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HOEDSPRUIT NEWS



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The paper that encourages dreams, supports people and builds the community!

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Selfless commitment to flying high for conservation



Steve McCurrach

The Bateleurs is a 20+ year old 'not-for-profit' registered NGO, with an unblemished record of having provided hundreds of missions (flights) in

meaningful and useful aerial support to SA conservation and the environment.

The preservation of the environment and conservation routinely requires the aerial perspective on matters, whether to search for

radio-collared wildlife, or to survey, to assess, to monitor, educate, or to patrol and to protect. This is where the organization steps in. Seldom do environmentalists and conservationists have access to aircraft, and

when they do approach the air charter companies, they are unable to afford charter rates and this is where The Bateleurs get involved.

The Bateleurs consists of a Board of volunteer Directors, two staff and 200+

volunteer pilots, making up what is fondly referred to as an Environmental Air Force. The company financials are independently audited annually, and all missions (flights) are only conducted after review by the Board –

who are a group of highly respected business and conservation people. Every flight is assessed for its conformity; namely, the missions being non-profit, not for the benefit ...

Cont. on Page 2

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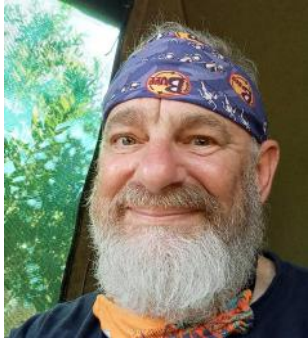
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The holidays are over ...



From the editor

With January 2022 almost a thing of the past, can we finally say goodbye to 2021 and all that it did or did not deliver? At this time of year, most of

us are still in the honeymoon phase of a New Year, hoping that the months ahead will bring about the new normal that we have all been seeking for the last 19 months. The virus finally caught up with me in December, but although I tested positive, the following day I tested negative. Having had no symptoms, I would not have been any the wiser to the fact that I was positive, had it not been for an elective procedure that required the test. With no symptoms before or after, I can count myself lucky.

January also sees Kruger-

2Canyon News take up residence in our new offices at The Farmery in Zandspruit - a fantastic base. Hoedspruit Info will also be sharing that space. The commercial development is an exciting addition to the The Farm House restaurant area, and includes other businesses and organisations, some of which are FGASA, Thorneybush and Africa Geographic. We wish all concerned the very best for 2022.

Forget Snakes on a Plane ... summer sees an increase in snake activity with many residents taking to Facebook groups, to either ask for the

identification of certain species or the names of those who are qualified to catch and remove them (the snakes and not the residents!). If you have an issue with serpents, please try to get them relocated rather than killing them. There are several 'catch and release' experts in Hoedspruit that will willingly and safely remove these unwanted intruders.

We here at Kruger2Canyon News are looking forward to a year of more interaction and involvement with the community, as well as businesses, that will continue to support this community newspaper.

The feedback that we have received to date has been great, but we have not been able to please all of the people all of the time. And if you were one of the latter, we would certainly encourage you to write to the paper so that we can include your comments, good, bad and even indifferent in our 'Letters to the Editor' column. We can only take the paper from strength to strength with the support of the community as a whole.

Let us not forget that February is the month of love, and that Valentine's Day is only 2 weeks away. I do hope that you have factored at least flowers and chocolates into your already stretched budget. With that in mind, instead of buying cards and gifts bought from a store, can we return to the original premise of this special day, by exchanging hand-made cards and gifts?

Until the next time, stay safe and stay healthy.

David Batzofin

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor – 22 December 2021



Dear Editor

A word of CAUTION if you are travelling on the R40 approaching the T junction with the R531 the left-hand lane as you come around the bend is disintegrating badly. Please drive carefully. The road has been in a constant state of disrepair for so long that I feel that your newspaper should carry a monthly road report. Vince

Ed: Vince, thanks for the suggestion, we will look into that.



To the editor

If the municipality cannot, or will not, fix the potholes correctly could they at least mark them with brightly coloured spray paint? The actual pothole could be circled in red and a huge white arrow pointing to the pothole could warn motorists of the imminent danger.

Dear Editor

Can anyone write and contribute to your paper?

Ed: By all means, we have always welcomed contributions to the paper. In fact we encourage it – we may edit the contributions but if it's newsworthy and relevant then we welcome all contributions.

Anon



Dear Editor

Is there any way that my Brother in the US can get your paper every month? He has been here many times and would love to keep "up-to-date" with the happenings here. Alex

Ed: Hi Alex – of course he can but it will be better as

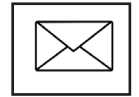
soon as our new website is up and running. We will be advising everyone about that very soon!

Dear Editor

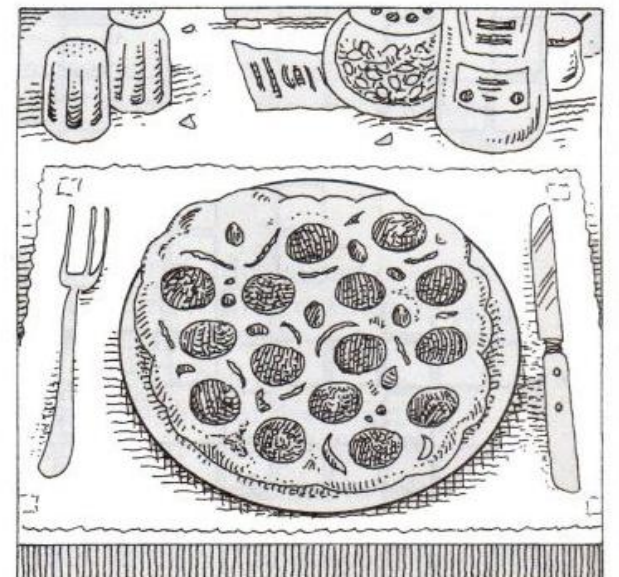
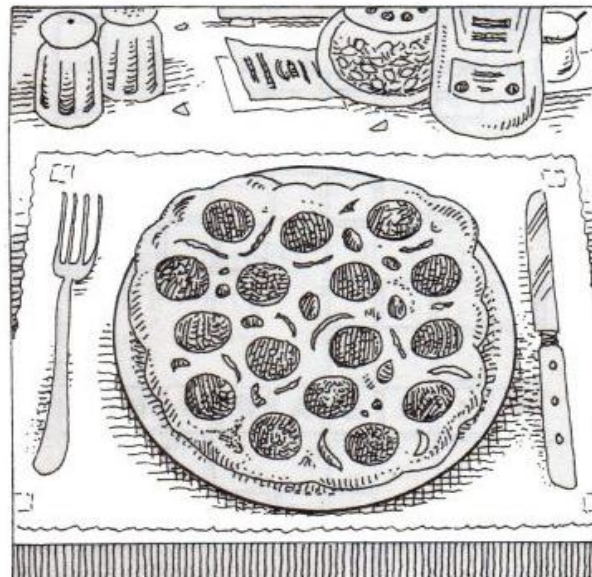
I would like to thank K2C News on the inclusion of the kid's wildlife page – my youngsters cannot wait to do the puzzles and find

out about the featured animals. It's so important for kids to get that chance to participate in things like this. Thank you.

