

A Fragile Future, Seen Up Close



Days old and already fighting for survival, a rescued pangolin pup lies in care before its eventual return to the wild.

Image: Lance van der Vyver

Mark Bishop

In a quiet room in Hoedspruit, wrapped in a blanket far removed from the wild it should have known, a newborn pangolin rests. Its scales are still soft. Its eyes

barely open to the world. This is Archie - one of the most threatened mammals on Earth - and the subject of a photograph by Lance van de Vyver that has now been selected among the top 24 images world-wide for the *People's Choice Award* in

the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year Awards 2026* (#WPY61).

Taken in Hoedspruit, at the heart of South Africa's conservation landscape, the image is understated. There is no spectacle, no dramatic confrontation. Instead, it of-

fers something far rarer: a pause. A quiet moment that asks a simple, unsettling question: "Why is a wild animal lying in a blanket instead of in its natural habitat?"

Cont. on page 2



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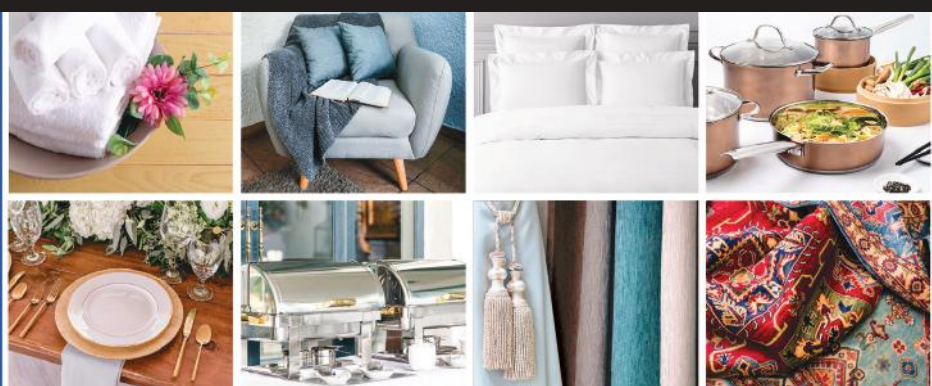


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From the Editor

FlySafair has resumed scheduled flights to and from Eastgate airport from as of 17th February 2026, following the successful repair of the main runway damaged during the January floods in Limpopo. The runway refurbishment has allowed full commercial operations to resume and FlySafair's return restores an important air link for leisure and business travellers accessing the Greater Kruger region.

As a note: we welcome story ideas and photographs from readers who would like to contribute to Kruger2Canyon News. Submissions that are relevant, accurate, and of interest to our readership will be considered for publication. If you have a story or photographs you would like us to review, please contact the Editor at editor@kruger2canyon.co.za.

A Fragile Future, Seen Up Close

Cont. from page 1

A life born of trauma - and saved by care
This photograph was made just days after Archie's birth. His mother had been captured by poachers and subjected to severe trauma. The stress caused her to give birth prematurely. Unable to nurse her pup, she left Archie entirely dependent on human care. Shortly afterwards, she died.

The newborn was removed and placed into specialised rehabilitation in Hoedspruit, where he was bottle-fed around the clock by experienced conservation teams - people who work daily with the consequences of wildlife crime, and who quietly dedicate themselves to saving what can still be saved.

Very few people will ever see a pangolin in the wild. Almost no one will see one at this age. That intimacy is deliberate. Van de Vyver photographed the scene in a calm, controlled setting to reflect just how fragile the moment was - a life balanced on the edge, sustained by patience, skill, and compassion.

Beyond the image: a bigger truth

Pangolins are among the most trafficked mammals on the planet. Their scales and meat are illegally traded, pushing populations toward collapse. This single image carries both sides of that reality: the brutality of wildlife crime and the extraordinary effort required to rescue even one animal from its consequences. Yet there is hope here. Today, that same pangolin is living back in

the wild. Knowing this, transforms the photograph from a record of vulnerability into a testament to resilience - proof that conservation success is possible, but never easy.

Voting that creates impact

The *People's Choice Award* is determined by public voting. This nomination offers a rare opportunity to amplify awareness around pangolin conservation, ethical wildlife storytelling, and the importance of supporting frontline rehabilitation work in South Africa - particularly here in Hoedspruit.

Voting closes at 14:00 on Wednesday, 18 March 2026. Let us drive home our support for conservation, more especially in this field, by casting your vote here:

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/wpy/peoples-choice/2025-a-fragile-future>.

This image is not about drama. It is about stillness. It is about asking why rescue is necessary at all - and what it takes to give a wild animal a second chance.

In the softness of a blanket, photographed in Hoedspruit, lies both a warning and a promise.

Van de Vyver is also involved with Save Our Wildlife, which supports pangolin rehabilitation and conservation efforts. For readers who wish to get involved directly, ongoing work is supported through their Patreon page: <https://patreon.com/saveourwildlife>.

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Rhino Killers Shift Their Sights Back to Kruger National Park



Provinces and National Parks	2023	2024	2025
SANParks (KrugerNational Park)	78	88	175
Gauteng	0	1	1
Limpopo	59	59	36
Mpumalanga	7	4	3
North west	12	18	21
Eastern Cape	17	4	5
Free State	0	6	9
Northern Cape	0	8	5
KwaZulu-Natal	325	232	97
Western Cape	1	0	0
Total	499	420	352

Rhino losses - Source: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment

Tony Carnie

The good news is that poachers slaughtered far fewer rhinos in the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park in KwaZulu-Natal last year. The bad news is that they killed many more in Kruger National Park instead.

Despite a modest 16% decline in rhino killings countrywide during 2025, the number of these animals poached in Kruger National Park has doubled compared with the previous year.

Significantly, the dramatic surge in rhino poaching in Kruger was mirrored by an equally significant drop in killing rates in the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park in KwaZulu-Natal, which has been a poaching hotspot for several years.

Conservation officials have attributed the sharp poaching decline in the 96,000ha Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park to a mass dehorning operation, which began in April 2024 - leading to a displacement of poachers to the two-million-hectare Kruger National Park rhino stronghold.

According to the latest official statistics from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), poachers killed

352 rhinos across South Africa during 2025 - a 16% decline compared with 2024, when 420 rhinos were poached for their horns.

The highest poaching rates were recorded in Kruger, where 175 rhinos were killed - almost exactly double the number (88) killed in 2024.

In Hluhluwe-iMfolozi, where white rhinos were rescued from the brink of extinction at the turn of the last century, the poaching toll dropped to 97 animals in 2025 - compared with 232 in 2024 and 325 during 2023.

SANParks spokesperson Reynold Thakuli declined to comment on 10 February on the possible reasons for the dramatic increase in killings in Kruger, referring all queries to the DFFE.

However, conservation sources in KwaZulu-Natal have attributed the renewed focus on Kruger to a poaching dispersal effect driven by the precautionary dehorning of a large number of rhinos in the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, as well as other security interventions such as the installation of more security cameras.

“Once conditions become less favourable to poachers in one area, such as Hluhluwe-iMfolozi, they disperse somewhere else instead. That’s the reality,” the source said.

Elsewhere in the country, another 36 rhinos were poached in Limpopo and 21 in North West last year.

In an official statement, newly appointed Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Willie Aucamp, attributed the overall 16% decline to “dedication and tactical, swift coordination”.

Of the 352 rhinos poached nationwide, 266 were killed in state or provincial parks and 86 on privately owned parks, reserves or farms.

‘Sustained support’

He said that Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife had attributed the significant reduction in poaching in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi to closer collaboration between Ezemvelo and KwaZulu-Natal rhino owners through the Integrated Wildlife Zones (IWZ) Programme, as well as “sustained support from key conservation partners, including WWF, Save the Rhino International, Wildlife ACT, and Peace Parks Foundation (PPF).”

“Whilst Ezemvelo recognises that the strategic dehorning programme implemented in 2024 served as a critical catalyst in stabilising rhino poaching pressures and enabled urgent, targeted interventions, analysis of the 2025 outcomes confirms that multiple

complementary interventions were central to the reduction in poaching incidents.

“Key among these were enhanced detection and early-warning capability, achieved through the deployment and integration of advanced camera technologies and sensors; and the implementation of the Integrity Implementation Plan, which included the successful polygraphing of all park law-enforcement personnel, reinforcing organisational integrity and public confidence.

Aucamp also conveyed his gratitude to private sector anti-poaching efforts, especially private rhino owners.

“South Africa continues to strengthen its international collaboration to curbing rhino poaching and wildlife trafficking. These efforts led to the country receiving the Asia Environmental Enforcement Recognition of Excellence Award late last year, which celebrates excellence in enforcement by government officials, institutions and teams combating transboundary environmental crimes,” a statement by Aucamp said.

