

**SUDOKU PUZZLES INSIDE THIS EDITION**



# Coastal VOICE



**Sandra Almeida**  
**Former Champ**



**Bixley Bear**  
**the Therapy Horse**

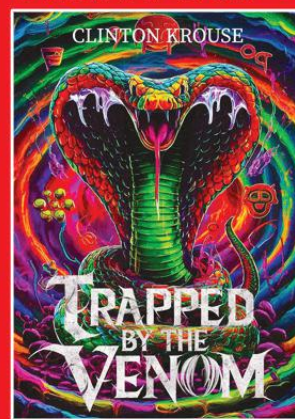
**JUNE**  
**2024**  
**EDITION 3**



**Ethan De Jager shoots straight**  
**Clinton Krouse and drug addiction**  
**Sue Kriel founder of Pet Pals**  
**Impact of the Caledonian Society**  
**Siani Zahn and the Sardine run**



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# VOICE



PATRICK KUKARD | GRAHAM TIMMS

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**HAPPY CAMPER:** Bixley Bear gets plenty of love and attention. Pictures: PATRICK KUKARD

# Embracing hope with a pony called Bixley Bear

**PATRICK KUKARD**

*patrick.kukard@yahoo.com*

**W**HEN Caroline de Bruin was touched by a miniature horse with the name Bixley Bear, she was so moved and inspired by the experience she felt compelled to share it.

Bixley Bear or 'BB' or 'Bix' as he's also affectionately known boasts a heart-shaped marking on his nose.

However, it is not solely this physical characteristic that sets him apart, but rather his gentle and affectionate nature that appears to have a profound impact on those he encounters. It was inevitable 'Bix' was going to become a therapy horse.

Animal therapy goals vary based on individual needs and conditions. Types of therapy and targets are tailored accordingly. Examples include:

- Reducing pain to provide comfort.
- Enhancing motor skills.
- Improving social and behavioral skills.
- Boosting motivation for exercise and social interactions.

Caroline said 'Bix' hails from Hogsback and is "on loan" from his owner Jennifer Whyte. Caroline said 'Bix' started his journey with her in 2020.

Charee Mettam was the first person to feel the gentle and caring touch of 'Bix'. At the time, Charee was bravely battling Huntington's disease, which is the



**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**

**REHERSAL TIME:** Bixley needs to learn her routines so she can comfort those in need.



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# BB's gentle nature ideal for elderly healing mission

premature deterioration of nerve cells in the brain. The condition leads to a decline in cognitive function and motor skills, ultimately impacting a person's ability to carry out daily activities.

The encounter marked the beginning of a heartwarming journey filled with compassion, understanding and unwavering support for Charee as she navigated the challenges of her condition.

Most therapy ponies or horses allow interaction with individuals either through physical contact or by providing them with the opportunity to ride them.

What sets 'Bix' apart is his small size, enabling him to access buildings and rooms that others may find inaccessible, bringing comfort and joy to individuals confined to their beds or rooms.

Caroline trains 'Bix' by letting him walk around in her house.

Having a horse that can ride in a lift or walk around in small rooms or corridors does come with its challenges. Caroline said "'Bix's' safety is paramount. 'Bix's'



**LOVING TOUCH:** Every hard working pony needs some TLC time with mom.

Pictures: PATRICK KUKARD

hooves slip on floors, so Caroline gives him no-slip shoes. 'Bix' can't signal when he needs the toilet, so Caroline made him a "bum bag" for visits.

At the moment Caroline and 'Bix' visit old age homes and children who might have a terminal illness and are at home.

"We can't go into hospitals because of health issues. But I love taking him to old age homes. I have a soft spot for the elderly," said Caroline.

