, most of all, his wife. His favourite animal is the elephant, his bird the crowned eagle, and his favourite colour is, once again, blue. As for bush snacks - biltong all the way, and any leftovers go straight to the dogs at home.

Celebrating the Heart of the Wild

The Safari Guide of the Year is more than a competition. It's a celebration of passion, perseverance, and professionalism in one of the world's most rewarding and demanding careers. These five guides represent the finest ambassadors of the wilderness - each with their own style, story, and spirit.

The prizes and sponsorships for this event, have grown over the years and are now on a level of being nothing short of extraordinary. Sponsors, be they corporates or individuals, all support and share in the goals of the event that focusses on the guides — the recognition of time and effort in bettering themselves, the acknowledgement of the effort and support that FGASA puts into the industry and the structured career paths mapped out for the guides, and at the end of the day and very importantly, guiding professionalism.

May the best guide win - and may their stories continue to inspire a new generation of nature custodians.

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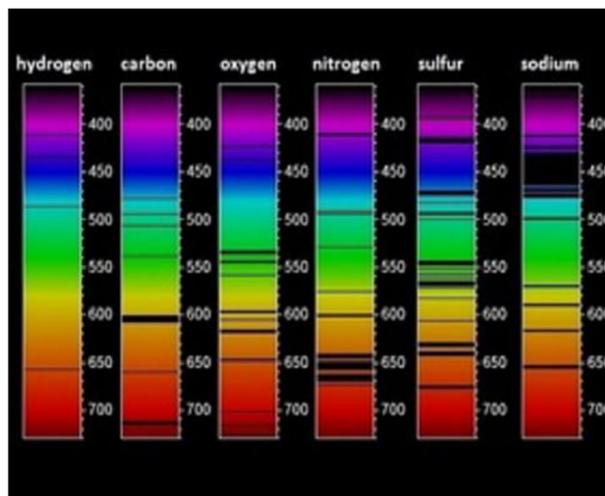
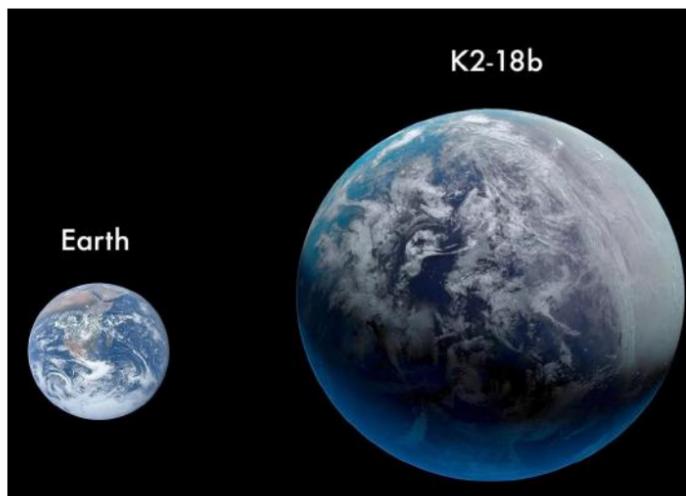
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Signs of Life



Earth vs K2-18b (above), Element absorption lines (middle), Phytoplankton - Wikipedia (far right) and Habitable zone -NASA (below) Images supplied

Ben Coley
Celestial Events SA

Recently, the world was introduced to a potential thrilling breakthrough for space science, when NASA's latest great observatory, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), spotted something quite unexpected on a distant exoplanet called K2-18b.

K2-18b resides around 120 light years from Earth within the constellation of Leo, the Lion. It is what scientists call a "sub-Neptune" planet, meaning that it's bigger than Earth but smaller than Neptune. It orbits its red dwarf star in what is known as the "habitable zone", or more colloquially, the "goldilocks zone" - a sweet-spot around its star where temperatures could be just right for liquid water to exist. Planets falling within this area offer the greatest potential for astrobiologists when hunting for signs of life.

K2-18b is thought to be a *Hyccean* world; a world with a hydrogen-based atmosphere surrounding a global ocean of liquid water, devoid of any landmass. The presence of water is seen as a pre-requisite by many for life to exist (albeit life as we know it at least), making K2-18b a possible home for weird and wonderful alien life.

