



KRUGER2CANYON

NEWS

September 2023

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

Balule trophy hunt — how not to shoot an elephant

Don Pinnock

This is a story about an apparently illegal kill licence, a botched trophy hunt, the gratuitous pain and suffering of an elephant and the right to shoot iconic wild animals.

This article has been updated post publication to include a response from Balule Nature Reserve below. Daily Maverick apologises to Balule for not seeking comment ahead of publication.

Hunting does not provide the precision kill of an abattoir, but what happened in Maseke Game Reserve on the 3rd September was beyond acceptable, even in hunting circles. Apart from a botched hunt, it may also have been illegal.

Maseke is within the Balule Nature Reserve, which, in turn, is in the Associated Private Nature Reserves (APNR), an area to the west of Kruger National Park. There are no fences between Kruger and the APNR, so animals can and do move freely between the two.

A paying client took a shot at a bull elephant but merely wounded it. The professional hunter accompanying him then pumped four more bullets into the animal but also failed to bring it down.

The elephant took off towards the Grietjie section of the Balule reserve, a non-hunting area, pursued by the hunting party. They couldn't keep up, so a helicopter was called in. By then the animal was in Grietjie and the chopper drove the wounded animal back into Maseke where it was shot and finally killed, its body by then carrying eight bullets.

This incident is not a hunting outlier. In 2018 in Maseke, a young elephant was shot 13 times — screaming in pain within view of traumatised guests at a lodge in Parsons Nature Reserve bordering Maseke. The professional hunter in charge, Sean Nielsen, claimed the elephant had been "shot in self-defence". Nielsen is the hunting concessionaire for Maseke Game Reserve which is owned by the Maseke tribe.

According to the then Balule chairperson Sharon Haussmann, that hunt had the correct permits in place, but she said the inci-



Elephants are sentient and feel pain, which raises moral questions about hunting them. Kruger National Park, Limpopo. Photo: Canva Pro

dent "did not comply with the sustainable utilisation model of ethical hunting in accordance with the hunting protocol that governs all reserves within APNR and to which Balule and hence Maseke are bound."

Was it legal?

There is a question regarding the legality of the permit for the Maseke hunt. According to the Humane Society International-Africa (HSI/Africa), the issuing of a hunting permit contradicts a high court interim interdict which prohibits the allocation of permits for trophy hunting of African elephants, leopards, and black rhinos in South Africa.

It followed a successful legal challenge brought by HSI/Africa in 2022 against the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) and others. Judge Patrick Gamble found that the Department of Environment had failed to comply with the consultative process prescribed by the National Environmental Management.

Pending a review, the minister was therefore not permitted to issue a quota for trophy

hunting and export of elephant, black rhino, or leopard without valid non-detriment findings. The review hearing is only scheduled for January 2024 so has not been held. Therefore, according to HSI/Africa's executive director, Tony Gerrans, the prohibition on hunting of trophies still stands.

The hunt evidently sparked a "vigorous debate" on WhatsApp by Grietjie landowners furious about the incident, including about the helicopter chase on their land. In a letter to the landowners, Ian Nowak, the general manager of Balule, apologised, but said Maseke Reserve "conducted the hunt in accordance with the requirements and protocols", that the hunt was legal and that no protocol violations were committed. Balule provides the overall administrative system for Maseke, with both situated within the APNR.

HSI/Africa rejected this assurance. Gerrans said, "We are horrified by this unnecessary tragedy. Given the high court's interdict prohibiting the permitting of elephant hunts, the letter's conclusion that this hunt

was lawful is incorrect.

"Furthermore, no animal should ever experience the pain and suffering that this elephant endured. The practice of trophy hunting is not only profoundly inhumane but also poses a grave threat to our biodiversity and tarnishes South Africa's global reputation as a sustainable and responsible tourist destination. To injure, chase and kill any animal in this way is unacceptable."

Hunting in the APNR

The hunt, apart from its obvious cruelty, raises wider questions about hunting in the APNR. These reserves are unarguably prime or even core wildlife areas. And because there are no fences between the APNR and the Kruger Park, by "supporting" APNR annual offtake quotas as it does, Kruger is essentially giving permission to hunt animals which it's obliged by law to protect — with permits being granted by the provincial authority.

Within the APNR, some reserves, such as parts of Balule, Klaserie, Timbavati and Umbabat, allow hunting and others do not. Animals can move freely across the borders of neighbouring reserves, which means that protected animals from one reserve or even the Kruger Park can be killed by trophy hunters within another reserve.

Each year the APNR is allocated quotas for the hunting of a range of animals. According to Nowak, it has permission to shoot 50 elephants annually. Of these, Balule is allocated 22 and Maseke, in turn, has a licence to hunt 12. He says the APNR quota "is to allow for better breeding opportunities for the average and above average bulls." Elephant experts we contacted called that unscientific nonsense.

Questions have also been raised about general hunting offtakes in the APNR. In reply to a parliamentary request for these numbers for 2022/23 and 2023/24, Environment Minister Barbara Creecy said that SANParks was not at liberty to release them and that the request should be routed to the relevant provincial authorities.

Cont. on page 3.

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From the editors desk



Hello again all you wonderful people. Over that last month we have seen all the dominoes falling in town with respect to the water and sewage issues. As we highlighted in a published article the month before last, there is no problem with the supply of water to town – it's the maintenance and infrastructural upgrade of the systems that exist, that is seemingly the problem! So, I happily direct you to the article written by one of our investigators on page 6, titled: **'The Idiots guide to sewage'**, to get an inside line on the sewage debacle. What we need is some definitive action in this realm to sort this out once and for all. Then there are the rates hike – there's been some very vociferous comment on this matter and thankfully the Hoedspruit

Chamber has weighed in with an article this month on exactly that, and where we stand if we believe we have any objections to submit. Take note of that article.

There are a couple of regular articles that are not in this month's issue; Veggie Diva and our birding column unfortunately are not in; the Veggie Diva was ill (glad she is back in full fettle) and Mike has gone 'missing' whilst on tour. I'll make sure that both are in next month's issue.

We are always looking for journalistic submissions, so if any of you are out there and want to submit an article, please feel free to do so. If it fits what we are trying to do, and there is space, we would be happy to publish.

We are very excited to be proud media co-sponsors of the upcoming music festival in November – see the advert on page 11. Make sure you all buy your tickets on time – it's going to be a belter the likes of which Hoedspruit has not seen before!

It looks like there has been fair progress with the hospital build. I do hope all goes according to plan because Hoedspruit is in dire need of that facility, and we'll be keeping an eye open on the progress going forward.

Looking ahead, I think that we should all

brace ourselves for a dry, very hot summer. I saw that Australia recently confirmed the 'establishment' of the El Niño phenomenon. El Niño and its opposite, La Niña, are complex weather patterns resulting from variations in ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. In layman's terms, La Niña brings cooler surface temperatures to the eastern Pacific Ocean, and the upshot for southern Africa is often wetter-than-usual weather, in other regions drought. El Niño is triggered when those same surface waters heat up with the opposite effect, that being drier-than-usual-weather. You have been warned!

Finally, it was with a very sad heart that the team at Kruger2Canyon News heard of the passing of Anka Bedetti - a key team member of Elephants Alive. A beautiful person inside and out, and taken too soon. The world could do with so many more people of this mould – her passion for what she did was off the charts.

An incredible person that has left an indelible stamp on all of us. Our prayers and thoughts go out to her family and children in this difficult time – treasure the memories, and know that she is smiling down on you all. RIP Anka.



To all of you out there, live life to the full, live it like there is no tomorrow, and love the life you live! Until next time, thank you for the continued support and stay safe.



Mark Bishop - Editor

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor, It was with interest that I read a message from a dear friend of mine that is at the Rugby World Cup concerning the make-up of teams. I thought you might like to print this as information for the town.

The 2023 Rugby World Cup has kicked off and is in full swing with some great results, namely and including France's win over New Zealand. All rugby players dream to one day represent their country on the biggest stage, however it is quite a common occurrence now to see players run out for nations, that are different to their place of birth. These 'foreign born' players can often be integral parts of an international set-up, with each rugby world cup match set to portray a diverse landscape, that encapsulates the global game. Of course a player can represent a country by ancestry or residency, but it still makes a good read just to see how many players make up a certain teams who are 'foreign born'. Only two teams have no 'foreigners'.

South Africa have 0
Argentina have 0
France has 2 : Paul Willemse (lock) SA, Uini Atonio (prop) New Zealand.
Chile has 3

England has 5 : Bevan Rodd (prop) Scotland, David Ribbans (lock) SA, Billy Vunipola (back row) Australia, Manu Tuilaga (centre) Samoa, Marcus Smith (fly half) Philippines.

Fiji has 5 : three from New Zealand and two Australians.

Australia has 7 : Made up of Tonga, Fiji and New Zealanders.

Ireland has 8 : Finlay Bealham (prop) Australia, Rob Herring (hooker) SA, Joe McCarthy (lock) USA, Jeremy Loughman (lock) USA, Jamison Gibson Park (scrum half) NZ, James Lowe (wing) NZ, Bundee Aki (centre) NZ, Mack Hansen (wing) Australia.

New Zealand has 9 : Neto Laulala (prop) Samoa, Ofa Tu'ungafasi (prop) Tonga, Tyrel Lomax (prop) Australia, Samisoni Taukef'aho (hooker) Tonga, Shannon Frizel (back row) Tonga, Finlay Christie (scrum half) Scotland, Leicester Fainga'anuku (wing) Tonga, Emoni Narawa (wing) Fiji.

Romania has 9 : Mostly from France, USA and Tonga.

Wales has 10 : six are English players and the others Australian and from Tonga.

Portugal has 10 : All from France.

Italy has 12 : Players from Argentina, Germany, NZ, England, Zimbabwe, France and Wales.

Scotland has 15 : Pierre Schoeman (prop) SA, WP Nel (prop) SA, Javan Sebastian (prop) Wales, Ewan Ashman (hooker) Canada, Hamish Watson (back row) England, Jack Dempsey (Back row) Australia, Sam Skinner (back row) England, Ali Price (scrum half) England, Ben White (scrum half) England, Ben Healey (Fly half) Ireland, Cameron Redpath (centre) France, Chris Harris (centre) England, Kyle Steyn (centre) SA, Sione Tuipolotu (centre) Australia, Duhau van der Merwe (wing) SA.

Japan has 18 : Made up of players from Tonga, New Zealand, Fiji, Australia, Thailand and SA.

Tonga has 20 : Mostly made up of New Zealanders (16 of them in total) and the rest Australians.

Samoa has 24 : All made up of players from Australia and New Zealand.

Enjoy the world cup and 'let's go bokke!' Cheers Greg

Ed: Dear Greg, thanks for that. It is certainly interesting and it looks like SA could almost field a second side! Let's hope it all goes according to plan! And yes – "Go Bokke!"


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Brain teasers with a twist

- A Poultry Problem**
I bought some fowls the other day, One hundred dollars did I pay.
Each turkey did five dollars touch, Each goose did bring but half as much.
While chickens, if it must be told, For ten cents each were freely sold.
One hundred fowls in all had I, Of each how many did I buy?
- In the blank spaces, supply four words made of the same four letters.**
A _____ old woman with _____ intent
Put on her _____
And away she went.
"Hey!" she cried. "Give me, I pray, something to make me _____ today."

- Unravel this somewhat romantic scrambled riddle.**
hope lmoavne fear
- Make one word out of these two words: now dore**
- A man having a fox, a goose, and some corn, came to a river which it was necessary to cross. He could, however, take only one across at a time. If he left the goose and corn while he took the fox over, the goose would eat the corn. But if he left the fox and goose, the fox would kill the goose. How does he go about getting them all safely over the river?
- A Chronogram on Human Happiness**
Take fifty, add cipher, add five, add the fifth letter of the alphabet, and the total is the sum of human happiness.