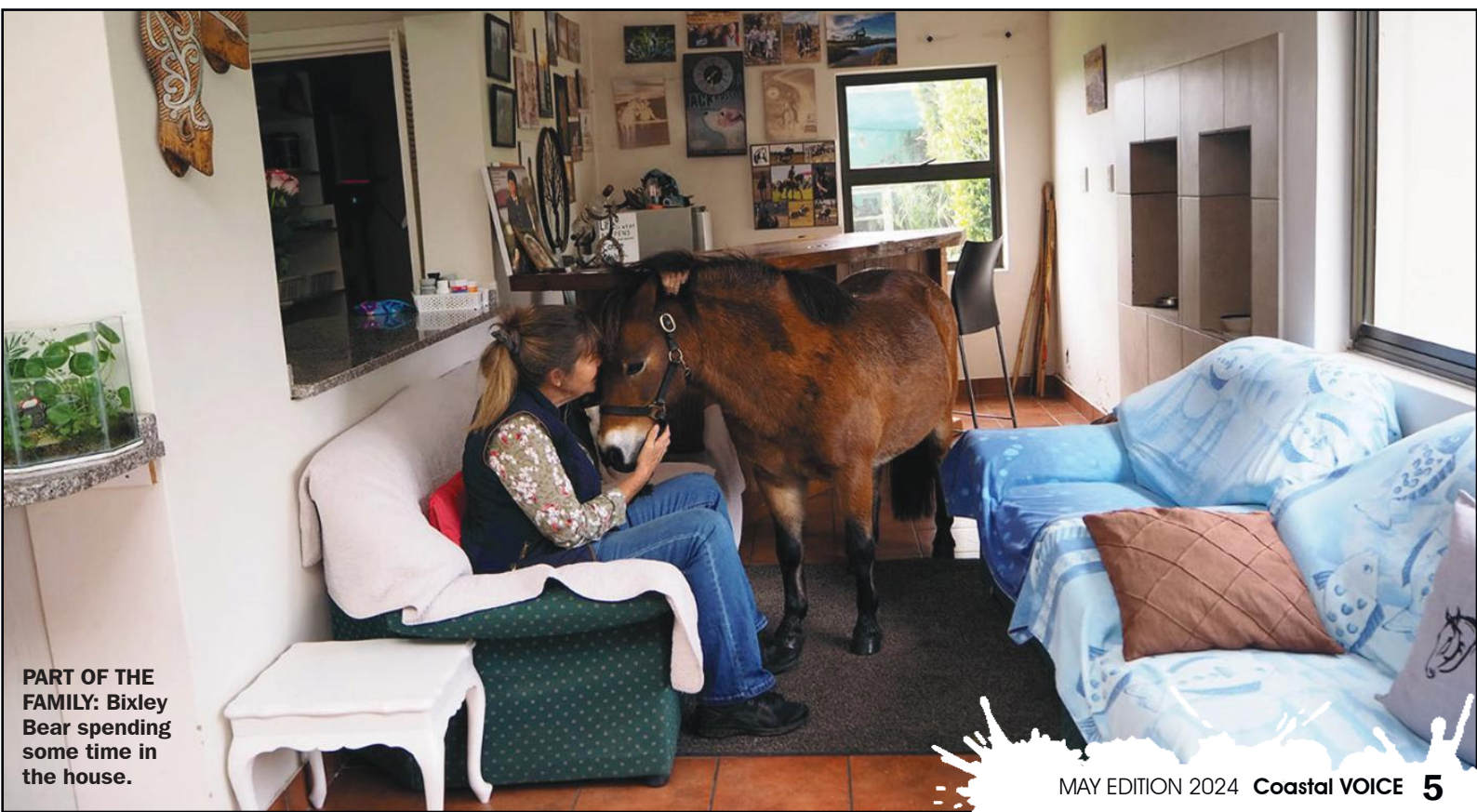
"He is the only therapy horse in South Africa that I know of," said Caroline.

"The closest therapy animal to 'Bix' is

a dog. I will apply for a "canine good citizens' award" for dog therapy because that is the closest to 'Bix'," said Caroline.

Caroline expressed that the impact of 'Bix' visiting was profound, as he had a way of touching the hearts of those around him. She mentioned that she would make sure to introduce 'Bix' to others whenever the opportunity presented itself.

Caroline believes that spreading the joy and positivity that "Bix" brings is important for creating a ripple effect of happiness in the community.



**PART OF THE FAMILY:** Bixley Bear spending some time in the house.

# SUDOKU

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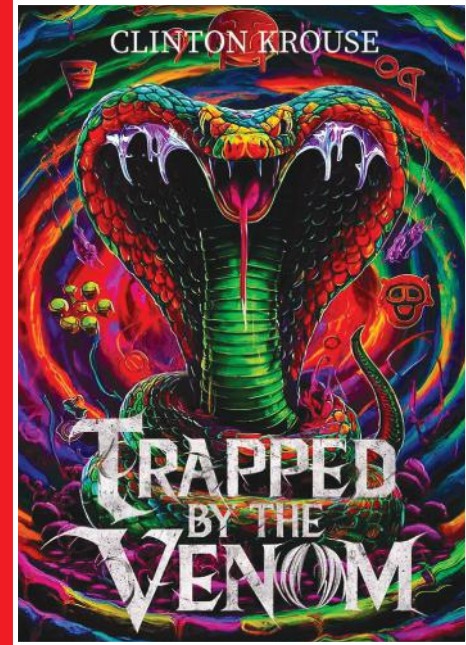
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ANSWERS ON PAGE 6



**BEEN THERE, DONE THAT GOT THE T-SHIRT:** Clinton Krouse has had a long hard relationship with the devil and there was nothing pretty about it. He finally got out and wrote a book about how he did it.