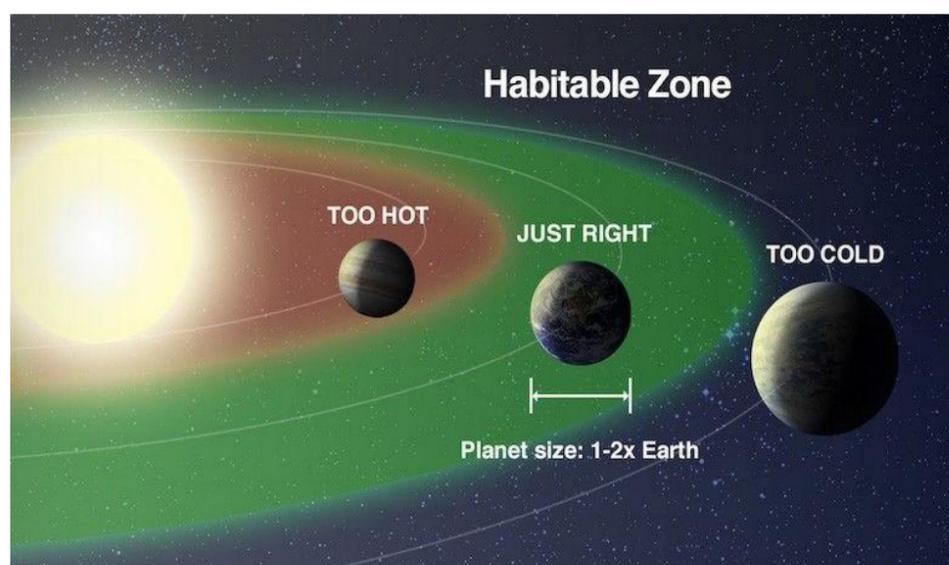
In April, JWST discovered the presence of a gas known as dimethyl sulphide, or DMS for short. Why is this exciting? Because the only place we know DMS comes from is...

life. Here on Earth, this gas is made almost entirely by tiny sea creatures like phytoplankton. These microscopic organisms live in the oceans and, as they go about their business, they release DMS into the air. It's even believed to help form clouds!

So, when scientists saw signs of this gas on another planet, eyebrows were definitely raised. Could this planet harbour a flourishing marine-based ecosystem?

You might be wondering: how can a telescope know what gases are floating around a planet that is 120 light-years away? Astronomy is ultimately the study of light, and examining the elemental constituents of a distant planet's atmosphere is no different. When a planet passes in front of its star, some of the starlight shines through its atmosphere. Elements within it, block out certain wavelengths of light, producing a pattern akin to a barcode in the supermarket. By analysing these elemental fingerprints, scientists can simply read off a list of its ingredients.

The amounts found by JWST aren't huge, but they still dwarf the amounts found on Earth. This has allowed us to detect it from this vast distance, and is certainly enough to get scientists very interested - could there be great colonies of alien phytoplankton floating around in the surface of this ocean world? The discovery doesn't prove anything yet, but it's one of the strongest



hints we have ever had.

Before anyone gets too excited, it's important to remember that this is still early science. More observations will be needed to confirm that the signal is real, and to rule out other explanations. Our understanding of life is based on a sample size of exactly... one. In a Universe of almost infinite possibilities, life on other planets may metabolise in very different ways, and there may be a multitude of ways to manufacture DMS from yet undiscovered geological processes.

Still, the idea that a distant planet might

have oceans and even microscopic life is amazing. Just a few years ago, we were blissfully unaware of planets outside of our own solar system, let alone the makeup of their atmospheres. Now we have a catalogue of over 6000 confirmed alien worlds, and we are talking about decoding their oceans from across the galaxy!

Thanks to the James Webb Space Telescope, the search for life beyond Earth is heating up, and K2-18b has just jumped to the top of the watchlist.

See Celestial Events SA advert for contact details

WildHire Roars to Life: New Platform Connects Safari Lodges with Freelancers Across Africa

A bold new solution for Africa's safari industry has arrived. Born in the heart of the bushveld, WildHire is a game-changing platform connecting freelance professionals with lodges and tour operators across Southern Africa - fast, directly, and seamlessly.