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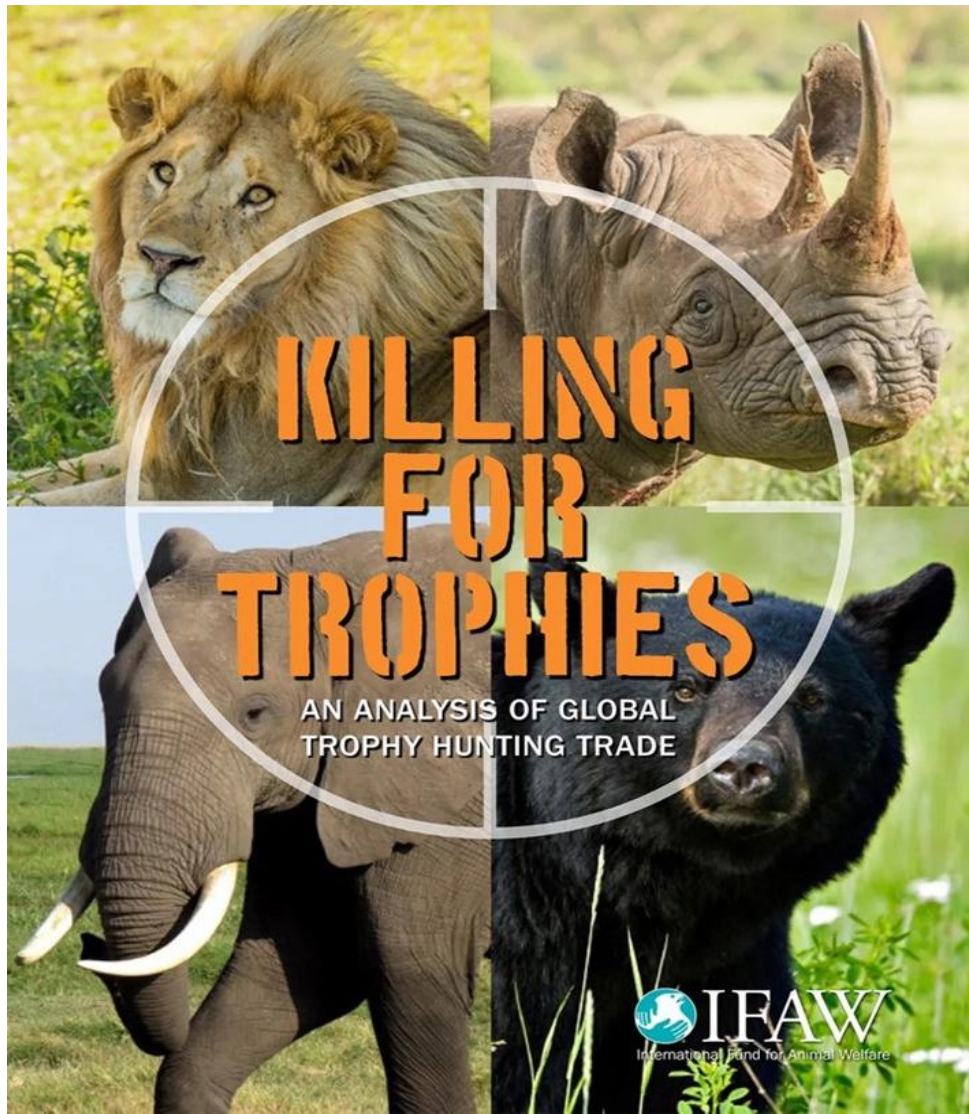
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Balule trophy hunt — how not to shoot an elephant



Trophy hunting, specifically, is a form of hunting in which the hunter's explicit goal is to obtain the hunted animal's carcass or body part, such as the head or hide, as a trophy that represents the success of the hunt. Image: ifaw / Wikipedia

Cont. from page 1

It is unclear why the minister should not wish to provide the information requested as it is certainly in the possession of her department and comprehensive replies have been provided to similar requests in previous years.

In 2021/22, SANParks supported the hunting of 4,449 animals (including 55 elephants, 64 buffaloes, 26 kudus, four wart-hogs, three hippos, nine hyenas, six giraffes and 4,265 impalas) in the APNR.

The proceeds

In 2019 (the only year for which financial figures could be obtained) hunting netted Balule estates alone R2.8-million, according to their financial statements. However, a desktop calculation using the SA Professional Hunters' standard rates, estimates income attributable to the hunting of animals allocated to Balule to be R10.9-million. So, who received the difference of R8-million?

On the same basis, hunting income for

the entire APNR was estimated to be R29-million, of which R17-million was disclosed by the APNR representatives to the Parliamentary Environmental Affairs oversight committee as having been received. Of this, only 9% was declared as having been used for community outreach.

The wider question is about the hunting of rare and protected animals. According to Gerrans, the latest incident "once again demonstrates the inhumanity of hunting sentient animals merely for bragging rights and to display parts of their bodies as trophies on a wall. Too many endangered and threatened animals continue to suffer and die within so-called nature conservation reserves in what is best described as a blood sport."

"HSI/Africa has challenged the way this horrifying activity is permitted by the government, and we call on all South African wildlife administrators to abide by the high court order which prohibits the permitting of elephant, leopard and black rhino hunts until such time as the court can rule on the

merits of the permitting process."

With clients who can't down an elephant and professional hunters who seemingly can't provide the *coup de grâce* when the clients miss, this means that a miserable fate awaits another 11 elephants for which hunting permits have been issued in Maseke.

The Balule Nature Reserves response

The Balule Nature Reserve Association ("BNRA") has noted the publication of the article client titled "Balule trophy hunt – how not to shoot an elephant" on the Daily Maverick's website on 12th September 2023. It was not approached for its comment prior to the publication of this article and wishes to record its response.

The hunt, which forms the subject of the article, was conducted legally in terms of a permit issued by the Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism Department ("LEDET") and within the Greater Kruger Hunting Protocols developed and endorsed by all the signatories to the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area ("GLTFCA") Cooperative Agreement.

The court order referenced in the article (and to which a link in the article is included) does not prohibit "the allocation of permits for trophy hunting of African elephants, leopards and black rhinos in South Africa", as is alleged by the article and by the Humane Society International.

The interdict in question applies only to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ("CITES") export permits in respect of leopards, black rhinoceroses, and African elephants. The court order itself notes that the "overall purpose of CITES is to regulate the worldwide trade in endangered species of, inter alia, wild animals and plants". Consequently, the interdict does not apply to any off-take or hunting permits issued to South African residents.

In the case of the hunt in question, the hunter was a South African resident who held a permit lawfully issued by the LEDET. The hunt was conducted legally and in accordance with all the requisite Greater Kruger Hunting Protocols.

The BNRA stands by the conclusions contained in the letter from Ian Nowak dated 5th September 2023: the hunt was legal, no protocol violations were committed and the pursuit of and follow-up shots on the elephant were consistent with the requirements contained in the Greater Kruger Hunting Protocol.

As is also stated in the letter, the BNRA's annual off-take of animals is determined by the Associated Private Nature Reserve ecological panel, reviewed and then endorsed by SANParks and the biodiversity arm of LEDET. The off-take recommendation extends to a number of different species, including elephants, buffalo, impala,

kudu, and waterbuck. Approximately 50 below-average-sized elephants are removed from reserves falling under the Associated Private Nature Reserve annually in order to allow for better breeding opportunities for the average and above-average bulls. The off-take recommendation and allocation is based on scientific data and does not amount to "unscientific nonsense", as is alleged by the unnamed elephant expert in the article.

All revenue generated from the hunting of these animals must be, and is, spent on conservation, wildlife security and community upliftment by BNRA and the Maseke Game Reserves, respectively. The meat from the elephant hunted on the Maseke Game Reserve was used to feed approximately 250 children and old-aged members of the community, in terms of BNRA and the Maseke Game Reserve's outreach program's ongoing community feeding scheme.

The BNRA denies any insinuation that the proceeds generated from hunting are spent in any other fashion. The Balule Nature Reserve is a federal system, and the income generated from hunting reflects this: the income is received at the level of the BNRA and at the level of individual regional members (e.g., Maseke Game Reserve). Equally, expenditure on conservation is incurred at both a BNRA level and at the level of individual regional members.

The article does not deal with this system and, consequently, creates a false discrepancy by comparing the income received and reported by the BNRA individually with the total income which should have been received by the BNRA and all the regional members combined.

The BNRA does not condone any illegal activity whatsoever, and especially not the illegal killing of any animals within a protected area it is tasked to manage. It works tirelessly to protect and conserve the sustainability of the biodiversity of the fauna and flora both in terms of the law and the protocols of the Greater Kruger's Open System.

This article was previously published in the Daily Maverick



An elephant bull in the Kruger National Park, Limpopo. Photo: Glado Images / Beeld / Deaan Vivier

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Spotlight – Century 21 Wildlife Properties

Century 21 Wildlife cleans up at the annual awards

On the 14th September, Century 21 South Africa had its annual price giving awards at Montecasino in Johannesburg. The annual event known as the Pearl Awards, pays tribute to the top agents in Century 21 South Africa. Pearl Award status is awarded to the Top 21 agents in the group, from 550 real estate professionals working in the 50 offices country wide.

A Pearl Award Agent signifies being one of the top sales and rental agents nationally within Century 21 South Africa. A Pearl Award Agent is characterized by their ambition, enthusiasm, extensive knowledge, remarkable success, and exemplary strength. A Pearl Award Agent serves as an inspiration and role model for all property professionals to emulate.

Awards are given to individual performances over various criteria. Century 21 franchises are grouped into three categories, based on the size of their market - not surprisingly Hoedspruit is categorised in the smallest town size category. However, the Hoedspruit Wildlife office punched far above its weight, and was able to compete with the large offices. The results were that they achieved the third highest sales turnover office in the country (out of 50 franchises), and were awarded with two Pearl Award Agents, and the National Franchisee Award.

The highlight of the awards celebration is the prestigious National Agent of the Year award. Harry Nicolaides the company CEO defined

this award as “the ultimate award in the Century 21 Group, the most prestigious and the one that everybody aspires to. This is the reason why we are all here, this is the reason why Pearl Awards exists, and in fact why Century 21 exists. In the National Agent of the Year, we find character, we find passion, we find work ethic, we find loyalty, honesty and resolve; our idol, our role model, our rock star. The Agent of the Year is the highest financial performer across sales value, gross commission, units sold and oyster points.”

With everyone hanging on every word, the 2023 award was awarded to Yvette Thompson from Century 21 Wildlife. Yvette was runner up in 2022 and 2021. Yvette also received various other national and category awards, as well as Pearl Award Agent status, for the seventh year running!

Michelle Severin achieved national 2nd runner up for gross commission earned, as well as 1st runner up in two award categories and Pearl Award Agent status for the fifth year running.

The owner and Principal, Rob Severin, was awarded National Franchisee of the Year for the second year running. The Hoedspruit office also won top Office Sales in their Category, and 2nd runner up nationally. They were also 1st runner up for National Office of the Year. Lizette Pienaar was runner up for the Administrator of the Year, for a third year running.

Century 21 Wildlife Properties would like to thank all of their clients over the years, without whom their success would not have been possible. In addition, a thank you goes out to the amazing people of Hoedspruit who make



this a wonderful community to live in. A special word of thanks goes out to all volunteers within this community who are involved in the multiple facets of Hoedspruit, from Town Watch, Farm Watch, through to Victims Support, Chamber of Commerce, Home Owners Associations and Rotary.

The winner, Agnet of the Year 2023, Yvette Thompson (above) and the C21 team, Michelle Severin, Yvette Thompson, Rob Severin and Lizette Pienaar Images supplied



Genetically Engineered Food: A Hot Debate on the Plate of Human Consumption

AI perspective 'correspondent'

Exploring the controversial terrain of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and their impact on human health.

The debate surrounding genetically engineered foodstuffs, commonly referred to as Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), continues to simmer, prompting fierce discussions among scientists, policymakers, and the public. While proponents argue that GMOs hold the key to addressing global food shortages and reducing the need for pesticides, critics raise concerns about their long-term impact on human health. In this article, we delve into the question: Are genetically engineered foodstuffs good for human consumption?

The Promise of GMOs

Proponents of GMOs point to several potential benefits. First and foremost, genetically engineered crops often possess enhanced traits, such as resistance to pests, diseases, and extreme weather conditions. These traits can boost crop yields, potentially helping to alleviate food scarcity in a world facing growing

population pressures and changing climates.

Moreover, GMOs can lead to reductions in the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides, which can have negative environmental and health consequences. By engineering crops to resist pests or tolerate specific herbicides, farmers may need to use fewer chemical inputs, reducing the risk of pesticide residues on our food and the impact on surrounding ecosystems.

Nutrient Enhancement

Another argument in favour of GMOs is their potential for nutrient enhancement. Researchers have developed genetically modified rice varieties that are fortified with essential vitamins and minerals, addressing nutritional deficiencies prevalent in many parts of the world. This could be a game-changer in the fight against malnutrition and related health issues.

Health and Safety Concerns

However, critics of GMOs express significant reservations. One of the primary concerns revolves around the long-term health effects of consuming genetically engineered food. While

rigorous safety assessments are conducted before GMOs reach the market, some argue that more comprehensive, independent, and long-term studies are needed to determine their full impact on human health.

A common worry is allergenicity. Critics fear that introducing genes from one species into another could trigger unexpected allergic reactions in some individuals. Ensuring the safety of GMOs requires ongoing surveillance and a commitment to monitoring potential health issues.

Environmental Impact

Environmental concerns also loom large in the GMO debate. While GMOs can reduce the need for chemical pesticides, they can lead to the emergence of pesticide-resistant insects and weeds, necessitating even more potent chemicals. Additionally, the potential for cross-breeding between GMOs and non-GMOs in the wild raises questions about genetic contamination and biodiversity.

Transparency and Labelling

The debate over GMOs is also about transpar-

ency and consumer choice. Advocates for GMO labelling argue that consumers have the right to know whether the products they purchase contain genetically engineered ingredients. This debate has led to the adoption of labelling laws in many regions, highlighting the importance of transparency in this contentious issue.

The debate continues

The question of whether genetically engineered foodstuffs are good for human consumption is far from settled. While GMOs offer the potential to address pressing global food and nutrition challenges, concerns about their long-term safety and environmental impact persist. Striking a balance between harnessing the benefits of GMOs and addressing these concerns remains a complex task.