Pictures: PATRICK KUKARD



# Clinton's road from addiction to recovery

**PATRICK KUKARD**  
patrick.kukard@yahoo.com

**B**E CAUTIOUS of one drink or hit. It can lead to irreversible consequences. The lure of drugs hides addiction horrors, trapping lives in dependency. It's an impact that devastates families and dreams.

Clinton Krouse from East London began drinking at 14, then added dagga and glue to the mix. His education suffered and he was expelled for smoking dagga at school. At 45, he started using hard drugs to party longer and chase the high feeling he loved.

Clinton married in 1993, had two children, and divorced after 17 years. He tried various drugs but got hooked on crystal meth, despite warnings from his dealer. He was addicted within four months.

Clinton had a serious car accident in 2021, putting him into a coma for three weeks. He suffered massive trauma to his arms, legs, face, and frontal lobe. He had to endure three grueling six-hour operations, with the third one leading to a near-death experience. No light, no angels, just



**HELPING HANDS:** Megan Castle and Sonae Mopp both work at the Koinonia Recovery Centre.

unspeakable horror.

He was revived and recovered bearing the scars of his bad decisions. His addiction to meth induced psychosis and led to hospitalization and a strained marriage with his second wife.

By now Clinton had lost everything - business, house, cars and all material possessions. His children never deserted him and still support him. He lives in a tent with his second wife at a camping site. Rehab

attempts failed until he went to 4 Brothers Drug Recovery Centre in Gonubie. Clinton has been clean for 5 months.

PR/HR manager JP Coezyter at 4 Brothers Recovery Centre said meth was a major problem in East London with a high percentage of residents addicted to meth.

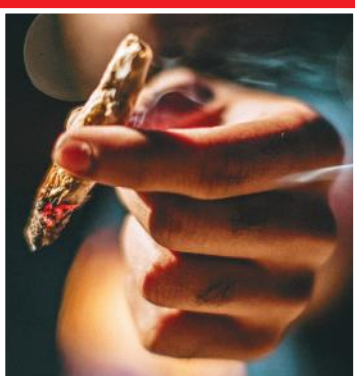
"Meth addiction seems to be growing among females," he said.

This was echoed by Megan Castle, wellness coordinator and case manager at Koinonia Recovery Centre just outside East London. Megan said meth and mandrax addiction was on the increase due to it being cheaper than other drugs.

Sonae Mopp, social worker and case manager at Koinonia said the centre took addicts between the ages of 18 and 60. The youngest resident is 19 years old.

"Parents don't have it on their bucket list to bring their child to rehab," said Sonae.

Clinton delves deep into his personal journey of struggles with addiction and ultimately finding his way to recovery. Through raw and honest storytelling, he shares the highs and lows in his book "Trapped by the Venom".



**THE PLAYERS:** Dagga is considered a gateway drug to addiction. One of many ways budding addicts get lured in. The cheapest on the market currently is crystal meth and mandrax.



# SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

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# The impact of Caledonian Society on the Local Community

**PATRICK KUKARD**

*patrick.kukard@yahoo.com*

**T**HE EAST London Caledonian Society continues to entertain the community despite a decrease in band members. Those who have persevered are committed to preserving their cultural heritage and ensuring significance of the bagpipes.

Widely recognised as a renowned pipe band, they are a common fixture at military events, showcasing their impeccable precision while donning traditional tartan kilts, sporrans, which is the leather pouch in the front and the sgian-dubh a double-edged dagger tucked into the right sock. Their unique ensemble consists of bagpipes, side drums, tenor drums, and a bass drum, creating a distinctive and harmonious sound.

The precise arrival of bagpipes in Scotland remains uncertain to historians with various theories surrounding their introduction. One undeniable fact is that, bagpipes have become synonymous with Scotland and are considered the country's national instrument. The distinct sound of bagpipes is inseparable from thoughts of Scotland.

The bagpipe served as an instrument of war, guiding Highlanders into battle, aiding in communication, and providing a source of celebration and entertainment. Two Scotsmen arrived on South African shores with Jan Van Riebeeck in 1652, a significant moment that remains an integral part of Scottish heritage in this country.

The numbers in the East London Caledonian Society have dwindled. The pipe band currently only has 11 members. Pipe Major Rob Rankin said there could be up to 25 pipers with, anything up to 10 side drummers, between 1 to 6 tenor drummers and a bass drummer.

