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HOEDSPRUIT NEWS



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& Happy New Year

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2021 in my rearview



From the editor

What a roller-coaster of a year it has been for everyone. And not least for the team that took over the editorial control of this newspaper.

A steep learning curve

has resulted in a publication that has returned to its print roots and is offering locals interesting and relevant content about what is happening in and around Hoedspruit.

But what of our nation and the world as a whole? International travel is still somewhat curtailed and with the recent discovery of the new Omicron variant once again those in the tourist industry are thrust into turmoil. The nay-sayers will always have a voice and until those voices are convinced we will always have this with us in one form or another.

Personally, what I hope for is that international flights

are not so quickly curtailed or cancelled and those restrictive quarantine requirements are reduced or removed. If you only have 10 days for your holiday then where do you find 10-14 days to stay in a hotel or the money to fund that?

Perhaps game lodges should be seen as quarantine centres, given that most of the activities there occur outdoors and guests get to stay in individual accommodation, unlike a hotel.

I am not a medically trained person and therefore my opinion is just that... my opinion. No better or worse than anyone else.

But, we have a more pressing pandemic to be concerned about and it has been around longer than COVID-19. I am referring to load-shedding (or whatever phrase is being currently used)

It has never ceased to amaze me how this intrusive attack on our economy seems to be able to be switched on and off almost at will. At one stage a few months ago we had 6 of our power stations out for one reason or another and, just like that, they were fixed! How and by who? The constant uncertainty of a stable source of electricity is just adding to our already de-

pressed state of mind.

Are there ANY silver linings in the dark clouds of 2021? Indeed there were. They may have been difficult to find, but they were there... More people travelled locally than ever before and discovered places that they never knew existed.

Biltong sales increased. More family time We got to dine by candlelight

However you and your family choose to celebrate this festive season, I hope that you do so with gratitude for having survived the year in good health and with the love of family and friends.

As we wave goodbye to the year that was and look towards the year that lies ahead I wish you all good health and a safe festive season.

David Batzofin

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor – 22 December 2021



Dear Editor

Love the updated airport!! Parking is so much better than before and I appreciated the covered/shaded waiting areas as it rained while waiting for my last flight. The arrivals and departure areas are very well indicated and so many loo's. Beautiful airport for guests to fly in & out. The old airport may have had bush charm but it needed fixing & updating. Well done to those involved.

Angele



Dear Editor

It was time for an upgrade, you have to be honest. Rustic is great but if you are hoping for an influx of tourists to keep the whole area alive and earning, then you have to break that egg to make an omelette. Personally, I like the way this omelette has a large serving of rustic built-in.

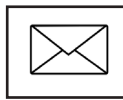
Ilse

Dear Editor

Recently my husband had a slip up with his saw and ended up with two fingers that looked rather mangled. We don't have medical aid but the Hoedspruit clinic is around the corner. When he arrived there they helped him promptly. They did a great job of repairing the damage and he was treated with respect.

On his follow up visit to have the dressing changed he was once again dealt with professionally. Thank you to all the staff for excellent service.

Sandra.



Dear Editor

2021 – Oh dear!

The year is finally edging to a close. Thank heavens for that – a thought that I think many people around our country are thinking. Please can 2022 be a better year?

Many of us have been faced with challenges that we could not have anticipated or even dreamed of. Can you imagine the whole world in lockdown, prisoners in your own home, not able

to go out and mix with friends and family, no travel, everyone covered in a mask and all facing a deadly pandemic! Who could have thought this story up?

But it happened and for many it was a disaster – businesses closed, psychological implications, strained and broken marriages, financial bedlam, suicides, chaos and looting, virtual schools, no socialising, friends and family passing away ... will there be an end?

The conspiracy theorists speculated that this was a human engineered virus that slipped out by mistake from a laboratory in Wuhan, China – part of the Chinese chemical warfare program. Could this be true? Well there are some convincing stories doing the rounds on social media, but can they be believed? And we hear nothing much coming out of China! On the other hand, could this strangely be driven by the pharmaceutical industry in some bizarre way? With all our science technology and skills why can't we get to grips with this disease? And then it mutates again ... Omicron! And all South Africa's fault! Really? We only found the mutation – it didn't happen here!

Out of that came a red listing by countries that

knee jerked a reaction causing further chaos and cancellations across the board. There was scant consideration of the impact on international travel and tourism, and on the livelihood of people and communities. And could Omicron have mutated from people that had the vaccine and were infected? So may questions with so few answers!

What has all this taught us if anything? Well we can work from home, we can conduct virtual meetings and court appearances, we can restrict our travel (painful as it may be) but that makes us explore our own fabulous country, new businesses have emerged, new apps, people have opted to move out of cities and into the country (a better quality of life), and maybe we have come to cherish that what we have, so much more. We are a resilient nation – we put up with Zuma for so many years – but we just wish (is that too far fetched an idea), that the politicians stop politicking and get down to the basics of helping the nation! But that might be too far fetched – there's still looting to do, dodgy tenders to secure, and quite frankly bad administration and appointments of

totally incapable people. The gravy train is sadly too long to grind to a halt.

But we will endure, and we welcome 2022 with open arms. May this coming year see us revert to some smidgen of normality – keep the masks and sanitising, but lets get this place up and running again! Happy Christmas to all your readers and may 2022 be a better year than this one, for all of us. Lets make sure that happens.

Thanks for a great publication.

Andre G

Thank you !

Dear readers, advertisers, prospective advertisers and everyone else out there in the precinct of "The Hoed",

On behalf of the whole team at the Kruger2Canyon News, we would like to thank all those that advertised in our publication this past year. Without your support our publication would not exist.

We have made great steps this year, we've increased our reach, improved on our journalism, provided a minimum of 500% more relevant content than any other newspaper in the region, we have



partnered with organisations such as Roving Reporters and Fgasa and have established ourselves as a respected mouthpiece in the region.

The year ahead poses many challenges for many of us, but with resilience and true grit we will persevere. We at Kruger2Canyon News look forward to our rebranding, scheduled for the first quarter of the year, and increasing our advertising family. We implore businesses to understand that advertising is still the cornerstone of successful business worldwide – and Hoedspruit is no exception. It would be fantastic to secure the support of all our local businesses. At the end of the day it surely is about supporting local and ensuring that we all within our community, survive and flourish.

We look forward to the following year with hope and excitement. Hope that things will turn for the better, and excitement for further opportunities that will present themselves.