In the end, the future of GMOs in our food system will likely be shaped by ongoing research, regulatory decisions, and the preferences of consumers. As we navigate this evolving landscape, the need for continued dialogue and informed decision-making cannot be overstated. The debate over GMOs is far from over, and it will continue to be a significant topic in the realms of science, agriculture, and public policy for years to come.

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Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2174061



APARTMENT IN HOEDSPRUIT R 650 000
Bedroom 1 | Bathroom 1 | Floor: 69 m²

This apartment is a great investment property, with a reliable tenant in place. It has an open plan living area and kitchen, as well as bathroom on the lower level and an upstairs bedroom. Municipal water supply and pre-paid electricity. Communal pool and braai facilities.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2156206



BLYDE WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 324 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 3 | Floor size: 360 m²

This home is privately situated and overlooks the wilderness area. The layout includes open plan kitchen, living and dining room as well as a separate scullery and a separate laundry. The living area and bedrooms all lead out to the large, covered patio with pool and elevated views.

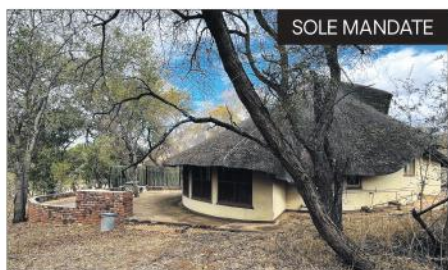
Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2143428



MAFUNYANE, KARONGWE R 14 000 000
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | Traverse: 8,000 ha

This property is stunning and has a wow factor that will take your breath away! Very exclusive, modern bush home, overlooking a seasonal river bed, located in a Big 5 reserve with 8,000 ha traverse. Sold furnished & including game viewer.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2107650



INGWELALA, BIG 5 GREATER KRUGER R 3 300 000
Traverse over 3,000 ha

50 % Share - This classic rondavel unit sleeps 8. It has 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and the enclosed wrap-around veranda accommodates another 4 single beds. The unit is situated on the banks of the seasonal Nhlalalumi river. The open patio, firepit & braai area looks toward the riverbed.

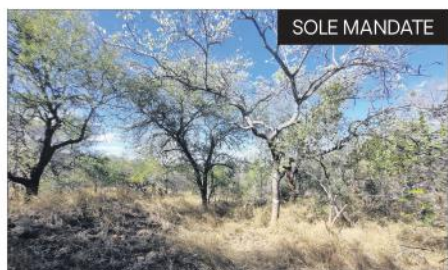
Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2187783



MODITLO WILDLIFE ESTATE, BIG 4 R 5 500 000
Beds 3 | Baths 2 | Floor: 242 m²

The house is set amongst large Jackalberry trees, on the bank of a dry riverbed. The seamless flow from indoor to outdoor living is evident in the dining and lounge areas, which lead to a covered patio. From the pool deck and boma one can take in the beautiful views. Backup inverter is installed.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2173366



ELEPHANT ROCK ECO ESTATE R 650 000
Stand size: 2,400 m²

This elevated bushveld stand features lovely trees and views over the lowveld. The stand is located in the first phase of the development. Elephant Rock Eco Estate is 240 hectares in size with 125 stands. The estate is located approximately 30 minutes out of Hoedspruit on the R530.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2152428



NDLOVUMZI R 5 200 000
Bedrooms 8 | Bathrooms 8 | Floor size: 480 m²

Set on 21 hectares and overlooking the Olifants River, this property offers four separate residential dwellings, the main unit has two downstairs bedrooms and three on the upper landing. There are three additional chalets, each of these overlooking the Olifants River

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2151582



NDLOVUMZI R 4 458 000
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | Floor size: 300 m²

This tranquil home's is situated overlooking the Olifants River and is surrounded by large riverine trees and rocky outcrops. The open plan living, dining and newly fitted kitchen are all under high vaulted ceilings that make this home light and bright and there is also a separate scullery.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2152063



COMMERCIAL LODGE R 11 000 000
Beds 8 | Baths 8 | Floor: 980 m² | Land size: 21 ha

This lodge consists of a main owner's house, central lodge area and 5 luxury treetop chalets. Sold as a going concern; this lodge has bounced back after Covid and has great potential. There are future bookings and well-trained staff. Movable items and furniture included, as well as a bakkie.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2160187



KHAYA NDLOVU GAME RESERVE, BIG 4 R 3 250 000
Stand size: 1 ha

This beautiful river site is the ideal blank canvas for you to design and build your dream bush home. The stand is set between large riverine trees on the edge of the seasonal Sandspruit river, in the exclusive Khaya Ndlovu, a low density residential reserve with only 35 stands on 1,307 ha.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2154781



RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 5 700 000
Beds 4 | Baths 3 | Floor size: 312 m²

This immaculate property is privately located in the third phase of this sought after estate. It has a comfortable living area with lounge, dining room and large kitchen. The large covered patio with pool and mountain views is great for entertaining. It has a boma area with pizza oven to the side.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2155933



RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 395 000
Beds 5 | Baths 4 | Floor size: 374 m²

This house is the ideal family home in the most wonderful location. Set on the dry river bed, in the shade of a massive Jackalberry Tree. The open plan living area is made up of a kitchen with pantry, dining area and lounge. Leading off the passage, you'll find a study, laundry and storeroom.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2171702



LISSATABA R 4 900 000
Bedrooms 5 | Bathrooms 5.5 | Floor size: 500 m²

The main building has an open plan kitchen, dining and two lounge areas, pantry, scullery, guest toilet and main en-suite bedroom. The double storey guest unit is privately located and it has 4 en-suite bedrooms. The large patio and pool deck lets you enjoy the mountain views.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2170282



PRIVATE CAMP IN BIG 5 RESERVE R 9 900 000
Beds 10 | Baths 10 | Floor: 650 m²

This 68 hectare farm is fenced within a Big 5 game reserve. There are 4 bedrooms inside the main house, which has a kitchen, scullery, laundry, office, dining room, lounge and walk in safe. The other 6 bedrooms are located in the separate chalets spaced within the garden for privacy.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2107053



MODITLO WILDLIFE ESTATE, BIG 4 R 5 899 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3.5 | Floor: 325 m²

This modern home boasts luxury, comfort and top-of-line finishes. In addition to the bushveld surroundings the home offers great outdoor spaces featuring bedroom patios, pool & covered patio with built-in braai. A double garage and back-up water storage adds to the convenience.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2157623

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“The Idiots guide to sewage”

Investigative Correspondent

Everyone in Hoedspruit is now blatantly aware of the serious sewage problem that has enveloped the town in the last month – not that it was ever absent! Where is it off to now?

The current issue

It is now the sewage has literally and categorically ‘hit the fan’. This is not, by any ‘stench’ of the imagination, something that can be fixed speedily – in fact Mopani District Municipality needs to get their ‘A’ into ‘G’ and get down and dirty! It is now time, and we as a community need to start to get more active and exert as much pressure as we can on them to get a move on.

Municipal status

If the sewage problem lies firmly at their (Mopani District Municipality) door, and there has been continual efforts by the DA and the Hoedspruit Chamber (and others) to get things moving (what looks like and feels like a fruitless undertaking), why are years going by and NOTHING is being done about it? Is it through incompetence, lack of understanding, a lack of funds, not actually having any clue of what to do, or just simply a lack of interest (because there is actually work to be done)?

It is understood that Maruleng Municipality has nothing really to do with either the water (from the Air Force Base) or the sewage – this is a Mopani District Municipality managed matter. The Air Force Base co-operates as best they can and assists where they can – Mopani however seem to be absolutely useless when approached for feedback or action – they do not know what they are doing! The only person that has any idea is Mr Petrus Ngobeni (the Manager of Maruleng Water and Sanitation) – but he only deals with issues in the town itself. He is not responsible for any pump station or the pipeline to Drakensig. He will deal with water and sewage problems “in the streets”, so as to speak.

With horror it was ascertained that there are no plans or details of where the sewage pipes (or water pipes) run in and around Hoedspruit – those details ‘have been lost’! The only person that seems to understand the system in town is Chris Dreyer from Drain Surgeon. He always helps if and when he can but is also limited in terms of what he can do from an equipment capability perspective. It is probable that this issue is just too big and needs municipal, if not national intervention.

The ‘idiots guide’

La Bamba pump station pumps sewage to the Leguaan street pump station. That pump station also gets sewage from other areas of town. At the pump station there is a shredding dam that treats the sewage to make it easier to pump to Drakensig (the Air Force Base purification plant). This shredding dam, however, has been out of commission for years. The result is that the dam fills up with sewage with no ‘shredding’ being done. This sewage then flows into two ‘pump caverns’, each of which has a pump lowered into it on a rail, by a steel block and tackle chain. The object of these pumps is to pump the sewage up the pipeline all the way to Drakensig.

The pipeline to Drakensig is three kilometres long but has NO manholes along that stretch. As mentioned before, the added problem is that no one really knows (due to a lack of plans) where the pipeline is! There is only one access point above the Kamagelo centre, but after that the pipeline position is a mystery.

Back to the pumps - the problem is that one of the pumps is out of service because the block and tackle chain has been dropped into one of the pits where a pump is and has never been extracted. The fear (supposedly) is that if the pump is activated it will break because it will become entangled with the chain. Why no one has lowered an industrial magnet to pull the chain out is not known –



Parma Dam

Image supplied

and because of the sheer volume of sewage, it appears that the pit in question cannot be drained to raise the pump and reconnect the block and tackle, to reposition the pump!

The other pit has a pump that was not quite aligned, so there was a problem pumping the sewage up the pipeline. This resulted in another temporary pipe being laid to facilitate more efficient pumping from this pit.

The pump station can work at 100% with one pump operational if there is a rotation back and forth between pumps to share the load. This is not rocket science, to understand that this facility, operating on only one pump, which is used continuously with no ‘off time’, creates the scenario where it’s only a matter of time before that pump falters through overuse.

Back to the shredder – because this is out of commission, the sewage being ‘dumped’ into the pits for pumping has not been shredded and is therefore bulky, and not the consistency that should be pumped through the pipeline. This poses a huge problem and likelihood of a blockage – in a pipeline whose position is not known and has no manholes through which to access it!

And this is exactly what has happened! The pipe from the Leguaan pump station is now blocked. The result is that no sewage can be pumped out of that pump station, and it has now filled up and continues to have sewage flowing into the station – the dam fills, the pits are full, and the only course for the sewage to flow is out of the pump station and into ‘poopspruit’, into Raptors View Estate, through Southern Cross School and into Osprey Dam on Raptors View Estate.

This is not only a dire situation, but is a very serious one, which has resulted in a resident of Raptors View Estate having samples taken and tested – it seems that nothing was being done in terms of sampling by the estate, the school or the municipalities!

The immediate issue is threefold

Firstly, the Leguaan pump station is operating on one pump only and cannot continue to cope with the deluge of sewage from the town without rotation of the pumps at the pump station.

Secondly, there is now a blockage in the pipe to Drakensig, and save for a stroke of luck, this will be very, very difficult to find should the blockage not be in close vicinity to the pump station. The lack of manholes on the three-kilometre stretch of pipe poses huge problems.

Thirdly, a contributing factor to this disaster is the fact that load shedding hampers the sewage pumping process. This would be quite simply solved if the generator, which is housed close to the pump station was in working order. This generator has not been working for many years (it may or may not be in working order), but the problem is that the automatic switch-over to generator power from Eskom power, at times of load shedding, is broken.

It seems that Hoedspruit town now faces

a lengthy time period until this matter is properly and finally solved, unless the Limpopo and/or the National government get involved and action a repair process or upgrade (preferably) as a matter of urgency. Right now, they are literally floundering in the dark.

Water tests

The results of the independent water tests have been shared with the relevant parties involved. These tests have revealed that there are serious pathogens in the sewage overflow, but thankfully this is a localised. We are not only talking about a potential dire consequence for us humans, but also a potential devastating effect on the wildlife in the area.

There has been action by Raptors View Estate and Southern Cross School in adding a bacterial/enzymatic treatment to oxygenate the sewage, to temporarily depress the pathogen status and the odour. It also aids in the faster degradation of the effluent. This was purchased from a company, Biochem, in KwaZulu Natal who had dealt with sewage spills in the past, and so have ample experience in this field. The chemical application (a ‘brick’ placed in the flow below the causeway near the pump station), will lead to an algal bloom which will then be contained and controlled by further applications of chemicals to target ammonia and nitrites (by-products of the degradation process), until normality is achieved. It must be stressed that the chemicals used had the caveat prior to purchase of being environmentally safe and friendly. This may well be an ongoing intervention until the sewage overflow problem is solved.

Many agencies have got involved including Afriforum, Raptors View Estate, the DA, the Chamber of Commerce, Maruleng Municipality, Mopani District Municipality, and the Department of Water and Sanitation from Mpumalanga. One may question why Mpumalanga is involved? It is simply because of the Lower Olifants Catchment Management Forum being run out of Mpumalanga, and because of the seriousness of the situation (which they realise), they are involved because of their management of that catchment area. It boils down to a situation that at all costs they need to prevent pollution in the wider lower Olifants catchment area – and how about Hoedspruit itself?! Clearly the Lower Olifants Catchment Management Forum view this as enough of a threat to be involved.