Ladies became more and more interested in pipe-bands. They were allowed to join in the 70s. It was however met with some resistance. Bill Hartley was East London Pipe Major for over 25 years.

"He wouldn't even teach his own daughter. He just had to relent a little when Merryl Cooper arrived as an established piper. Merryl came to East London having been a member of PE Ladies' Pipe Band," said East London piper Dave Rankin.

"I joined the band pre-Covid," said tenor drummer Leanne Harbottle. Leanne is proud of her Scottish heritage and wanted to be part of the band. "I wanted to be part of something that teaches discipline," said Leanne. "I am still learning flourishing," she said. "Flourishing" is the visual technique of the mallet (drum stick) leaving the palm of the hand for any duration of time.

Rob said the pipe band had lost feeders like cadet bands that used to be prominent in schools. He said they welcomed new members and he encouraged people to join. It does however take discipline and commitment.

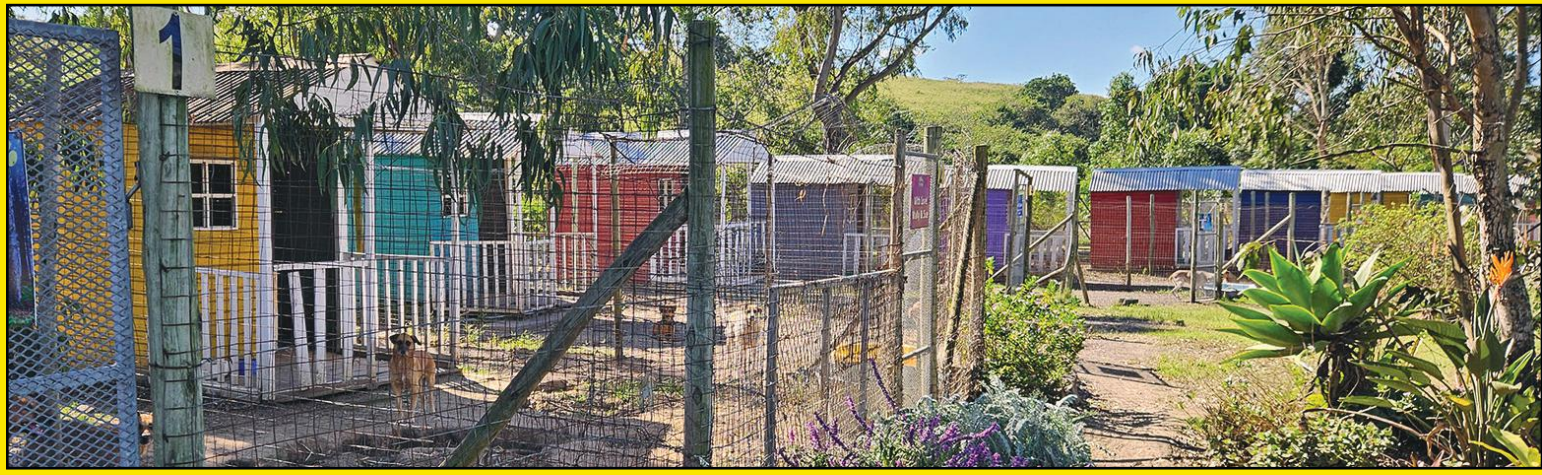
**Anyone wanting to join or hire the**

**The East London Caledonian pipe band can contact Pipe Major Rob Rankin on 082 897 8571. The band practises every Wednesday night at Buffs Club.**



**AT ATTENTION: Tenor drummer Leanne Harbottle at the ready in full uniform. Inset: Piper Dave Rankin on the bagpipes at a recent practice session. Below left to right: Bagpipes and music sheet and traditional kilt adorned with decorative kilt pin. Sparron and Glengarry hat with decorative badge.**





# Pet Pals a place for the unwanted dogs and cats

**TESSA BOYD**

[boyd.tessa@live.com](mailto:boyd.tessa@live.com)

**T**HE EL Pet Pals sanctuary was willed into being by passionate animal advocate Sue Kriel, in the January of 2008. Sue has worked tirelessly ever since to alleviate the silent suffering of unwanted, unloved, neglected and abandoned dogs and cats.

We service the greater East London area with our homing of as many animals as our shelter can hold at any given time.

Our goal and objective is combined in how strongly we feel that no animal should pay with their life – for being homeless. With this in mind, dogs and cats who are not adopted, are ensured a safe, fun-filled and caring home at the sanctuary for the rest of their lives! In this regard, Sue has a very pro-active and progressive adoption policy. She is passionate about finding loving, permanent homes for our orphans and realise that the more families who choose to adopt – the more precious lives can be saved.