Spearheaded by Hoedspruit sisters Liv Bedford and Victoria Bakos, WildHire is built for the wild at heart. With deep roots in the tourism industry and firsthand experience in freelancing, the duo created WildHire to fill a critical gap: lodges often need reliable staff at a moment's notice, while freelancers struggle to get noticed. WildHire fixes that - all in one smart, purpose-built space.

"We've lived the freelance hustle," says Liv. "Lodges are constantly looking for last-minute help, and freelancers are ready to go. But until now, there's been no central tool to bring them together. So, we built one."

From field guides, chefs, and relief managers to wildlife content creators, WildHire connects safari businesses with qualified, available professionals - no middlemen, no delays. Freelancers get visibility, credibility, and access to real job opportunities with vetted lodges.



Platform features include:

- Searchable profiles with references and real-time availability.
- A Talent Bank for lodges to short-list and save top freelancers.
- Smart filters to match immediate staffing needs.
- Direct communication between

lodges and freelancers.

WildHire is tailor-made for the safari and hospitality sector. It's intuitive, fast, and grounded in how the industry truly operates - built by insiders, for insiders.

"We're proud to launch WildHire right here in Hoedspruit," says Victoria. "This area is full of skilled, passionate people.

WildHire gives them a platform that finally works for them."

Dive into the platform or create your free profile today: <https://wildhire.co.za>. Follow the journey on Instagram: @wildhireafrica

From Fangs to Pharma – The science and struggle behind snake antivenom



Tim Baynham
Wildlife Safety Solutions



many bite cases go unreported. Cultural beliefs, limited medical infrastructure, lack of suitable, effective and safe antivenom's all contribute to the challenges of reducing the incident of snakebites globally. Antivenom production costs are high and the target market for antivenom is poor rural communities who can't afford to pay for it. Consequently, there is little financial incentive for private pharmaceutical companies to manufacture antivenom.

Antivenom production is a complex and highly specialized process. It begins with the careful extraction of venom from live snakes - a process known as "milking". Highly trained handlers collect venom from specific snake species, which is then freeze-dried and stored. The next step involves injecting small, controlled doses of the venom into large animals, typically most facilities use horses. Over time the animal's immune systems produce antibodies in response to the venom. These antibodies are harvested from the animal by drawing blood and separating the red blood cells from the plasma, the red blood cells are returned to the horse. The plasma is then purified, and the

immunoglobulins (antibodies) are isolated and formulated into antivenom.

The French scientist, Albert Calmette is credited with creating the first antivenom around 1886. Antivenom was first produced in South Africa in 1901, but only in small quantities. In 1928 the South African Institute for Medical Research started producing antivenom on a larger scale. Today the South African Vaccine Producers (SAVP), which is a division of the National Health Laboratory Service, is responsible for the production of our local antivenoms.

SAVP produce several different antivenom's. The most widely used product is their polyvalent snake antivenom which is a broad-spectrum product, effective for treating bites from much of the highly venomous species found in South Africa. A monovalent antivenom is manufactured for treating Boomslang bites. Additionally, they produce spider antivenom for treating bites from the Black Button Spiders (*Latrodectus* sp) as well as scorpion antivenom for treating stings from the highly venomous *Parabuthus* species. Lastly, they produce an exotic monovalent antivenom for treating bites from the dangerous Saw Scaled vipers found further north in Africa.

It has been well publicized that the production of antivenom by SAVP has steadily declined over the last five years, to the point where, as of the writing of this article, their stock is completely depleted other than a small supply of monovalent Boomslang antivenom.

The reasons for the decline in production have been attributed to load shedding,

an aging facility and equipment and procurement issues. The SAVP facility has in the last year undergone refurbishments and upgrades. During this process production has stopped completely, leading to the current situation of no stock whatsoever. The latest information received is that SAVP hope to start production again in about three months' time, although in all honesty I would not hold my breath for that to happen.

