



# KRUGER2CANYON

## NEWS

May 2023

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

## ‘Shift in conservation thinking’: A new biodiversity White Paper could make SA a world leader if it becomes law.

Don Pincock

**It’s excellent legislation, but faces enormous challenges, not least from wildlife breeders who are sharpening their knives.**

Changing a country’s legal paradigm on conservation is like turning a super tanker at sea – it takes time and space. And though the just-released draft ‘White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable use of South Africa’s sets a new course, it’s not yet law and the ship is only beginning to turn. There will be battles up ahead, but the new shoreline is at least in sight.

Its vision – both lofty and wordy – is of “an inclusive, transformed society living in harmony with nature, where biodiversity conservation and sustainable use ensure healthy ecosystems, with improved benefits that are fairly and equitably shared for present and future generations”.

It envisions a world centred on Ubuntu, where all people have a high quality of life, a voice and a nurturing earth supporting them.

The problem with these admirable goals yet to be embedded in law is what bedevils so many such reports – implementation. The White Paper admits that to become effective, it will take considerable redirection of funds plus strategic integration of the ideas into all departments, both national and local.

According to Wilderness Foundation Africa, the White Paper provides long overdue, comprehensive definitions of sustainable use and conservation.

“In our view, not having such clear and unambiguous definitions in our environmental law has led to conflicting approaches and interpretations within the biodiversity sector.

“The Paper enshrines the environmental duty of care principle and entrenches the



**Campaign Against Canned Hunting activists march in Johannesburg against canned lion hunting on 15 March 2014. (Photo: Gallo Images / Foto24 / Mary-ann Palmer)**

requirement for activities, methods or actions involving wild animals to be humane and to consider their wellbeing.”

There is, unfortunately, a disconnect between the Paper’s principles and the reality on the ground where protected areas have been allowed to wither from neglect, corruption, and nepotism. This will be addressed shortly below.

### **We have been here before**

Although limited popping of corks is in order, it comes with a caution. A White Paper with similar goals was tabled in Parliament in 1997 but stalled.

Had that White Paper been cast into law, the environmental field would have been very different now. It recognised that the goal of using biological resources sustainably was to ensure that it minimised the adverse impact on biodiversity. It also insisted that biodiversity considerations be

integrated into all national policy. Pity it hit the skids.

These issues lay dormant for many years and their re-emergence was in relation to the growing abhorrence of captive lion breeding and hunting.

As a result, mainly, of calls from conservation NGOs, Parliament’s portfolio committee on environmental affairs convened a two-day colloquium in 2018 and concluded that canned lion hunting should end.

That broke the logjam of business-as-usual in the government’s approach to the treatment of wild animals.

In 2019, new environment minister Barbara Creecy established a high-level panel to review policies, regulatory measures, practices, and policy positions related to hunting, trade, captive keeping, management and handling of elephant, lion, leopard and rhino.

Its conclusions didn’t please everyone,

particularly wildlife breeders and hunters, but it was a giant step in a new direction for wildlife protection. Most importantly, it changed the language of conservation, which, through the policy position that followed, found its way into other avenues of wildlife policy.

One was the National Environmental Management Laws Amendment Bill which contains a vital wellbeing clause, but it has been hanging around since 2018 without forward movement. Could it be because game breeders have indicated that they will challenge the clause in court?

Last year, Creecy appointed a panel to look into the voluntary exits of lion breeding facilities – five years after the colloquium call. She has just extended the deadline for a further 60 days – breeders are clearly not clamouring to give up their outfits.

Another roadblock was the withdrawal this year of the new Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) regulations. Gazetted by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE), it was arguably the most progressive wildlife protection legislation yet drafted in South Africa. It seemed like good news for beleaguered wildlife.

But just before it was to become law, game breeder and hunter organisations applied for an urgent interdict to halt it. DFFE responded with a convincingly argued defence of its legislation.

At the last minute, in a secret, out-of-court settlement, the department withdrew the proposed TOPS regulations as well as related norms and standards amendments and agreed to pay the applicants’ legal costs. Breeders had clearly found a legal loophole and closed it down.

### **Biodiversity White Paper**

The White Paper on sustainable use of biodiversity is the latest to signal a shift ...