We would like to thank you all for your support. We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Travel safe, be safe and enjoy the holidays. See you all in 2022.

The Kruger2Canyon team.

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Eastgate Airport - Gateway to dreams

Nicole Walker /
Staff travel writer

Eastgate Airport is the gateway to the heartland of South Africa's abundant wildlife.

With an average of 150 monthly flights and over 7000 passengers passing through its gates any given month, it needed an upgrade to better service its growing clientele of residents in the surrounding area and tourists visiting the Kruger National Park and private game reserves. In mid-2020, with South Africa under lockdown due to the global pandemic and most flights suspended, the airport began its R20 million refurbishment.

The renovations have included, a complete overhaul of the entrance gate, installation of additional check-in counters to assist with the high volume of passengers and an increase in the size of the departure lounge to allow for ample seating. The curio shop and refreshment kiosk received a major revamp and the size of the baggage claim area has been increased.

Previously the limited seating meant passengers had to wait in the hot sun until boarding. The facilities now offer a comfortable, sheltered waiting area where guests can relax before boarding.

Return guests and residents of the area who previously used Eastgate Airport cannot believe the transformation as it is much more spacious, check-in is smoother, luggage is handled quickly and the waiting area is much more comfortable.



"Eastgate Airport currently operates private charter flights as well as scheduled flights to Johannesburg and Cape Town".

Eastgate Airport refurb sporting new facilities. Landing strips (left) Boarding gates (below) Parking area (below right)



The flights from Johannesburg to Eastgate Airport (HDS) is just under an hour and a one-way ticket starts at around R1560 on Airlink and R1426 on Cemair. The flights from Cape Town are around 2 ½ hours. Being a CAT6/7 airport it can accommodate any sized aircraft from an Antonov 124 to an Airbus to a Papa Charlie.

Eastgate Airport is situated in the eastern reaches of South Africa's Limpopo Province. Its origins stem from an unused portion of the Hoedspruit Airforce Base at the southern end of the airfield which was converted into a civilian airport known as Eastgate Airport in the late 1990s.

Today, Hoedspruit is a magnet for people who love wildlife and who are looking for exceptional game viewing experiences. With an enormous range of safari offerings on its doorstep to fit any budget requirement, it has firmly established itself as the Rainbow Nation's

number one safari town. This has been helped by the advent of the residential wildlife estates, a housing niche that has made Hoedspruit one of the most sought after property destinations in the country.

For anyone interested in buying into life in the African bush, having wildlife on their doorstep and living in safari lodge-style accommodation, estates such as Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate, Raptors View, Moditlo, Zandspruit Aero Estate and Leadwood offer exceptional opportunities to live the African dream as well as go on safari!

The town's infrastructure has expanded to meet the demand of international visitors and a growing number of permanent residents, with major supermarkets like Spar and Pick n Pay and a range of excellent restaurants on hand. No longer just a town people pass through on their way to somewhere else, Hoedspruit holds its

own as a tourism destination and is an excellent base from which to explore one of the most exciting and adventure-soaked areas of South Africa.

The town is within easy reach of the Panorama Route with tourism drawcards like the Blyde River Canyon, Bourke's Luck Potholes and God's Window

complemented by great activities like zip-lining, hiking, horse riding and hot air ballooning. Day trips to the Kruger National Park are a leading attraction for visitors to the town, with both the Orpen and Phalaborwa gates a short drive from the town. Game drives can be arranged in the Kruger and several private reserves

around Hoedspruit so wildlife enthusiasts will never be tired of things to do and see. From its humble beginnings, Hoedspruit has finally arrived and is looking forward to the future. So next time you are planning a safari, make sure that this vibrant little piece of South Africa is on your itinerary.



Dance is the hidden language of the Soul

Jamie-Lee Language

Actions speak louder than words and we often resort to dance to express ourselves when words fail us. The joy which comes with dancing helps us to cope with life differently.

I was born into a family that loves dance and music. I started dancing when I was three years old, my mom enrolled me in dance classes to pursue my passion. I tried many dance forms, from ballet, Spanish,

high-energy freestyle, a bit of Latin-American and hip hop. I bring all these styles into my choreography. I find that dancing is not only an escape from the world but a way to express myself through music.

When we talk about dance, usually a professional dancer comes to mind. But this is where we go wrong. Dance is for anybody and everybody. There is no such thing as "two left feet" or "I wasn't born with rhythm". I started teaching hip-hop in

Hoedspruit a little over four years ago and was blown away by the talent and love for dancing in this little gem of a town.

Body Language Dance Studio had our first dance show on the 27th of November 2021, and what a show... The kids worked very hard all year and we were all excited to show the parents what we've been up to. What made it even more amazing was the special guest Briana Evigan (Step Up series actress) who

came to watch the talent this town has. She was an absolute pleasure to have and was so supportive of all the dancers, clapping and cheering all the way.

Body Language Dance Studio has a lot planned for 2022 and we would like to invite you to come and try a class for free. Whether it be a Cha-Cha with your partner or Hip Hop just to have some fun.

"We hope to welcome you to our studio in 2022".



Above back row left to right: Briana Evigan, Savannah Gutteridge, Samantha Ferreira, Sophie Swemmer, Danni Wall, Amelia Viegas, Jamie-Lee Language

Above front row: Jodi-Lee Hendricks, Cameron Wood, Gemma-Lee Wiltshire, Kelley Taylor

Below from left to right: Mila Mai Job, Mia Badenhorst, Aila Badenhorst, Annabelle Koen, Leja Kolver at the back Briana Evigan & Jamie-Lee Language



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Waste reclaimers, a thankless but necessary occupation

Cindy Koen

Despite the hard work and positive environmental and social impact that waste reclaimers have on the landscape, they are often shunned by communities, neighbours, friends, and family.

For most reclaimers, picking through waste and recycling is not something that they WANT to do. It is purely a means of providing for their families and an alternative to starvation. The working conditions that they find themselves in is unbearable, however, these individuals still persevere despite the challenges that they face.

In 2021, the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere, in collaboration with Maruleng Municipality, identified needs that the waste reclaimers

working from the London landfill site have. Upon further investigation, they noted that these struggles were not limited to the waste reclaimers situated at the landfill site, but extended to informal recyclers working in communities in the K2C landscape. Due to the far distances that these individuals have to travel to gain access to markets, they forfeit most of their profit. They are also charged a waste handling and processing fee to get it ready for broader markets. In the end, these individuals are left with a fraction of the true value of their labour.