On the other side of the hill – another ‘leak’

It is well known that the purification plant at the Air Force Base is running well beyond 100% capacity, and it is patently not coping. In fact, the sewage is flowing from the plant and onto the next-door farm. Of course, being like water, the sewage seeks the line of least resistance and flows down a drainage line into a dam. From there it flows out and continues down the drainage line and into

another dam and eventually into a dam near Parma Nursery. It seems that Parma Nursery built the dam to irrigate their plants, but the water quality was so bad it was never used. The outflow from that dam is clearly polluted and smells of sewage. On inspection, dead fish were seen in the stream below the dam, and bleached algae hinted at seriously contaminated water.

The problem clearly has two prongs to it – the problem in town and the problem at the Air Force Base. They are as important as each other, but it is believed that the Air Force Base is doing their part in providing solutions to their side of the problem – it’s now up to us to find proper solutions on our side of the fence.

A worrisome conclusion

Thankfully we have the likes of Ms. Marie Helm on our side, and it is with her dedication and fortitude (together with others), that this problem has now been escalated to the Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation on a national level. We thank all the individuals involved for their efforts. At the time of going to print Hoedspruit waits in anticipation for some effective solutions.

At the time of writing this article, it was advised that the Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation in Giyani had joined the fray, and had spoken to Mopani District Municipality (Dr Shilowa) who confirmed that they - Mopani - were sending a contractor (PSP) to deal with the problem. Of course, the million-dollar question is when does that contractor turn up? Will it in fact be that contractor or will they palm it onto someone else? Hopefully by the time you read this, the contractor (whoever that may be) will have come and gone.

This problem is not going to go away unless there is a serious commitment, action, and a refurbishing of the current infrastructure – it’s as simple as that. We cannot ‘fix’ today what will continue to be a problem tomorrow.

In the meantime, the sewage flows continue unabated. The stench remains unbearable. The likelihood of disease is looming precariously on the precipice. Municipal action is limited, and we wait Christmas is around the corner, and the possible knock-on effect to our economy in Hoedspruit and the surrounds, might rest firmly on the shoulders of those that are indifferent and possibly incapable.



Poepspruit, Raptors View (top) and dead fish below Parma dam
Images supplied

Rates and Taxes – is your objection valid?

Hoedspruit CS

Hoedspruit residents have gone to great lengths to make their objections heard, after they received their latest municipal statements. Social media has been buzzing with outrage, threats, and boycotts. The question remains, is your objection valid and what can be done?

Let's look at the lengths that the local municipality and the community organizations have gone to, to notify residents of the valuation process. Let us list the chronological order of important dates in the process:

14th November 2022

Notice on the General Valuation Roll (GVR) - the municipality put out a notice to property owners about the compilation of the new valuation roll for 2023-2028 in terms of Section 41 (1). (A Valuation roll is updated every 5 years.)

26th November 2022

Valuation Roll Update on the Hoedspruit Town FB page – Botha Lovegrove Inc wrote a letter to explain the valuation process and the rights of residents and valuers during the valuation of a property.

10th January 2023

Maruleng Rate Payer's Meeting – residents were invited in December to the annual rate payer's meeting to ask questions about the property valuations and property rates. Out of the whole Maruleng area, only 48 people attended the meeting. Minutes were taken by HCS and distributed via

WhatsApp groups.

12th January 2023

Courtesy Public Notice – property owners were requested to submit their queries about the GVR from 13th January to 12th February 2023 and apply for incentives from 13th January to 31st April 2023.

17th January 2023

Supplementary valuation roll was circulated on WhatsApp groups.

18th January 2023

GVR for 2017 to 2023 was circulated on as many WhatsApp groups.

4th April 2023

Public Notice calling for inspection of the GVR – residents were invited to view the GVR and lodge their objections from 14th April to 31st May 2023.

13th April 2023

Notice on draft rates policy – The resolution of rates passed was made public and the community requested to comment on the revision from 17th April to 26th May 2023.

14th April 2023

Certified GVR2023 was posted on the Hoedspruit Town FB Group.

10th May 2023

IDP/Budget Public participation – Residents were invited to the meeting to hear about the new budget and give them a chance to raise any concerns or ask questions. MLM and MDM officials answered questions.

18th May 2023

A friendly reminder by HCS was posted

on Facebook pages to remind residents to check the valuation roll and lodge their objections before 31st May 2023.

From the above it is clear that there was no lack of communication or invitations to the public to attend meetings, ask questions or raise objections.

The real question is why didn't residents raise queries or objections during this time – or show up for meetings? To that, the answer is unclear. An educated guess based on informal feedback is that the community has lost their faith in municipal processes and service delivery, so they don't think that their attendance or objections will have any bearing on the outcome of processes or policies like these.

This premise is incorrect but has been a tried and tested activity for many residents all over South Africa. We believe our discussions and complaints around braai fires and on social media will change the outcome of issues and service delivery. But what influence does it have if not raised in public participation forums or via purposeful organisations? The simple answer is NONE.

HCS has opened its doors during their launch in March, to businesses and residents, to join forces in defending public and municipal policy issues. Residents are vocal about their support for HCS initiatives but when it comes to pledging official support, there is but a few. We have said it before, and we will say it again...if you don't join HCS we won't be able to fight socio-economic

injustices or join affiliate organisations who can fight the bigger fights. Strength comes in numbers; it is as simple as that.

OK, that's enough with the "If the shoe fits" attack. What to do now?

There are four things to do: firstly, objections can only be raised for your own property(s) and not against the entire valuation roll. Secondly, if you have raised your objection in time and have not received feedback – the municipality has asked for time until 30th September to send feedback. Thirdly, if you have raised your concern and don't agree with the feedback, raise a dispute. A copy of a template letter can be obtained from hoedspruitcs@gmail.com. And lastly, if you have not raised/submitted your concern, contact the accounts department or the municipal manager to ask what recourse to take, by providing them with as much information as possible.

Once the feedback period has lapsed and disputes have been submitted, we will consult with affiliate organisations on recourse for residents. We will never turn a blind eye to residents or businesses, but we are respectful towards the legal processes involved in the valuation processes. Patience is a virtue.

HCS would like to thank the Maruleng Accounts and Valuations Department and the Municipal Manager, for making yourselves available to answer questions, provide feedback and assist residents. The community appreciates you!

Fast Heroes 2023 campaign: calling on South African primary schools to help save lives

Building on the success of its 2022 pilot campaign in the Western and Eastern Cape provinces, the award-winning health education initiative, FAST Heroes, is gearing up for its 2023 campaign, inviting primary schools nationwide to register and help save lives.

Endorsed and supported by the World Stroke Organisation, FAST Heroes has an important mission: to enlist a million young heroes who will play a crucial role in safeguarding their grandparents from the potential impact of a stroke. Designed for primary school children aged 5 to 9 years, this compelling campaign aims to equip them with the ability to recognise stroke symptoms and understand the urgency of immediate action – to call an ambulance.

Through a 5-week curriculum, facilitated by teachers and involving weekly activities and reinforcement, children learn and internalise the signs of a stroke and the steps to take during a stroke emergency. The educational resources within the FAST Heroes program are designed to captivate young minds. They are interactive, engaging, and fun. Beyond imparting life-saving skills, the program also nurtures values such as empathy and compassion.

"Statistics show that stroke is a serious concern in South Africa and globally, ranking as the second leading cause of death and the

third leading cause of disability worldwide. Unfortunately, many stroke victims don't receive timely medical care due to a lack of awareness about the key signs. Children hold the power to change this by educating their families," emphasises Prof Naidoo, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa.

Embracing their inherent passion for learning and sharing, children are encouraged to become health advocates and "superheroes" within their families, particularly with their beloved grandparents. The primary focus is on empowering them to educate their families, particularly their grandparents, about the signs of a stroke and the importance of quickly calling an ambulance.

The campaign introduces children to the three most prevalent stroke symptoms through the engaging analogy of "the evil Clot" striking. Guided by a cast of animated characters including retired superhero grandparents and their grandchildren - Timmy and Tanya, children become adept at identifying the three key signs of a stroke: facial drooping, arm weakness, and speech impairment.

The characters emphasise the importance of promptly calling an ambulance. This vital process gave rise to the acronym FAST, reflecting the symptoms of a stroke and the ur-

gency of getting prompt medical attention.

During the pilot program in 2022, Nina Ras from Brackenfell Primary School in the Western Cape was a finalist for the Teacher's Award. She received recognition as South Africa's Teacher of the Year for her unwavering dedication to the campaign. With Nina's guidance, over 500 learners participated in the FAST Heroes initiative.

Nina shared her insights about the program, "Being part of the FAST Heroes campaign has been a rewarding experience. Witnessing the enthusiasm and dedication of our young learners as they become agents of change is truly inspiring."

The FAST Heroes campaign was conceptualised by the Department of Education and Social Policy at the University of Macedonia in Europe. The campaign's implementation in South Africa is made possible through the support of the Angels Initiative by Boehringer Ingelheim. The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA), a non-profit organisation, is the chosen local partner for this initiative.

Renathe Van Der Merwe, the national coordinator for Fast Heroes, says "With global stroke figures on the rise, recognising stroke symptoms and knowing how to respond are vital life-skills. Children serve as exceptional messengers for disseminating this crucial

message to adults around them. I extend a challenge to schools to join forces; together, we can make a transformative difference and save lives, one grandparent at a time!" Keep an eye on the FAST Heroes social media pages to find out when the next webinar will be hosted. Schools can join these webinars for an introduction to FAST Heroes.

To learn more about this life-changing campaign or to register, please visit www.fastheroes.com
<https://www.facebook.com/FastHeroesSouthAfrica>
https://www.instagram.com/fast_heroes_south_africa/

Tanya, Timmy and Duke



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Keen to save rhinos? Focus on their rear ends –

Fred Kockott and Matthew Hattingh

Amid the increasingly bloody poaching conflict, a more nurturing approach is required to further rhino conservation, says a former head of conservation at SA National Parks.

A name change at the age of seven gave Hector Magome the steel to face life's battles on his journey to become a leading rhino conservationist.

When the going gets tough, 62-year-old Magome likes to remember his mom, and how, when he was a boy of seven, she gave him a new name.

"She sat me down, touched both shoulders and said: 'From today you are Hector. Don't let anyone call you by your old name!'"

Hector, of course, recalls the mythical Greek hero of the Trojan War, a warrior revered for his bravery and honour. The name means "steadfast" or "holdfast".

Magome describes his mother – who as it happened loathed her own name, Lettie – as both "an ordinary maid in Johannesburg during South Africa's apartheid era" and a "fierce matriarch".

She was a woman feared and respected by the family, including her own parents.

"She had that aura of authority and the wisdom to know the power of a name," says Magome. "My mother went on to tell me that I was destined for great things... She died two years later, but those words have stuck in my head. They have always helped me to take on many of life's battles."

And battles aplenty, there have been for Magome.

The former head of conservation at SA National Parks (SANParks) has endured the boardroom kind, which led to his ousting on "spurious grounds", faced up to the fight against rhino poaching, and overcame poverty in his own personal struggle to make it in the world.

Wide approach

On rhinos and their preservation, Magome believes a wider approach is needed and he will be explaining how at the 12th Oppenheimer Research Conference, in Midrand from 4 to 6 October.

The annual conference has grown since 2010 to become an important event on the global academic calendar, showcasing innovative research in the environmental and natural sciences.

Magome, who is one of conference's key presenters, will reflect on a lifetime's work on the frontline of protected area management, the surge in rhino poaching and wildlife trafficking over the past decade, and how state and private sector partnerships can combat wildlife crime.



Hector Magome

Magome shares the vision of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) that wild African rhinos will thrive across the continent – if given the space, and protection, to do so.

He is encouraged by latest statistics from the IUCN's African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) showing that rhino poaching abated within most African range states in 2022.

According to the AfRSG, the overall poaching rate on the continent is now below the 3.5% threshold above which populations will decline.

"And let's not forget," says Magome, "that all the white rhinos we have in South Africa today grew from fewer than 100 rhinos in the 1950s."

At the CITES 19th Conference of the Parties



White rhino mother and calf. Mothers poached means calves orphaned – only the lucky ones survive
Photo Leon Molenaar/ Flickr

(CoP19) in Panama last year, the AfRSG reported that by the end of 2021, there were more than 15 024 rhinos (2 056 black rhinos & 12 968 white rhinos) in South Africa, making up 68% of the total of Africa's free roaming rhino population, estimated at 22 137.

Rhino populations have since gone up by more than 5%, says the AfRSG in a soon to be released report.

Even amid the devastating poaching scourge, the AfRSG predicts that rhino populations will continue to increase in the various range states across Africa, in particular Namibia, Kenya, Mozambique, Botswana, Tanzania, Malawi, South Africa, and possibly Zimbabwe and Uganda.

But in South Africa, the poaching challenge has proven difficult to solve, says Magome.