*Cont. on page 3*

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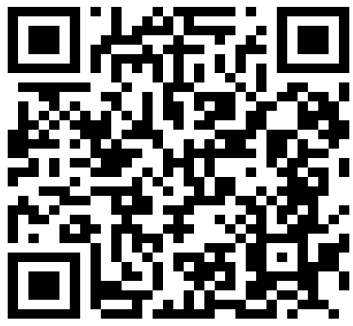
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# From the editors desk... and letters to the editor



Well, we are almost halfway through 2023 – where has that all gone – and winter is upon us. The weather is certainly a lot crisper in the evenings and early morning, which for many is a pleasant change from the blistering heat.

Unfortunately, this month our Picky View article will not appear due to ‘AE’s’ travels, and to be honest space is an issue this month.

We have had numerous interactions with people concerning our last issue, more especially about the lead article “State caves in to game farmers and hunters over key wildlife protection”. My dear friend Jan put me in touch with Dries van Coller, mentioned in the above article, who is the Consulting Executive Officer - Professional Hunters Association of South Africa.

I have been in touch with him, but unfortunately due to both our busy schedules we have not been able to sit together to discuss the article, and get a piece done from the other side of the coin (so as to speak).

There are always two sides to every story, and we are very interested to get to hear and understand the other side, from the hunters and game farmers perspective.

We of course try, at the Kruger2Canyon News, not to hold any bias when it comes to confrontational articles, and we like to give both sides of the story for our readers to make up their own minds. This will be true for said article, and hopefully I’ll be able to get it done for next month’s edition.

I did have a telephone interaction with Mr Rob Hare, the developer and owner of the construction company building the new mall. Here I will elaborate a little – Rob told me that the delay was due to a revised financing option which his group was busy with, and which would be imminently signed off. When asked about the press release that was meant to be released, and which Kruger2Canyon News did not get, he stated that it was released, and he would send me a copy of the same. I told him that there was a lot of rumour mongering going on, and that the community needed clarification of the situation – was it going ahead or not. He promised to send a mail with the press release as well as an explanation of the developments that had taken place. I have not received any correspondence yet.

His explanation to me by telephone was that the project was going ahead, Checkers was still in, and in fact Woolworths could also be coming to town! The only matter needing finalisation was the finance deal with the new bank. He also stated to be that he was in no way involved with the Berlin

development, and that the new hospital development was not connected to him, and he had nothing to do with it ... yet.

And that was that – I have not heard a thing after I spoke to him on the 2 May, despite having left messages for him to send me the email as promised. I did mention this to Liz-mari Wolmarans of the Hoedspruit Chamber (from whom I also hope to get regular monthly Chamber updates).

I see that Hoedspruit made headlines on ‘Businesstech’ in an article written by Luke Fraser titled “The best wildlife estates in South Africa” – Hoedspruit once again being very apparent on the map!

Finally, make sure you all follow the Safari Guide of the Year competition (featured in this month’s publication). It is well worth seeing how incredible these finalists are with their bush skills and knowledge.

Have a great month ahead and welcome the winter, until next time.

Dear Editor,

Please help shed light on the new mall. Is it going ahead, how big is it and for heaven’s sake can we at least see what it’s going to look like?

I don’t like the sound of this development – no transparency at all. It’s going to kill our town.

Regards, Richard

*Ed: Dear Richard, please see my comment above ‘From the Editor’ – it’s all a bit grey at the moment. What I can tell you is that when it is finished it will be 13 000 square metres (not small!), but I do not think anyone, save for the developer, knows what it is going to look like! I just hope that if it comes about, it fits in with the ethos of Hoedspruit and the bush, and that locals benefit from the construction.*

Dear Ed,

I would just like to voice my thanks to Town Watch and Farm Watch for the wonderful work they do in keeping our town and the surrounds safe.

*Ed: I absolutely agree, and we should all be grateful for the volunteers that give of their time and energy to make that possible. Well done and thank you!*



## Disclaimer:

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# Mother’s and Father’s, here are some party ideas for kids under 10 years old – AI style.

Mark Bishop

Here we go again. This month’s jump into AI (Artificial Intelligence – for those that have no clue) posed the question to the AI platform ChatGPT: ‘What party ideas do you have for kids under 10 years old’.