This article was previously published in the Daily Maverick/Maverick Earth/Poached

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Finale Opens its Doors: A Community Stepping into Nature-Based Opportunity



Community members enjoy the Waterfalls experience during the launch of Finale's new eco-tourism trails (above left) and community members prepare refreshments for hikers at one of the designated trail viewpoints (above right). Images: Supplied

Vusi Tshabalala and Lauren Booth
Kruger to Canyons Biosphere

On 13th December 2025, the Finale community officially launched its Eco-Tourism Office and newly established hiking trails along the Olifants River, locally known as the Lepelle. For a community positioned between private reserves and along one of the region's most significant river corridors, this moment marked the opening of a building, and importantly the beginning of a new chapter.

A rich landscape in view, now within reach
Located approximately 32 kilometres outside Hoedspruit within Maruleng Municipality, Finale sits in a landscape of dramatic Drakensberg views, waterfalls, rich biodiversity and culturally significant caves. Yet a long history of limited livelihood options and poverty contributed to high levels of poaching and crime, while these natural assets were either extracted or largely forgotten, and certainly untapped as economic opportunities.

Through the Safe Systems process, supported by the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region's Community Solutions team and partners, residents reflected on local challenges and opportunities. Eco-tourism was identified as a viable pathway to generate dignified livelihoods, while strengthening conservation and collective pride. The refurbished Eco-Tourism Office now stands as a visible symbol of that intent - a local hub from which visitors can access guided experiences and from which the commu-

nity can manage and grow its tourism offering.

Leadership, unity and local vision
At the official opening, Community Development Forum Chairperson Aubrey Malepe, reflected on the journey from limited livelihood options toward a future defined by opportunity and shared responsibility. Headman Matene emphasised the importance of unity in addressing both social and environmental challenges. He spoke of waterfalls, grazing plains where impala and zebra move alongside livestock and caves that carry cultural meaning, reminding those gathered that Finale's greatest wealth lies in its natural heritage.

This emphasis on local leadership and ownership has been central to the change taking place in Finale. The initiative has taken shape through extensive community dialogue and planning, together with the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere supporting the process as a steady partner and connector in the wider landscape.

Walking the trail together
Following the ribbon cutting ceremony, celebrations continued with local cultural performances before guests and community members made their way to the Maburuburung Waterfalls. A five-kilometre guided walk along the overflowing Olifants River formed the heart of the day's activities.

Six trained nature-based tour guides led the group along clearly marked trails, stopping at designated viewpoints where re-

freshments had been prepared. For many residents, it was the first time visiting parts of their own landscape that had long been spoken about in stories, but seldom experienced firsthand. One participant summed up the feeling from the group by simply stating "Now we see why this place is special!".

Youth and elders walked side by side, pausing at natural pools, tasting indigenous fruits and taking photographs against the backdrop of cascading water and rocky gorges. Directional markers and basic trail infrastructure now signal that this is a space ready to welcome visitors in a safe and organised way.

Partnerships that strengthen confidence
The presence of partners at the opening, including experienced hikers from the Maruleng Hiking Group and representatives from the Endangered Wildlife Trust, reinforced the credibility of the trails and highlighted the value of collaboration in strengthening community-led conservation efforts. By connecting Finale to wider networks and expertise, the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere is helping to position the initiative within a supportive ecosystem of partners.

From milestone to momentum
Finale's Eco-Tourism Office and hiking trails represent a practical step toward aligning livelihoods with landscape stewardship. By positioning its natural assets as something to be protected and experienced rather than depleted, the commu-

nity is creating pathways for income generation, skills development and renewed pride.

The next phase will focus on strengthening communication platforms, refining booking systems and expanding marketing reach so that the initiative translates from a successful launch, into a sustainable tourism offering that supports the wider community into the future.

What is taking shape in Finale is not only a local attraction. It is a reminder that when communities lead and when organisations such as the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere play a supportive role, conservation and livelihoods can move forward together, anchored by the diverse landscape and driven by those who call it home.

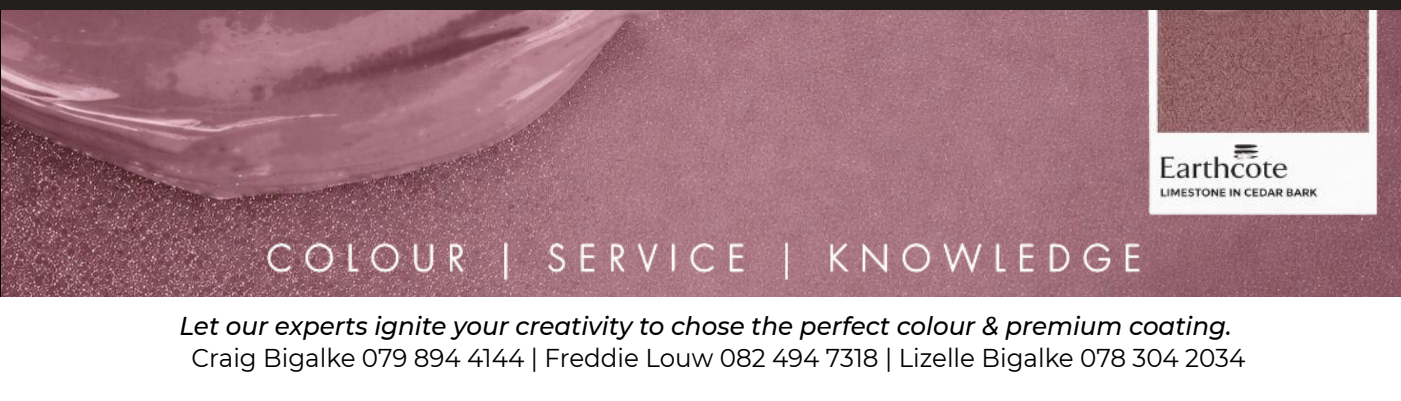




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NDLOVUMZI NATURE RESERVE R 5 250 000
Beds 7 | Baths 7 | Floor: 320 m²

Commercial lodge on the Olifants River for sale furnished and equipped with game viewer. Features three guest units with river views, alfresco dining, terraced pool, boma and pizza oven, plus a separate manager's unit with private entertainment area and pool. Approved for eight guests.
Jason Jones – 083 267 4794 Ref: 2467532



KAMPERSRUS R 2 190 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: 120 m²

This home is a great option for first-time home buyers or those looking for an investment opportunity. The home has an open-plan living room with the kitchen set to the side. Above the kitchen is a loft area which can be utilised in various ways. Property is fenced and pet-friendly.
Michelle Severin – 083 469 3821 Ref: 2464926



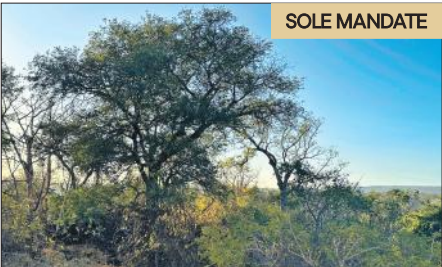
LISSATABA NATURE RESERVE R 5 850 000
Beds 5 | Baths 5 | Floor: 358 m²

Well-maintained bush home on the banks of the Olifants River, offering privacy and breathtaking river and mountain views. Open-plan living, newly fitted kitchen, TV room, and deck with plunge pool overlooking the river. River boma with built-in braai and firepit. Located in 2 500 hectare reserve.
Rob Severin – 083 469 3820 Ref: 2462283



KAMPERSRUS R 4 300 000
Beds 4 | Baths 2 | Floor: 274 m² | Stand: 1,625 m²

Spacious home with open-plan living areas, well-finished kitchen, scullery and guest loo. Large windows capture mountain views. Upstairs rooms open to a balcony, while a large rooftop patio offers sweeping 360° vistas. Features landscaped garden, powered shed, ample covered parking.
Calin Leppan – 082 824 9482 Ref: 2433836



ELEPHANT ROCK ECO ESTATE R 730 000
Stand size: 2,400 m² | Estate: 240 ha

Lovely stand with mountain views, natural shade, and cul-de-sac privacy. Pet-friendly estate with 5-year build window and no transfer duty. Building packages available. Secure eco estate with outdoor activities and wildlife.
Calin Leppan – 082 824 9482 Ref: 2388805



ZANDSPRUIT VALLEY R 2 750 000
Bedrooms 2 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: 110 m²

Newly built, neat home offering comfort, security and strong rental income potential. Spacious open-plan lounge and kitchen, private pet-friendly fenced garden, motorised gate and double covered carport. Ideal lock-up-and-go or investment opportunity with low monthly levies.
Carika fox – 071 911 9940 Ref: 2472134