The monthly financial challenges can be daunting for Pet Pals. Feeding over three hundred dogs and cats daily is enormously costly, and most of our animal orphans require extensive veterinary care upon res-



**SAFE HAVEN: A sanctuary built for over 300 dogs and cats who all need some love, food to eat and a place they can call home. They rely heavily on your donations.**

Pictures: GRAHAM TIMMS

cue, and many of our permanent residents are on life-long medication. All our rescues are sterilized at our own cost.

We have our own registered clinic at our sanctuary. Not only for our resident animals but to offer a more affordable sterilization cost for people who are not in a position to pay full vet fees. This clinic op-

erates on the first Saturday of every month.

We owe our biggest thank you to Mr Tony Cotterrel of Kempston who has provided us with the land that we are now on in Wilsonia with us paying rent each month for the wonderful piece of land.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 11**



# Volunteers, donations are always needed

**TESSA BOYD**  
boyd.tessa@live.com

**S**HE STARTED the sanctuary near Pinecreek and we have been at our present premises, Farm 648, Eureka, Wilsonia since 2018.

We have 200 dogs and 100 cats and if we had the space we would be able to take many more as the need is so great.

Sue saves the lives of animals that have often been discarded and left to an agonising death. She homes the animals, cares for them and loves them endlessly.

Our main cost is food for the animals, each day we use 60kg of dog pellets which is supplemented with rice and sometimes even chicken if we have had a donation of meat. We also put a gravy with it. Each dog receives a bowl that is overflowing with food. The cats get "wet food" as well as pellets and this is about 40kg a week. The next main expense is veterinary costs for our animals.

We have 6 staff who are paid and then a committee of volunteers who try their hardest to do the fundraising. We are an NPO and receive no assistance from government so it is our task to raise enough money every month to cover costs - extremely stressful.

People can donate food, old blankets, bowls, cat and dog toys. Many people prefer to make monetary donations. Every cent is gratefully received.

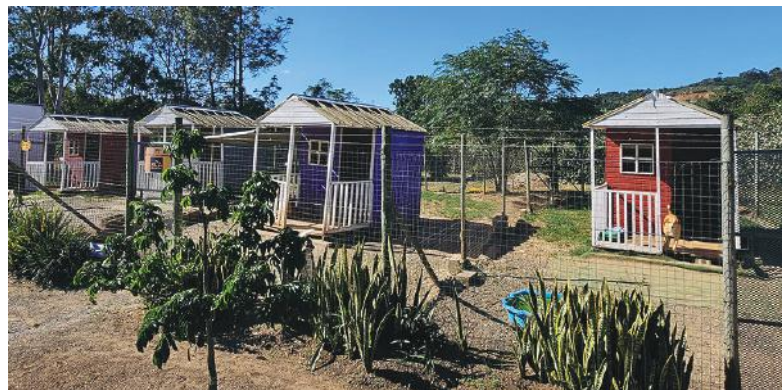
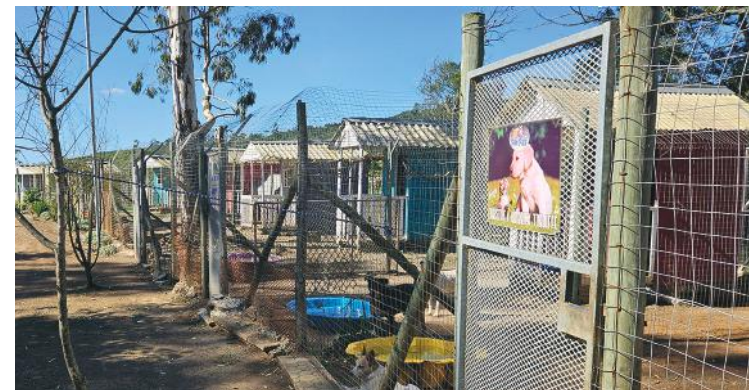
**People to contact Tessa Boyd**  
(boyd.tessa@live.com)  
with any fundraising ideas/questions.



**VOLUNTEERS:** Hudson Park Port Rex Lions Cubs spent many hours giving their time to create this play area for children when parents come to adopt a new pet.