Di



See if you can find the eight differences.



Selfless commitment to flying high for conservation

Cont. from page 1

Every flight is assessed for its conformity; namely, the missions being non-profit, not for the benefit of any commercial enterprise, making sure that any conservation protocols and permits are adhered to, and above all, that the effort is directly beneficial to Southern African conservation and the environment.

This 'environmental air force' will support any qualifying conservation applicant with their aviation needs at no cost to the applicant

Of all the supporters, it is the pilots who make the biggest sacrifice. They are reimbursed for their

fuel burn only and the remaining (approximately 75%) of the costs of aircraft operation is carried by them. This sacrifice is hugely appreciated by The Bateleurs and their supporters.

It is unbelievably impressive that the vast majority of the donors have approached The Bateleurs, and not the other way around. This is largely because their Corporate Social Investment does not end up nourishing the outstretched hand of Africa in some unaccountable way. With The Bateleurs, their contribution remains very green, impeccably managed and every activity recorded and accounted for.

More than anything, it is



The Bateleur pilots at work

Images supplied

that for every Rand that is received, this Rand is turned into R4 going towards conservation efforts. How do they do this you may ask. Ingeniously because the pilots are the

biggest contributors, The Bateleurs use the financial support of their benefactors to offset only the pilot's fuel burn. However, the fuel represents only a quarter of the average run-

ning cost of the aircraft. By encouraging the pilots with fuel support, coupled with their (the pilot's) willingness to give up the balance for the greater good, they take vacation leave or they 'down tools' if self-employed, to make their very generous and committed contributions; and this is how every R1 in financial support is converted into R4 value in aerial services in conservation.

The organisation is exceptionally well respected in the environmental and conservation world, and has a 23+ years record of an impeccable and free delivery of more than 100 missions flown per annum - making this a fantastic 'win-win' for every-

one involved.

The pilots love to fly with a purpose and to giving up something for the 'greater good', the conservationist is thus "empowered" to do their good work and then lastly, the corporate sponsor has a tax-deductible satisfaction of involvement, without them having to do any hard work - it's a perfect equation.

Perhaps the only reason that The Bateleurs are not universally renowned within the environmental arenas, is that they do not use donor funding to 'promote' themselves, and hence the incredible work they do, always remains out of the limelight.

Trophy hunting quotas: the small end of massive wildlife destruction

Don Pinnock,

Environmental Journalist

Last month, with little publicity, the Department of Environment gave the public 30 days to object or comment on its proposed hunting and export quotas for elephant, black rhino and leopard hunting trophies. It turns out to be the mere tip of a hunting iceberg.

Proposals to licence the hunting of 150 elephants, 10 black rhinos and 10 leopards have raised objections from environmental NGOs who slammed the Environment Department (DFFE) for expecting public comment based on a two-page notice with no supporting information.

Elephants are listed by the IUCN Red Data Book as endangered, black rhinos as critically endangered and leopards as vulnerable.

"The Draft Quota," says the EMS Foundation, "contains no information about how the quotas have been determined, other than stating the quotas for leopard and black rhino are proposed 'as per the recommendations of the Scientific Authority'. [It] cannot be finalized and any final decision made in the absence of providing the public with the information on which the proposed quotas are based, is flawed."

The call for public discussion on the hunting quotas of three iconic species ignores the recommendations of a High-Level Panel policy paper, which is currently under review on the welfare and use of those three species as well as lions. Setting quotas before the High-Level Panel process is finalized, not only pre-empts, but undermines the ultimate recommendations of DFFE's own Draft Policy position.

"The quotas are arbitrary and not rationally connected to the information before the Department," said Michele Pickover of EMS.

Humane Society International-Africa and EMS have called on the DFFE to withdraw the draft quota until it can put in place a procedurally fair process, which includes publication of all the scientific and policy information based on which the



"I see a target on my forehead"
Image supplied

quotas were determined.

The quota, says EMS, appears to have been determined without taking relevant information into account, and is "irrational and arbitrary." The setting of trophy hunting quotas for leopard, black rhino or elephant is therefore unsupported. The NGO's also noted several fundamental procedural and legal flaws in the process for proposing the quotas.

Here's the puzzle. The proposed quotas were specifically set for the calendar year 2021, and public inputs still have to be assessed. But throughout 2021 elephants were extensively being hunted. So we're effectively talking about quotas that were set in, at best, December, for December 2021. Would any decision taken therefore be retrospective to regularise hunts that have already taken place, or are the quotas going to be rolled forward into 2022?

This is also a problem for hunters. Stewart Dorrington of Custodians of Professional Hunting and Conservation - South Africa, stated that the problem his organisation had with the quota process was the timing. It was too late in 2021 and it's illegal to market a leopard hunt without a permit so there's no way to market beforehand. This made it

difficult to find clients and match them to a leopard at such short notice.

The proposed quotas, however, are small windows into a vast business of wildlife destruction which is generally unknown to the public.

Each year professional hunters have to submit kill statistics to provincial departments which are then collated by DFFE. This excludes hunting for the pot, biltong and, of course, poaching. It also, for some reason, excludes certain enclosed properties.

The Professional Hunters Association of SA (PHASA) submits the statistics to the Department which doesn't publish them. They are, however, available on request if you're persistent enough.

"These species, because they are the most charismatic, rare and sought after by trophy hunters, means that the issuing of hunting permits for them could lead to market speculation, creating the conditions for extinction."

Those for 2020 were not available, but hunt stats from 2016 to 2019 tell a startling story. During those years 190,468 wild creatures were 'bagged' as trophies, consisting of 171,748 wild mammals, 15,233

birds, 742 reptiles and 2,745 non-indigenous animals. That's 130 a day. Add meat hunting plus poaching and the number could be double that, but these aren't listed anywhere.

Impala top the animal list, closely followed by wart-hogs, kudu and zebra (pretty mats?). Turtle doves, speckled doves, laughing doves and ring-necked pigeons are the most hunted birds (are they mounted above the fireplace or just eaten?). Then there are some extremely odd trophies, such as snakes, llamas, mouflon sheep and emus. Of concern are several endangered species, some critically, including those for which DFFE proposes to provide quotas.