Understanding the problem, the partners set out to identify possible solutions going forward. The solutions identified needed to support the waste reclaimers to earn a fairer and more equitable return for their hard labour, as well as look-

ing at systems could be put in place for the broader economic sector to benefit. Right from the beginning, the partners understood the need to gain the trust of the waste reclaimers, as so many previous projects had come and gone without delivering effective solutions that benefit all stakeholders.

The first step of the journey to empowerment has taken place. A simple gift of much needed PPE and uniforms were provided to 21 waste reclaimers who have been working at the landfill site since 2019. A further 27 additional waste reclaimers have started working from the landfill site, and will receive their PPE as soon as the project launches in January 2022.

This project focuses on developing a recycling buy-back centre at the London landfill site in partnership

with Marula Conservation Project and some upstream buyers that the waste reclaimers are working with. This will ensure that reclaimers will be getting a fairer return, but will also ensure that they are part of a network that provides market access for informal and formal waste recyclers in the surrounding communities.

This project will form part of a wider Biosphere landscape project that supports the improvement in waste management networks in the Greater Kruger area. The identified waste reclaimers and recyclers will also be part of a broader SMME development project, that will in future support them in growing and developing small businesses in our landscape that can benefit a wider community.



The waste reclaimers- making a difference to the community Photo's supplied



Operation Wild Dog 2021, a huge success



The Operation Wild Dog team - Town Watch, SAPS, Maruleng Traffic Dpt, Farm Watch and various security companies. Photo's supplied

Marie Helm

The end of year Operation Wild Dog was a huge success, so said Mr Johan Potgieter, chairperson of the Hoedspruit Town Watch. He was addressing the participants after the operation at which more than 30 vehicles were present, setting a new record.

The Chairperson thanked all members that gave up their time and used their resources to increase visibility in our town. 16 vehicles were present at the Bosveld complex on the R40 and 14 vehicles at the Ryshuis on the R527.

Those who participated included W/O Dawid Kgothloane, Sgt Lucky Ma-

kutu and the team from Hoedspruit SAPD, head of Maruleng Traffic, Mr Tau Mogoboya, Superintendent Maile and their team, Members of Town Watch and Farm Watch, Mrs Leigh Barkas – Protrack, Mr Mark Dingle – MD Alarms and Mr Div Lambrecht – Syncro Dynamics and Weltrac

The excellent co-operation between Hoedspruit Town Watch, SAPS, Maruleng Traffic Department, the various security companies and Farm Watch ensured that Hoedspruit and all its residents enjoy the most efficient security possible. It was also emphasized that the first line of defence is visibility. Town Watch will continue its efforts to regu-

larly carry out actions to ensure high levels of visibility.

It was emphasized that all residents should remain vigilant, especially during the end of the year holiday season. Ask your neighbours to keep an eye on your property when you are out. Help each other to remain safe.

Operations such as Operation Wild Dog will become a regular occurrence. Although it is not possible to measure the impact of such an operation, the low levels of crime in Hoedspruit is a direct result of all the stakeholders.

“Hoedspruit Town Watch says THANK YOU VERY MUCH”!



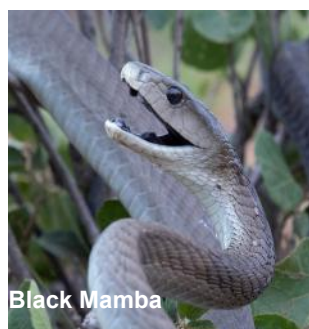
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Summertime is snake season



Puff Adder
Images: Johan Marais



Black Mamba



Bibron's Stiletto snake



Mozambique Spitting Cobra

Johan Marais

There are seventy-five different types of snakes in the Lowveld with thirty-six harmless snakes, eleven that can inflict a painful bite and six snakes that are considered potentially deadly.

Most of the recent bites were from Bibron's Stiletto Snake – a small dark brown to a blackish snake that lives underground but surfaces on hot summer nights, especially after good rains. It is unique in that it has large fangs that can protrude from the sides of the mouth even when closed and when handled the person doing so will be bitten. There is no safe way of handling this snake and for some reason, people mistake it for a harmless Mole Snake. The venom of the Stiletto Snake is potentially cytotoxic or cell-destroying, doing local damage and causing severe pain, swelling, blistering and

sometimes the loss of a digit or two. As there is no antivenom for the bite of this snake doctors treat pain and symptoms.

Next on the list of most serious bites is the Mozambique Spitting Cobra. This snake is most active in the early evening when it hunts for food. Unfortunately, it has the bad habit of ending up in houses and lodges, usually entering through an open sliding door or the gap under doors if big enough and several people get bitten while asleep in their beds. Ensure that doors seal well and make use of mosquito doors. We also recommend that people sleep under mosquito nets. The venom of this snake is potentially cytotoxic causing severe pain, swelling and blistering that may be followed by severe tissue damage. Victims need to be hospitalised and invariably need antivenom.

Puff Adders are common in

the Lowveld and the majority of bites are from people accidentally standing on these snakes at night. Always make use of a torch when walking in the dark. Like the Mozambique Spitting Cobra, this snake has a potent cytotoxic venom that may cause severe pain, swelling, blistering and tissue damage. Victims need to be hospitalised and may require antivenom treatment.

Black Mamba bites are rare but extremely dangerous. This is a shy and elusive snake that is quick to move off when given the chance. However, if surprised or cornered it will gape, exposing the black lining of the mouth, and it may strike more than once. The neurotoxic venom of this snake is potent and fast-acting. Victims soon mention pins-and-needles in their lips, a metallic taste in the mouth, slurred speech, nausea and

vomiting, excessive sweating, droopy eyes, dilated pupils and eventually difficulty with breathing. These bites are life-threatening and victims need to be hospitalised urgently as they may require breathing assistance. Bites from the other dangerous snakes in the Lowveld are few and far between and include snakes like the Snouted Cobra, Boomslang and Vine Snake.

Snakes in gardens

Snakes are often found in suburban gardens and are largely lured by prey items like rodents, frogs and bird nests. There is no effective snake repellent, and this includes commercially-available snake repellents, Jayes fluid, old oil, various plants and any other concoctions that people often use.

If you spot a snake in your garden or house, immediately remove pets, watch the snake from a safe distance and call a snake remover. There are over 800 snake removers on the free ASI App ASI Snakes. Never attempt to catch or kill a snake – leave it for the professionals.