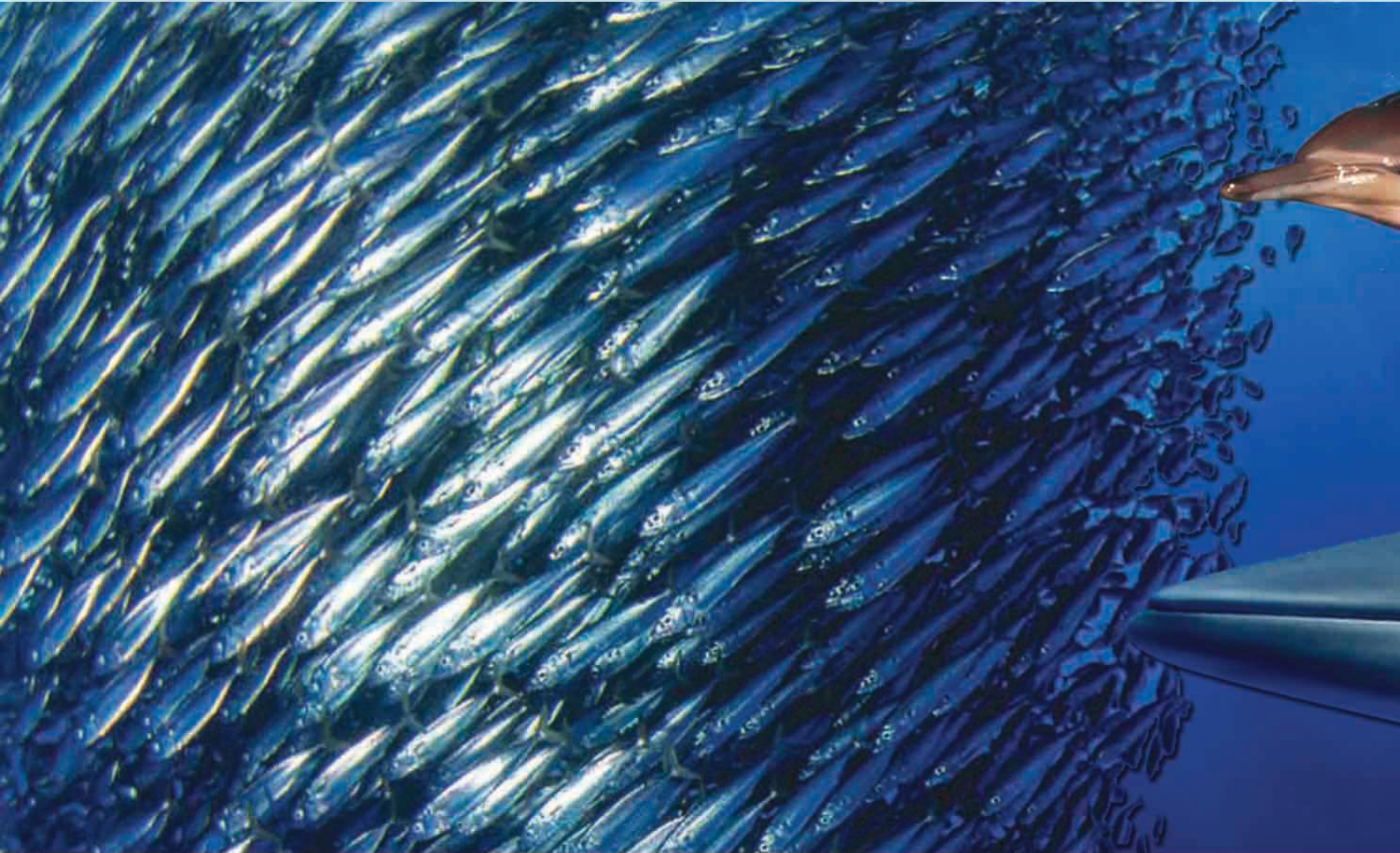
**ANGEL OF HOPE:** Our "paws on pension" kennel, Sue Kriel sits with a few of the dogs at the sanctuary. The dog closest to Sue's face is Elsa and she has been happily with us since 2011. Picture: PET PALS



**STRESSFUL:** Maintaining and caring for the animals is hard work. The biggest stress is finding the funding to maintain, care for and feed the animals. Pictures: GRAHAM TIMMS



# Sardines are



**TO NAME A FEW:** Many predators like the African Penguin, Cape Fur Seal, Cape Cormorant and Cape Gannet will be attending this feast along side the other more deadlier predators such as Copper, Dusky and Hammerhead sharks, Bryde's, Minke and Humpback whales will be some of the gentle giants of the ocean expected to be making their appearances working in teams with the common dolphin to capitalise on this sardine treat. Graphic: GRAHAM TIMMS