The EMS Foundation, which put in a 51-page objection to the rhino, elephant and leopard quotas, provides a grisly list of animal part 'mementoes' for which export licences were requested. For leopards, these included, floating bones(?), rug mounts, skull shields and claws. For elephants it was more varied: scapula bowl, leather skin panels, mounted tails, ears, footstools, part or whole trunks, foot umbrella, blood plasma, bagpipes(?), bracelets, skin duffle bags, feet ice buckets, ivory keys, a penis, teeth, belts and, of course, tusks and mounted

heads.

Setting hunting quotas for rhinos risks an international perception problem, says the EMS report. "While the illegal hunting of rhino continues unabated, men and woman are risking their lives trying to protect this species. It will be embarrassing to try and persuade an international audience to fund emergency rhino protection funding, while at the same time promoting the legal killing of rhino on private land."

Hunting licences are issued by the various provinces and are subject to certain restrictions and seasons. But when DFFE officials sit around a table to discuss the public inputs on the hunting of black rhino, leopards and elephants, there will necessarily be different criteria.

Elephant populations have crashed throughout Africa, black rhinos have hovered on the brink of extinction for many years and there's no formal census and inadequate information on leopards, so it's not known what impact hunting will have on their future. They are all in decline, facing increasingly disappearing and fragmented habitats.

Hunting also poses problems of genetic weakening, says HSI-Africa. "Hunters generally target the biggest and strongest males,

meaning that trophy hunting removes these animals from the breeding pool, leaving smaller or weaker animals for mate selection."

Black rhinos are in even greater danger says the NGO. The species declined by 85% between 1973 - 2017. In 1960, there were an estimated 100,000 black rhinos; by 1973, there were 37,807; and at the end of 2017, there were only 5,495. Recent census figures for Kruger National Park reveal an alarming decrease with only an estimated 268 black rhinos remaining, down from 415 in 2011.

Leopard populations are thought to be declining at around 11% a year but based on inconclusive and fundamentally inadequate information. Estimates of the size of the national population vary widely from 2,185 to 3,400.

The DFFE's proposal to set the age at which a leopard can be hunted from seven years upward is also flawed. According to HSI-Africa, "It is highly unlikely that ages can be reliably estimated by hunters, especially as rapid and rash decision-making in poor light conditions is a hallmark of leopard trophy hunting."

So if hunting elephants, leopards and rhinos will be permitted, the decisions cannot be made on the grounds of conservation. Will they be influenced by hunting organisations, gun traders, commercial game farmers, political pressure or concerns about litigation if permits are blocked?

According to HSI-Africa, even the economic argument does not stand up to scrutiny. "Trophy hunting brings in just 0.78% or less of the overall tourism spending and has only a marginal impact on employment in those countries, providing approximately 0.76% or less of overall tourism jobs. As little as 3% of trophy hunting income trickles down to local communities."

According to EMS, leopards, black rhinos and elephants are not resilient to trophy hunting because they have lower reproductive rates, more complex social organizations and their body parts are illegally traded in international criminal markets.

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Enjoy Valentine's Day with a special homemade treat

Michael Olivier

This month the Valentine recipe comes from well-known food and wine commentator Michael Olivier.

As a young aspiring chef, Michael laid a solid foundation for his career at the Cordon Bleu Cooking School in London. Over the next 30 years he had a series of high profile hospitality management posts, was the Public Relations Manager for Boschendal and ran three successful restaurants in the Cape, one of which, Parks, featured in the national top 10 restaurants.

A lifetime devoted to the promotion and appreciation of the South African wine and food industry has earned him

many accolades, including the Lannice Snyman Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2013 Eat Out Awards.

Michael is a family man, author (5 books) and broadcaster and he continues to be prolific, informative and entertaining on his wine and food website, michaelolivier.co.za

Michael's recipe for us this month is Ceviche with Granadilla Dressing (Serves 2)

Ceviche

Ceviche is a dish of Peruvian Origin, an idea possibly brought there by Japanese immigrants and with the help of the Spanish who took limes to South America. Some believe it is a dish of Arab origins.

What you'll need

4 thin slices of fresh white fish, tuna, salmon or trout
1 ripe granadilla

For garnish

Bird's Eye Chili
The cheek of one lime
Curly parsley

Dress it up

1 ripe granadilla
125ml Extra virgin Olive Oil
45ml Sherry Vinegar, Apple Cider Vinegar or Lime Juice
2 tsp Honey, we use Peel's
1 tsp smooth Dijon Mustard
Sea salt, like Maldon Salt, and freshly ground black pepper

What you'll do

Chill 2 serving plates
Make the dressing
In a small jam jar, put the dressing ingredients. Close the lid and shake well.
Place on each plate, two slices of fish. Pour over the dressing and allow to marinate for as long as you desire, two hours at least. Add a finely sliced chilli and parsley, and the lime cheek. Add a grind of black pepper and a pinch of Maldon Salt. Serve with a slice or two of a crusty baguette and a wonderful glass of white wine.



Sit back and enjoy the delicious lime and granadilla flavours - Happy Valentines Day !
Images supplied by Michael

WIN a fantastic Valentine's Day celebration dinner at The Farm House.

Lifetsyle correspondant

Shrouded in mystery, both Valentine's Day and the story of its patron saint, Saint Valentine of Rome, continue to baffle those who have tried to decipher the essence of this celebration over the centuries. February has long been seen as the month of love, and Valentine's Day as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. Some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle

of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death. He was martyred on February 14 in AD 269.

The Feast of Saint Valentine, also known as Saint Valentine's Day, was established by Pope Gelasius I in AD 496, to be celebrated on February 14 in honour of the Christian martyr. Yet others claim that the Christian church may have decided to place St. Valentine's feast day in the middle of February to counteract the pagan celebration of

Lupercalia. Celebrated at the ides of February, Lupercalia was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture.

By the middle of the 18th century, it was common for friends and lovers of all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes. However, by 1900 printed cards became the norm rather than written letters, and these cards made it an easy way for people to express their emotions at a time when commu-

nication of this sort was frowned upon.

In modern times, it is Cupid that is often portrayed as the 'face' of Valentine's Day. Appearing on cards and associated merchandise, this naked cherub is depicted as launching arrows of love and affection at unsuspecting lovers.

In view of this celebration, Kruger2Canyon News approached The Farm House for an 'offering' for a lucky reader to celebrate this romantic day in style. As a result The Farm House is

giving away a dinner for two on Valentine's Day to the value of R750.00!