LISSATABA NATURE RESERVE R 3 080 000
Beds 2 | Baths 2 | Floor: 162 m²

Brand-new, low-maintenance bush home with central living area and open-plan kitchen. Set on a 7,500m² full-title stand within 2,500ha reserve. Includes two en-suite chalets with aircons, patios, and outdoor showers. Features include double carport, large boma, paved walkways, tool shed.
Rob Severin – 083 469 3820 Ref: 2414510



KAMPERSRUS R 2 950 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2.5 | Floor size: 220 m²

Well-maintained home offering relaxed living. Spacious open-plan living with aircon opens to a covered veranda with built-in braai, fire pit and large established garden with partial Mariepskop views. Double garage, double carport, tool shed, Wendy house and 10,000L JoJo tank with pump.
Carika fox – 071 911 9940 Ref: 2465960



NDLOVUMZI NATURE RESERVE R 4 000 000
Beds 4 | Baths 3 | Floor: 125 m²

This 21 hectare Olifants river property offers stunning views, a beautiful garden, and riverine tree surroundings. The property includes a 2-bedroom main house and a separate 2-bedroom guest cottage, as well as an expansive entertainment area with braai, pizza oven, dining area and pool.
Jason Jones – 083 267 4794 Ref: 2330912



MODITLO WILDLIFE ESTATE R6 200 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor size: 290 m²

Elevated home with beautiful bushveld and mountain views. Features spacious open-plan lounge, dining room and kitchen, scullery, a bar, large patio, and pool, plus a boma for outdoor evenings. Modern bedrooms open to the bush, with a separate private guest room.
Michelle Severin – 083 469 3821 Ref: 2430164

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RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 25 000 pm
Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Furnished

Available immediately, not pet friendly – Open-plan lounge and kitchen flow onto a deck and pool with mountain views, plus a separate dining room and study. Bedrooms are en-suite. Solar system powers the home except the pool. Includes storeroom, two carports, and tenant-paid utilities.
Natasha van Nelson – 071 652 9140 Ref: 2434176



ZANDSPRUIT BUSH & AERO ESTATE R 50 000 pm
Beds 4 | Baths 3 | Furnished

Available 1 Mar – 30 Jun 2026, no pets allowed – Expansive home with open-plan living, high ceilings, fireplace and fully equipped kitchen with scullery. Covered patios, timber decks, pool, built-in braai, boma and riverbed viewing deck. Weekly cleaning, garden and pool service included.
Natasha van Nelson – 071 652 9140 Ref: 2397813

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Investing Early: How SEF 3 Is Unlocking Potential Through the numiknow® Enrichment Program

Thias Taute

In the previous edition of Kruger2Canyon News, we introduced readers to an ambitious enrichment initiative planned as part of the third phase of the Social Employment Fund (SEF 3). This article takes a closer look at that program now underway - and at the young learners whose futures it aims to shape.

At the heart of this initiative is a six-month Enrichment Program designed for twenty-four carefully selected Grade 7 learners from rural primary schools across Acornhoek, Hoedspruit and Ga-Sekororo. Selection followed a rigorous two-stage process, beginning with applications and followed by additional assessments in mathematics and English, to identify learners with potential and motivation.

Fourteen primary schools are represented, including Chueu, Drakensig, Hoedspruit Christian School, Kgopong, Kgwaditaba, Lepelle, Maatla, Mahupje, Makgaung, Makwetse, Mametja, Mariepskop, Seganyane and Setlhare. For many learners, this program is their first exposure to structured academic enrichment beyond the standard classroom.

The program runs from February to July 2026 and is hosted at the Hoedspruit Hub. Learners attend six Saturday sessions, combining face-to-face engagement with digital learning. This blended approach



recognizes that strong learning outcomes require both personal support and effective use of technology.

Learners receive unlimited access to the numiknow® Compendium of games and app, designed to build mathematical proficiency through problem-solving and play, alongside Bite-Size English, which strengthens everyday English skills essential for academic success. Mathematics and English tutoring is tailored to each learner using

performance data from these tools. Learners are also introduced to coding and robotics, exposing them to future-focused skills.

Parents and guardians play a key role. At the first session on 7 February 2026, families were briefed on expectations and responsibilities, and parents or guardians signed a commitment alongside their child, reinforcing a shared partnership in the learner's development.

Progress is tracked through ongoing per-

formance on numiknow® and Bite-Size English, attendance, and each learner's own numiknow® Clubs at their school, giving back to others from what they are privileged to experience. By September 2026, one or more learners may be selected for a school bursary opportunity for entry into Grade 8 in 2027.

As SEF 3 continues, this Enrichment Program demonstrates the value of targeted investment, innovation and community collaboration. It is about improving results, and about widening horizons and creating pathways for young people in the Kruger to canyons Biosphere region.

Community members are invited to share their experiences through short talks or presentations with the learners to widen their world or assist with Mathematics and English activities during the monthly Saturday sessions at the Hoedspruit Hub.

Kruger2Canyon News invites readers and partners to become involved. Learn more about numiknow® at <https://numiknow.com>, explore the app at <https://play.numiknow.com>, or find out more about Bite-Size English at <https://kaleidoprax.co.za/personal-solutions-to-improve-english/>. For more information or to get involved, contact Thias Taute at thias@hoedspruithub.com or on 079 502 4727.

Securing a Legacy for Generations to Come

Marteen Michau

Family fortunes are typically squandered by the end of the next generation - mainly because heirs are completely unprepared for inheriting substantial assets. However, research is increasingly showing that the successful transfer of wealth from one generation to another depends on far more than just financial education. It can't just be about wealth - equally crucial are the set of values and the legacy associated with the family wealth.

The Knight Frank Wealth Reports revealed that a lack of communication and trust between the first and second generations is one of the main reasons why heirs are unprepared to take on their new role as custodians or stewards of family wealth.

Why do families fail to communicate about such an important aspect of the future well-being of the next generation? The main reasons cited by researchers include not wanting to face or speak about

the older generation's mortality, not making or having the time to do so, or not wanting to disclose financial details to children or a spouse.

The conversations required are, however, about so much more than just financial matters. Financial education is of course imperative, but equally important for the successful retention of wealth by the next generation is the 'buy-in' by all family members to a set of agreed-upon family values, as well as the legacy the family wishes to be identified with, leave behind and be remembered by.

How can you ensure your wealth is transformed into a lasting legacy during its transfer to the next generation? We've identified the following steps:

Set up a family conversation with both generations present - it's often the younger generation that requests the get-together.

Share the story of how the family wealth was made, the hardships suffered in the process, and the lessons learnt. It works best when the younger generation interviews the older generation to make sure

they hear the full story and understand all its facets.

Consider a set of family values to be shared across generations, and draw up and record a family wealth plan as agreed to by all around the table. During the conversation it often becomes clear that there are already certain family values in place, but the members of the younger generation put these into practice in different ways to their parents.

Introduce the next generation to your team of advisers, and include your children in future meetings with them. Your team typically includes your lawyer, accountant, wealth manager, portfolio manager, independent trustee and banker. It's vital that your children should cultivate relationships with each member of your team and get to know them personally. The next generation should also be invited to trustee meetings, and can then be appointed as co-trustees at an appropriate age.

Hold annual meetings where the family wealth plan is discussed, as well as proposed amendments to it: the fam-

ily wealth plan should be provided to the team of advisers, and any proposals by them should be tested against it. The structures in which the family assets are held should be tested against the family plan, both when it is drawn up, and on an ongoing basis. All proposed transactions should be tested in principle against the long-term objectives of the family, as recorded in the family plan.

Educate your children financially - this includes investment training, trustee training, and broader financial education: your team of advisers can assist in the financial education of the next generation. Trustee training can be given to prospective trustees or trustees already in office. It covers trustee responsibilities as well as a crash course on trusts and how they work in practice from a tax, accounting and legal point of view.

Contact Marteen Michau at marteen@fidelisvox.co.za for assistance or further information about the above.



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Lady Godiva’s March Forecast: Action Reaps Reward



1. Who sailed in a ship called Queen Ann's Revenge?
2. Saponification is the process that makes what common product?
3. Blue red green yellow, four Olympic rings: what colour is missing?
4. Who landed on Timor Island after being cast adrift?
5. What is the more common name of the Chaparral Cock?
6. In what language did St Paul write his epistles?
7. Ian Fleming's house was called Goldeneye - in which country?
8. Who was the first black entertainer to win an Emmy award?
9. Which author created Dick Tracy?
10. What is the world's most widely used vegetable?
11. Who used to spend summer in Castle Gondolofu for 400 years until 2016?
12. What two items make up the dish 'devils on horseback'?
13. What colour is cerulean?
14. Which record company rejected the Beatles in 1962 as "being past it"?
15. From which country does spinach originate?
16. The penny black - the world's first stamp - what was second?
17. In which sport are left-handed people banned from playing?
18. Who was eaten by dogs in the Old Testament?
19. What lives in a holt?
20. What is the world's tallest grass?
21. Which acid was first prepared from distilled red ants?
22. Which European city was the Bride of the Sea?
23. The Salk vaccine is used against what disease?
24. An alloy of Iron, Chromium and Nickel makes what?
25. Who said "Public service is my motto"?
26. Which country first used the fountain pen?
27. In which country is the port of Frey Bentos?