Credit: ChatGPT, chat.openai.com

## The AI response

1. “Movie Night: Rent a projector and show a movie in your backyard or living room. Provide popcorn and candy for a fun, classic movie experience.
2. Arts and Crafts Party: Set up different stations for the kids to make different crafts like painting, colouring, and making bracelets. Make sure to have enough materials for everyone and provide guidance as needed.
3. Outdoor Scavenger Hunt: Create a list of items for the kids to find around the backyard or local park. Provide clues and have a prize at the end for the winner.
4. Pizza Party: Set up a mini pizza station where the kids can add their own toppings and create their own mini pizzas. Make sure to have a variety of toppings available.
5. Science Experiment Party: Set up different stations for different experiments like making slime, volcano eruptions, or creating a lava lamp. Make sure to have adult supervision and safety precautions in place.
6. Dress Up Party: Set up a costume station where the kids can choose from different costumes to wear for the party. Have a runway for them to show off their outfits and take pictures.
7. Sports Day: Set up different games and sports stations like basketball, soccer, and relay races. Make sure to have a prize for the winning team or individual.
8. Dance Party: Play popular kid-friendly music and have a dance competition or dance-off. Provide glow sticks or other fun party favours.
9. Cooking Party: Have the kids help make their own snacks like popcorn balls or fruit kabobs. Provide easy-to-follow recipes and guidance as needed.
10. Tea Party: Set up a tea party with fancy teacups, tea pots, and finger sandwiches. Have the kids dress up in their fanciest clothes for a fun, sophisticated party experience.”

I am sure that there are some grateful parents out there that will tune into this list. I am assuming that ‘kabobs’ are in fact what we know as kebabs. Until next month.

# SUDOKU

## INSTRUCTIONS

Use the numbers 1 to 9 to complete the Sudoku. Only use each number once in each row, column and grid.

	5	8				4	9	
			9	4	8			
	9	1				2	8	
				6				
			8		7			
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			1		9			
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5			3		4			6

# 'Shift in conservation thinking': A new biodiversity White Paper could make SA a world leader if it becomes law.

Cont. from page 1

The White Paper on sustainable use of biodiversity is the latest to signal a shift in government conservation thinking. As mentioned above, its bite is in its definitions.

The highest on the list is "sustainable use", a term hitherto undefined and employed by those more interested in use than sustainability. The White Paper nails it down and probably provides the world's best definition.

The use of any component of biodiversity, it states, must ensure that it is:

- Ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable,
- Does not contribute to its long-term decline in the wild or disrupt the genetic integrity of the population,
- Does not disrupt the ecological integrity of the ecosystem in which it occurs,
- Ensures continued benefits to people in a manner that is fair, equitable and meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations, and
- Ensures a duty of care towards all components of biodiversity for thriving people and nature.

Sustainable use of biodiversity, it states, "implies the careful and equitable use of

nature so that all current and future generations of people get the full benefit of what they value from nature".

A second important definition – which is a nod to the sentience of animals – is the notion of "animal wellbeing". This is defined as "the holistic circumstances and conditions of an animal or population of animals which are conducive to their physical, physiological and mental health and quality of life, including their ability to cope with their environment".

Human interventions and activities, according to the White Paper, must consider animal wellbeing, not only of individual animals, but also of groups and whole populations of animals. This is because the wellbeing of individual animals is entwined with the biodiversity of the space in which they live.

For this reason, measures must be taken "to prevent harm from occurring to biodiversity within the environment and ecosystems that they are part of".

This is in line with the notion of Ubuntu, which acts as the White Paper's guiding principle. Ubuntu, it states, emphasises the environmental duty-of-care principle in which actions should be humane and ensure quality of life within its environment.

An important principle is the creation of linkages, corridors and connectivity be-

tween wild spaces to ensure genetic variation and expand the natural footprint, both on land and in the ocean.

## Infertile ground

Just how difficult it will be to implement the excellent recommendations of the White Paper can be seen from a survey by the Environmental Wildlife Trust entitled, *The State of Provincial Reserves in South Africa – Challenges and Recommendations*.

There are 400 provincial parks and reserves covering three million hectares of South Africa and it is there – not just the large parks like Kruger – that the rubber of biodiversity hits the road. Many of these are falling apart because of a shortage of money, poor management or lack of political will.

The most common problem in all provinces, says the report, are inadequate budgets for nature and wildlife conservation. In some reserves, as much as 80-90% of budgets are consumed by staff salaries – leaving little funding for day-to-day conservation.