First Aid for Snakebites

In the event of a snakebite **DO NOT** apply an arterial tourniquet. Many people are bitten by harmless snakes, mildly venomous snakes or snakes with cytotoxic venom. Arterial tourniquets are not recommended for snakebites by the World Health Organization and can do serious damage.

DO NOT cut and try to suck the venom out. It does not work.

DO NOT apply ice or heat.

DO NOT inject antivenom. If required, antivenom is administered by a medical

doctor in a hospital environment.

What should one do?

Make sure the victim is safe and away from the snake. Remove all pets, especially dogs.

Contact the nearest hospital or private ambulance service. Victims need to be hospitalised as soon as possible. Do not try to kill or catch the snake but take a photograph if it can be done safely. It is not essential to know the identity of the snake.

Resort to mouth-to-mouth resuscitation of the victim stops breathing on the way to the hospital.

Venom in the eyes

Though scary and painful, venom in the eyes is easily dealt with provided you follow the correct procedures. Immediately rinse the eyes with water (from a tap or hose pipe) and transport the victim to a doctor who will examine the eyes and provide the required treatment. If your pet gets venom in the eyes, do the same – rinse the eyes with water and get it to a vet.

Dogs and snakebites

There is no first aid if your dog gets bitten by a highly venomous snake – get it to a vet urgently. Do not waste time with Allergex tablets, milk and charcoal – it does not work for snake venom.

For more advanced first aid measures and a list of snake removers in your area, download the free African Snakebite Institute App ASI Snakes (<http://bitly/snakebiteapp>).

African Snakebite Institute
Cell: 0824942039

www.africansnakebiteinstitute.com

The life of an NGO Director

Michelle Merrifield

Running an NGO is certainly not for the faint-hearted!

I live this 'adventure' daily. It's the choice of the director of an NGO to help the less privileged, and despite many naysayers; I have tried to accomplish that. I have discovered that there are more reasons and excuses NOT to donate than there are to contribute. The list is long but I won't give up because this is my mission, and I have to make a difference in this country before I die.

Running an NGO is something you do because you have passion, not because you cannot do anything else and can't earn an income. You get up early, have your coffee and think, "...how will I get funding today". Yes most of us will

still open our windows every morning, with the magnificent view of the bush and a few impalas roaming around, and our employee will come to clean the house. We'll take your children to the best school in the area and we will have tea with our friends and plan our next trip overseas. We will buy beautiful jewellery, we will eat great food, and we will stay in a beautiful hotel and enjoy life as much as we can.

Oh ... and I forgot, we will invite these people from overseas who just bought a house nearby. They have friends coming so we'll make a braai, and show how great our country is, and how nice it is to live here. We'll feel comfortable because we deserve it.

However, if you think you can skip some of the material things in your



life, please donate to the NGOs because they need YOU as well. You are an indirect beneficiary, and we are doing the work you do not have time to do, for whatever reason. The life

of an NGO Director is both fulfilling and immensely satisfying, and I hope and trust that we are able to make an impact on this wonderful country of ours so that all can benefit.



"You'll never get poorer by donating"
Images supplied by Michelle

Summer rolls ... a mouthful of delicious in a moment

Hayley Cooper

Summer is here! Love or hate the warmer weather it does bring the opportunity to eat fresh, light and colourful meals and to try out some quick and easy meals that require little or no cooking.

These summer rolls are so delicious, and the great thing about them is that you can use any vegetables you want! You could even add in some fruit if feeling adventurous.

We have chosen some simple ingredients that you will probably already have, but really go wild with experimenting, or just make them as a way to use up what needs to be eaten in your fridge.

They may look like a snack, but are surprisingly filling

especially if you are having them with a generous dipping of the sauce, which is rich but oh so good.

Ingredients for the rolls:
Rice papers, baby corn, pepper, avocado, cucumber, carrot, red cabbage, lettuce, mushrooms and coriander. How many rice papers you need, and how much veggies you require is simply dependent on how hungry you are!

Ingredients for sauce:
2 tablespoons peanut butter (smooth)
¼ cup coconut milk
A tablespoon soy sauce
A teaspoon coconut sugar
A teaspoon of garlic powder and half a teaspoon of ground ginger are optional
Tablespoon of fresh lime juice (can use lemon if you don't have lime)

If you like things spicy you can add a sprinkle of chilli flakes

Method:
For the sauce add all ingredients (except lime juice) to a low heat but don't let it boil. Mix it until you have a smooth consistency (it is just to soften the peanut butter so not on the heat for long)

Then add your lime juice to the sauce and if adding chilli flakes do this now, and mix.

Take each sheet of rice paper and soak in cold water for about 30 seconds until wet all over. Lightly pat dry with a paper towel to take most of the water off - but you still want it to be damp.

Wash and slice your veggies as thinly as possible and have them already lined up on your chopping board. Shred your lettuce &



"Eat and enjoy - it's that simple".

cabbage and roughly chop your coriander.

Put a few strips of each of the veggies and avocado into the rice paper roll including some chopped coriander. Make sure you get a little of everything into the roll!

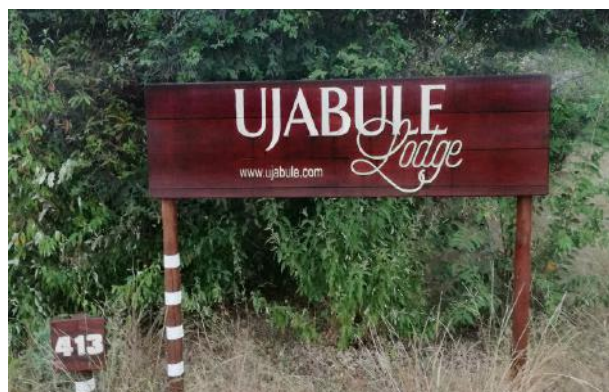
Roll as you would a wrap and then cut in half (if you want), to see the colourfulness of the inside.

Plate and serve your sauce on the side in a dish for dipping. Sprinkle with extra coriander to make it look fancy

Ujabule Lodge.... welcoming lodge in the heart of Hoedspruit



Ujabule pool area



Ujabule Lodge in the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate



Comfortable suite

Staff travel writer

Ujabule Lodge in the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate was started by Liezel Coetzee during lockdown - a brave move that seems to be paying dividends.

From the main road of the Estate, it might not look all that inspiring, but looks can be deceiving and in this case, the latter is true. The best part of the lodge faces away from the road and looks directly into the

bush.