When Magome joined SANParks in 1996, there were about 10 000 white rhinos in the Kruger National Park. Today there are barely 2 000 white rhinos left in Kruger.

Dismayed

Magome is dismayed by the failure of the state to protect rhinos in national parks, making them an easy target, for poachers.

"All poachers know that the will to protect them is low," says Magome. This is to be expected when "our law enforcement officers can't even protect women and children."

And he is particularly concerned about how vulnerable white rhinos are to poaching.

Unlike its cousin, the black rhino, which is aggressive and dangerous, white rhinos are "sitting ducks for bullets", says Magome.

Bumbling giants

"They are bumbling giants that even ardent big game hunters should find repugnant to kill," says Magome. "They tame quick, live in open areas, and do not run away (from people), so are easy pickings for poachers."



An inquisitive white rhino – viewed through a camera lens, rather not the sights of a gun
Photo: Jacques Briam

Parks. That was easy. Commercial farmers are businessmen who sold land when money offers were good."

Controlled hunting

On concerns that some private game farms that bought Kruger's rhinos were involved in the sports-hunting industry, Magome, and the AfRSG, note that there are more black and white rhinos today in countries that allow hunting and controlled recreational hunting than in countries that don't.

Although Magome is not an avid fan of big game hunting – "personally I would never want to hunt rhino, elephant or lion" – the professional hunting does contribute significantly to conservation, says Magome.

Without this revenue source private rhino farmers and game reserves would lack the financial incentive to keep wild animals, says Magome.

He said this had already happened in the case of the largest white rhino farmer, John Hume. "He recently sold about 2 000 rhinos to retire from rhino conservation", say Magome.

Life journey

At the time Magome left SANParks, it had already been quite a journey for the boy from Bapong – "a village between Brits and Rustenburg, in the North West Province, where the Marikana Massacre took place."

Magome describes his childhood, one of 10 siblings, as tough.

The family survived on a little state pension from his grandparents and "a penny here and a pound there" earned by his grandparents, working for others in the village.

"I was the only boy among the children. As a result, I was raised to do all the things that girls could do. That made me independent by the age of 12, and I was soon taking on part-time jobs after school, including garden work or picking crops for neighbouring white farmers."

"After I matriculated in 1981, I worked for a year to save enough money for first-year studies in BSc (Education) at the former University of Bophuthatswana."

Diligence

"I knew that I was good enough to secure a bursary to complete my studies," says Magome.

He says his diligence ultimately attracted the attention of biology Professor Michael Parr, who encouraged him to study wildlife and nature conservation.

"After getting my degree, Prof Parr designed a full-time BSc Honours programme for me. Assisted by three mentors, I conducted research into grasses and the feeding habits of the white rhinoceros. Those field trips instilled in me an undying love for nature," says Magome.

Mentors

These role models and other mentors helped Magome complete two, overlapping MSc degrees. One was at Wits University, studying the habitat selection and feeding behaviour of the sable antelope in Pilanesberg. The other was an MSc in Wildlife Biology at Colorado State University in America, financed by a USAID Equals Opportunity Study Grant.

"Armed with two MSc degrees, I earned myself the unfortunate title of being called the first black South African to become a wildlife ecologist in 1991," laughs Magome.

That year, Magome became part of a team that converted 60 000 hectare cattle farms into the Madikwe Game Reserve in the North West Province.

He went on to serve as acting CEO of formerly Bop Parks before joining SANParks in 1996.

While as acting CEO of Bop Parks, he arranged for the first five white rhinos to be translocated (by road) to Khama Rhino Sanctuary in Botswana.

Soon after joining SANParks, he helped move 30 white rhinos from SANParks into the Okavango Delta, and they too have increased to over 2 000.

Cont. on page 9

not their horns – says veteran conservationist

Cont. from page 8.

Through this, and other efforts, Botswana became home to a significant white rhino population, says Magome.

tion, says Magome.

After SANParks, Magome spent a year in Cameroon, followed by two years in Malawi and Zambia, where he was inspired by what had been done to combat wildlife crime.

Malawi, once considered a capital for trafficking wildlife products, had effectively addressed wildlife crime within four years through partnerships between the state and various non-profit entities.

“Poachers and traffickers were snowed under by an avalanche of multi-sectoral teams. This included changing policies and laws, through to working with the police at crime scenes to help secure prosecutions,” says Magome.

“Arrests were followed with poachers spending time in jail. No deterrent is stronger than spending time,” says Magome.

In stark contrast, in the decade from 2013 to 2023, South Africa’s criminal justice system has let poachers and traffickers kill rhinos and traffic their horns with relative ease, says Magome.

The same applies to other environmental crimes, ranging from daily eyesores of littering to serious water pollution affecting the entire South African landscape.



White rhinos prefer herds which makes them easy targets for poachers

Photo: Jacques Briam/Wild About The Wild

Private prosecution

Against this backdrop, Magome says he was encouraged by the ground-breaking private prosecution and conviction in 2019 of British Petroleum SA for building 17 fuel stations in Gauteng Province without proper environmental assessments and authorisations.

The case against BP was initiated by a small legal entity, Uzani Environmental Advocacy CC, set up by a lawyer, Gideon (Kallie) Erasmus. It was the first ever successful private prosecution in South Africa of an oil giant for environmental offences using our environmental laws.

“Through Uzani, Gideon demonstrated that private prosecution can indeed complement the State in fighting environmental crimes. The battle is not lost, and the war can be won.”

Currently, the dehorning of rhinos is among strategies adopted to curb rhino poaching in South Africa.

((Photo: DESPERATE MEASURES: Photo © Neville Ngomane | WildShots Outreach))

But dehorning is not fool proof - even dehorned rhinos fall victim to poachers, says Magome. Neither is fortress-styled protection a viable long-term solution due to costs.

Reducing the demand for horns is key, says Magome, who is likely to elaborate on this the forthcoming Oppenheimer Conference.

And he may well quote Richard Emslie, a rhino expert for the IUCN’s Species Survival Commission.

Emslie describes anti-poaching efforts as a focus on the front of rhinos (to save their horns) as opposed to a focus on the rear of the rhinos (where they push out calves). “Focusing on their rear means moving them to areas where they can safely breed,” says Magome.

“And if we improve policing technology, work with law enforcement officers on collecting evidence on arrests, on sentencing, and on monitoring convicted rhino poachers (after their release from prison), we could significantly reduce poaching,” he says. “What we need is focus, sheer will and determination to change bad situations.”

Rhino poaching on the wane since 2015

There has been decrease in rhino poaching in Africa from 2015 through to the end of 2022. This is according to a report soon to be released by the African Rhino Specialist Group

(AfRSG) of the International Union Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The AfRSG has also reported an increase in African rhinos from 22 137 at the end of 2021 to more than 23 000 at the end of 2022. These statistics are due to be released on World Rhino Day (September 2023).

Situated on the border with Botswana close to the Kalahari Desert, Madikwe Game Reserve has become the fifth-largest game park in South Africa, offering visitors a Big 5 safari experience over 750km². Magome directs Madikwe Futures Company (MFC), which raises funds to maintain the reserve from tourism and lodges. Photo courtesy of Flowcom | Wikimedia Commons.



Hope for rhinos as a part of our natural heritage

Louise David

World Rhino Day, celebrated on September 22nd every year, is a global initiative aimed at raising awareness about the importance of rhinos and their conservation. South Africa, with its rich biodiversity and unique ecosystems, plays a significant role in the global effort to protect these magnificent creatures. This year’s World Rhino Day comes with exciting news as African Parks, a prominent conservation organisation, has made a ground-breaking, last-minute purchase of 2 000 rhinos.

Established in 2010 by WWF-South Africa, World Rhino Day recognises the dire conservation status of rhinos and their importance in our natural world. It has since become a day to celebrate these incredible animals and highlight the urgent need for their conservation and protection within Africa’s key natural landscapes.

Rhinos are iconic creatures, known for their prehistoric appearance and their vital role in maintaining the balance of ecosystems. Unfortunately, they face numerous threats,

primarily driven by poaching for their horns. Rhino horn is a highly prized item in some cultures for its perceived medicinal properties, and for its indication of wealthy social status leading to rampant illegal trading and poaching.

The celebration of World Rhino Day serves as a reminder of the urgency to protect these magnificent animals and raise awareness about the devastating consequences of poaching, not only for the animals themselves, but also the impact of losing this keystone species from protected areas. Rhinos play a vital role in maintaining the health of our ecosystems and serve as an indicator of overall health within natural landscapes.

South Africa is home to the majority of the world’s rhino population, making it a critical player in rhino conservation efforts. The country boasts two species of rhinos: the white rhino and the black rhino. Both species are an integral part of South Africa’s natural heritage.

Southern white rhinos are the most numerous rhino species globally, and are primarily found in southern African countries, including South Africa. These gentle giants play

a crucial role in shaping the landscape by creating water holes and clearing pathways, benefiting various other species. Their counterpart, the black rhinos, are known for their solitary nature and are more aggressive than their white counterparts. They are browsers and help maintain vegetation diversity, which is essential for other herbivores in the ecosystem.

Rhinos are an emblem of our nation’s wildlife heritage and are a major draw for tourists, contributing significantly to the country’s economy through wildlife tourism. With South African Heritage Day falling on the 24th of September, there is no better time to celebrate our wealth of natural beauty and the importance our natural heritage holds for the health of global ecosystem functioning.

African Parks’ recent acquisition of 2 000 rhinos is a ground-breaking step in rhino conservation. This move demonstrates their commitment to protecting these endangered species from the threat of poaching and habitat loss.

The acquisition includes both black and white rhinos and will be distributed across

African Parks’ network of protected areas. African Parks employ rigorous anti-poaching measures and community engagement strategies, to ensure the safety and well-being of these rhinos. This initiative aligns with their overarching goal of preserving critical habitats and securing the future of Africa’s wildlife.

The purchase of such a significant number of rhinos not only bolsters global rhino populations, but also underscores the importance of protected areas in rhino conservation. By focusing on habitat protection and management, African Parks ensures that rhinos have secure environments in which to thrive, and promote the recovery of their populations across their natural habitats throughout Africa.

As we celebrate World Rhino Day, let us remember that the survival of rhinos depends on our collective efforts. We must continue to raise awareness, support conservation organisations, and work together to combat poaching and habitat destruction, ensuring that rhinos remain an integral part of South Africa’s natural heritage for generations to come.

Once in a Blue Moon

Ben Coley

For as long as mankind has been watching the sky, one object more than most has stood out in the glittering heavens. The Moon is the Earth's only large, natural satellite. It was born around the same time as the Earth when a Mars-sized object (we now call Theia) collided with our embryonic planet ejecting millions of tonnes of material into our orbit. Over a few thousand years, gravity worked its magic, pulling together the debris and sculpting it into a massive sphere of rock that has been orbiting us for four and half billion years.

Its history and movement is complicated, but people have watched its rise and fall, and morphing of phases for millennia, using it to help with navigation, time keeping and more recently, as a way of decoding the history of our solar system.

Did you know that the words 'month', 'Monday' and 'menstruation' all come from the word Moon (in Latin, the word for month is 'Mensis'? It was the Romans who gave us the 12 month calendar system, as a way to reconcile the year's periods with the number of full moons witnessed in a year.

However, due to its complicated orbit, there are sometimes 13 full moons...it is this phenomenon that has given rise to the now common phrase, 'once in blue moon'.

In the modern world, this event refers to the second full moon witnessed in a calendar month, and, as the name suggests, this only happens very rarely – only once every 2 to 3 years. It takes the Moon twenty nine and a half days to complete this cycle, in what is known as its synodic period, and thus for us to witness it twice, the first event must occur very early on in any given month.