Answers on page 15

March is a month of reckoning - not dramatic, not chaotic, just unavoidable. What's been postponed now demands attention. What's been tolerated starts to cost more than it's worth. This is where excuses quietly expire.

There's a strong theme of accountability in March - financially, emotionally, professionally. You don't need to fix everything at once, but you *do* need to stop pretending that time will solve it for you. It won't! This month rewards those who act decisively and punishes hesitation disguised as caution. The upside? Once a choice is made, momentum returns quickly. Clarity follows courage. March doesn't ask for perfection - it asks for honesty and follow-through.

Pisces (19 February - 20 March)

Your intuition sharpens into certainty. What feels "off" probably is. Trust yourself - without explaining it to everyone.

Aries (21 March - 19 April)

You're being slowed on purpose - to stop you charging into the wrong fight. Authority matters this month: respect it or earn it properly. Less noise, more precision.

Taurus (20 April - 20 May)

Money and values come into sharp focus - especially where you've been too generous. Stability improves once you stop carrying other people's weight. Firm boundaries = quiet power.

Gemini (21 May - 20 June)

March demands follow-through, not clever talk. One conversation you've avoided changes the whole board. Say it cleanly. No theatrics.

Cancer (21 June - 22 July)

Emotional depth turns into direction - finally. You're asked to step beyond comfort and into visibility. Growth feels exposed before it feels rewarding.

Leo (23 July - 22 August)

The applause fades - the real work be-

gins. Leadership is tested behind the scenes, not on the stage. Show substance, not sparkle.

Virgo (23 August - 22 September)

Overthinking becomes the only real obstacle now. Progress comes from action, not refinement. Trust your systems - then move.

Libra (23 September - 22 October)

A long-postponed decision can't be deferred any longer. Choosing yourself doesn't require an apology. Clarity restores balance.

Scorpio (23 October - 21 November)

Power shifts quietly in your favour - if you stay measured. Someone underestimates you. Let them. Timing beats intensity.

Sagittarius (22 November - 21 December)

Restlessness signals readiness, not escape. Commit to the next chapter in-

stead of browsing options. Freedom grows with structure.

Capricorn (22 December - 19 January)

The long game starts paying off. March rewards discipline and punishes shortcuts. Stay boring - it's working.

Aquarius (20 January - 18 February)

You're ahead, but not everyone can follow at your speed. Simplify your message or lose the room. Vision needs translation.

Hot Tips for March

1. Decide once. Don't reopen it.
2. If it's draining you, it's costing you.
3. Quiet confidence beats loud certainty.
4. Preparation matters more than optimism.
5. March rewards those who act - not those who wait.

Lady Godiva



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We Tested if a Specialised Magnetic Powder Could Remove Microplastics from Drinking Water: The Answer is Yes



Collecting plastic bottles on a beach in South Africa (iStock Editorial _ Getty Images Plus) and microplastics absorbed (image supplied)

Riona Indhur
Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Durban University of Technology
Sheena Kumari
Water Scientist, Durban University of Technology

Microplastics are the crumbs of our plastic world, tiny pieces that come from bigger items breaking apart or from products like synthetic clothing and packaging. They're now everywhere. Scientists estimate there are about 51 trillion of these particles floating in the world's surface waters, and low levels have even been found in South African tap water.

That's worrying because these particles can carry chemicals and bad bacteria, get eaten by fish and other wildlife, and may end up in our bodies.

We're water scientists who are looking for ways to solve this problem. In a recent study, we tested a practical fix: two "magnetic cleaning powders" that can attach onto microplastics in water; the combined clumps can then be pulled out using a magnet. These materials are called magnetic nanocomposites (think: very fine powders with special surfaces).

The idea is simple: mix a small dose of powder into the water, let it attract and attach to microplastics, and then use a strong magnet to remove the powder-plastic clusters, leaving cleaner water behind.

Around the world, researchers have tried many different methods to capture microplastics, but our study is among the first to show that magnetic nanocomposites can work effectively not only under laboratory conditions but also in real-world samples, including municipal wastewater and drinking water.

This is the first study to use these specific nanomaterials for microplastic removal, proving both their high efficiency and their practical potential. Most existing filters struggle to catch the smallest plastics, the ones most harmful to health and the environment. The next step is to test these powders on a larger scale and develop simple, affordable systems that households and water treatment plants can use.

How well do the powders work?

In our research we found that the powders were able to remove up to 96% of small polyethylene and 92% of polystyrene particles from purified water. When we tried the same approach in both drinking water and water coming out of a municipal wastewater treatment plant, the results were just as strong. In drinking water, the removal was about 94% and in treated wastewater the removal was up to 92%.

Another finding from this study is that the size of the plastic particles matters. The smaller the microplastic, the easier it is for the powders to attach to it, because tiny particles can reach more of the powder's special "sticky" surface. We saw very good results for small plastics (hundreds of micrometres), but bigger particles (3-5 millimetres) were hardly removed at all. This is because they don't mix with the powder as well and there's less surface for the powder to attach onto.

In everyday terms, these magnetic powders are excellent for the small microplastics that are hardest to catch with normal filters.

Now for the big question: why do the powders attach to plastic? Think of it as being like tiny magnets. The powder and the plastics have special surfaces. The powder has parts that are sticky for plastics. This sticki-

ness happens because of different kinds of forces. The plastic and powders have opposite charges which pull them together or allow them to stick together.

The key point is that the powders are engineered or specifically made to grab onto plastics so that microplastics naturally cling to them in water.

Once the powders attach onto the microplastics, we use a strong magnet (magnetic force: 250kg) to pull the powder-plastic clumps out of the water. The plastics are then separated from the powder by washing and filtration, dried, and weighed. This allows us to check how much plastic was removed. The separated powders are regenerated and reused, while the plastics are safely discarded, preventing them from re-entering the water.

We also looked at real-world questions: can you reuse the powders? And are they safe? The powders themselves are made from safe, lab-engineered materials: tiny sheets of carbon and boron nitride (a material also found in cosmetics and coatings) that are coated with magnetic iron nanoparticles. This makes them stable in water, and easy to pull out with a magnet after they've captured the microplastics.

After three rounds of use, the tested powders were effective in removing plastics up to 80%. That means you don't need a new batch of powder every time, which is important for keeping costs down. Treating 1,000 litres of water with this method costs about US\$41 (R763), making it competitive with many existing treatment options.

For safety, we tested the filtered powder (the "filtrate") on plant growth. The results showed minimal to no toxicity, as three different plants were able to grow well in the presence of the filtrate. This is a strong sign that the method is environmentally friendly

when used as intended.

What does this study mean for households and cities?

In the short term, magnetic powders could be built into small cartridges or filter units that attach to household or community water systems, helping remove microplastics before the water is used for drinking or cooking.

But the bigger picture is just as important. Microplastics are not only a South African problem but are also a global pollutant that crosses borders through rivers, oceans, and even the air we breathe. Low-cost, scalable solutions such as magnetic powders can make a real difference in resource-limited settings, where advanced filtration systems are too expensive or impractical.

Looking ahead, further work will focus on scaling up the method, testing it under more diverse water conditions, and designing simple, affordable devices that households or treatment plants can adopt.

In short: this specialised magnetic powder can tackle a tiny pollutant with big consequences. With sensible engineering and careful recovery, magnetic nanocomposites offer a promising, practical path to clean water while protecting the ecosystem from microplastic pollution.

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SA’s Citrus Future Depends on the Logistics Built Today



Boitshoko Ntshabele

With citrus exports booming, South Africa faces a critical moment - enhancing logistics infrastructure is key to sustaining growth and securing the industry’s future.

In his 2026 State of the Nation Address (Sona), President Cyril Ramaphosa offered a rare moment of national consensus when he acknowledged one of South Africa’s triumphs: citrus. As lawmakers applauded the fact that the country is the world’s second-largest citrus exporter, the recognition felt deeply welcome.

However, the industry is equally, if not more, compelled by another aspect of the President’s address: not the celebration of past success, but the President’s renewed commitment to a future of logistics reform and a larger, more dynamic role for the private sector in this area.