The survey respondents also lamented the lack of capacity – including staff who were "not dedicated, motivated or passionate about what they do".

The report adds: "The adoption of funding models that centralise financial flows in government, and the gradual but significant

decrease in government budget allocation to conservation efforts, have combined to put pressure on protected areas to generate the necessary funds for their management and protection."

The new Biodiversity White Paper comes with a detailed implementation plan as it heads, hopefully, into law.

First, key stakeholders in the environmental field will be identified and consulted. This will be followed by intergovernmental consultations to work out implementation processes. If all goes well and the White Paper is not watered down or side-lined, South Africa could end up with some impressive biodiversity protections on paper.

However, for it to grow beyond law into implementation, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment – with all other departments for which biodiversity is important – will have to till and fertilise the ground upon which the White Paper can grow its plans.

That will take political will and a good deal of cash allocated to conservation, and not fat staff salaries and top-heavy "management". That will be another super tanker that needs to turn.

*This article was previously published by the Daily Maverick.*

## Why do animals walk in line?

It is believed to be a means of animals getting from one place to another in the most efficient, quickest and safest way.

Regardless of the species, many animals tend to walk in single file, which is quite puzzling considering the immense scale of their wild surroundings. Why not walk beside one another or simply scatter? The answer differs among species, but the following reasons generally apply. Most animals move in groups for protection and there is often, but not always, a hierarchy among the group members. The most dominant member walks either at the front or at the back, in both cases generally dictating group movements.

An overriding aspect of this behaviour is safety. A herd of antelope walking in single file, the way forward being navigated by the first individual, is less likely to make a noise and alert predators than a herd walking randomly next to one another. Listen, for ex-

ample, to the difference in noise levels of a herd of zebra walking in this manner and a herd of buffalo, which tend to walk at random. Walking in single file also minimises the chance of a number of animals being surprised by predators. Generally the first one is attacked, giving the others a chance to flee.

Vegetation also plays a role as it is much easier walking in single file on established game paths in thick bush than splitting up. These paths offer the easiest route. This is also the reason why so many animals, predators in particular, can be seen walking along roads. After heavy rains the big cats may well also prefer to move out of the wet grass into these 'open areas'.

In wildebeest, scent markings are a vital means of staying together. The scent glands are located between the front hooves. As the animal walks, the hoof splays out and the scent is deposited. This would explain

why wildebeest walk in single file, heads hanging low to detect the scent in open grassland. Established game paths criss-cross the bush and generally lead to water. It is on these treks to and from water or feeding grounds, that animals are often seen walking in a line, simply following the direction indicated by the pathway.

Cont. on page 15

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





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# Caramelised leek & mushroom Gruyere pasta

Veggie Diva

This is a delicious, rich, and creamy pasta with a meaty feel of mushrooms.

With the weather cooling in the evenings this is a perfect autumn dish. If you cannot find oyster mushrooms get creative with what is available. I have used a combination of dried shitake mushrooms rehydrated in boiled water and fresh portobello mushrooms when I cannot find oyster mushrooms. It serves 4.

## Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil  
3 tablespoons butter.  
3 medium leeks thinly sliced.  
½ tsp sugar.  
1/3 cup sherry.  
250gm oyster mushrooms.  
4 garlic cloves minced.  
250ml heavy cream.  
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar.  
1 teaspoon lemon zest.

## Method:

1. Heat the olive oil and 2 tablespoons of butter in a large pan. Add the leeks, a good grind of salt and the sugar, and cook for 20 minutes at a medium heat until soft and caramelized.
2. Remove from pan and set aside.
3. Use the balance of the butter and fry the mushrooms until gently brown but not soggy.
4. Season with salt and pepper. Add the garlic and cook for a minute.
5. Return the leeks to the pan and add the cream, balsamic and lemon zest.
6. Simmer until the sauce thickens.
7. Cook the fettucine al dente. Reserve ½ cup of the pasta water.
8. Add the fettucine, the ½ cup water, and the grated Gruyere to the mushroom mix. Simmer for 2 minutes until well coated, and the cheese has melted.
9. Serve in warm pasta bowls, garnished with finely chopped parsley.