To have a chance of winning this wonderful dinner, all you have to do is email the words 'Valentine at The Farm House' together with a short sentence as to why you should win the voucher. Please include your contact phone number (this is essential) and email to editor@kruger2canyon.co.za before the 8th of February, and the chosen winner will be contacted directly.

For everyone out there,

make certain that you do not forget the chocolates, flowers and wonderful dinners – treasure the love and togetherness in celebrating the day.

Happy Valentine's day!



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KRUGER2CANYON NEWS

Happy Valentine's
WIN a dinner

The Farm House

K2C Biosphere to host the Annual Catchment Based Indaba on Ecological Infrastructure 2022



Zanele Shezi, coordinator of the Tugela Living catchments project, handing the calabash to Mbali Mashele from Kruger2Canyons Biosphere

Image supplied

Mbali Mashele,
Living Catchments Project Manager

SANBI, together with partners, support and host an annual National Catchment Indaba on Ecological Infrastructure implemented through the SANBI Living Catchments Project. The Living Catchments Project is funded by the Department of Science and Innovation through the Water Research Commission, as part of the implementation of the Water Research Development and Innovation Roadmap.

The particular focus of the project is geared towards enhancing research, development, and innovation for socio-economic impact, through engaging communities of practice in key catchments associated with strategic water source areas.

The Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region together with partners Conservation South Africa (CSA), Association for Water

and Rural Development (AWARD), and Institute for Developmental Learning & Environmental Sustainability (IDLES), are amongst the four catchment convenors in the country that implement these processes on the ground. This project aims to continue supporting existing collaborative platforms at the catchment level to integrate research, planning, and implementation. Furthermore, it aims to ensure that the lessons from collaborations strengthen water governance at a catchment level.

The 2021 Catchment Based Indaba on Ecological Infrastructure was hosted by Thukela Catchment in KZN from the 2nd to the 4th of November 2021. The event was attended by delegates from government, academia, research institutions, and civil society institutions. The experience of participating and engaging in the Indaba was intriguing, as was learning about how the people,

dynamics, processes, and culture of the uThukela catchment area, relate to water security. What was highlighted from this experience, was the importance of the linking of the Ecological infrastructure, Built infrastructure, and Rural and Development practitioners, with the communities in these spaces, which further has the potential to enhance capacity across the science-policy-implementation interface.

During the Closing Ceremony at the Didima Resort in KZN, the uThukela Catchment Convenors handed over the "Living Catchments Calabash" to Mbali Mashele in her capacity as the Olifants Living Catchments Project Manager. Handing over the "Living Catchment Calabash" symbolizes the new responsibilities passed on from one catchment convenor to the next, to host the subsequent Catchment Based Indaba on Ecological Infrastructure.

BaDinkwanyane Tourism Launch

Cindy Koen, FrFr Project Manager

Creating a sense of pride for one's home is a critical factor of community development. Rural-based communities have so many struggles that they do not always get to witness the beauty of their natural resources.

The BaDinkwanyane Tourism Project was born out of consultation with the people of Phiring as part of the Dinkwanyane Water Smart Project. The community felt that the addition of tourism to the area would be a valuable asset to the future development of the region. Creating community awareness of what a tourism project would entail was discussed in detail, as well as the hard work required to set it up. The long-term view was and is for the benefits that the community would reap. And so a development strategy was created.

Two beautiful sites were identified and prepared for tourists. The project partners (Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region, Conservation South Africa, and Hoedspruit Hub), felt it was of utmost importance for the community to experience the tourism sites themselves, before the greater public was invited to come along.

The BaDinkwanyane

Tourism Association firstly undertook to thank the Chief, community, project partners, and the funder. Once that was completed, numerous people from the community, project partners, and a representative from the Government of Flanders, set out as honoured guests to experience the newly prepared hidden gems.

At the first site, Sekweneng, the Chief and the Flanders representative 'cut' the ribbon for the official launch. Sekweneng boasts the magnificent perennial Tufa waterfall. Standing below the cascading crystal clear water, the aroma of damp soil filled the air as the guests absorbed the splendour of the waterfall, dotted as it was with ferns, moss and other foliage that glistened in the spray from the tumbling water.

The next site, Sethunyeng, required a bit more walking to reach, but the treasure at the end made the trek worthwhile. Entering the forest area, the group found themselves surrounded by magnificent riverine trees. As the path meandered through the undergrowth, they discovered a wealth of flora as well as animal tracks; witness to the fact that there was indigenous wildlife present. Rounding a bend they found themselves once again in the pres-

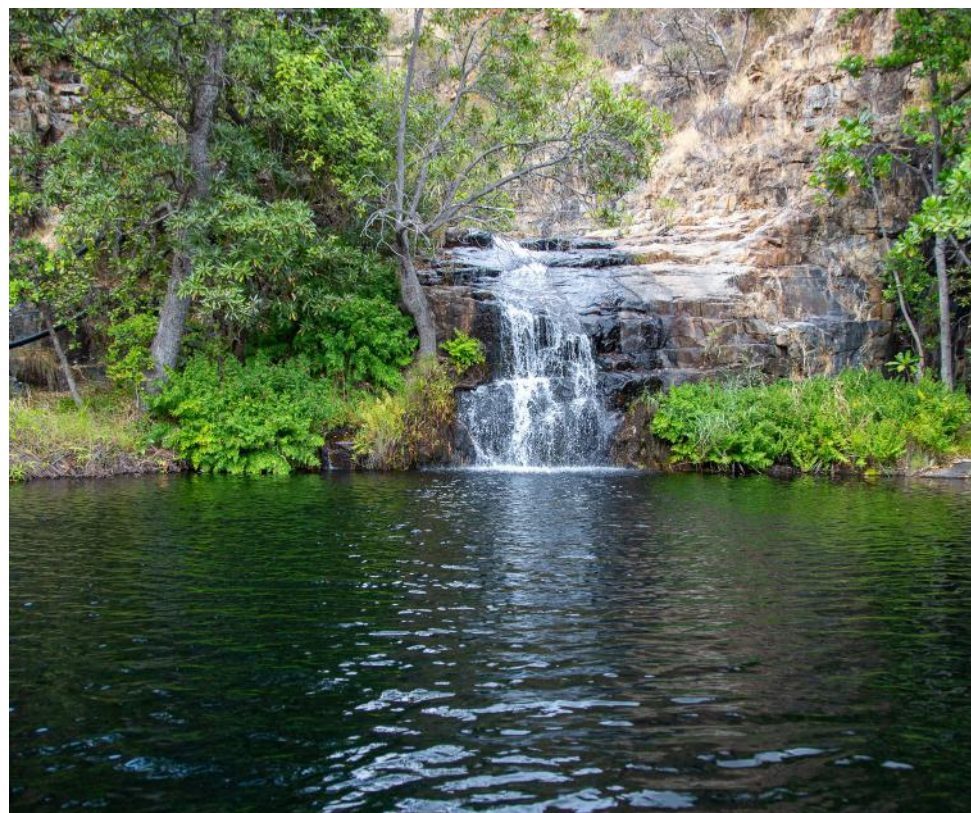
ence of yet more waterfalls and streams. Although the guests wanted to stop and take in the splendour of their surroundings, the guide kept them moving and motivated this by promising an even more spectacular sight that lay ahead. True to his word, a moderately rocky section led to the foot of 'Gun Rock'; a monolithic stone outcrop surrounded by a series of waterfalls. It was here that the participants were finally able to lose themselves in the spectacular vistas, and were able to explore the pools and waterfalls, and the pristine beauty of the site.