South Africa’s citrus industry is swelling with possibility. Production continues its upward climb. Yet growth alone will not guarantee prosperity. Without a logistics system capable of moving fruit swiftly, safely and reliably - from rural orchards to global markets – even record harvests risk becoming wasted potential.

And the truth is that, should citrus production continue on its upwards trajectory, the current logistics network - comprising road, rail and port facilities - will not be able to handle the increase.

That is why the President’s pledge to “turn around the performance of our rail system

and ports” signals a moment of opportunity. His stated commitment to advancing public-private partnerships through concession models that preserve public ownership while unlocking private expertise, represents one of the most promising shifts in our sector.

Evidence of this evolution is already visible in the joint venture between Transnet and ICTSI at Durban’s Container Terminal Pier 2, where most of South Africa’s citrus begins its journey to the world. The partnership is bringing expertise and steadiness to operations.

The recent bottlenecks at the Port of Cape Town during the deciduous fruit season have, however, reminded us how fragile the supply chain can be, and how further reforms are needed. As the Citrus Growers’ Association of Southern Africa (CGA), we remain convinced that private partnerships are the way forward.

But there is progress within Transnet Port Terminals itself. It has improved equipment availability and introduced new labour incentive systems in the past year. There were no serious problems at the ports during the past citrus season.

On the rail front, volumes for citrus have also ticked upward - 1,254 containers, up from 1,064 last year - very modestly, but meaningfully. It is far from a renaissance, but it is a beginning.

The potential of rail

The real economic potential lies in what rail could become. Three decades ago, rail

carried the bulk of the citrus crop. Today, it moves around 5%. Yet train transport is not only more cost effective, but significantly greener. It is up to four times more fuel efficient than trucks. Rail can shift from a logistical afterthought to a competitive advantage.

While mining has long dominated rail planning and investment, citrus also offers one of the country’s most compelling growth opportunities in this area. The past season more than 203 million 15kg cartons of citrus were exported, and the industry has the potential to boost that to 260 million by 2032. Rail options - largely neglected outside the mineral corridors - can emerge as a viable path to unlocking our sector’s full promise.

When the President, relatively early in his Sona, stated that South Africa is “investing across our country in roads, bridges, rail lines, ports, dams, wind and solar farms”, he did not start this investment list randomly with “roads”. Roads and rural roads in particular are both the arteries and the Achilles heel of the agricultural economy. Citrus cannot arrive at ports in peak condition if it has been battered and bruised by the potholes along the way. Poor roads also damage trucks and multiply costs. Poor roads in effect “steal” from the progress being made in improving rural livelihoods.

Citrus industry remains optimistic

The recent floods in Limpopo also highlighted the primacy of road connection

in rural economies. Limpopo is the heartland of South Africa’s citrus exports. Rural roads, as well as sections of the N11 and R36, are flood damaged and require urgent repair before the export season begins.

The citrus industry always leans into optimism. The CGA developed a web-based GIS mapping model to document, monitor and track road conditions, rehabilitation efforts and urgent repair needs across Limpopo. All data will be shared with officials at local, provincial and national levels, creating a transparent, coordinated mechanism. It is a model not of complaint, but of partnership - a recognition that solving South Africa’s logistics challenges requires collaboration.

Taken together, these developments paint a picture of an industry standing at the edge of extraordinary opportunity. The citrus sector is ready to grow, ready to export more, ready to employ more South Africans.

What it needs now is the logistics infrastructure to match its ambition. And for the first time in years, it feels as though government and industry are becoming more aligned in pursuit of the same goal: a modern, efficient logistics system that not only supports agricultural success, but strengthens the broader economy.

This article was previously published in the Daily Maverick/Business Maverick/Op-Ed



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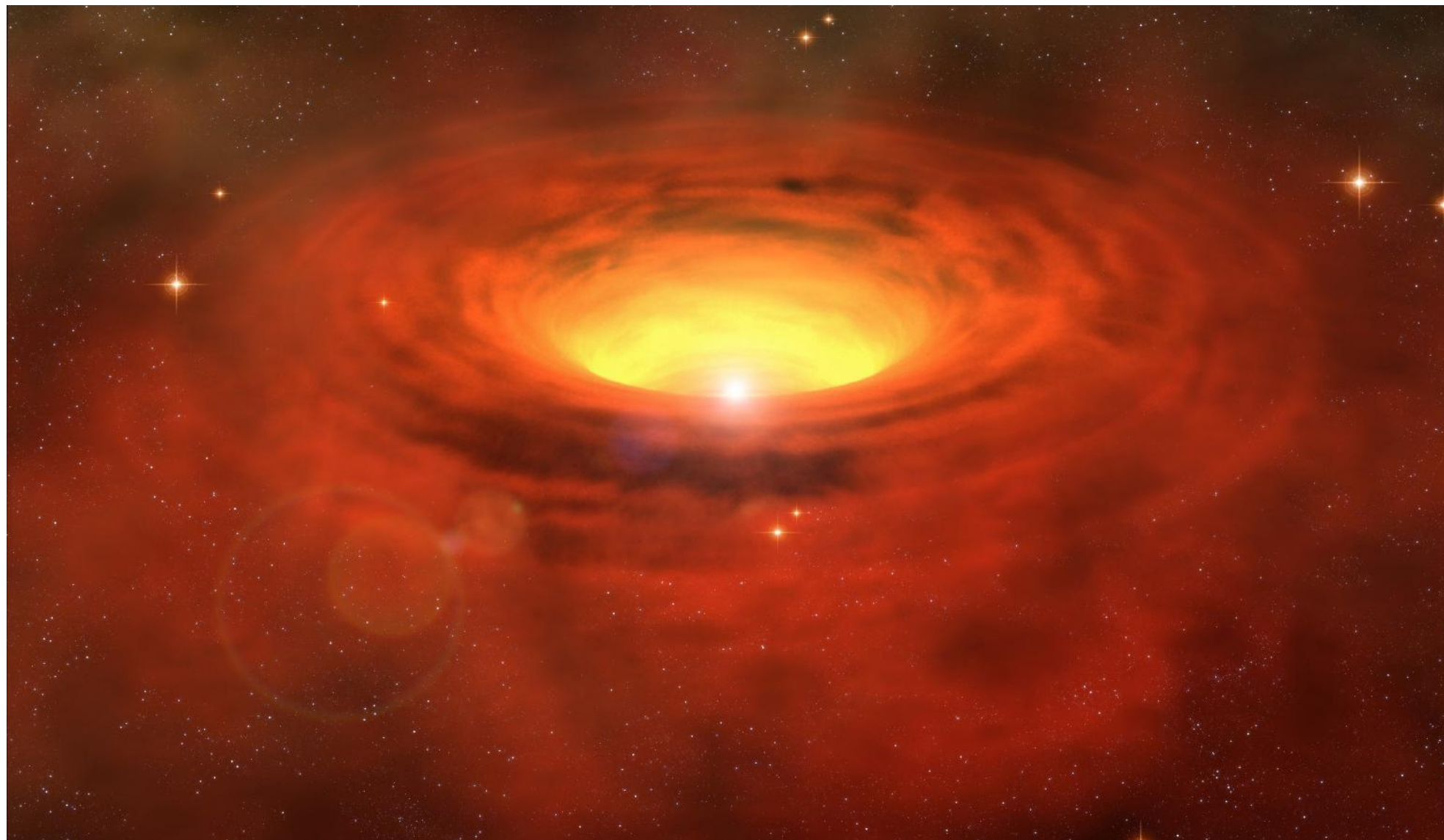
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A Giant Star is Changing Before our Eyes and Astronomers are Watching in Real Time



The star WOH G64. An artist's impression is provided of the thick, massive torus of matter surrounding the star as inferred from observations made with ESO's Very Large Telescope Interferometer. Image: European Southern Observatory, CC BY 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

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For decades, astronomers have been watching WOH G64, an enormous heavy-weight star in the Large Magellanic Cloud, a galaxy visible with the naked eye from the Southern Hemisphere. This star is more than 1,500 times larger than the Sun and emitting over 100,000 times more energy. For a long time, red supergiant WOH G64 looked like a star steadily reaching the end of its life, shedding material and swelling in size as it began to run out of fuel.

Astronomers didn't think its final demise would happen anytime soon, because no-one has ever seen a known red supergiant die. But in recent years astronomers - including our team working with the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) - discovered that this star has started to change, growing dimmer than before and seemingly warmer. This has surprised scientists and suggests the star's final stages of life may be more complicated, and perhaps unfold faster, than once thought.

Massive stars, more than about eight times the mass of the Sun, produce so much energy, which we see as light, that they run out of fuel within millions of years, instead of the billions of years of the Sun's lifespan.