It is a place of tranquility. The silence is only broken by the sounds emanating from the bush that surrounds Ujabule. The well-equipped rooms all have a coffee and tea station, as well as an indoor and outdoor shower.

Although the pool was inviting, it was REALLY cold, so while I was prepared to 'sacrifice' my feet, I was not prepared to plunge in, even for research purposes! That

being said, I did spend time here contemplating the meaning of life and the universe in general.

The lodge has 4 identical rooms that have all the required amenities for either self-catering or bed and breakfast if you wish for that. I travelled with cereal and a bowl, so I cannot comment on the breakfast. However, I did have a coffee while watching a fellow guest enjoy her 'full English'.

I was at this lodge for two nights and I enjoyed

my take-away meals on the verandah while looking out over the bush. Sitting there I could hear rutting Impala, watched two large Nyala bulls feeding in the undergrowth and my ears were assailed by the screams of a colony of Banded Mongooses. I have never heard the sound before and it was somewhat terrifying, to say the least. Luckily it was during the early evening while I was still able to see exactly WHO was causing the

hair on the back of my neck to rise.

Given the density of the vegetation within the Estate, it is no wonder that there is such diverse birdlife. Although I could hear numerous species, a Hornbill was one of the few that I saw, let alone identify. As the Estate is close to the centre of town, accessing amenities like food and beverage stores is simple and easy. Guests can choose to purchase a take-away to be eaten at the lodge,

or a sit-down meal at one of several restaurants in town, all of which are easily accessible. That being said, there are braai facilities at the lodge for those who are prepared to cook.

Contact details: Liezel Coetzee, 413 Rotsy Road, Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate, Hoedspruit, South Africa. Tel 060 431 9371 Info@ujabule.com. You can also find them on Facebook and Instagram.



WISHING ALL OUR CUSTOMERS A WONDERFUL FESTIVE SEASON AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR



List your birds and have fun this December !



Cape Parrot (above)

Pel Fishing Owl (right)
Images supplied MdP

Mike Meidlinger

As the month of December ticks on by, and the year that is 2021 counts itself down, we are all preparing for the much-coveted festive season.

Turkeys, ham shanks, lamb in various forms and quantities, maybe venison, surely brussel sprouts in bucket loads, and family, are all on the agenda offering little time for birds and birding.

Perhaps a spot of local travel will add some spice or variety to those in search of a new bird or two. The prospect of the new year and the excitement of what it can bring, has inspired this piece on a rather simple yet vital part of birding - lists.

Much as Christmas is the focal point of the year for many people, lists are what drive and motivate birders in the pursuit of the hobby itself. A list is simply the practice of keeping a record of what species one has seen, of which there are many forms.

The most important is one's "Life List", a checklist of all of the wild birds seen in a single lifetime. When new birds are added that have not been seen before, these are duly referred to as the ubiquitous but pulse-raising terms "lifers" or "ticks". Many birders invest time, effort, money and sacrifice, in the hunt for new lifers to add to their lists.

Lifers that are particularly tricky to see, or which are range restricted, can be

known as "blockers" as they are often shown as gaps on the Life List that are difficult to unblock. Some infamous blockers of the greater Hoedspruit area, that are not just notorious around the country, but also around the world, include a number of true specialities.

The critically endangered Taita Falcon, can be found in the Strijdom Tunnel area, and is most easily seen with the aid of local community guide Michael Kumako. The forests of Magoebaskloof, hold Black-fronted Bush Shrike, Cape Parrot and Buff-spotted Flufftail, while the elusive Pels Fishing Owl has reliable spots in the Balule Game Reserve such as at the quaint Toroyaka Bush Lodge. All of these are birds that are dreamt

about by many, and which are hard to see under normal circumstances.

"Regional Lists" are for those who travel abundantly. Here in South Africa the Southern African List is the baseline, whereby all birds seen beneath the Zambezi and Cunene Rivers are logged. For most residents this is the list by default, but as one travels internationally, other options open up. As an example, if traveling to London birds seen like the Eurasian Blue Tit, European Robin, or Eurasian Jay can be on one's Life List, but are obviously not confined to the boundaries of Southern Africa.

Lists however can be much more than chasing lifers. For many the pursuit of a Year List can be a fun and stress free chal-

lenge, especially if combined as a gentleman's wager or friendly bet between family or friends. As its name suggests, a Year List is one that refers to keeping a list of all species seen in a single calendar year, when everything starts again from fresh on January 1st. This is an energetic and vibrant way to tick new birds and explore new areas while birding.

Patch Lists refer to lists that are built while birding a single area. This can be the reserve you work in, the housing estate you live in or even simply your garden. A patch is an area, which one goes birding in most often. They can be large or small, but for the most part it is where one spends most of one's

time in the field on a day-to-day basis. Patch Lists are oddly exciting as even mundane species like House Sparrow, Feral Pigeon or the like can bring tons of joy when seen in your patch for the first time.

Keeping a list or two is an invigorating challenge and helps enthusiastic birders, whether beginner or those that are more accomplished, in pushing the boundaries further and further.

So as Christmas and the New Years celebrations approach, it is most certainly time to eat, drink, bird and be merry. As 2022 approaches perhaps begin a list, whichever form will suit you best, that will energize your birding throughout the year to come. Happy holidays!

Starry starry night - Constellation of the month - Orion

Ben Coley

Mythology

The constellation of Orion represents the great hunter wielding his sword/club and shield and being accompanied by his faithful hunting dogs, Canis Major and Canis Minor. Its most famous mythology has direct links to the constellation of Scorpius due to them being exactly opposite one another in the sky.

In Greek mythology, Orion was a renowned hunter and boasted often that no beast on Earth was a match for him. He hunted with abandon and showed no remorse in his actions.

To teach him some humility in the face of nature, Gaia, the goddess of the Earth, sent a giant scorpion to attack Orion. A great battle raged for days until, according to some versions, both succumbed to their injuries.

To honour them, Zeus placed both combatants in the sky at exact opposites of the celestial sphere. As Orion sets, Scorpius rises, and vice versa, giving the impression that the scorpion is chasing the fleeing Orion across the sky for eternity.

Notable Stars

Orion contains many famous stars but the most notable is Betel-



Orion Scorpius 300 Images supplied by Celestial Events

geuse, a red supergiant whose name stems from the Arabic for 'armpit of the giant'.