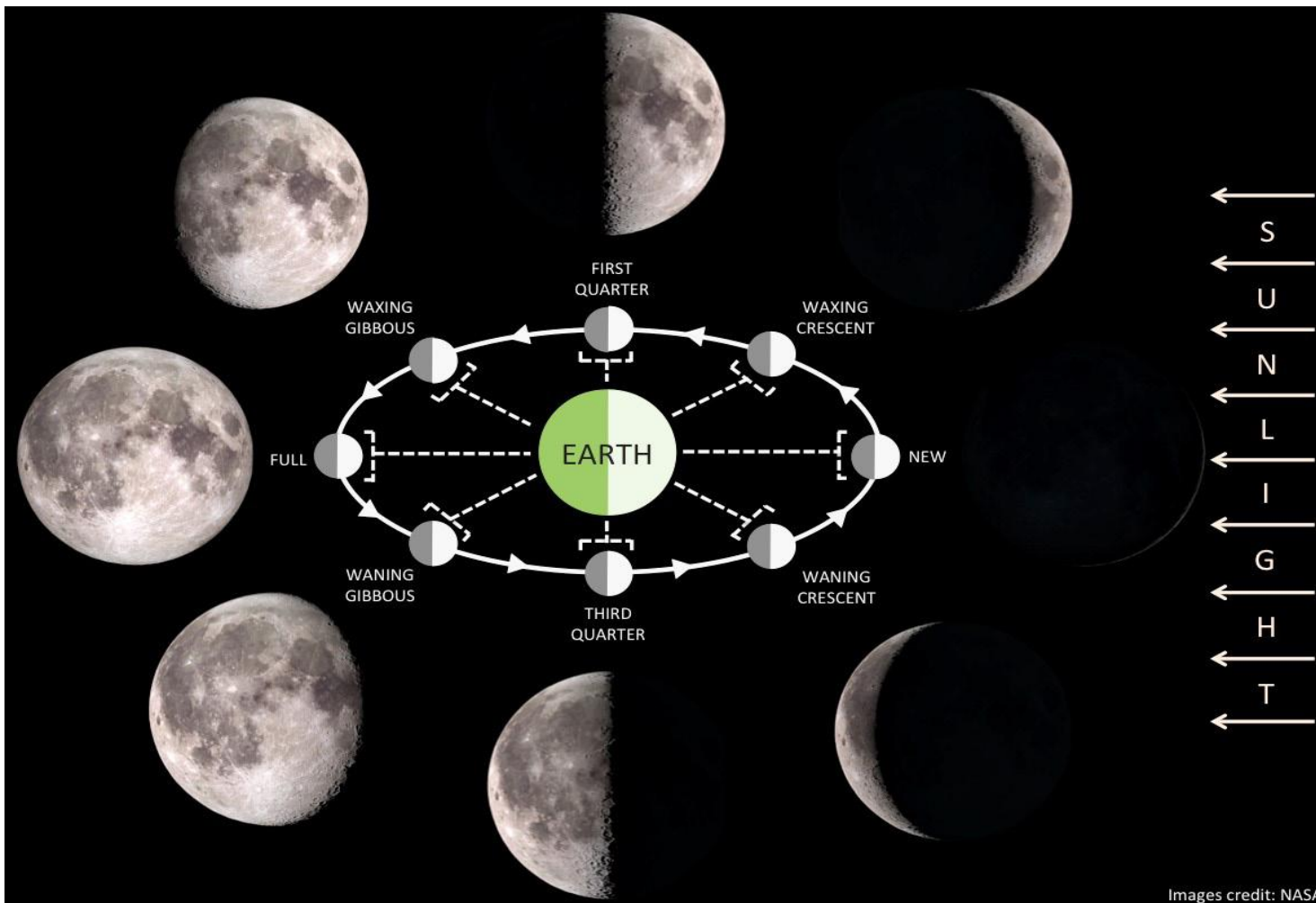
The first full moon last month was on the 2nd August, but on the 31st of August, the moon completed its cycle again, gracing the world with the second full moon of the month.

This interpretation is a bit of a misnomer however, and the original definition of a 'blue moon' stems from the farming community. The year used to be divided into four seasons of three months, based on the Sun's movement as it passed from summer solstice to spring equinox, to winter solstice and to the autumnal equinox. When four full moons were witnessed in an astronomical season, the third was labelled a 'blue moon'.

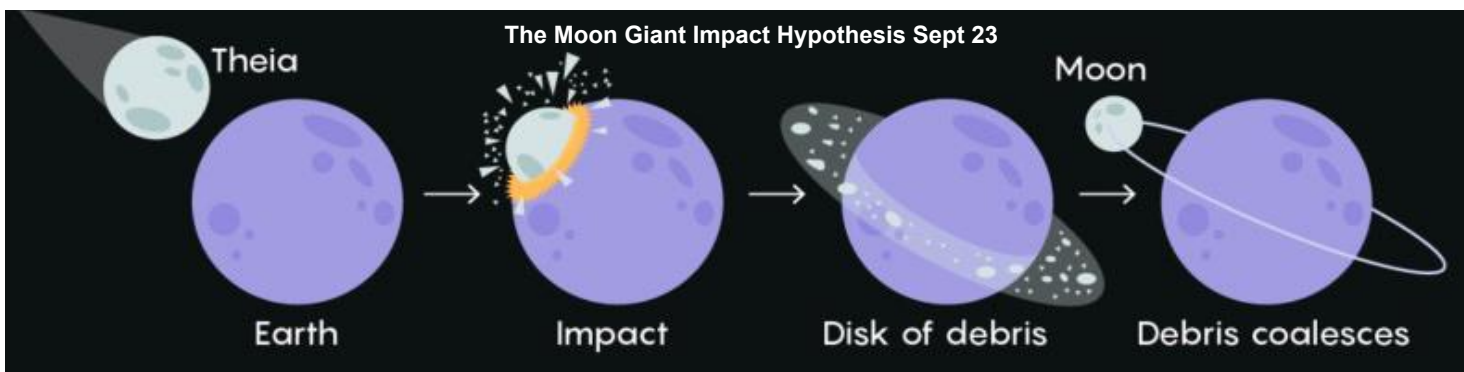
It was only in 1946, thanks to a poorly worded article in Sky and Telescope magazine, that the more modern definition was adopted. Interestingly, in a month with either no new moons, or two new moons, it is known as a 'dark moon'.

Monthly Blue Moons	Seasonal Blue Moons
May 31 st 2026	Aug 19 th 2024
Dec 31 st 2028	May 20 th 2027
Jan 30 th 2029	Aug 24 th 2029

This table (above) shows the occurrence of the next three 'blue moons'.



Images credit: NASA



It is worth noting that, for either definition, the Moon never manifests as the colour blue, much to the disappointment of many excited onlookers. There have been a few occasions where the Moon has appeared blue to naked eye observations, but these are all due to atmospheric conditions. Volcanic eruptions and massive forest fires have been known to affect the wavelengths of light penetrating the atmosphere and cast an eerie blue hue upon its face, but the Moon itself never manifests with a natural azure glow.

As another interesting, side-note, half of the Moon's surface is always lit by the Sun. The only difference is the angle that we view it from here on Earth, and thus *how much* of the lit area we can see. When the Moon is full, the Sun is on the opposite side of the Earth, thus illuminating the Moon's full face from our perspective. As the Moon orbits Earth, its angle changes and we see less and less of the lit half, until the Moon is between us and the Sun (New Moon). When this happens, the far side of the Moon is still up by the Sun, but we are not privy to this light until it passes the Sun and

we see the lit area growing until full once again. This is what gives rise to the lunar phases we know so well. As the amount of light lessens, the Moon is said to be *waning*, and when it is returning to full, it is *waxing*.

Full Moons have often been associated with behaviour, in both animals and people. The phenomenon has been around for almost as long as the Earth and it is thus not surprising that life has adapted to its changing light. There are countless examples in nature of organisms reacting to lunar phases. Dung beetles navigate by the light of the Moon, taking a bearing from its light to guide their ball-rolling antics. Birds use the position of the Moon to aid in navigation. The joint pine, or Mormon's tea (*Ephedra foeminea*) is a tree species found in the Mediterranean region that uses the light of the Moon to aid in its reproduction. It is a gymnosperm, meaning that it produces no flowers, but is reliant on nocturnal moths and flies to pollinate itself. During full Moon, it produces a sweet, sticky fluid that glows in the moonlight to attract its suiters.

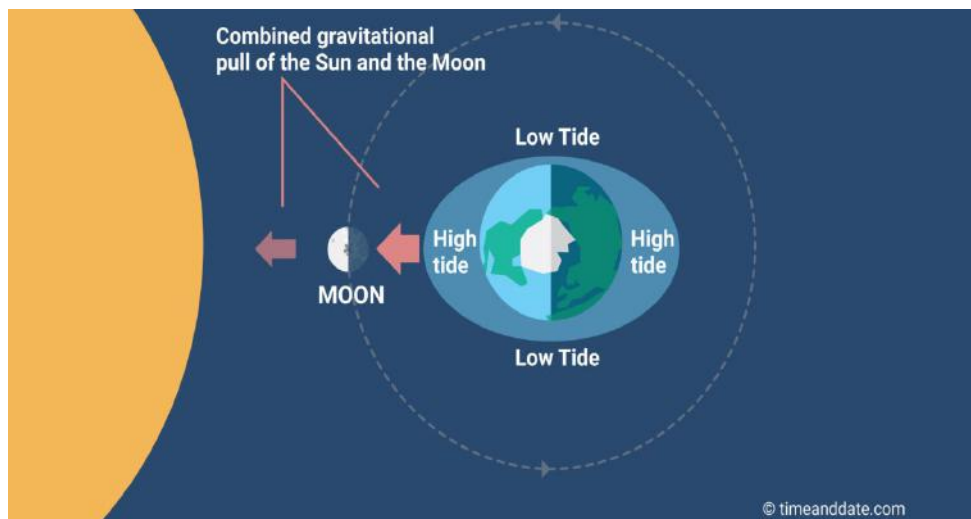
Perhaps the most famous example of organisms using the lunar cycle is found

in corals. These amazing creatures only spawn once a year, just after a full Moon, when the water temperature is just right. They do this because the full Moon causes strong tides, aiding their reproductive cells to be spread far and wide by the ocean's currents.

It is worth noting again here however, that while the Moon causes our tides, its phase does not play any role in tidal *strength*. In fact, its tidal pull on our oceans is the same regardless of its phase. The Moon's mass (and influence on our water) does not change at all as it moves around the Earth, but at full Moon, the Sun, Earth and Moon are all lined up in single direction (known as 'syzygy'), and the combined influence of both the Sun and the Moon pulling on the same plane accentuate the affect. This is known as a 'spring tide' and the addition of the Sun's gravity causes tidal variance to be much greater.

Due to the human body being made up of 70% water, popular culture has long assumed that the full Moon (with the additional gravitational influence of the Sun) can have an effect on our behaviour. The word 'lunatic' is derived from this idea. But many experiments have been done on this topic and no official correlation has been found. This is unsurprising considering that scientists have shown that the change in gravity and pressure felt in our bodies at full Moon, is around a million times *less* than the pressure of resting one's head on a pillow at night!

Despite scientific evidence to the contrary, stories of erratic behaviour abound so be on the look-out for werewolves just in case!!



The phases of the moon (top) - NASA, a brilliant image of the moon taken by Celestial Events (left) and a graphic image of the tides (far left)- image supplied

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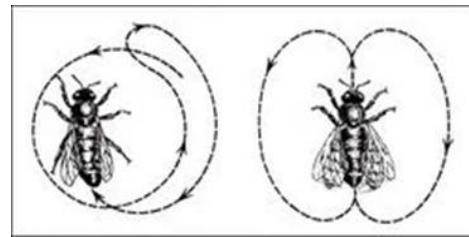


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Brilliant bees that waggle with intent



Bee specimen (above left), Karl Von Frisch. (middle) bee sitting on a flower (above) Images: Supplied Waggle dance (left) Image: Marcio Rocha

Don Pinnock

It's now common knowledge that bees communicate by dancing. But the extent of their intelligence deserves a hard look at just how smart insects are.

Bees pose a problem. Not because they sting – all creatures have the right to defend themselves – but because they do spherical geometry.

This may be hard to believe, mainly because the arrogance of our species inclines us to think that those creatures most like us – vertebrates – top the intelligence list. Insect intelligence is apparently unsettling, even for scientists. In really scary science fiction movies, the horrors always seem to be scheming creatures with exoskeletons – or no skeletons at all.

Fortunately, an Austrian biologist, Karl von Frisch, was too focused on his work to worry about who he unsettled. While World War 1 loomed in Europe, Von Frisch was at the University of Munich studying the colour adaptation of fishes. When war was declared he retreated to his country home in Brunnwinkl.

Strolling in spring fields, he got to wondering if bees could see colour. The more he watched the little insects the more they charmed him, so he set up some hives.

“How do they know where the best flowers are?” he wondered. With a glass-fronted hive, Von Frisch noticed that returning bees generated excitement among their neighbours on the comb.

“It appears,” he wrote, “that in some way or another the first-comer must not only have announced her rich find to the other bees in the hive, but must also have led some of them to it so they might exploit it for themselves. What we should like to know is how they do it.”

By marking certain bees with a spot of colour he could keep his eye on them in the melee of creatures on a comb. What he saw excited him. They danced. Not randomly but in very specific patterns. What did the patterns mean?

He put out feeding trays, marked some bees that arrived at them, then watched them when they returned to the hive. Not long afterwards the feeding tray would be buzzing with bees. Some communication was clearly taking place.

A scout bee encountering a tray near the hive would return and do a circular dance, closely trailed by other bees with their feelers on her abdomen. After a few rounds, these other bees would fly off, scout round, and find the tray. If the tray was beyond a certain distance, however, the scout bee would change her dance (worker bees are all female – the drones

just drone about). She would circle first left then right, doing a little straight run in the middle while wagging her tail.

Other bees would watch and follow, occasionally making little “weeping” noises, whereupon the dancing scout would stop and share her food with them. Then they would fly off in the direction of the “straight” run of her dance to exactly the tray the scout had come from. Von Frisch was astounded.

How did the scouts indicate direction and distance? Herein lay the biologist's genius.

He timed the rotation of the scouts and the number of tail waggles. The slower they rotated and the fewer times they waggled, the further was the tray from the hive. Eventually, Von Frisch could predict exactly where the bees would go by counting and timing. He had learnt bee language.

His next conclusion was to give rise to massive controversy in the scientific world for several decades. The Earth is, of course, horizontal to a bee, but the combs upon which they dance are vertical and, generally, in pitch darkness.