On their return, the adventurers were treated to a traditional meal and entertainment with songs and local games. The entire trip was awe-inspiring and allowed the group to reconnect with nature, absorbing its magnificent power and leaving them re-vitalised.

To experience this for yourself, please make a booking by calling the **BaDinkwanyane Tourism Office on 063 533 9794**. You will not be disappointed.

Adventurers, project partners, honoured guests, Flanders Government representatives and community partners enjoying the splendour of the trail.

Image supplied



Ensuring the survival of the species – skulduggery or just very clever?



Red Chested Cuckoo
Image: Tony Dodds



Green Woodhoopoe
(above)
Image: John Edwards



Mallard
(left)
Image: Tom Ennis

Mike Meidlinger

Having survived another festive season, with the auspicious optimism that a new year brings, we welcome the flush of vibrancy the young 2022 has to offer. In terms of birding, there is no rest for the wicked, as breeding season is now in full swing, the rains are upon us, and life is exploding from every angle.

For many birds, parenthood is the order of the day at the moment, whilst in general, there are a number of strategies birds have evolved to raise their young. The range of aspects needed to be successful is almost limitless. From the types of chicks birds produce, to the number of young they have. From the amount of effort they invest as parents, to the lengths they go to defend their young. Also the onerous duties of defending

a territory that is needed to support a growing family, are all just a few pitfalls parent birds overcome.

Camouflaged patterns such as those spray-painted on eggs by glands, those made by sticks and leaves glued to nests using spider webbing or that camouflage naturally possessed by some chicks, all aim to hide precious cargo in plain sight. This strategy, of cryptic defence, is used by almost all species in some context or to some extent. Alongside this, adults will often actively defend their young with their lives if necessary when all other defences fail.

Some species get help from a whole team of other flock members such as the Green Woodhoopoe, Arrow-marked Babbler and some Tit species, which receive help from related individuals such as past offspring. Helmetshrikes on

the other hand like White-crested and Retz's, are all aided by unrelated younger individuals. These allopathic assistants are fully committed in "learning to parent" by helping the mating pair raise a family.

For many seed-eating passerines such as Waxbills, Buntings, Sparrows and Weavers, a grain rich diet is changed almost completely in some cases. These normally strict vegetarians take full advantage of the life that summer brings. They augment their and their chick's diets with soft easily digested material, such as insects, which are richer in certain proteins than grass seeds. This offers growing chicks an added benefit of some high-octane fuel for rapid growth and independence.

Some birds like the infamous Cuckoos and their lesser-known kin, the Hon-

eyguides and the Viduines, have an outsourcing policy. These families of brood parasites are locked in an ever-escalating battle with a single, or number, of host species. These hosts are tricked by their own biology, where they are unknowingly employed to raise chicks on the parasites behalf.

Each of these families has their own method of ensuring the success of the chicks. Cuckoos remove host eggs by rolling them out the nest. Honeyguides use a hooked bill to stab chicks to death and crack eggs. The Viduines, Indigobirds and Whydahs, are the most harmonious, and their parasite chicks fool host parents at first with a unique mouth pattern. They then grow up in harmony with the hosts as a stepsibling of sorts.

This persistent battle between parasite and host has even reached the dizzy-

ing depths of mathematics! Host adults count to ensure their clutch size remains constant while parasites, in retaliation, will thus remove one host egg for each of theirs that they lay in a nest. This limits the possibility of discovery of the already 'custom-painted egg' or eggs that match the hosts. Inexperienced birds make mistakes, the well versed and adaptable ones pass on their genes. Yet another small example of how long this evolutionary skirmish has been taking place for, is the story of the Cuculus Cuckoos. Species such as Red-chested and African Cuckoos have grey plumage and sharp pointed wings. When swooping in between trees this can easily mimic the shape of a hawk. Small birds are therefore more likely avoid possible predators and this stops the Cuckoo being harassed by small

songbirds and other potential victims while laying their eggs.

With the bounty of summer, comes its fair share of threats in due course. Despite nobody being safe, birds that have precocial young, like water birds or terrestrial species, suffer mightily from opportunistic predators. As a response these birds tend to lay a larger number of eggs than altricial nesters, this then compensates for the fact that some, if not many, will be lost along the path to adulthood.

These are but a few small tactical adaptations birds have employed, both anatomically and behaviourally, in the effort to reproduce and protect their offspring. Nonetheless, all these examples above, show that when it comes to parenting, birds are fully committed. In most cases each has their own unique blend of strategies, at a time when food and nesting habitat is at its prime.

Look out this month for active nests, fledglings and juveniles of some of the familiar or garden birds around you.

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Plant of the month – The Wild Foxglove – *Ceratotheca triloba*



Wild Foxglove

Photo supplied

Michael Anderson,
EcoTraining Instructor

Do not confuse this plant with the European foxglove, of the scientific name *Digitalis purpurea* which grows with much thicker bunches of flowers. This native Wild Foxglove is

closer related to Sesame. It has lovely mauve flowers, which depending on the genetic variations or the quality of the soil, may sometimes appear white or purple. It can grow up to one and a half metres tall and this is particularly striking when they are growing

in a thick bunch. They tend to grow far taller than most of the surrounding grass vegetation, and that helps them to catch the eye of both the insects that use them as a food source, or we as humans, who enjoy their beauty. It grows especially abundantly in the

early and middle part of the summer and can, particularly on roadsides, be very spectacular!