On a positive note, while antivenom shortages in South Africa have posed serious challenges to healthcare delivery, they have also opened the door to new and promising alternatives. The importation and use of products like Panaf Premium from India, and Echitab from Costa Rica's Instituto Clodomiro Picado (ICP), represent a significant step forward in diversifying the country's antivenom supply. These alternatives help alleviate pressure on local production and offer broader treatment options going forward. The integration of these international antivenom's into South Africa's healthcare system marks a hopeful shift toward a more resilient and responsive approach to snakebite treatment for the future.

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@wildlifesafetysolutions.co.za; www.wildlifesafetysolutions.co.za, FB Wildlife Safety Solutions, Instagram [wildlife_safety_solutions](https://www.instagram.com/wildlife_safety_solutions)

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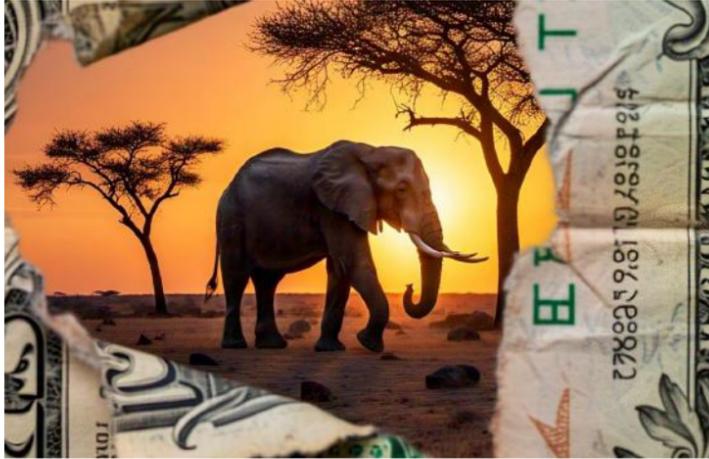
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Africa at a Conservation Crossroads: A Funding Crisis - and a Moment of Possibility



What happens to conservation when the world stops paying for it? That was the key question a Tipping Points webinar titled “Beyond Aid: Rethinking Conservation Funding in a Changing World.”

Fred Kockott

There has never been a more urgent - or opportune - time to rethink the future of conservation in Africa.

As global attention shifts elsewhere and traditional donor streams dry up, conservation in Africa stands at a turning point. Yes, there is a funding crisis. But there is also growing motivation to tell a different story: one of African-led solutions, resilient ecosystems, and recognition of our biodiversity not just for its beauty, but for its central role in sustaining livelihoods, economies, and life itself.

Over the past four months, the global funding landscape has shifted - fast. Governments are broke or looking inward. Donors are distracted. Philanthropy is chasing the next shiny crisis. And across Africa, many conservation organisations are being forced to ask an uncomfortable question: *What now?*

South Africa offers a stark case study. An estimated R15 billion is needed annually to support national biodiversity efforts - but less than a third of that is currently funded. “We’re spending about R4.5 billion,” said Kruger National Park’s sustainability manager, Danny Govender.

The shortfall is compounded by recent cuts to foreign aid. In Kruger alone, approximately R12 million has been lost from anti-poaching and ranger programmes. As Govender puts it, “The abrupt halt of international funding... has had a tangible impact.”

And on a global scale, the gap is staggering: “We spend \$124 billion per year... but need \$900 billion plus to restore and protect nature,” noted Kishaylin Chetty, executive head of sustainability at the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

So how will conservationists adapt? What new funding models and partnerships might emerge?

These were among central questions tackled at a *Tipping Points* webinar hosted by Oppenheimer Generations Research and Conservation (OGRC). Titled “Beyond Aid: Rethinking Conservation Funding in a Changing World”, the session brought together Govender, Chetty, and Shameela Soobramoney, CEO of the National Business Initiative and more than 80 conservation thought leaders, environmental researchers and writers. Rendani Nenguda, a senior research associate at OGRC facilitated the discussions.

Bridging sectors

Soobramoney said many organisations have already felt the impact of donor funding cuts, with project-based work taking the hardest hit. Addressing this involved shifting priorities and finding new funding sources. We need to ask,

‘What should we truly prioritise and prize?’ said Soobramoney, and from there, determine how to attract the right sources of funding.