**SIANI ZAHN (née TINLEY)**  
*siani@elaquarium.co.za*

**S**O IT IS that time of year again!... That time of year where we enjoy the aloes blooming and the sardine run gracing our coastline. Here are some basic facts about the sardine run. *Sardinops sagax*, commonly know as sardines, move annually from the cold waters on the Agulhas Bank, where they have finished spawning, in a northerly direction along our east coast. This occurs somewhere from May to July annually, and if you are not focused on the ocean during this time you



can be reminded by blossoming aloes that you should possibly take some time to keep a watch on the ocean. It is thought that the sardines originate from the cool and temperate Atlantic Ocean and eventually find themselves trapped in the warm sub tropical waters along the Kwazulu Natal Coastline which results in mass strandings. This particular migration includes millions of individual sardines, and along with this a huge range of predators such as game fish, seals, sharks, whales and dolphins, and sea birds. In terms of biomass this event can be compared to East Africa's great Wildebeest migration, just obviously in a more watery environment that is not as easily viewed or experienced. Even though the sardine run can cover a distance of around 15km, be 4 km wide and around 40m deep it is all happening mostly below the water surface. These schools of fish are referred to as bait balls and form the most mesmerizing three dimensional moving ball of fish that transforms through various shapes

in an attempt to remain protected and intact. However fatalities of sardines in large numbers are expected as predators target these bait balls relentlessly and get a very good feeding. The tell tale signs of sardines making their way past our coastline includes the sighting of sea birds diving in large flocks, dolphins moving fast in large numbers and the presence of whales such as Brydes Whales making a splash of things. The movement of the sardines can vary each year and we are not always blessed with a spectacular and close encounter as often schools will move past further out to sea or through the night. It takes good timing, clear sea and weather conditions, and a bit of luck to get to see this spectacle as a general member of the public. During these winter months with such high fish movement activities, the East London Aquarium often has the task of

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 13**

# on the move



## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

assisting with strandings that originated from this migration. Most of the time it is sea birds such as the Cape Gannet (*Morus capensis*). These birds often experience damage during the foraging as they dive at high speeds and the animal traffic just below the water surface is huge so often the attempt to catch a sardine from a height at high speed can result in underwater collisions with other predators.

At any stage during this migration or through out the year, the East London Aquarium will assist with the receiving, stabilising, and hopeful rehabilitation of marine life. Our aim is to educate and conserve, so returning marine life back to the ocean is our core activity next to educating of people on the wonders of the ocean.

There is also a reason to be both

Very little is known about why sardines choose to strand themselves along our shores

aware and cautious during this time as many more marine predators can be found following the sardine run.

This includes heightened shark activity and for those of us who enjoy water sports we need to keep in mind our exposure at sea.

It needs to be an appreciated thought that predators such as sharks are as natural a phenomenon as our much loved dolphins and to give nature the space and respect to do what needs to be done in keeping a balanced ecosystem and planet.

Every species involved in this migration has an important role and however we perceive them, as friend or foe, they are absolutely needed and are natural superheros in this migration.

For now very little is know about why the sardines choose to migrate and to strand themselves in huge numbers

along the northern shores of our country but marine science continues to look at this as a fantastic spectacle and a mystery worth working on.

For many marine biologists, filmmakers and Ocean lovers this event is iconic and has formed the subject of many documentaries and ocean trips.

To venture into the ocean and submerge yourself into this migration can be both life threatening and mind blowing all at the same time.

The ocean itself can sometimes feel like a universe of its own due to the creatures, the dynamics and the vastness which is very different sometimes to the terrestrial world we spend most of our time in.

For now keep admiring the vast magic of the ocean and pay some extra visits to the beach front incase you get the opportunity to witness some portion of the annual migration.

# Bullseye at 60m

**PATRICK KUKARD**

*patrick.kukard@yahoo.com*

**I**TS AN effortless demonstration of remarkable ability to hit a bullseye at a distance of 60 meters.

That's what Ethan de Jager (16) has achieved in just 5 years of competitive archery.

Ethan's natural talent became apparent at the age of 8 when he effortlessly wielded his cousin's bow and arrow. Resembling a Springbok lock, Ethan declined offers from his school to play rugby. His true passion lies with archery.

Ethan's mom and dad, Adri and Francios identified Ethan's potential. They serve as his unwavering foundation in all his endeavors, consistently providing encouragement and support. His dedication and self-belief influenced his parents. Adri and Francios embraced archery and have both achieved success as medalists.

There was no archery club in East London. Adri said they formed their own club in January 2023. "It was so that Ethan could start world archery as that is the discipline that he needed to compete in if he ever wanted a chance to get to the Olympics. Ethan shares his skills at the club where he assists by coaching the other members. The club has grown from 7 members to 14 members in a year.