## Spotlight interview



Lizmari (right) and her sister Sulene having some family time  
Image: supplied

Mark Bishop

This month's Spotlight falls on a 'pocket battleship' of a woman, Lizmari Wolmarans.

I was amazed at how easy it was to get to have a face-to-face meeting with Lizmari. A person that runs her own business, and then has taken on the momentous task rejuvenating the Hoedspruit Chamber of Commerce (now called Hoedspruit Chamber/Sakekamer) and being the administrator of the Hdt Town Concerns group on WhatsApp - she should by rights not have any time available for anyone! But here we are, in her office and settled in for my short interview.

Lizmari is a 'Hoedie' through and through, born and bred in Hoedspruit, she has resided here for the past 42 years! She owns and manages her glass and aluminium company - Hoedspruit Glass and Home.

The rejuvenation of the Chamber was as a result of a tragic car crash involving her soul-mate. She could not believe the overwhelming support she received from the community, and because of that she felt she had to thank them for their support somehow.

She decided she had to give back to the

community in one way or another, so she got involved with Farm Watch and Town Watch but it was not an active enough role. So, she started helping out with projects and initiatives in and around Hoedspruit.

This all started with the township development. Lizmari rallied a group together and had community involvement with great success. Then, having seen her efforts bear fruit, many people approached her to resurrect the Chamber. The Chamber is the only apolitical, government recognised organisation that can put pressure on local authorities and the like, to get things done in the town. She had meetings with previous chamber members, industry mentors and residents that spurred her on to the point where she leapt into the void! Together with seven others, Lizmari launched a new version of the Chamber in March of 2023.

"To be honest I literally do not know how I do it", was Lizmari's response to the question of being on call 24/7. "Every moment I am not working I spend on the Chamber." It's got to the point where her hobbies right now are the Chamber, and possibly a glass of red wine on Friday evenings!

It seems there are too many people that appreciate a sympathetic ear, and far too many that thank the Chamber for what they do - even though they are not doing half as much as they want to do. The gratitude given, makes up for all the hard work and time sacrifice made. "Nothing is too much at this stage", she shyly admits. Although she did have a jesting caveat comment that she is not sure that will be the case in a year's time.

Lizmari feels the most pressing issues in the town currently are threefold; infrastructure, municipal policy, and the continued approval of developments without resolving the water and sewage infrastructure problems facing the town. She feels that some projects are being planned and/or approved while the current infrastructure is unable to han-

dle the development.

"We are in the process of building a 'trust relationship' with the municipality - unfortunately due to workload, we don't get the short notice meetings that are so essential", she says. Sadly, there is a delay of the necessary feedback from officials that is so desperately required, but it appears that the municipality is trying to build this necessary relationship with the Chamber. "It is much better than a year ago and we hope that it will still grow", Lizmari says. It can always improve, and it extends further to Mopani and with all the other role players that have vested interests in the services in the town.

"We do have big plans for tourism, but the Chamber will never, and can never, fulfil the role of a Tourism Association. We will support them however they need, and I really do not know why we cannot have a Tourism Indaba here in Hoedspruit! We are ideally positioned for that. But we need to first tidy up the town big time, because we CAN be the video of 'that town on the wall' of the arrival's terminals at OR Tambo! I don't think it's enough to say we are promoting the tourist industry at the moment, but we are working towards it", she stated.

The Chamber recently attended the fifth forum meeting with the biggest role players concerning the water and sewerage situation in town and the surrounds. The main role players are the Department of Defence, Maruleng, MBB, the Water Board, Sanedi, Department of Water, Department of Public Works and others. The issue in Hoedspruit is that one department is not responsible for everything. Currently, the contract for the conveyancing of water and sewage is with one body, the rates is with another, maintenance is with yet another, and so it is a difficult and laborious situation. However, these meetings saw an enthusiasm by the role players to come up with solutions. Sanedi (appointed by the Department of Defence) launched an investigation - nothing to do with Hoedspruit - on how to improve the status inside the Airforce Base. But by exten-

sion this does impact the town.

Since the beginning, the Airforce Base has been the ally and protector of the community, supplying the town with water and sewage infrastructure. But nobody saw how the town would explode. The system is now 'operating' over capacity and cannot handle the current load, and certainly not the load into the future.