Shameela Soobramoney, CEO of the National Business Initiative, called for a deeper integration of conservation into corporates’ business strategy and economic planning.

She emphasised that the private sector remained a largely untapped partner. Supporting conservation, she said, needed to go beyond corporate social investment and become embedded in the core of how businesses operate, rather than being treated as a charitable cause.

Intrinsic link

There was growing recognition, she said, of the intrinsic link between healthy ecosystems and economic resilience. For example, financial institutions, including central banks, were beginning to assess the systemic risks posed by environmental collapse. This shift, she said, signalled a new understanding: conservation is not just a philanthropic pursuit but a cornerstone of long-term economic stability.

Govender agreed that traditional funding conservation models were not sufficient. She reflected on how Covid-19 had pushed the conservation sector to begin thinking more seriously about long-term sustainable financing. Now, with shrinking international aid, that urgency has only grown.

Danny Govender called for bold new narratives and long-term financing strategies beyond ecotourism. With over 20 years of experience as a veterinarian and science manager in the Kruger National Park, Govender heads up the sustainability portfolio at South African National Parks.

She stressed that while ecotourism remained vital - making up nearly 80% of SANParks’ revenue - it cannot stand alone. There was other finance out there for conservation but unlocking that potential required clearer goals, better systems for accessing capital and measuring outcomes and entering innovative land usage agreements.

Conservation beyond charisma

The common bullfrog: not iconic, but essential. Many conservationists say it’s time to shift focus from headline species to the ecosystems - and lesser celebrated species - that sustain life as a whole. Photo: Chris F / Pexels



TIPPING POINTS

Episode 30 • Beyond Aid:
Rethinking conservation funding in a changing world



Facilitator
Rendani Nenguda
Senior Research Associate at Oppenheimer Generations Research and Conservation



Panelist
Shameela Soobramoney
CEO of the National Business Initiative



Panelist
Kish Chetty
Head of sustainability at the Endangered Wildlife Trust



Panelist
Danny Govender
General manager of sustainability at South African National Parks

It’s not just about protected areas, but ecosystems as a whole, said Govender. So, redefining conservation itself was part of the solution.

She said while charismatic species opened doors to donor interest, the real goal was to shift the conversation toward biodiversity as a whole - the ecosystems, services, and interconnections that sustain all life, not just iconic animals.

Kishaylin Chetty, executive head of sustainability at the Endangered Wildlife Trust, views the funding crisis as a chance to redefine conservation values in Africa.

Chetty’s presentation was titled: Turning a crisis into a catalyst.

He said NGOs like the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) were still counting the losses with approximately 16 million rand in funding already withdrawn from vulture conservation and canine scent detection programs due to recent funding cuts.

He also stressed the human cost. “This is also about people... rangers, scientists, communities . . . Conservation is essential infrastructure.”

However, Chetty said that the crisis, though challenging, could serve as a catalyst for creating an African-led conservation model that better reflects local needs and priorities.

“It’s a superb opportunity to rethink... how we define value in conservation.” And that shift, said Chetty, “must become a movement that is proudly South African, proudly African.”

Building accountability and trust

On the business front, Chetty said it was also vital to address NGO transparency concerns and upskill conservation scientists in financial literacy.

Publishing audited financials to show where money goes - focusing on outcomes, not just activities - would go a long way to build investor confidence, he said.

“Governance isn’t sexy”, admitted Chetty, but essential to building trust that funds are effectively used for what they are intended.

Govender agreed that accountability was key. She noted a gap between policy frameworks and on-the-ground action, where a missing middle layer often prevented strategy from translating into real impact. This pointed to the need to make sure that high-level policies and strategies actually do lead to measurable and successful conservation outcomes.

Skewed agendas

And far too often, she added, the conservation sector pitched issues based on what funders were willing to support, rather than on what was truly needed. This creates a skewed agenda where external funding priorities took precedence over longer term ecological sustainability at a local level.

She drew a parallel with Karoo sheep farming, where government intervention - through predator control, infrastructure, and logistics - had proven essential in making the Karoo farming model viable. Conservation, she said, needed similar catalytic support to provide the necessary infrastructure for biodiversity enterprises to thrive.