They like to grow in sandy, usually disturbed soils and are a huge attraction to pollinating insects because of the bright and contrasting colours on their

'landing strip'. The landing strip refers to the bottom of the bell-like flower which faces outwards, and allows insects to land on, and climb up and into the flowers to find that nectar. It is especially favoured by bees and bumblebees, which see in the ultraviolet spectrum and so the contrasting colours attract them. Some species of spiders also use them as ambush sites, especially the crab spider. These spiders can mimic the colours of the flowers they inhabit, and wait patiently for their meal to alight on the flower unaware of what awaits.

It is not only useful for the pollinators looking for nectar, but humans can also use it for sustenance. When eaten raw, the leaves are rather bitter and unpalatable, but once cooked up or boiled, the leaves lose that bitter flavour and are used to bulk up relishes and stews. It is not highly nutritious and is generally only used when there is nothing else to eat, and it is picked and dried to keep for lean times. This is especially common in remote and rural areas,

where people do not have access to supermarkets or shops.

Though more research is necessary on this matter, some interesting chemicals have been isolated from this plant that may help in the fight against cancer. These are known as anthraquinones. These anthraquinones are remarkably like those chemicals found in the treatment of breast and prostate cancer, and so there is hope that these may be of some use medicinally. Apart from that, it has many traditional remedial uses as well.

A tea can be made from the leaves that could aid in several women's reproductive issues, and help regulate menstruation, and a decoction of the roots is said to help lower blood pressure. Again, these are traditional uses and not necessarily tested and proven scientifically.

Be sure to be on the lookout for these showy flowers next time you walk around the Lowveld, and stop to enjoy the display of life that surrounds them.

Pisces, the Fish - Constellation of the month

Ben Coley

Despite covering a large area of the night sky, Pisces is the faintest of the 12 zodiacal signs, containing very few bright stars. It is easy to find under dark skies however, since the constellation wraps around the prominent square shape of Pegasus, the great winged horse. This area of the sky is known as 'The Sea' since it contains many water-related constellations including Aquarius (the water carrier), Capricorn (the seat-goat) Cetus (the sea monster) Eridanus (the river) and Pisces Austrinus (the southern fish).

Pisces is represented by 2 fish tied together with a piece of cord, and according to Greek mythol-

ogy, depict Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, and her son Eros. Eros is better known to many by his Roman counterpart, Cupid, whose arrows were capable of causing uncontrollable desire in anyone shot by one.

During one of the Greek gods' great battles with the Titans, Aphrodite and Eros were confronted by the beast, Typhon. Typhon was the son of Gaia and Tartarus, and considered the most fearsome of all creatures. Accounts vary, but most agree that its human upper half reached to the skies, that his head was replaced by 100 fire-breathing dragons, and that his lower body was made up of viper curls. Typhon is also considered the father of dangerous winds and is



Eros 300 (above)
Images supplied by Celestial Events

the etymology behind the word 'typhoon'.

To escape this terrifying creature, Aphrodite and Eros changed themselves into fish and dived into the Euphrates River, binding themselves together with a rope to ensure they were not separat-

ed. Eventually, Zeus was able to kill Typhon with his lightning bolts and buried him under Mount Etna, the active volcano that still smoulders today from the imprisoned fire breathing menace.

Pisces does not contain any bright stars or deep-



Pisces 300 (right)

sky objects of interest, but the constellation marks the area of the sky where the Sun crosses the celestial equator on the vernal equinox each year around 20th March.

Ben Coley is the owner of Celestial Events SA, an

Astro-tourism company based in the Lowveld. They specialise in Night Sky Safaris (visual and telescopic tours of the African skies), Astrophotography and Astronomy training for the safari industry. Call Ben to arrange on 0795750900

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Passionate local women



Nothando Mkhombo proudly displays her giraffe picture

Roving Reporters and Alexandra Howard

Capturing memorable wildlife moments on camera is sometimes the stuff of heartbreak, hope and missed opportunities. Alexandra Howard chats to five young, local women who cut their photographic teeth in the Kruger.

Hyenas are many things: great hunters; clever like a fox; and possess some of the most confusing genitalia the animal kingdom has to offer. But what they are not noted for is their tree-climbing prowess.

Hyenas are not geared for climbing. They do not have retractable claws like leopards. That makes it easy for the agile cats to hoist freshly killed carcasses high into trees, out of reach of hungry hyenas. Imagine then, a young photographer's surprise, when she came upon a hyena jumping out a tree in Thornybush Game Reserve. It was a moment 19-year-old Nothando Mkhombo, will never forget - but sadly, a shot she missed.

You can imagine Mkhombo's regret when she thinks back to the time when she spotted that female hyena jumping down from a tree, but was too engrossed in the moment to tear her eyes away to record it on camera.

"I wanted to take that shot, but couldn't because my eyes were focusing on that!" says Mkhombo, awestruck by the scavenger's behaviour and its somewhat ou-



tré wedding tackle: a 15cm long clitoris that looks like a penis, complete with labia that resemble testicles (incidentally, hyenas give birth to cubs through their narrow clitorises). "I never knew these weird things about hyena before," says Mkhombo.

The 19-year-old photographer from Acornhoek, a sprawling village to the west of the Kruger National Park, has found so much else to

marvel over, and ever since enrolling with Wild Shots Outreach, has had plenty food for thought about conservation. A not-for-profit environmental education programme, Wild Shots Outreach uses photography to engage with young people living near the Kruger Park, who often have had little experience of wilderness areas, or access to the park while growing up.

Most of the participants,

many of whom are unemployed, have grabbed the opportunity to get to know their natural heritage. Mkhombo is no exception, and her growing love for wildlife proves infectious, as she tells me about her first sighting of a herd of elephants and how it left her speechless.

Mkhombo says her dream photograph would be of her favourite animal, the rhino - but one that hasn't been

dehorned. Since she started her training with Wild Shots Outreach in 2020, and began going on game drives in the Kruger Park and neighbouring private reserves, she has yet to see a rhino with its horn as nature intended it.

While wildlife photographers rightly prize unusual sightings and dramatic encounters, it's the details of individual animals as viewed through the camera lens, that really inspires Mkhombo. One of her favourite photographs (this time, one that didn't get away) came thanks to being close enough to zoom in on a giraffe's tail. Individual hairs and numerous scars give the hide pattern an almost abstract quality.

Mutateki Ubisi, also from Acornhoek and a fellow Wild Shots graduate, recently qualified as an animal health technician. She is trained to assist veterinarians and scientists with animal disease control, laboratory testing and treatment. Now the 29-year-old plans to pursue field guiding as a career so she can, "be in the bush full-time to take all the

photos I want". She wishes she could go back in time to her first game drive, when she was lucky enough to see Thornybush's infamous one-eyed male lion, up close. The gigantic Mapoza, with his milky blue right eye was a sight to behold, but Ubisi failed to take a photograph! Ubisi is a lot more trigger-happy these days. She keeps her camera nearby and ready to focus and shoot at all times, and says she would even resort to using her cellphone if a SLR camera wasn't at hand. "You want to capture the moment in your heart, but you want to have something you can treasure."