Betelgeuse is a behemoth of a star, estimated to be around 1.5

billion km in diameter. If Betelgeuse were to replace our Sun, everything up to and including Jupiter would be enveloped by the star. Betelgeuse is coming

to the end of its life and is expected to go supernova soon (astronomically speaking). When this happens, the resulting explosion will be visible in the daytime sky for weeks and be brighter than the full Moon at night! Of course, since Betelgeuse is over 500 light-years away, it may have already exploded....

Deep Sky Objects

The Great/Orion Nebula (M42) is the closest, and brightest area of star formation visible in our night skies, despite being over 1,500 light-years away.

It can be found by looking at the central 'star' of Orion's sheathed

sword. A simple pair of binoculars will show a hazy patch, while small amateur telescopes can begin to resolve detail and long exposure photography will expose the intricate structure and stunning colours.

The nebula is a cosmic nursery with 100s of baby stars forming from within its gassy womb. The noticeable pink colour in long exposure photographs is evidence of vast amounts of hydrogen being excited by the energy of the young stars within. Eventually, the stars will blast away the excess gas and drift off into space to start their stellar lives.

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Black and white photography -Why I love it so much and when is it fine art?

Helena Atkinson

I have always been drawn more to black and white photos.

I think it comes from a book that my Parents owned, that I used to page through when I was a child. It was 'The Best of Life' magazine. The majority of the photos were black and white and the impression they made on me is still fresh in my mind. I found the simplicity and yet layered ability to convey emotions and the mood of the image so powerful. I think it influenced me to look for those opportunities in my photography.

With wildlife, it is not always about the emotions in the scene, but I try to look out for that, and I try to convey it. What I love is when the opportunity presents itself for the image to be even more striking in black and white. That is something I look for in the field. I don't simply download my images and test them in black and white, although that does happen occasionally. I generally already have the picture in mind and I either try and find it, or I see the opportunity present itself and I will have settings that will best allow for this.

One thing I look for is clean backgrounds with an animal that has striking patterns. Some obvious ones allow for this but then some are not so obvious that make for great black and white photos.

There are some classic black and white subjects that I think most people can imagine that would work quite well. These include lion, zebra, giraffe, and leopard. Some of the more unexpected ones are baboons, monkeys, baby hyenas, pangolins and any baby animal interacting with its mother. The simplicity in the colour tone tends to highlight the connection between the mother and baby.

I generally find that when I shoot with the plan of converting the image to black and white, the results tend to be better than when I did not have that intent from the beginning.

Sometimes one gets an image that is unexpectedly good in black and white, even when that was not the original plan, but in general,

when I keep an eye out for the opportunity, and shoot with that in mind I compose and expose differently.

I will often shoot my images over and underexposed by at least 2 stops. I like the high key effect this produces but it also allows me to get rid of distracting things in the background quicker with minimal editing required. A lot of this can be done in post-editing but I do find that things respond faster to the editing brushes when I shot it in high key.

I am also really enjoying shooting with my Canon R6 for the simple reason that it has focus points to the edges of the frame. I like to compose my images where the subject is in the corner and most of my frame is blank space.

In general, I find that I have a stronger reaction to a black and white image, especially when I believe it has elevated the image to what we like to call fine art. That is such a tricky term in photography and some people simply refer to any black and white photo as fine art. I think there must be more to the process than that. I believe that there must be some more forethought to it, and there has to be some interpretation of the scene that is unique to the photographer and that the photographer can convincingly pass off as their imagination and the way they see the world.

The editing process for converting images to black and white is also a fun one for me. You must start with deciding on the mood of the image. It can be light and soft and almost ethereal, or it can be dark and moody with a lot of grit and grain.

The final thing I enjoy about black and white photography and especially the fine art approach, is that it can be subjective, and the result is a matter of 'do I like it and would I want to hang a big print of that image on my wall?' I find that using these questions as the evaluation tool for whether I am happy with the image or not, is a very clear end to the editing process, and isn't the goal of photography to enjoy yourself, capture moments in time and express yourself? I find that I get to that with this style of photography.



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Swing by and check out the Drakensig Military Golf Club

Joan Acutt

When Air Force Base Hoedspruit was built in the late 1970s, Drakensig, for safety reasons, was established as the housing area for the Air Force personnel.

At the time Hoedspruit was a very small town with no facilities to speak of. The South African Air Force decided to establish a military sports club that included different sporting facilities as well as a 9 hole golf course for the Air Force members and their families to use.

Drakensig Golf Club has a proud history of more than 40 years, currently serving approximately 150 members, made up of military

and private members from the community.

The last 2 years accompanied by the Covid restrictions were fairly tough but the club has fortunately grown and managed some noteworthy achievements.

The Drakensig Military Golf Club is still accepting new members at R2000.00 per annum which includes Military Sports Club membership (for entry to Drakensig). A once-off joining fee of R800.00 also applies.

Any enquiries or further information required may be directed via email to drakensigmilitarygolf@gmail.com



Spectacular views from the tee

Photo supplied

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SUDUKO

Lowveld Academy's leadership development weekend

Suné Müller, Monique Mulemba and Jade Langenhoven

As our slogan says, WE STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE in everything we do.

I have the huge privilege to be the guardian of our leaders and took them on a leadership development camp to the Klaserie dam recently with colleague Mrs Elmarie Jansen van Rensburg, who makes work seem like play! Not only did these students overcome their fear of water, but they discovered the adventurous side of life.

The peaceful environment made them open their hearts towards one another so that they could build on their strengths, which often is seen as one's weakness, and be the wind beneath one another's wings. I am extremely excited to see this group grow in leadership, confidence and take our school to new heights. These are amazing young people with compassion and determination, qualities that I admire in people. Watch this space... they are building a legacy.

The School Representative Council took to Klaserie dam on Friday 22 October to have a leadership development camp. The goal of the camp was to measure students' learning development as leaders who are in-



Leaders of tomorrow that attended the Leadership camp weekend (left)

Much fun was had in the dam (below)



clusive amongst many other qualities.

The camp was a huge success in the sense that we are completely different people from the moment we entered Klaserie dam and the moment we left. We didn't just leave the Klaserie dam

with nothing but we left with bonds that were created and strengthened. We got to know each other on deeper levels which helped us to understand each other more and knit us into a unit. We are now more than just a group of prefects we are

now a family with an unshakeable bond of unity.

The leaders of Lowveld Academy went on a team-building camp at Klaserie dam, or so they thought. Arriving at the dam and immediately putting up the tents, excited to see what activi-

ties lie ahead, their phones were taken away only to be left with them and their fellow peers.