Facilitator Rendani Nenguda wrapped up the session by highlighting Africa’s opportunity to lead a redefined, homegrown conservation movement.

Nenguda said as the world turns away, Africa clearly needs to up its game - not just to fill the funding gap, but to redefine what conservation looks like when it’s led, owned, and celebrated from within.

Bold narratives

Prompted to share key priorities going forward, Chetty said African NGOs must tap into the growing wealth within the continent. While international donor streams are retracting, local sources - including high-net-worth individuals and corporates - present a promising avenue, said Chetty.

And there was a need for narratives that resonate with these audiences, and to demonstrate how funding support translates into tangible, long-term conservation outcomes.

In her parting words, Soobramoney said that in an era of complex, overlapping crises, staying focused on long-term outcomes - rather than being swept up in reactionary efforts - was vital.

She ended on a philosophical note, reminding the audience of this powerful maxim: “If you don’t invest in the future you want, the one you get will be worth infinitely less.”

In closing, Govender warned that doom-laden conservation narratives risk alienating the public. She called on scientists to engage with the media and urged investment in professional conservation journalism to support more nuanced, high-quality storytelling.

In this sense, the most powerful response to the crisis may not be new funding pleas - but a bold new narrative - one that shows not just what Africa stands to lose, but what it’s already doing to win.

“We need to become storytellers of success,” said Govender.

Her call to action was clear: change the narrative, and change the future.

Fred Kockott is the Director of the Environmental Journalism Training Agency, Roving Reporters. This story was produced with the support of Jive Media Africa, science communication partner to Oppenheimer Generations Research and Conservation.

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Month Overview

June 2025 opens with a wave of mental clarity as Mercury moves direct, encouraging bold communication and long-postponed decisions. The Gemini Sun keeps energies high and social circles buzzing until the 21st, when Cancer ushers in deeper emotional tides. A new Moon in Gemini on June 6 invites fresh starts in learning, travel, and connection, while the full Moon in Capricorn on June 21 demands balance between dreams and responsibility. Venus enhances romantic sparks mid-month, but a tense Mars-Pluto square later on could ignite power struggles - especially where ambition or ego is unchecked. Ground yourself with intention and avoid impulsive moves. It's a month of clarity, courage, and recalibration.

Gemini (May 21 - Jun 20)

Happy Solar Return! It's your time to shine bright. A bold idea gains traction - share it widely. Mid-June brings clarity on a personal decision. Balance mental stimulation with much-needed rest.

Cancer (Jun 21 - Jul 22)

June awakens your intuition and emotion-

Lady Godiva and your June 2025 horoscopes

al truth. Tension in relationships eases with honest talk. Take time to recharge before your birthday season. A surprise financial boost may change your plans.

Leo (Jul 23 - Aug 22)

You're magnetic, but not everyone deserves your energy. Team dynamics may shift - lead with grace. A creative breakthrough mid-month lights your fire. Choose diplomacy over drama when provoked.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sep 22)

June puts your professional goals in the spotlight. Say yes to collaboration - but read the fine print. A romance could shift from flirtation to depth. Stay grounded when old insecurities resurface.

Libra (Sep 23 - Oct 22)

Travel or study plans bring unexpected insight. June asks you to choose growth over perfection. Old friendships may return with a fresh perspective. End of month favours bold, balanced moves.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

This is a month to transform, not control. Secrets surface - meet them with integrity. Passion intensifies, but so do emotional stakes. Use the Capricorn Full Moon to reset priorities.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Partnerships are tested - respond, don't react. Career momentum builds if you stay consistent. A contract or agreement needs your full attention. Trust your instincts around mid-month decisions.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Health and work routines demand review and revision. June encourages a return to the basics. A Full Moon in your sign brings closure and clarity. Let go of pressure to be perfect - progress is enough.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

Creative sparks fly - express them without

apology. Love and joy deepen when you're fully present. Avoid tech or communication mishaps mid-month. June ends with renewed faith in your path.

Pisces (Feb 19 - Mar 20)

Home and heart take centre stage this month. Emotional boundaries are essential for peace. An unexpected reunion stirs old feelings - reflect before acting. June helps you find softness within structure.