Ubisi, like Mkhombo with her close-up of a giraffe's tail, hopes to record the texture of an elephant's toenails. She believes detailed shots can change how we see things.

Jabulani Justine Maluleke is determined to shoot an aardvark, but the elusive ant-eaters seem bent on evading her camera.

The 33-year-old was so surprised when she saw one of these long-snouted



Mutateki Ubisi and her hyena and lion images

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snappers hunt for best shot



Justine Maluleke's rhino shot (left) and lazy lion image (below)

Cont. from page 8 ...

The 33-year-old was so surprised when she saw one of these long-snouted creatures for the first time that she completely forgot about photography. Now, a total of four all-too-brief aardvark encounters later, and the excitement burns brightly, but Justine Maluleke is no closer to getting that shot.

A junior marketing, fundraising and media relations official at the South African Wildlife College outside Hoedspruit, Maluleke finds the nocturnal animals fascinating. She remarks that few people get the opportunity to see them in the wild, never mind to photograph them.

Every now and then there are those moments in photography that steal your breath away. And so it was for Karabo Magakane while on a game drive as part of a Wild Shots Outreach advanced photography course.

She had been enjoying the early morning drive with the soft sunlight providing ideal conditions for photography, when her party chanced upon a herd of elephants feeding peacefully in thick bushveld. Suddenly, out of the corner of

her eye, Magakane spied a couple of bull elephants engaged in a lively bout of who's-your-daddy. The big males pushed and shoved each other with their tusks in aggressive bursts, and Magakane was so engrossed, that many months later she remained at a loss to do the clash justice in words – or pictures.

The 23-year-old, who is now training as a student pilot, hopes one day to combine careers in flying and photography, so she can catch her dream shots of lions, elephants and antelope, silhouetted on the Serengeti plains.

Magakane seeks to illustrate bigger stories through simple images. She photographs with her village in mind, aiming to show neighbours, friends and others what they're missing.

She believes good photographs should prompt the viewer to wonder about the story behind it. She wants to grow as a photographer, so she can bring light to conservation issues and encourage more young people and women, to pick up a camera or to get involved in wildlife related careers. Magakane is now a South African ambassador for the international "Girls Who Click" programme.



Karabo Magakane (left) and her hyena image (above)



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Queen's image of cheetah , sunning themselves Photo supplied



Karabo Magakane's elephant image (above)

Cont. from page 9...

Field guide and Wild Shots graduate, Queen Manyike, sighs when asked about the great wildlife shots that slipped through her fingers. These include timeless images of leopards lazing in tall trees after devouring their kill. She occasionally leaves her camera at home for her family to use, and so it was, that while out with guests, she missed out on recording her first sighting of elephants, swimming and playing in the water.

The 26-year-old featured in the award-winning documentary film, *Beyond the Fence*. This feature tells the story of how photography helped three Wild Shots Outreach graduates become leaders in conservation and mentors to their communities, by overcoming the metaphorical and physical fences surrounding them.

Manyike is determined to carry on breaking down barriers in her community, by involving herself in envi-

ronmental education. She hopes photography will provide a connection through which she can persuade others to look at conservation differently.

Mankiye, alongside Karabo Makagane, has also been appointed as one of 14 international ambassadors of the "Girls who Click" programme. They were selected from over 160 applicants worldwide, to help mentor teen girls interested in nature photography – a sector traditionally the domain of white men! The initiative inspires and empowers teen girls to use photography to further conservation efforts around the world.

Each of the five Wild Shots Outreach women I met see things a little differently. Their reasons for photographing are as diverse as their personal stories, but they have a common goal – to share the beauty of our natural heritage and motivate people to care about wildlife.

"We want to inspire people, especially the youth,

to get involved in conservation and ultimately help counter poaching and the illegal wildlife trade," says Maluleke.

"It's a serious problem," adds Mkhombo, yearning for the day when rhinos are no longer at risk because of the illegal trade in their horns.

This story was first published by Roving Reporters. It forms part of a series of stories arising from the

Khetha Journalism Project. Supported by USAID and developed by WWF-SA and WESSA, the training project explores the broader context of wildlife trafficking and examines ways to counter its impact in and around the Greater Kruger National Park.

Queen Manyike, Wildshots graduate



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Lowveld Academy scores a 100% pass rate for the second year in a row

Reinhold Deacon

When the matriculants of 2021 started their final year of academics, who would've thought that they would be spending the majority of their FET academic career clouded in a global pandemic? But that is what happened and they still managed to achieve a 100% pass rate!

With the release of national pass rates, on Friday 21 January 2022, Lowveld Academy could finally see the outcome of the efforts put in by educators and students alike. Lowveld Academy has since its inception, always sought to 'Strive for Excellence' and has, through the valiant efforts of its matric class of 2021, achieved a 100% pass rate in the last NSC Examinations for the second year in a row! Whatsmore it becomes one of only five schools out of 119 schools in the Mopani-West District

to achieve this benchmark.

This is also the second year in a row that Lowveld Academy placed as the top school in the Lepelle 4 Circuit, placing them within the top 2.1% of schools in Limpopo Province.

With the 100% pass rate, Lowveld Academy also achieved a 100% pass rate in 11 of its 15 FET subjects, and the additional four subjects all achieved a pass rate above 92%. Subjects with a 100% pass rate included English Home Language, Mathematical Literacy, Life Orientation, Engineering Graphics and Design, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Computer Applications Technology, Accounting, Business Studies, Tourism and Visual Arts.

A special mention must go to Obeilwe Chiloane, a dedicated individual and life-long LA student, who managed 6 distinctions, and an average of 83.5%. Also deserving of special mention is

Nicole van der Merwe with an average of 82.2% and 4 distinctions.

At Lowveld Academy 48 Matrics wrote their Final NSC Exams during November 2021, each writing 7 subjects. Out of all papers written LA students achieved a 98.81% written pass rate.

That is a remarkable achievement by any standard, especially for a secondary educational institution still in its infancy. Out of the 48 students, 90% passed with an exemption for further tertiary studies.

Lowveld Academy is also seeing the fruits of its hard work as some students of their first matric group of 2018 have completed their undergraduate studies at university level. An example is Nhlalala Sibuyi, who is currently completing her Honours Degree in Chartered Accounting at the University of Pretoria.