The next night and day changed their opinions about their fellow leaders as they all became a team. "Tell us one thing that no

one knows about you?", was the first activity that brought us closer together, a moment each leader will never forget, their vulnerability made their bonds truly strong and set the tone for the weekend. The rest of that day was filled with good food, team activities and fun in the dam like tubing and canoeing. Ended off the evening with some broken telephone, singing and chatting around a fire. Waking up in the morning fresh as a daisy (after a few cups of coffee) and starting the day with an intense gym session. We spent more time at the dam and ended the day with having to share what they admire most about each other by writing it on a piece of paper that was taped to their backs. They left the dam with a good spirit and a new family with the help of ma'am Sune and ma'am Elmarie they all realized that their differences are what brings them all together and that trust together with communication is a key factor in a team.



THE LAST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH AT KAMOGELO CENTRE

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It's Dress Up Time!

KAMOGELO CENTRE
Night Market
Friday 31 Dec
5-8pm

Glow in the Dark Treasure Hunt
Food Stalls Crafters Spit Braai
Line Dancing DJ Fun for the Kids

Bumper plant sale replenishes Rotary's wilting reserves

Lovelle Henderson

Not to be discouraged by all their fundraisers being curtailed at the beginning of the year due to Covid, the Hoedspruit Rotary Club diligently brainstormed other options and decided that one of the fundraisers for 2021 should be a Plant Sale.

After the initial scepticism, as most members were not so sure that they were the "green fingers" type at all, we started growing seedlings and plants in earnest and lovingly nurtured them through the rough and dry winter months. At our fortnightly meetings, members talked about the progress of our respective baby plants with growing enthusiasm while swopping all sorts of nurseryman advice at the end of the evening.

It was decided that the plant sale would take place at the monthly Farmer's

Market in the first week of November and as the date drew closer preparations started in earnest.

Days before the agreed Saturday market, we seriously debated whether our precious bounty would be safe standing in the market precinct overnight - not sure whether the people of Hoedspruit are such keen gardeners that they would grab a plant when leaving the restaurants nearby. We even considered having a sleepover and braai on the premises on the Friday night while guarding our treasured individually nurtured plants but luckily one of our members agreed to check in on the precious bounty at intervals right through the night.

On the Friday afternoon before the sale, members started arriving with bakkie loads of plants to our allotted site at the Market precinct. As luck would have

it, it was a scorching hot afternoon and by mid-afternoon, the plants were starting to wilt sadly in the fierce sun. A Rotarian always has a plan and twice in the course of the afternoon, all the plants were carefully hand-watered to prevent them from wilting and dying.

All the above JUST to see the heavens open at 9 pm to soak them thoroughly in order to be lush and ready for the sale in the morning. Sales were brisk from the very start and by mid-morning, almost half the plants were sold. We were all so excited.

One Rotary member generously donated a valuable cycad which was auctioned after some highly competitive bidding.

At the end of the day, the last few plants were sold to a local nursery and to our delight a handsome amount was raised for us to pursue further projects.

The Rotary Club of Hoedspruit has initiated and completed several projects which have greatly impacted the lives of many people in and around Hoedspruit in the last 5 years. However, to launch and complete projects requires funding and the cancellation of our main fundraiser for the last couple of years, the Rotary Hoedspruit K2C Cycle Tour as a result of the Covid pandemic and lockdown was considerably depleting our reserves. Having this new intake of funds will give us the ability to continue our aim of serving the community.

Rotary would like to thank the people of Hoedspruit for so enthusiastically embracing our new project which will certainly become one of our successful annual events. We plan to have the next plant sale in the first week of October 2022 so watch this space.



Rotarians Wendy, Tebogo and Steve
Photo supplied

I am from Hoedspruit and proud of it !

Antje Mouton

21 RULES OF HOEDSPRUIT:

1. Pull your droopy pants up. You look like an idiot.
2. Turn your cap to the front, your head isn't crooked. When you sit down to eat, take it off. It's called manners.
3. Let's get this straight; it's called a 'dirt road.' No matter how slowly you drive, you're going to get dust on your Mercedes. Drive it or get out of the way.
4. So you have a R950,000 car. We're impressed. The farmers here have R4,5 million farm equipment that's only used 3 weeks a year.
5. So every person in Hoedspruit waves. It's called being friendly. Try to understand the concept.
6. If your cell phone rings while you're on a game drive, we WILL shoot it out of your hand. You'd better hope you don't have it up to your ear at the time (see rule #9).
7. We eat meat and potatoes here. However, the restaurants cater for all diets; lamb for vegetarians, chicken for vegans and if you want sushi, you can get it at Fat Franks - it's called biltong.
8. Telling someone that they drink like a girl is considered a compliment.
9. Oh yes, most people in Hoedspruit carry a gun on their person; in the car, in the bakkie, on the tractor, on the game drive vehicle, in the house, in the shop, in the bar and in PostNet. You get the picture?

10. We open doors for women. That is applied to all women, regardless of age.
11. Daytime temperatures under 35°C are considered cold.
12. Winter is on the last Wednesday of June.
13. You bring 'coke' into my house, it had better be brown, wet and served over ice.
14. You bring 'Mary Jane' into my house, she'd better be cute, know how to shoot, drive a bakkie, and have long hair.
15. Rugby is a religion here. Don't think you'll impress any of the ladies at Sleepers by telling them you're a soccer player unless you want one of them to kick your overpaid, egotistical, scrawny butt down the stairs and into the car park.
16. Yes, we have a golf course. But don't hit the water hazards - it scares the fish.
17. Turn down that blasted car stereo! That thumpy-thump junk isn't music any way. And we don't want to hear it anymore than we want to see your boxers. Refer back to rule #1.
18. We know it's cute when the warthogs go into Pick 'n Pay, or the 'likkewaan' drinks water at the Great Outdoors, but leave them alone - they will hurt you.
19. Horses have right-of-way at the KFC drive-through.
20. We don't have or need Woolworths, DisChem or Clicks. You moved here from the city for a small town life, not to bring the goddamn city to paradise. Get over it. Support the local businesses.
21. If you don't like the rules, the R40 goes north and south, the R527 goes west. **Pick one. Good-bye!**

Book review ...Tracks & Signs

David Batzofin

Mammals of Southern Africa and their Tracks & Signs Expanded and revised 2nd edition

by Lee Gutteridge and Louis Liebenberg.