Aries (Mar 21 - Apr 19)

Opportunities arrive in rapid succession - choose wisely. Watch for burnout from overcommitting socially. A family matter may require your leadership and calm. June ends with insight around career choices.

Taurus (Apr 20 - May 20)

Financial shifts demand adaptability, not fear. Let go of routines that no longer serve your purpose. Venus smiles on new romantic prospects - stay open. Practicality helps navigate emotional turbulence mid-month.

SUDOKU ANSWERS

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



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How AI is Transforming Architecture: The Bright Future of Smarter, Sustainable Building Design

AI perspective 'correspondent'

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has quietly revolutionized one of humanity's oldest professions - architecture. Far beyond the realms of science fiction or academic labs, AI is now playing a practical, positive role in how we design and construct homes and buildings across the world. From streamlining the planning process to enabling greener, more efficient construction, AI is helping shape a smarter, more sustainable future in the built environment.

Smarter Design in Less Time

Traditionally, the design process for buildings has involved lengthy back-and-forth between architects, engineers, and clients. AI now accelerates this process dramatically. Tools like generative design software allow architects to input goals and constraints - such as room size, sunlight direction, ventilation needs, and budget - and receive hundreds of design options in seconds. The AI evaluates these using complex algorithms that consider everything from spatial efficiency to environmental impact.

This means that what once took weeks of sketching and modelling can now be done in a matter of hours. Architects are freed from repetitive tasks and can instead focus on refining and humanizing the most promising concepts. With AI acting as a creative copilot, professionals can push the boundaries of innovation while saving time and reducing costs.

Greener, More Sustainable Buildings

One of the most urgent challenges facing the construction industry is its environmental

footprint. Globally, buildings account for nearly 40% of CO₂ emissions. AI offers a powerful solution.

AI can analyse a building's orientation, local weather patterns, and energy usage to suggest improvements that dramatically boost sustainability. For instance, it can recommend window placements that maximize natural light and reduce reliance on electricity, or materials that reduce heat absorption in hot climates. In South Africa, where energy efficiency is crucial, these insights would help create homes that are both comfortable and affordable to maintain.

Moreover, smart building systems powered by AI continue to optimize energy use even after construction. Intelligent HVAC (heating, ventilation and cooling) systems, lighting, and appliances adapt to occupants' behaviours, reducing energy waste without compromising comfort.

Enhanced Safety and Planning

Before a single brick is laid, AI is already making construction sites safer and more efficient. By integrating with Building Information Modelling (BIM), AI can predict potential clashes or safety risks in the design - such as plumbing colliding with electrical systems - before they happen in real life. This drastically reduces errors and rework, which not only saves money but protects workers from potentially dangerous oversights.

During construction, drones and AI-powered cameras monitor progress and ensure compliance with safety standards. Some systems can even alert managers in real time if workers enter hazardous zones without proper gear or if structural elements appear misaligned.

In areas with seismic activity or unstable weather, AI simulations can predict how a building will respond to various stressors. Engineers can then reinforce key elements, ensuring that buildings are not just efficient, but also resilient.

Affordable Housing Solutions

AI is also making waves in addressing the global housing crisis. In many developing regions, including parts of Africa, there's a pressing need for affordable, durable housing. AI can help by optimizing material usage and construction methods, reducing costs without sacrificing quality.

Some startups are using AI to guide 3D printing of homes - cutting down construction time from months to days. AI systems determine the optimal layout for pipes, electrical lines, and insulation layers during the printing process, ensuring a quick, efficient build. This could be a game-changer in providing decent housing in remote or underserved areas.

Inclusive and Adaptive Design

Another exciting benefit of AI in architecture is its ability to support inclusive design. By analysing user data, AI can help architects tailor buildings to better meet the needs of people with disabilities, the elderly, or those with sensory sensitivities. For instance, AI tools can simulate how someone with limited mobility might move through a home and suggest adjustments to door widths, ramp gradients, or light levels.

As urban populations grow and diversify, buildings need to adapt to a wider range of needs. AI helps ensure that homes and public spaces are not just functional, but welcoming

and inclusive for everyone.