Options have already been formulated, and are being considered, to be implemented. This will be presented to the relevant department for a decision to be made. Behind the scenes, Mopani and Maruleng have been working hard together with, amongst others, MBB (who are an appointee for the pipeline owner, RMB) to formulate how contracts are going to be renewed, to see if there is a way to get a better structural management program in place. Mopani and Maruleng are also looking into the incomplete projects (both water and sewage) that were launched in previous years. It is Lizmari's hope that in the next year or two there will be observable progress of the solution.

This is not an easy solution issue, it is very difficult, and the red tape (in place for good reason), is so onerous that it takes copious amounts of time and energy to wade through. Lizmari believes the correct role players are in place and that correct planning ensures correct implementation. "I am hopeful that answers will be forthcoming sooner rather than later, because there are a lot of stakeholders that are dedicated to getting this sorted out".

"Development does not translate into growth or progress - maintenance, planning and responsible management ensures that!"

Hoedspruit town can be thankful that we have someone of the energy, passion, patience, and determination as Lizmari has, to look after our interests and drive the rights and wishes of the community. Thank you for all your efforts.

Join 'Hdt Town Concerns' on WhatsApp and/or join the Hoedspruit Chambers, or email them on [hoedspruitcs@gmail.com](mailto:hoedspruitcs@gmail.com)



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**Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176** Ref: 2102135



SOLE MANDATE

**CANYON GAME RESERVE** R 2 450 000  
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor: 250 m<sup>2</sup>

This home has an open plan kitchen, dining and living room plus a walk-in pantry. The entire living area opens onto the elevated pool deck with a built-in gas braai. There is a large entertainment room, which could also be used as a TV room. Priced to sell, so don't delay to arrange a viewing.

**Jason Jones - 083 267 4794** Ref: 2149688



SOLE MANDATE

**LEOPARD ROCK** R 4 380 000  
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | Floor size: 210 m<sup>2</sup>

Spacious and inviting, this lodge style home really does have so much to offer the bush enthusiast. Enjoy everything from the granite boulders that surround the main living space and swimming pool deck, to the elevation of the master bedroom with its birds eye view that is just sublime.

**Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821** Ref: 2136341

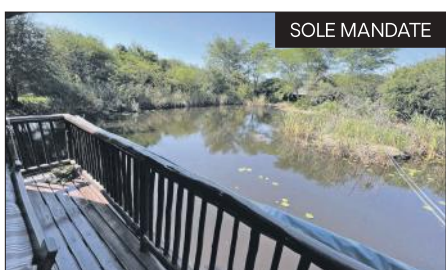


SOLE MANDATE

**BLYDE BOTANICAL RESERVE** R 3 750 000  
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: 373 m<sup>2</sup>

The location is serene and peaceful: magnificent botanical gardens, large trees and the ever-impressive Drakensberg Mountains surround this home. This home has a free flow layout for comfortable living, lots of windows, and inviting views of the outside wherever you are in the home.

**Jason Jones - 083 267 4794** Ref: 2140767



SOLE MANDATE

**GUERNSEY, HOEDSPRUIT** R 18 000 000  
Bedrooms 18 | Bathrooms 15 | Floor size: 1235 m<sup>2</sup>

This property is home to a well-known restaurant and pub, guest accommodation, as well as several home rentals and accommodation rentals. It is ± 4 hectares in size and borders the Timbavati and is 500 meters from the gate and 11 km from the Eastgate Airport. Income via various rental options.

**Rob Severin - 083 469 3820** Ref: 2149661



SOLE MANDATE

**KARONGWE - BIG 5** R 8 400 000  
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | Traverse: 8,000 ha

Be one of 14 private owners within Karongwe Nature Reserve which offers pristine game viewing with 4 seasonal river systems. The home is situated on a dry riverbed and comes fully furnished. Harvey tile roof for lower maintenance.

**Rob Severin - 083 469 3820** Ref: 2063307



SOLE MANDATE

**BLYDE WILDLIFE ESTATE** R 4 730 000  
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 3 | Floor size: 360 m<sup>2</sup>

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



SOLE MANDATE

**NOT LIMITED BY RESERVE RULES** R 3 200 000  
Beds 2 | Baths 2 | Stand size: 21 ha

Each room has spectacular views of the mountain range and leads out onto the covered pool deck. A spacious open plan living, dining, and kitchen compliment this home and there is a separate scullery and guest toilet. This property could be considered as a commercial tourism option.