Most massive stars become gigantic, cool stars in the final million years or so of their life - so-called red supergiants. All red supergiants blow gaseous winds, losing weight as they do so. Some do this so strongly that the star becomes enveloped in a shroud of

the ejected material containing gas and solid particles like tiny sand grains - called dust in astronomy. This makes them look dim in visual light, but very bright in the infrared where the dust shines.

In the 1960s Swedish astronomers Westerland, Olander and Hedin discovered number 64 in their catalogue of red stars. They thought nothing of it, as it looked like an unremarkable red giant star, something the Sun and most other stars will become later in life. But when in the 1980s Nasa, the UK and The Netherlands launched the InfraRed Astronomical Satellite into space, astronomers Elias, Frogel and Schwering discovered that WOH G64 is the most luminous, coolest and dustiest red supergiant in the entire Large Magellanic Cloud, which harbours over a thousand red supergiants. More observations over the following decades showed the strong, steady modulations of the brightness expected of a pulsating star of that kind.

Then, in 2024, our team (both authors of this article and our collaborators in Germany and the US) succeeded in taking a close-up image of WOH G64 using the European Southern Observatory's telescopes and revealed a fresh cloud of dust close to the star. It was the sharpest picture of a star in another galaxy ever taken (comparable to being able to spot an astronaut walk on the Moon from Earth). We discovered that in the last decade, unexpectedly, the star had started to eject much more dust than before. At that time, we did not have an idea about why and how.

It turns out, WOH G64 had also become dimmer, possibly because of the dust cloud it had ejected, and started to pulsate less and a little more quickly, suggesting it had

shrunk. At the same time, the star seemed to look a lot warmer, leading some to believe it might have entered a new stage of its life - a so-called yellow hypergiant on its final path to doom.

All these phenomena are happening on a human time scale, which is usually not the case when we observe stars. This makes WOH G64 even more special. Is this star offering us an opportunity not to be missed to witness the final death throes of massive stars?

Now, as we start 2026, we have announced that observations we have obtained using the Southern African Large Telescope give us some clues about what is going on with WOH G64. The SALT observations show the overwhelming presence of ions in the vicinity of the star, which means that the gas is heated up to high temperatures by what must be a much hotter star. This should not have surprised anyone as the hot gas had been spotted in the 1980s and ever since. But we also found the imprint of molecules, implying cool gas (because molecules break up at high temperatures) likely in the atmosphere of the red supergiant. It did not appear to have changed into a yellow hypergiant, at least not yet.

For a long time, astronomers have suspected that the red supergiant has a smaller, hotter twin living alongside it, but they have somehow been reluctant to claim this in publications. And now it looks to be the elephant in the room. One way of making sense of our observations is that this hotter star, looking blue in contrast to its bigger, cooler, red sibling, heats gas it might have captured from the red supergiant's wind. Now that the red supergiant has faded, the presence of the heated gas has just become

more conspicuous.

If the orbit of the blue star is not a circle but quite elongated (Earth's orbit around the Sun only slightly deviates from a circle), the distance between the blue star and the red supergiant varies. It may have got closer in recent years, and its gravity might have caused the atmosphere of the red supergiant to stretch out. This would make it more transparent overall, allowing us to see the warmer interior, but with cool, dark molecular patches left in places. That would also have made it easier for dust to form further out in its wind.

If that is true, then once the blue star starts to recede again on its orbit, WOH G64 might regain its former red supergiant glory. On the other hand, if it did throw off its coat entirely, then the molecules would disappear, and with it, the dust, and we would gain a clean view of the star. Then again, WOH G64 might do something else unexpected. It certainly teaches astronomers to be humble.

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Exploring Magoebaskloof: One of South Africa's Top Birding Destinations



Cape Parrot

Image: Warwick Tarboton

John Kinghorn

Rising along South Africa's north-eastern escarpment between Polokwane and Tzaneen, lies Magoebaskloof. This sweep of mist belt forest, rolling grassland, and deep-cut valleys is one of South Africa's most atmospheric birding destinations.

The air here is often cool and heavy with moisture. Tree Ferns lean over shaded streams, ancient yellowwoods rise out of the forest like cathedral pillars, and somewhere in that dim, green, half-light, something whistles, and another 'churrs'.

For birders, Magoebaskloof is not just productive, it is immersive and addictive. Despite the countless hours that many of the country's most travelled birders may have spent exploring the eastern escarpment's forests, something keeps beckoning them to return.

A Forest That Reveals Its Secrets

The name "Magoebaskloof" is loosely used by birders to refer to several key birding sites in the region. At the heart of these lies the legendary Woodbush Forest Reserve, a stronghold of Afromontane mist belt forest; raw, untamed, and a hive of avian activity. Here, whether intentional or not, the forests force you to slow down. Once does not simply race through Woodbush; you wait, you listen, and you let the forest reveal to you its secrets.

The call of a Cape Parrot may slice through the dawn - loud, metallic, urgent. Often heard before seen, small flocks of these endangered birds sweep over the canopy in purposeful flight in moments preceding dawn, their green plumes catching the early light and giving away their presence. For many birders, this species is one of the main reasons to make the journey

to these forests. It is one of South Africa's true forest icons, dependent on mature yellowwoods and suitable, intact habitat. Seeing them feels like a privilege and a reminder of how fragile these ecosystems actually are.

As one navigates deeper into the forest, the rewards become subtler but more noticeable. A flash of emerald and crimson betrays a Knysna Turaco gliding between fruiting trees. The mournful, fluted notes of a Narina Trogon drift from the canopy's mid-storey, coaxing patient birders into long vigils beneath tangled branches. A sharp, frog-like duet announces a pair of Black-fronted Bushshrike, bold in colour but surprisingly elusive.

Common forest residents such as Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Olive Woodpecker, and the shy Lemon Dove stitch the experience together, creating a constant sense of movement and sound. Overhead, a Crowned Eagle may circle silently - a forest sovereign watching from above.

Where Habitats Collide

One of Magoebaskloof's greatest strengths lies in its compact diversity. Within minutes, the forest gives way to grassland, plantation edge, wetlands, and open clearings. These ecotones - the meeting points of habitats - are where birding becomes especially dynamic, affording birders the opportunity to encounter an array of other species that may not otherwise deviate from their association with the forests.

Around the nearby town of Haenertsburg, for instance, rolling montane grasslands at high altitude offer a completely different rhythm. Here, the avian soundtrack changes. The bubbling trill of Drakensberg Prinia rises from waist-high grass. Cape Grassbird skulk and burst into song from small shrubs. Red-winged

Francolin announce their presence from hillsides in raucous fashion, interspersed by the occasional metallic ping of Fan-tailed Grassbirds. It is in these grasslands that birders begin to understand and appreciate the full extent of the region. You are not confined to one birding site or biome. A morning may begin in a dark forest and end by scanning vast slopes of otherwise untouched grassland.

Near water, particularly around Ebenezzer Dam, wetlands and riverine strips add yet another layer. In season, widowbirds denounce their presence using charismatic breeding flare as they begin their elaborate breeding displays. Warblers chatter songs from reedbeds, and along gently flowing rocky streams, the elegant Mountain Wagtail bobs deliberately between stones. Few birding destinations in South Africa allow such seamless habitat-hopping and avian diversity.

Why Birders Keep Coming Back

Ask anyone who has birded the Magoebaskloof region why they return, and the answers are strikingly similar. They range from access to business owners and accommodation establishments who support birding, ensuring that their businesses are "birder-friendly" through their association with BirdLife South Africa's Recommended Member Network. It is access to some of the country's most skilled Accredited (Community) Bird Guides with over 25 years of experience. The birding quality is high, with high species diversity within a small area. And, of course, all the birding sites are accessible - from forest drives and trails, prime birding habitats are within easy reach. The whole area screams "birding!"

Morning mist lifts slowly from the valleys. Sunlight filters through suspended droplets. Bird calls seem to echo differ-

ently here - softened, amplified, and occasionally distorted by the forest's density. Even seasoned listers find themselves lingering longer than planned, reluctant to leave a promising bend in the road, drawn in by the allure of what may be hopping around the next bush.

A Place That Lingers

Birding in Magoebaskloof does not end when you leave. The echo of trogon calls follows you home. The metallic screech of parrots replays in your memory. The image of mist rising through yellowwoods settles somewhere deep and quiet.

In a country rich with birding destinations, Magoebaskloof remains distinctive. It is not loud or flashy. It does not overwhelm with spectacle. Instead, it invites you in and rewards only those who stay long enough to listen.

Visit www.gobirding.birdlife.org.za for more information on Recommended Accommodation, birding sites, and Accredited (Community) Bird Guides operating in the area.