Scout bees, he said, transpose the solar angle into a gravitational angle. Up represents the sun, and the angle of the straight part of the waggle dance to the vertical is the angle between the sun and the food source. If they dance facing down, the worker bees “read” that as meaning “fly with the sun at your back, but angle from it according to my waggle line”.

In 1927, he published his findings in a book, *The Dancing Bees*. “So little is known about the mental capacity of the honeybee,” he concluded, “it is better not to say too much about it. But without doubt they can learn. And what they learn they remember – for many weeks, perhaps for the rest of their lives.”

The book caused a storm. Many scientists at the time believed Von Frisch was suffering from delusions. One university refused to publish the book; others refused to use it in the teaching of etymology.

In the US, two eminent biologists set up elaborate experiments attempting to disprove the dancing bee theory. They failed: Von Frisch was right.

He would later win a Nobel Prize for his work.

Building on Von Frisch's legacy, researchers continued to discover abilities in bees that astounded them.

Writing in the journal *Scientific American*, biologists James and Carol Gould, looking back at the debate, concluded that “the assumption that insects were, by virtue of their size or their lack of an internal skeleton, necessarily simple had

frequently beguiled researchers into overly reductionist hypotheses.”

Institutes for research into honey bees were set up in several countries and facts from open-minded observers mounted fast.

Bee ancestry dates back at least 40 million years and they have been socially organised into swarms for about 30 million of those. So they've had time to practise their communication techniques.

A single honeybee, it was estimated, flies about 900km in her life. That's equivalent to about 100 000 human kilometres or more than twice round the Earth.

They are born with magnetite (lodestone) in their lower abdomens and therefore are virtually flying compasses.

Although they were once thought to be deaf, highly directional ears have been discovered in their feelers. When a scout bee waggles it also emits low sounds rather like a small motorboat. It has been speculated that the frequency of these sounds communicates distance.

The most extraordinary findings, however, remain the sophistication of honey bee navigation. It is all very well to navigate by the sun but, as we all know, the sun moves. How does a bee take that into account when communicating direction? Even more puzzling is that, in terms of how a bee's compound eyes work, it is unlikely that the bee can even see the sun.

Researchers found that bees use polarised light. In space, the sun's light is not polarised. But on hitting Earth's atmosphere rays are scattered and, by the time they hit the ground, the shorter ultraviolet rays have been forced into a single plane of vibration.

They are polarised, but in a certain way – perpendicular to the line linking that point to the sun. So the polarised light pattern in the sky will encircle the sun, like concentric fences – the further from the sun the more it will be polarised.

Bees see this ultraviolet light. They can look at any part of the sky, see the angle of polarisation, drop a line from that point to the horizon, estimate the sun's azimuth and know exactly where they are. They can do this whether it's cloudy or even after the sun has set. When humans do this, it's known as spherical geometry.

There are two other skills they need to get their geometry right: a good speedometer and an absolutely acute sense of time.

If this all sounds complicated, it is. Can bees do it? Evidently, and with an ease and accuracy that is astonishing. This information, plus the scents and tastes they gather, they communicate in their waggle dance and can direct sister bees accurately for up to 5km.

They're even democratic. When they swarm, scouts will go ahead to check for suitable places to settle, returning to dance directions. After a number of bees visit the various suggested places, a “voting” process takes place until one site (generally the best) wins out by having more bees dance for it.

It appears that all species of honeybees speak some variant of the dance language, but with slightly different dialects.

So what is intelligence?

Intelligence is usually measured in terms of a creature's ability to learn, anything else is instinct or luck. If all this navigation were hard-wired into a bee's brain it would be startling enough. But bees have to learn.

About 20% of all young bees that leave the hive for the first time get lost. Elaborate experiments have shown that bees scout their terrain – a building, a tall tree, a pool of water – and memorise these positions in terms of their polarised sun grid, rather like a GPS logging position against satellites. Once they have done this, they remember it and never get lost.

If they're blown off course, they just shoot the sun, check their GPS, set a new course and fly home. If you move the hives, they build up a new map, which they do quite quickly.

Japanese researchers have found that bees use learnt knowledge to detect poorly visible or camouflaged objects, and that they're pretty good at memorising mazes. They even have associative recall: a whiff of scent can trigger the recall of an associated colour.

In 1965, Von Frisch took his findings through another quantum leap and raised another storm. In *The Dance Language and Orientation of Bees* he pointed out that bees use symbolic representation to communicate. Their dance shapes are graphic representations of their intentions, which are designed to communicate with others.

Though they only have a brain the size of a pinhead, they can create and understand abstract forms which have social meaning. The only other creatures on Earth able to do that, as far as we know, are ourselves.

This raises all sorts of thorny questions. Such as what is the relation between brain size and abstract thought? What is abstract thought? And if we put as much effort into studying other insects as we have into studying bees, would we find they're far smarter than we imagined?

Until we find out, perhaps we should go easy on that bug spray. The beetle in the corner may be pondering particle physics.

Previously published in *Daily Maverick*.

The snouted cobra - *Naja annulifera*



Johan Marais
African Snakebite Institute

The snouted cobra (*Naja annulifera*) is by far the largest cobra in the Lowveld, reaching 2,5 m in length. It is usually yellowish to dark brown or blue-black above with a yellow mottled belly but there is also a banded variety. Such individuals are blue-black with seven to eleven yellowish crossbars on the back.

Historically this was known as the Egyptian cobra as it used to be a subspecies, but further studies concluded that it is not closely related to the Egyptian cobra and it was el-

evated to full species, hence the new common name snouted cobra (wipneuskobra).

It inhabits arid and moist savanna and is common in Lowveld and bushveld areas. The snouted cobra often inhabits a permanent home in a termite mound where it will live for many years. Though occasionally encountered during the day it hunts at night, often venturing into poultry runs. It feeds on toads, rodents, birds and their eggs, lizards (including the rock monitor) and snakes, especially puff adders.

This snake is fond of basking in the morning sun, usually near its retreat and is quick to disappear if disturbed. If cornered it

Snouted Cobra (*Naja annulifera*) from Limpopo Province. Copyright Johan Marais

will lift as much as half of its body off the ground and form a wide, impressive hood. Like many other snakes it may also play dead, turning the front half of the body upside down with the mouth agape. Should one attempt to pick it up, it may bite.

Females produce up to 33 eggs in early summer, and the hatchlings measure around 30 cm in length.

The venom of this snake is both neurotoxic and cytotoxic and may rapidly affect breathing. Initial symptoms may include burning pain and swelling, but bites from this highly

venomous snake are rare. In the event of a dog getting bitten by this snake it may need antivenom and should be taken to a vet urgently.

Johan Marais is one of Africa's leading herpetologists and is CEO of the African Snakebite Institute. He is a best-selling author, a compulsive photographer, and a travel addict. Check out the website on www.africansnakebiteinstitute.com – get your FREE App on the link <http://bit.ly/snakebiteapp>



Juvenile Snouted Cobra (*Naja annulifera*) from the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate, Limpopo. Copyright Johan Marais



Snouted Cobra (*Naja annulifera*) from Vaalwater, Limpopo Province. Copyright Johan Marais

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South African trees of the year 2023



The trunk of the false olive tree (far left) and the profuse panicles of sweetly scented, white flowers (left). The silver tree (above) and the beautiful tree wisteria flower Images : Random Harvet Nursery

Correspondant

Common tree: *Buddleja saligna* – the false olive

Buddleja saligna, commonly known as the false olive, is a remarkable evergreen shrub native to the southern regions of Africa, particularly South Africa. This versatile and hardy plant belongs to the *Buddlejaceae* family, which includes other popular garden species known for attracting butterflies and bees.

The false olive gets its name from its striking resemblance to the true olive tree, primarily due to its narrow, silvery-green leaves and gnarled, twisted branches. This shrub can grow up to 4 meters in height and is well-adapted to a variety of environmental conditions, including dry and coastal regions. It can grow in poor soils, on hot mountainsides, either away from or close to water and is both cold and drought resistant.

Its small, tubular, fragrant flowers, which range from creamy white to pale yellow, bloom in clusters during late winter and early spring, attracting an array of pollinators.

One of the false olive's most appealing features is its ability to support local wildlife, particularly butterflies, which are drawn to its nectar-rich flowers. As a result, it is often planted in gardens and natural landscapes to promote biodiversity

and conservation efforts.

Furthermore, the false olive is valued for its dense foliage, which provides excellent shade and is often used for hedging or wind-breaks. Its wood is also used for various purposes, including crafting, while its leaves have traditional medicinal uses in some indigenous communities to treat colds and coughs, and the roots are used as a purgative. It is also used to make small pieces of furniture and fence posts as well as assegai handles. Overall, this tree is a versatile and ecologically significant plant, cherished for its aesthetic and practical qualities.

The tree of appreciation: *Leucadendron argenteum* - the silver tree

The *Leucadendron argenteum*, commonly known as the silver tree, is an extraordinary and iconic plant native to the southwestern coast of South Africa and can easily be found on the lower eastern slopes of Table Mountain. Renowned for its striking appearance, this evergreen shrub belongs to the *Proteaceae* family, which also includes proteas and banksias. What sets the silver tree apart is its remarkable glistening silvery foliage, a result of dense, silky hairs that cover its leaves, giving it a shimmering, almost metallic appearance.

Silver trees are slow-growers and can reach heights of up to 10 meters over several decades. They are well adapted to the harsh conditions of their natural habitat,

with a deep root system that helps them withstand drought and strong winds. The tree's unique foliage serves several functions, including reflecting sunlight to reduce water loss and deterring herbivores with its tough, prickly leaves.

In addition to its visual allure, the silver tree holds cultural significance as a symbol of resilience in the face of adversity, making it a cherished emblem in South Africa. It is widely cultivated as an ornamental garden specimen. The dried female cones are decorative and the small silver balls of the dried male flower heads are used in dried floral arts and crafts.

Unfortunately, it is also classified as a vulnerable species due to habitat loss and illegal harvesting. Conservation efforts are underway to protect and preserve this magnificent plant for future generations to admire and appreciate its beauty and ecological importance.

Tree for promotion: *Bolusanthus speciosus* - the tree wisteria

Bolusanthus speciosus, commonly known as the tree wisteria, is a striking and charismatic deciduous tree native to the southern regions of Africa, including South Africa and Zimbabwe. This tree belongs to the *Fabaceae* family, which is known for its diverse and economically important plant species. Being a protected tree in South Africa, wild specimens may not be removed, cut down

or damaged.

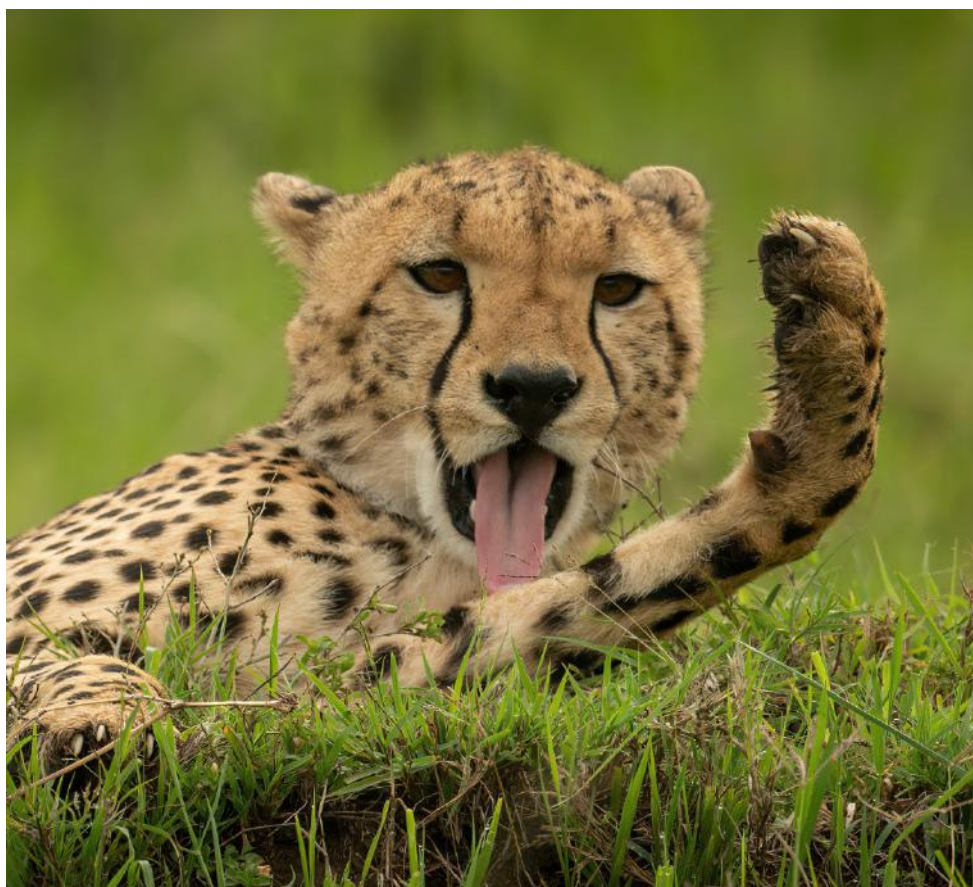
The tree wisteria is renowned for its breath-taking display of cascading lavender-blue to violet pea-like flowers that hang in pendulous clusters from August to January. These blossoms, reminiscent of wisteria vines, earn the tree its common name and make it a sought-after ornamental tree in gardens and parks.