Editors note: Despite



Obeilwe Chiloane



Nicole vd Merwe



Homeschool star

It has been brought to Kruger2Canyon News attention that some home schooled children also excelled in their matric year. This is really an amazing achievement of true grit and dedication. Roché Honiball was a student Hoedspruit Christian School and then moved on to Lowveld Acad-

emy. She left LA in March of her Grade 11 year during lockdown, and went on to enrol with Teneo Education – an online school. She managed to work through the hardships of online learning and went on to achieve outstanding Matric results with seven distinctions! Well done Roché!

Southern Cross excels

Staff reporter

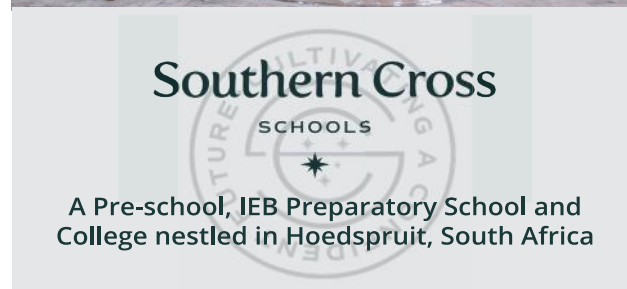
At Southern Cross Schools, learners, teachers and parents had to adapt to new ways of learning through virtual platforms and this placed an extra pressure on

the Matric Class of 2021. SCS recognised that change in the education industry was necessary to transform and improve learning outcomes. SCS embraced this change and developed its own hybrid model of schooling and edu-

cation, and the Matric Class of 2021 were the first learners to embark on an online IEB accredited educational platform.

The IEB NSC results released recently confirmed the perseverance of the Matric Class of 2021 with the magnificent NSC results obtained. The sense of responsibility and hard work has certainly paid off! It is wonderfully rewarding to see that this high level of matric achievement, something SCS has become known for, continues to be accomplished within the hybrid College model.

Incredibly, the small class of 9 learners achieved exceptional results both individually and collectively - 100% Bachelors degree pass and 16 distinctions. Special mention must be made of Kayla Thompson with 6 distinctions, Kate Schwaeble with 3 distinctions, and Matshepo Mashumu, Mosaladi Inama and Tahlia Spencer-Wilson with 2 distinctions each. Well done also to the dedicated College mentors who showed great commitment in assisting the learners to finish the year and their school careers on a high note.



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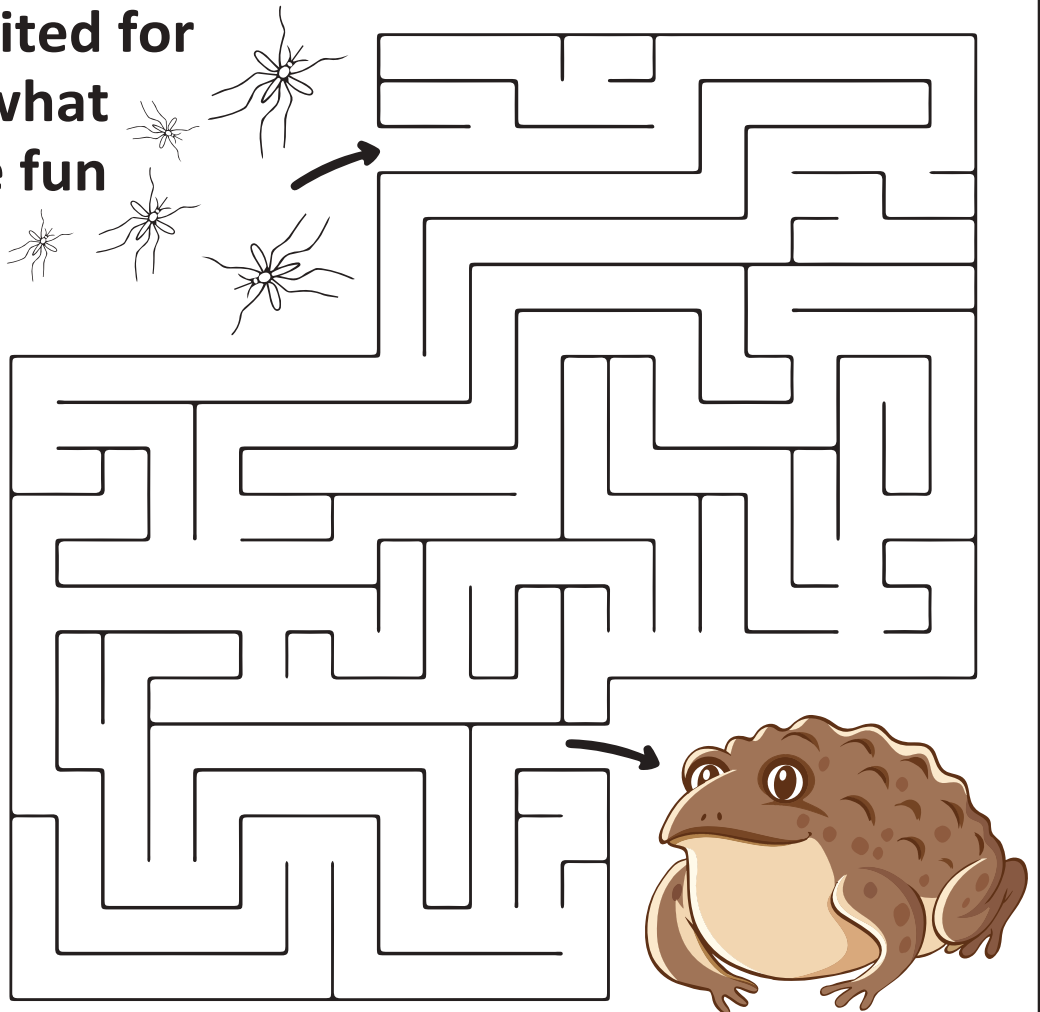
New Year, New Life, New beginnings

How many butterflies can you count?

Welcome to 2022, we are so excited for what this year has in store and what a better way to begin with some fun learning and exciting activities! Let's start by giving the toad some yummy mosquitoes.

On that note, with all the rain we have been having, don't forget to use your mozzie spray!

Talking about rain, have you been noticing lots of tadpoles, frogs, and toads around lately?



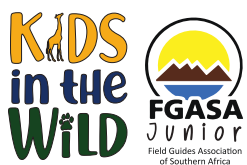
Frog Life Cycle

Draw & lable the correct process of the frogs life cycle into the correctly numbered box.

What are some differences between Frogs & Toads?

Write down some of the differences between frogs and toads.

Frogs	Toads



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