Chubb's Lesser Thicktail Scorpion (*Uroplectes chubbi*)



Chubb's lesser thicktail scorpion

Image: TB Photography

Tim Baynham
Wildlife Safety Solutions

In this month's article we introduce one of Hoedspruit's lesser known scorpion species, the Chubb's lesser thicktail scorpion (*Uroplectes chubbi*), a relatively small scorpion typically averaging just 35 mm in total length.

At first glance, *Uroplectes chubbi* has an overall yellow brown appearance, with the abdomen having distinct broad black and yellow stripes. The species occurs in two distinctive colour forms. In the typical form the pale stripe down the midline is well defined and the hands are the same colour as the rest of the pincer; in the lowveld form the pale stripe down the midline is narrower, less distinct or completely absent and the hands are darker in colour than the

rest of the pincer. Males are more slender and elongated than females, with a longer, thinner tail. The hands of the males are also not bulbous like many other *Uroplectes* species. Females of the Lowveld form often lack the pale stripe down the midline of the abdomen

The species is not commonly encountered in the Hoedspruit area and as a consequence, it is not responsible for many stings locally. Although its sting is painful, it is not regarded as medically important. Most stings result in localized pain and discomfort but do not pose serious health risks to healthy adults.

This species may be confused with the more common eastern bark scorpion (*Uroplectes vittatus*). In South Africa, *Uroplectes chubbi* is found primarily along the Limpopo River valley and the eastern parts of Limpopo Province. Its preferred habitat appears

to be riverine woodland, however, it may also be found on rocky hillsides and within mopane woodland. Unlike many scorpion species that frequently shelter under rocks, *U. chubbi* is often found sheltering beneath leaf litter and rotting logs, it is also known to climb into low vegetation at night.

As with most scorpions, Chubb's lesser thicktail is a nocturnal predator. After sunset, it becomes active, patrolling the substrate and low shrubs in search of prey. It feeds on a variety of invertebrates. Once prey is located, it is swiftly seized and subdued with a potent sting, designed to immobilize small insects rapidly and efficiently.

Scorpions often evoke fear, largely due to misunderstanding and long standing cultural beliefs. They are not aggressive creatures and will only sting in defense. With awareness and basic precautions it is possible to

safely manage human-scorpion encounters and greatly reduce the risk of being stung.

In the quiet of a warm African night, as the bush comes alive, scorpions continue to play out their ancient role, silent, efficient, and essential.

For more information on scorpions, snakes, spiders and other venomous animals, awareness training and talks, as well as a professional 24hrs problem snake rescue service, contact the author at Wildlife Safety Solutions: 073 934 6156; info@wildlifesafetyolutions.co.za; www.wildlifesafetyolutions.co.za, FB: Wildlife Safety Solutions, Instagram: [wildlife_safety_solutions](https://www.instagram.com/wildlife_safety_solutions), YouTube: [Wildlifesafetyolutions](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

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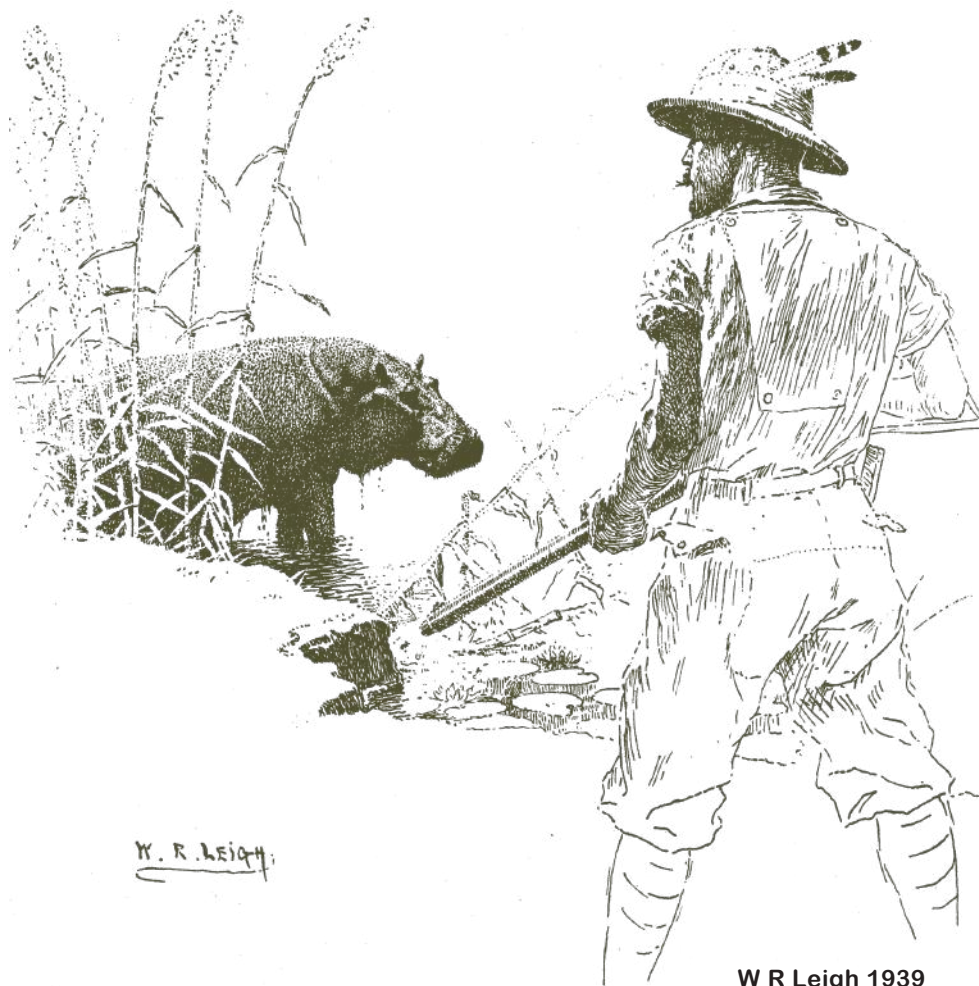
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Social-Ecological Resilience Science



W R Leigh 1939

Andrew Paterson
Philosafaris.com

Last month's lioness charge was a live demonstration of how living systems behave under sudden stress. Three people stood on the same path, facing the same animal, yet experienced three different realities as their brains faced different internal thresholds. That story showed how fear, action, and meaning are constructed under pressure - and how resilience determines whether a system stays flexible or flips into panic or shutdown.

The same principles shape bushveld ecosystems. The African savannah is not a static postcard landscape. It is a dynamic, adaptive system constantly adjusting to drought, flood, fire, grazing, predation, and human influence. Like a brain under threat, it can remain resilient - or it can cross thresholds into new states that are hard to reverse.

This is the domain of Social-Ecological Resilience (SER) that asks how much disturbance a system can absorb before it crosses a threshold into a different state.

A savannah can endure dry years, heavy grazing, and periodic fire. But alter key slow-moving conditions - suppress fire for decades, overstock herbivores, fragment habitat - and healthy mixed grassy woodland may tip into dense, bush-encroached thickets. Pushed further, overgrazed grasses diminish, soil degrades, erosion accelerates, and desertification happens. The system hasn't "died." It has reorganised into a different state with different feedback loops, different species, and fewer options for recovery.

Resilience is not about preventing change. Change is constant. Resilience is about keeping change within bounds where recovery, adaptation, and continued function remain possible.

During the lioness encounter arousal surged - disturbance. Each brain updated predictions - adaptation. But once certain thresholds were crossed, flexibility narrowed. One nervous system stayed coordinated and purposeful. Another tipped into catastrophic panic. Another into immobilising freeze. Same event. Different responses shaped by prior experiences, feedback loops, and emotional predictions.

Among the most mentally resilient human psyches are those of special forces operators. In volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments,

these teams work - where the difference between mission success and catastrophic failure rests upon psychological resilience under extreme stress. They are small adaptive units where plans unravel, feedback is delayed or distorted, and the psychological load often exceeds the physical one. Whilst military doctrine emphasises control and dominance, SER offers quieter but deeper lessons - ones that speak to mental resilience, emotional regulation, judgement under stress, and the capacity to endure without hardening into brittleness.

Complex adaptive systems - whether ecosystems, individual nervous systems, or a small special forces team - face fundamentally similar challenges: managing disturbance, avoiding catastrophic threshold crossings, maintaining function under pressure, and learning from experience. The same attributes operate across all these domains.

SER applies this logic to natural landscapes and human societies embedded within them. Humans are not external managers of ecosystems; we are components in the same web of feedbacks.