Beyond its aesthetic appeal, *Bolusanthus speciosus* is also valued for its ability to attract a wide range of pollinators, including bees, butterflies, and birds, which play vital roles in ecosystem health. Its compound, pinnate leaves provide lush foliage and turn a brilliant yellow in the autumn, adding further visual interest.

This tree typically reaches heights of 5 to 10 meters, with a graceful and spreading canopy that offers welcome shade. Its bark is smooth and grey when young, gradually developing into a rougher texture as it matures.

Bolusanthus speciosus is not only a testament to the beauty of African flora but also a symbol of its ecological importance. It is often planted as a shade tree, ornamental specimen, or street tree, enriching the landscape while supporting local biodiversity. The roots are used medicinally to alleviate stomach problems and the inner bark used to treat abdominal cramps. The wood makes excellent furniture.

Is the cheetah the fastest animal and is it a true cat?



A cheetah licking its leg and you can see the exposed claws of its paw Image : Canva Nicolas Dale

It is probably the fastest land mammal, some antelope species coming close, but it's definitely not the fastest animal.

Some dragonflies, bees and wasps can fly at the speed of around 100 km/h, and some falcons regularly go much faster than 100 km/h, even over 200 km/h in a dive. It is always difficult to say how fast any species is, because like humans, individuals are all slightly different and have different capabilities, but it is likely that the average cheetah can attain a speed of 90 to 100 km/h in suitable terrain. Higher speeds that have been 'recorded' are probably inaccurate or exceptions.

A true cat?

Yes, a lot of people believe that cheetah are not true cats and more closely allied to dogs because their claws remain exposed. This belief stems from the firmly entrenched notion among laymen that if an animal has claws or nails that stay out, it is a dog, and if they are sheathed it is a cat. This is of course a simple conclusion to reach if one bases the theory on domestic animals, but it is incorrect. Carnivores are divided scientifically into two broad groups, namely cats and dogs, based on internal ear structure. Cheetah are very definitely in the cat group, but they have various features of their body that are different from other cats as a result of their specialised lifestyle and hunting technique, where they chase their prey down rather than stalk and ambush, as happens with other cats. The legs are long for big strides, the feet narrow for less resistance when running,

the footpad has ridges for grip like a car tyre, and the claws remain exposed to offer grip when turning. Cheetah cubs, when very young, have claws that are still sharp, and they can thus climb trees if need be to avoid hyenas and even lions. As they get older and the claws become blunted by wear, they lose this ability to an extent, but even adult cheetah are able to clamber into fairly tall trees with upright trunks. In fact, cheetah claws are movable just as those of other cats, but to a slightly lesser extent with the major difference being that they are unsheathed.

The dewclaw, up and away from the ground, remains sharp and is essential for knocking into the prey's flanks when the forepaws slap the animal off balance. The other cats, all of whom are to some extent stalkers and pounces, have claws that retract into sheaths when at rest. This is to ensure that these weapons - the principal means of prey capture - remain sharp and efficient. Another interesting difference between cheetah and other cats is the voice - they do not miaow like small cats or roar like large cats, but rather make a birdlike chirping sound that allows them to go unnoticed by their bigger enemies. They also purr, unlike lion and leopard. The cheetah's uniqueness means that it is placed within a different genus called *Acinonyx* - probably derived from *akaina* meaning thorn and *onyx* meaning claw, referring to the unsheathed claws.

Excerpts from 'Beat about the Bush – Mammals and Birds' by Trevor Carnaby, Published by Jacana Media, Second Edition reprint 2018.

Wildlife Ranger challenge 2023



Wildlife ranger participants gathered at the entrance to the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC). The rangers during the challenge Images supplied

Wildlife rangers operate on the very front-line of conservation across Africa, routinely making personal sacrifices to put their lives on the line to protect the continent's wildlife and habitats.

Wildlife rangers are not just law enforcement officers, they are teachers, community support workers, mediators, researchers and so much more. Unfortunately, resources are not keeping pace with the scale of the challenges they face every minute of every day.

For the fourth year running, the Wildlife Ranger Challenge (WRC) sets out to redress this, by raising critical funding to cover operational costs, including salaries and equipment. Participants crossing the finish line (top) and others making their way en route (right). Riders relaxing (above).

The WRC is the world's largest celebration of solidarity, support and fundraising for the ranger profession. Initiated by NGO Tusk

Trust in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 (the goal was to keep wildlife rangers employed through the crisis), the WRC has grown into an annual celebration of connection and camaraderie for the ranger profession. It also connects rangers and supporters. The global campaign #ForWildlifeRangers has created a united front for conservation, driving donations to secure vital funding and connecting virtual race participants around the world to run in tandem with Africa's biodiversity guardians.

Together with the Game Rangers of Association of Africa (GRAA), and with the support of the Scheinberg Relief Fund, the WRC highlights the role of rangers and the work they do, often in hazardous conditions, and with low pay and few benefits. It brings together over 100 ranger teams across more than 20 African countries, who run the WRC in support of one another.

Prior to World Ranger Day on Monday 31st July 2023, the teams of rangers across Africa started gearing up for this the fourth annual

Wildlife Ranger Challenge. This multi-million fundraising initiative features a series of fitness challenges and culminates with a 21km (half-marathon) race.

This year, the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC), who has entered a ranger team from the inaugural WRC in 2020, hosted seven official teams on race day, five of them from the Kruger National Park. The teams were the Kruger National Park (KNP) Special Rangers, KNP Marula South, KNP Marula North, KNP Xanatsene South, KNP Xanatsene North, Southern African Wildlife College and the Black Mambas.

Setting off at 06h30, the SAWC's airwing and its K9 team ensured the safety of the participating teams, as did the support vehicles. Each team comprised four runners, with the men in the team carrying 22 kg and the woman 10 kg of previously weighed rice, in their backpacks. Joining them in solidarity were four unofficial teams running without backpacks. These included a Community Team representing the Kruger Park Running

Club, a Southern African Wildlife College staff team, a Sabi Sand Wildtuin team, and a team comprising the Braveheart course leader with three of the course participants. The route took the runners around the college campus located just south of the Kruger Park's Orpen Gate.

Under tough conditions and in the blistering heat, the first official team that came in as a collective was the team from the Southern African Wildlife College comprising Clive Ngomane, Tebogo Malapane, Excellent Ubisi and Precious Malapane.

More about the organisations involved

The SAWC was established in 1996 and is based near the Kruger National Park in South Africa. It is a regional non-profit, public benefit organization, aimed at promoting thought, leadership, and empowering people to manage and conserve some of the world's most biologically diverse areas. It uses an applied learning methodology to deliver conservation education, training, and skills development programs both on site and across the region. The college provides tomorrow's conservation leaders and practitioners, including natural resource managers, field rangers, guides, wildlife monitors and the community, with the skills needed to become partners in the drive to conserving our natural heritage responsibly and inclusively.

For more than 30 years, Tusk has worked to accelerate the impact of African-driven conservation. Since its formation, Tusk has boosted an impressive range of successful conservation projects across more than 20 countries. These initiatives have increased vital protection for more than 40 different threatened species, and have also contributed to poverty reduction through sustainable development and education amongst rural communities living alongside wildlife. Tusk partners with the most effective local organisations, investing in their in-depth knowledge and expertise. By supporting and nurturing their conservation programmes, Tusk helps to accelerate growth from an innovative idea to a scalable solution. The charity, which has Prince William as its Royal Patron, has invested over \$100m into African conservation since its founding in 1990.

Founded in 1970, the GRAA is a non-profit organisation and the oldest, largest, and most representative ranger association in Africa. As an organisational partner of the WRC, the GRAA plays a critical role in building networks of wildlife rangers, advocating for their interests, and providing expert guidance on ranger-related issues.

The Scheinberg Relief Fund is the founding donor of the Wildlife Ranger Challenge. It was established by businessman and philanthropist Mark Scheinberg, and his family, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Its mission is to provide meaningful difference with strategic, high impact relief for individuals and communities in locations where the family has a personal or business presence. The fund works closely with a network of trusted partners in key locations across the globe, to identify local organisations, social benefit projects, charities, and communities on the ground that have limited visibility.

For more information go to <https://wildliferangerchallenge.org/> - you can also see a google map for areas where all the rangers across Africa are running, and for any other information, contact Jeanné Poultney on email jpoultney@sawc.org.za

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Marieskop Pre-primer	082 880 7069
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Africa Safe - T	010 590 6313
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Alcoholics Narcotics Anonymous	082 258 4602
Ambulance Airforce Base	015 799 2065
Ambulance Services Limpopo	015 793 1581
Ambulance Tintswalo	101 77
Ambulance Services Swift	060 528 2784
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Fire Brigade Maruleng	015 793 0536
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Hoedspruit Town Watch	072 812 2172
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	013 759 0645
	013 795 5000
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DR Shivambu	087 260 1537
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Hlokomela	072 698 6538
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J Coetzee (Clinical Psychologist)	015 781 0012
Kyk Oogkundiges (Optometrist)	060 548 5387
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ProVet Veterinary Hospital	015 793 0797

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Puzzle answers

- 12 turkeys, 13 geese, and 75 chickens
- vile, evil, veil, live
- a man in love in between hope and fear
- one word
- First he takes the goose over, and returns and takes the fox over. Then he takes the goose back, and then he takes the corn over; after which, he returns and takes the goose over again.
- LOVE



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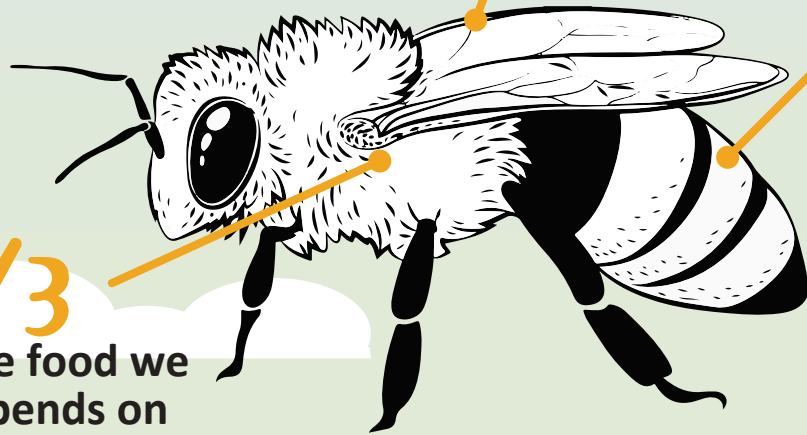
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85% of plants exist because of bees

more than **100** types of plants are pollinated by bees

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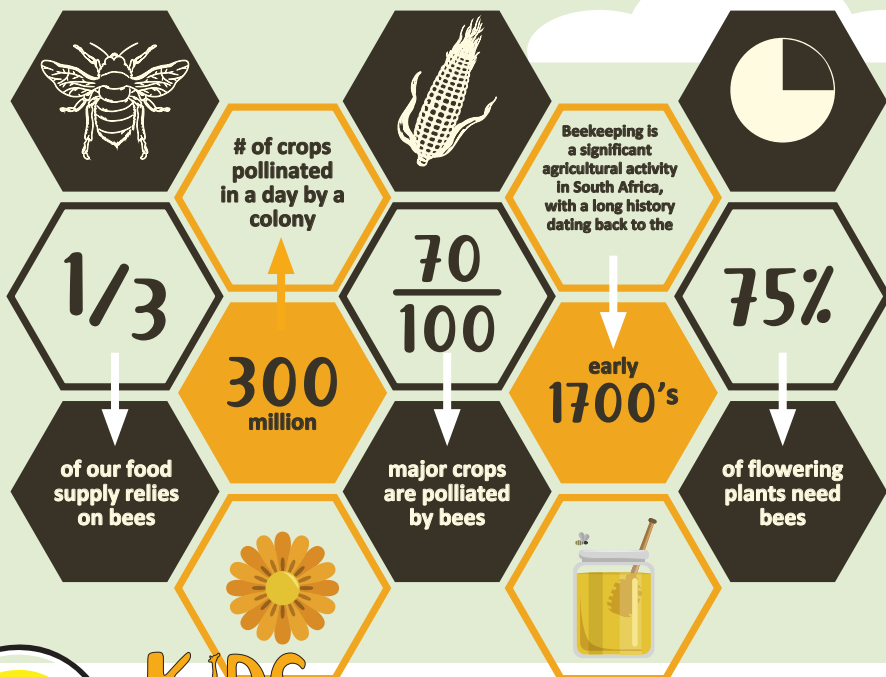
1/3 of all the food we eat depends on pollinators

Did you know?

According to Albert Einstein, if bees were to disappear from the Earth, humans would only survive for **4 years!**

Do you know about the bee waggle?

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