Published by Jacana Media

This expanded and revised edition is a must-have update. The major change is that the track and spoor il-

lustrations are as close to actual size as you are going to get.

Updated species information and photographs enable this field guide to serve as an ID guide to the mammals of Southern Africa as full-colour photographs of each animal are included.

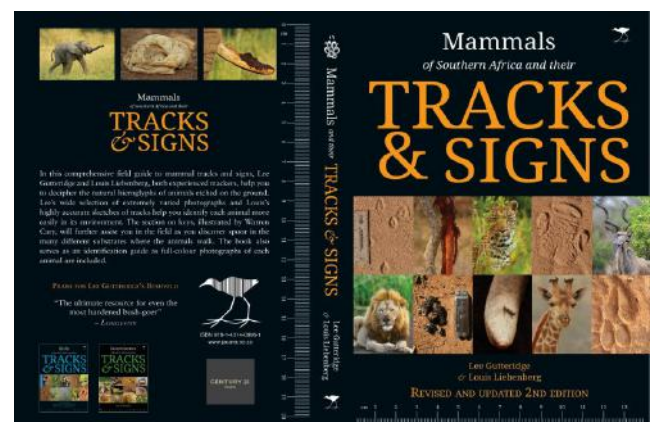
By making use of this very comprehensive guide, anyone who applies themselves can begin to decipher

these natural hieroglyphs etched on the ground. Louis Liebenberg's highly accurate sketches of animal tracks show all the details one would find in a perfect example of the spoor. This combined with a wide selection of extremely varied photographs, explain the difficult truth of the matter, and represent what you are most likely to see in the many different substrates

where the animals walk.

Authors Lee Gutteridge and Louis Liebenberg are both highly experienced and internationally recognized for the work that they have done in this field.

This book will make a great end-of-year gift for those who enjoy this discipline. By the same token, those who are looking to expand their knowledge when in the bush will surely use it.



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Timbavati Traverse Ultra Marathon



The athletes and spectators supporting Tshepo Pebane during the Timbavati Traverse Ultra Marathon

Hayley Cooper

Tshepo Pebane is from Green Valley, Acornhoek. He works at Pick n Pay in Hoedspruit.

Running became an outlet for him when he was going through some mental health issues. It started off as innocent past time, but because he is a super competitive individual, it grew into a goal of him wanting to dominate the sport.

There are no running clubs where Tshepo lives, so currently he is training and running alone. He used to run with friends, but they did not enjoy running with him as they could not keep up!

The chance of running in the Timbavati Traverse both shocked and surprised him. Luckily his race entry was sponsored. He was excited about the opportunity to test himself, because he had never run an ultra distance before. The furthest

distance that Tshepo had run was only 28km and now he was about to face the Timbavati Traverse Ultra Marathon of 45km!

The pre-race briefing was very informative, but Tshepo had no time to get to enjoy the festivities or socialize as he was mentally preparing myself for the next day of competition.

"I was ready and very excited", said Tshepo. "Even though it wasn't a race I couldn't stop preparing myself, as if it was.

My morning preparation was geared towards that with meditation, breathing exercises and some skipping. Breathing exercises is the most crucial part of my preparation. This is how I prepare for all of my races."

"I am often asked what it is that I enjoy most about running, and it is the high after the run and the mental clarity that it gives me". He continued, "... a highlight was coming across a lion while

running and as it was my first sighting of this predator - I'm glad it happened while I was doing something that I thoroughly enjoy!"

After the event, there was a show and presentation with the K9 dogs and the anti-poaching team. It was very entertaining, and there were some good laughs and some eye-opening moments as the team explained to onlookers what

they did and how they operated.

Tshepo Pebane is an inspiration to all, and clearly is very passionate about running. His advice to budding runners is to "... be consistent. If you want to maintain your level of fitness and eventually improve, you'll have to have a sustainable training program that allows you to train almost every day".

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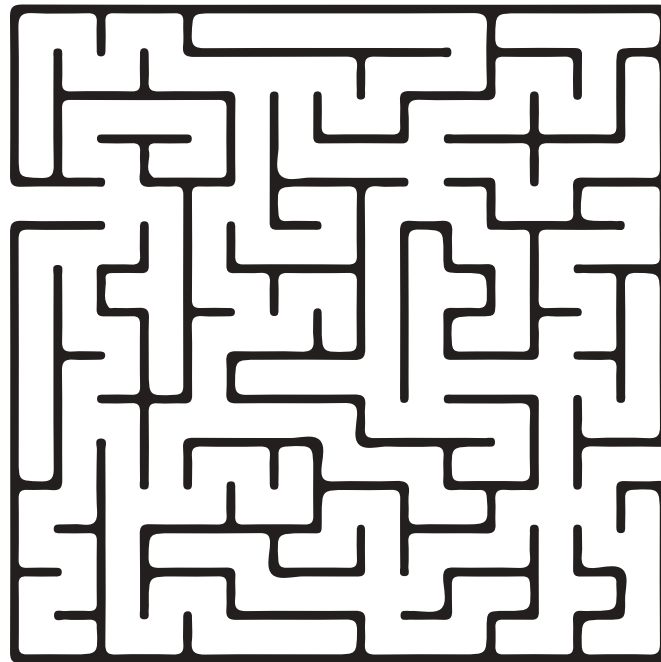
HLOKOMELA

Junior FGASA & Kids In The Wild

colour me in

It's the most wonderful time of year!

So, what better way to celebrate Christmas with a whole lot of Christmas games and colouring in!



Q: Did Rudolph go to public school?
A: Nope – he was elf-taught.



1. What do you call an old snowman?

2. When does Christmas come before Easter?

3. What does December have that no other month has?

4. Where do snowmen go to dance?

5. What kind of candle burns longer, a red candle or a green candle?

Make-a-Word

How many words can you make from:
Christmas

Example: Car

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



colour me in



If you love the wilderness, and are passionate about conservation, then we have the perfect thing for you. **FGASA Junior** in partnership with **Kids In The Wild** bring you the new and improved Pangolin Series that will be launching in 2022. **The Pangolin Series** will include an interactive platform for kids to reconnect with nature and the incredible wilderness that surrounds us on a daily basis. We will be offering online live lectures as well as on-demand courses that will encompass many different modules and will also include games, quizzes, homework and so much more.

www.fgasa.co.za | +27 (0) 11 886 8245 | membership@fgasa.org.za | www.kidsinthewild.co.za | +27 (0) 66 485 1956 | info@kidsinthewild.co.za

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