Ethan practices 4 days a week on a farm near Lilyfontein. What is remarkable is that Ethan's coach, Mahendra Naidoo is based in Makhanda (Grahamstown). Mahendra is the Coach and Development for Eastern Cape Archery as well as the National Development Officer for South African National Archery Association. He has been coaching Ethan for a year. "One must understand that sport reveals character. From this standpoint it is up to the athlete what he/she does with these revelations," said Mahendra.

"Ethan responds extremely positively and embraces the challenges that he



**FOCUSED:** Ethan spends many hours a week honing his skills to hit the bullseye with precision. Pictures: PATRICK KUKARD

faces in archery. Being grounded and humble is what enables Ethan to excel in archery," he added.

Ethan has clear goals in archery, aiming to represent South Africa at the Olympics. His coach strategizes with him to achieve these goals, setting short, medium, and long term goals. Short term goals involve local and national tournaments, while medium term goals include Southern African Regional Tournaments.

Long term goals focus on International Tournaments and Olympic qualification.

In April Ethan participated in the 74th South African National Archery Championships, which coincided with the Africa Southern Region Championships. South Africa competed against Zimbabwe and Namibia. Ethan ultimately clinched the coveted gold medal in the final.

That is not the only success he has achieved with his bow in the last year. At u/18 level he broke 2 National records and 3 Provincial records. He shot 2 World Championship qualifying scores, 9 Protea level scores, 11 national level scores and won the National and Regional Championships.

Ethan can hold his nerve competing

against adults. Friend and "student" Charmaine Burger and her husband Camille met Ethan and his father Francois during 3D archery competitions in the Garden Route. Since 2019 they formed a team and participated in Provincial and National competitions across South Africa.

Camille and Francois competed in the Traditional class for senior males, while the author and Ethan competed in the Traditional class for females and juniors, respectively.

"Ethan and Camille formed a close bond during competition shoots. If Ethan was not on top form the day there was this thing of Camille being his "coach". Some days it was Ethan's "coaching" that kept Camille going ... From there this fondness grew," said Charmaine.

"My goal is to win gold at the Olympics. But I want to concentrate on the 70m at the World Archery Youth Championships in Canada next year" said Ethan. Inspired by the achievements of his role model Brady Ellison, a multi Olympic medalist and winner of the 2019 World Archery Champion title, Ethan is assured of his future as a professional archer.



# Female boxing champs' fight against poverty



**KO KIDS: The rising stars of youth boxing.**  
Pictures: SANDRA ALMEIDA

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**E**AST London's pioneering female professional boxer is facing a unique challenge outside the boxing ring. Sandra Leigh Almeida was deemed a maverick and labeled a traitor by Boxing SA after she received a boxing licence in New Zealand. Women's boxing was not officially acknowledged as a sport in South Africa during that period.

The uproar from boxing fans worldwide inundated the pioneering sportswoman with words of encouragement and solidarity. This watershed event ultimately paved the way for a professional era in female boxing.

The grueling hours spent in the gym, striving to maintain physical fitness and fine-tune technical skill, are no easy feat. The mental strain of traveling to an opponent's home town, facing not just the rival in the boxing ring but also their passionate home fans, takes a toll on a fighter.

Sandra has savored the triumph of competing on the global stage and clinching the South African title.

Although she may have temporarily hung up her gloves, her battle continues. The only difference lies in her adversary. From squaring off in the ring against skilled orthodox or southpaw boxers has transformed into a foe that South Africans are much more acquainted with: poverty.

Sandra is championing her cause where it is most crucial. The younger generation of our country.

"I can finally do something that has meaning in my life. That means passing on what I know in boxing to all the children out there," said Sandra.

"There are some children that have no hope for the future. Their dreams are shattered because of finances and the perception that money can buy happiness. A lot of people walk around with their heads sagging down especially children," added Sandra.

Two of the three schools where she



**SERIOUS BUSINESS: After wrapping her hands, Sandra Almeida sweats it out on the punchbag, training for success, and ends off with a sparring session.** Pictures: PATRICK KUKARD



coaches are in desperate need of sponsorship and equipment. East London is not the boxing mecca it once was. Sandra said some of the children share shoes or the shoes are too big or too small. Some don't have gum guards while others have to share clothes.

"Just like any sport, with persistence and consistency there are some children who really respond positively to boxing. It makes

them feel really great and lifts them out of a mucky state of mind, hopelessness, despair and poverty," she added.

Sandra is appealing for sponsorship from anyone interested in supporting her emerging young boxers with equipment. Donations of unused boxing gear for her initiative would also be greatly appreciated.

**Sandra can be contacted on  
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