And nowhere makes this clearer than on foot in the African wilderness, where you realise the land is never "balanced" in the tidy sense people imagine. It pulses. After good rains, grasses flourish, grazers multiply, predators raise cubs. During drought, herds thin, woody plants out-compete sparse grasses for water, and scavengers proliferate. Some years see wildfires; others hardly burn at all. Elephant open up woodlands; shrubbery and grasses fluctuate. Termites and bacteria quietly reshape soils below the surface.

This variability is not a flaw in an ecosystem. It is the vital engine of any system's resilience.

Systems that have a history of dealing with manageable disturbance build the capacity to handle future shocks. Grasslands that burn from time-to-time rid moribund material to regenerate. Herbivore populations that normally fluctuate are less likely to collapse in a single dry year. Variability is exposure training for ecosystems, just as graded stress exposure helps a nervous system learn that high arousal does not automatically mean catastrophe - or as rigorous training prepares special forces teams to function when plans disintegrate.

Resilience is not random. Over decades, ecologist Brian Walker has identified key

attributes that characterise systems able to absorb disturbance without losing their identity. Think of them as recurring patterns in how resilient systems are structured and governed.

Diversity: Multiple grass species responding differently to rainfall, mixed feeders from zebra to impala, predators with multiple prey species, and a vast hidden diversity of insects and soil organisms. When one species reduces, others can perform similar roles. Diversity spreads risk and maintains function. A monoculture crop can fail in a single pest outbreak, but a diverse savannah bends instead of breaking. Psychologically, diversity means having multiple ways to cope - problem-solving, seeking support, reframing, resting - rather than one rigid response to every stressor.

Variability: Attempts to freeze a landscape in one "ideal" condition often undermine resilience. Suppress all fire and bush encroachment overruns grassland. Stabilise river flow too tightly and floodplains lose the pulses that maintain fertility. Variability keeps systems practiced at change. The Stoics trained the same principle internally: rehearsing adversity, accepting uncertainty, and practising perspective were ways of building flexibility before actual crises hit.

Modularity: In the bushveld, not everything is connected to everything else all the time. A fire in one area leaves unburned refuges nearby. A disease affecting one species does not wipe out all the others. This partial separation prevents disturbances from cascading uncontrollably throughout the entire ecosystem. In human systems, modularity shows up as decentralised networks and local capacity.

Slow variables: The creeping background conditions that control thresholds. In savannahs, these include soil condition, groundwater levels, long-term grazing pressure, and woody plant cover. They change gradually, often unnoticed, until a tipping point is reached. By the time shrubs dominate and palatable grasses are gone, recovery can be slow and costly. In people, slow variables include chronic stress load, sleep patterns, social isolation, and deeply held beliefs about threat or safety. Day to day, nothing seems dramatic-until the system suddenly can't cope. Resilience work means noticing and managing these slow movers early.

Tight feedbacks: When herders quickly notice declining grass and adjust grazing, overuse is limited. When fire frequency responds to fuel loads, landscapes self-regulate. But when feedbacks are delayed - through foreign recessions or slow institutions - damage can accumulate before anyone reacts. In the body, tight feedback comes from awareness of early stress signals: rising tension, shallow breathing, irritability. Catch it early and you can adjust; miss it and you may tip past your threshold.

Social capital: Trust, relationships, effective leadership. Communities that share information about grazing, water, drought, poaching, wildlife movements and diseases adapt to their environment better than isolated individuals. On a walking safari, safety depends on coordinated movement and trust in the guides and group. Under stress, connected systems outperform fragmented ones.

Innovation: After disturbance, resilient systems don't "bounce back" by rebuilding the past; they adjust and evolve. Species that can shift diet or breeding timing persist through hard years. Communities that experiment with new grazing strategies or crops adapt better than those rigidly repeating old practices in new conditions. In psychological terms, this is

cognitive flexibility: updating predictions when reality changes.

Overlap in governance: Multiple redundancies in a mix of protected areas, community lands, and private reserves creates varied management approaches. If one part of a system fails, others still function. In life, it's not relying on a single source of income, personal identity, or just one coping strategy.

Ecosystem services: Intact savannahs regulate water, build soil, store carbon, and support pollinators and wildlife. When systems cross degradation thresholds, these services decline, and human well-being follows. The Stoic idea of living in accordance with Nature aligns closely with this recognition that our survival depends on functioning ecosystems we do not fully control.

Equity and Justice: Systems where benefits and burdens are shared more fairly tend to have stronger cooperation and information flow. Where inequality is high, trust erodes and collective action falters - just when coordinated response is most needed. Social resilience and ecological resilience are tightly linked.

Humility and Learning: The bushveld constantly reminds us how limited our control is. Rainfall patterns shift. Fires start with lightning. Disease moves through herds. Managers who assume total mastery often push systems towards thresholds through overconfidence. Resilient systems include the capacity to say, "We don't fully know. Let's observe, learn, and adapt."

Seen this way, resilience is not toughness, and it is not stability. It is the capacity to remain in a zone where adaptation to disturbance is possible.

With that lioness, resilience meant a nervous system able to function under extreme arousal without tipping into chaos. In the wilderness, resilience means a landscape able to absorb drought, fire, floods, and grazing without flipping into a degraded state. For special forces operators in VUCA environments, it means small teams maintaining coherence and judgement when everything else is uncertain. In all cases, history, diversity, feedback, learning, and relationships shape where the thresholds lie.

Social-Ecological Resilience gives us a shared language for understanding minds, landscapes, and societies as complex adaptive systems facing constant disturbance. It invites us to look out for thresholds before we cross them, strengthen feedbacks before they loosen, and cultivate the diversity and learning that keep options open.

Next month, we'll focus on the first of these attributes in depth: Diversity—not just as a count of species or viewpoints, but as functional insurance and the raw material that allows both ecosystems and human minds to adapt when the pressure is on.

If you want to get hold of Andrew you can email him on ecostoic@philosafaris.com. Safaris to the Wisdom of Nature. Philosophy means "love of wisdom" in ancient Greek, Safari means "journey" in Swahili.



Supporting Bladder Health Through Everyday Habits

Bladder health plays an important role in overall comfort, confidence, and quality of life. While problems are often associated with ageing or illness, everyday habits have a significant influence on how well the bladder functions. Consistent attention to hydration, diet, and physical habits can support bladder health naturally and help reduce the risk of ongoing discomfort.

Hydration: getting the balance right
Adequate hydration is fundamental to healthy bladder function. Drinking approximately 6 - 8 glasses of water per day helps flush bacteria from the urinary tract and supports normal bladder activity. A simple and reliable guide is urine colour - pale yellow generally indicates good hydration. To minimise night-time disruptions, it is advisable to reduce fluid intake shortly before going to bed.

Nutrition and bladder sensitivity
Diet has a direct and measurable impact on bladder health. High-fibre foods, including fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains, help prevent constipation, which can place additional pressure on

the bladder and worsen symptoms. Certain foods and drinks are known to irritate the bladder in some individuals and should be consumed in moderation. These include caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods, citrus fruits, tomatoes, chocolate, artificial sweeteners, and highly acidic products. Maintaining a balanced diet with lean proteins and healthy fats supports overall bodily function, including the urinary system.

Pelvic health and bladder habits
Strong pelvic floor muscles are essential for bladder control. Regular pelvic floor (Kegel) exercises help strengthen these muscles and can reduce the risk of leakage and incontinence. Healthy bathroom habits are equally important. Emptying the bladder every two to three hours, rather than holding urine for long periods, supports bladder function. Sitting fully and allowing the muscles to relax

helps ensure complete emptying, reducing residual urine and potential irritation. Bladder health is best maintained through consistency rather than quick fixes. By combining proper hydration, mindful nutrition, regular pelvic floor exercise, and healthy daily habits, individuals can support long-term bladder function naturally. Small, practical adjustments made today can help prevent more significant problems in the future.



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trivia

- 1.Blackbeard (Edward Teach)
- 2.Soap
- 3.Black
- 4.Captain William Bligh and 18 crew
- 5.The Greater Roadrunner (Geococcyx californianus).
- 6.Koine Greek (common Hellenistic Greek)
- 7.Jamaica
- 8.Harry Belafonte
- 9.Chester Gould
- 10.Tomatoes
- 11.The Pope
- 12.Bacon and typically prunes or dates
- 13.Azure/sky-blue to a deeper, slightly greenish-blue
- 14.Decca
- 15.Iran
- 16.Two Penny Blue
- 17.Polo
- 18.Jezebel
- 19.An Otter
- 20.Giant Bamboo
- 21.Formic acid
- 22.Venice
- 23.Polio
- 24.Stainless Steel
- 25.Al Capone
- 26.Egypt 953AD
- 27.Uruguay



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