The Human-AI Partnership

Importantly, AI doesn't replace the creativity or expertise of architects and builders - it enhances them. Think of AI as a new kind of colleague: one that works tirelessly through massive amounts of data, helps uncover patterns and efficiencies, and offers insights that humans might miss. The architect still makes the final call, but now with better tools and broader perspective.

Some critics worry that AI may lead to a homogenization of design, or to buildings that prioritize function over beauty. But the reality is proving quite the opposite. With the tedious calculations handled by machines, architects are rediscovering time and energy to focus on what makes buildings truly special: cultural context, human experience, and artistic flair.

The Road Ahead

As AI continues to evolve, its role in the construction industry will only deepen. We can expect smarter cities where buildings communicate with each other and their inhabitants. Maintenance will be predictive rather than reactive. Resources will be used more wisely. And everyone - from homeowners to developers - will benefit from faster, better, and more affordable design.

In the face of climate change, rapid urbanization, and resource constraints, AI isn't just a luxury - it's an essential partner in building a better future. The houses and buildings of tomorrow are already being shaped by the intelligence of today's machines, guided by the vision and values of human hands.

Credit: ChatGPT 4o mini - chatgpt.com

My 5 Sent

Oupa Bobbili

'n Gesonde liggaam lewer 'n gesonde gees. Die balans om jou self te laat groei. 'n Goeie gebalanseerde lewe maak jou konstant bewus van self dissipline. Werk hard en speel hard. Klink dit nie reg nie? Klink gesond vir my. Onthou alles met 'n "te" vooraan is nie gesond vir jou nie. Daarom is balans baie belangrik.

As dit tyd is om te ontspan doen dit met iets wat jou bou. Skinder, oordeel en leeglê is nie ontspanning nie, dit steel van jou saligheid en is emosionele afbrekende tyd verdryf. 'n Goeie stokperdjie is goeie ontspanning. Tyd saam met goeie vriende is die beste ontspanning. Goeie vriende bou mekaar op. Moet nie tyd mors nie. Jy kan dit nie terug koop nie

Maak tyd vir oefeninge, al is dit net stap.

Dit sit sommer weer oemf in die dag, hou die bloedsomloop aan die gang en hou die brein helder. Spandeer tyd aan jouself, dit moet 'n prioriteit wees. Jy beteken niks vir niemand as jy jouself nie toelaat om te groei nie. Ons het soveel geforseerde verantwoordelikhede dat ons moet kop hou met die samelewing. Tussen die belastings, swak dienste, duur kos en brandstof, en kinders op skool sal ons mal word as ons nie 'n balans handhaaf nie.

Ons sit hier in ons dorpie by die plaaslike 'padel' bane. Giggel my siel te lekker om te sien hoe mense oud en jonk 'padel' speel, kindertjies hardloop die wêreld vol. Hulle voel veilig, terwyl pappa en mamma die bal rond slaan. Die eienaars van die plek kort 'n medalje en 'n klop op die skouer om so 'n plek bymekaar te gesit het, sodat mense veilig, gesellig en sommer gesond kan verkeer.

Balans is nie net by ons self nie, maar in ons gemeenskap ook. Dit is nie jou keuse as

jy swart, wit of geel gebore is nie. Dit is nie jou keuse oor watter kultuur jy in gebore is nie, nog minder jou keuse of jy arm of ryk gebore is nie. Dit is beslis jou keuse as jy 'n rassis is en neersien op ander mense. Al ons kleure en kulture dra by tot die groei van die land, dit is volks balans. Ons het mekaar nodig. Of jy daarvan hou of nie. AI kan jy nie altyd al die kleure van die reënboog sien nie, is hulle almal altyd daar.

Emosionele wanbalans beïnvloed jou redenerings vermoë. Kyk hier is hierdie ou kêrel skuldig aan. As ek my wip dan breek die filter tussen die brein en die mond. Mense met 'n goeie gebalanseerde lewe het 'n standvastige emosionele intelligensie. Besluite word geneem met wysheid en nie emosies nie.

Onthou 'n gebalanseerde dieet is nie 'n sjokolade in die een hand met 'n dieet koeldrank in die ander hand nie. Die keuse is om of gesond of siek te wees, kies eerder gesond. 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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