**Jason Jones - 083 267 4794** Ref: 2145090



SOLE MANDATE

**HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE** R 3 700 000  
Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor size: 160 m<sup>2</sup>

This beautiful home has it all! The lounge opens up onto the patio and entertainment area with pool and well-maintained garden. Upstairs is a study and a second lounge. The immediate area around the house is enclosed by a latte fence. There is a double carport plus a garden shed.

**Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176** Ref: 2143619

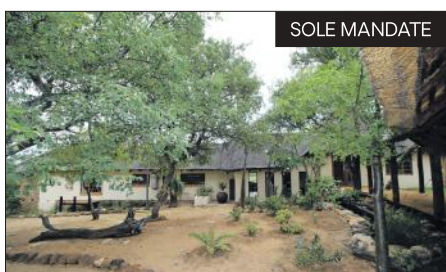


SOLE MANDATE

**GREATER MAKALALI** R 20 000 000  
Bedrooms 5 | Bathrooms 5 | Farm size: 640 ha

This farm is within Greater Makalali Nature Reserve, which has the Big 5 and 20,000 ha of traverse. Approvals in place for 10 commercial beds. There is a main 2-bedroom home and 3 guest chalets. Ideal for syndication, families, or convert to boutique commercial lodge.

**Jason Jones - 083 267 4794** Ref: 1459112



SOLE MANDATE

**NDLOVUMZI** R 4 950 000  
Bedrooms 9 | Bathroom 5 | Stand size: 21 ha

This bespoke tented camp is perfectly nestled on an elevated ridge within a 1,000 ha nature reserve. The property consists of two luxury tents with commercial licences, a 4-bedroom owner's house and a 2-bedroom manager's cottage. The commercial aspect will be sold fully furnished.

**Jason Jones - 083 267 4794** Ref: 2079842



SOLE MANDATE

**MAHLATHINI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE** R 4 500 000  
Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor size: 479 m<sup>2</sup>

This stunning home with its quality features is situated on a 21-hectare freehold stand in a secure estate bordering the Kruger National Park. It is ideal to be used as a holiday home or even permanent living. The 21-hectares offer a lot of privacy and no one else may traverse onto your property.

**Mike Dodds - 082 906 7004** Ref: 2143562



SOLE MANDATE

**LISSATABA** R 5 160 000  
Bedrooms 5 | Bathrooms 5.5 | Floor size: 500 m<sup>2</sup>

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: 2099048



SOLE MANDATE

**NDLOVUMZI** R 3 750 000  
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 3 | Floor size: 380 m<sup>2</sup>

This 21-ha Olifants river property has a 2 bedroom main home and a separate 2-bedroom cottage, all located under large indigenous riverine trees. The outdoor entertainment area has captivating views of the garden, pool & river.

**Jason Jones - 083 267 4794** Ref: 1459005



SOLE MANDATE

**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



SOLE MANDATE

**OLIFANTS RIVER PROPERTY** R 4 500 000  
Bedrooms 4 | Bathrooms 4 | 50% share

By purchasing this 50% share in Parsons Nature Reserve you will have access to 2080 ha of prime Big 5 game viewing in Greater Kruger. This quaint bush home also has a lapa, pool and lush garden. The sale includes the use of a game view vehicle.

**Mike Dodds - 082 906 7004** Ref: 2048251

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# Croc attack ! A miraculous escape

Local Correspondent

It all happened on Tuesday, 25 April, along the Metsi Metsi River near the Harry Wolhuter Memorial. Mark Montgomery was on a walking trail with guests and the time had come to settle down under two large trees for lunch – on the banks of the Metsi Metsi River.

In discussion with the guests, it was suggested that they all move on as it was still a little early for lunch. Mark however needed to refill his water bottles and remembers that the water of the river was a little dirty on the surface, so they all went back to a spot that was rocky and a little more accessible to scoop water from the river to fill the bottles.

Mark started scooping water and on the third scoop, as he was about to scoop the water, he noticed a crocodile dead still under the water, the head pointing directly at him and right in front of him! He thinks he pulled his right hand back as the crocodile launched forward at him, but it was too late, and the crocodile managed to take hold of Mark over the wrist area and the fingers of his right hand.

The flow of events from seeing the head to being dragged into the river in the grasp of the crocodile is not a memory for Mark, it happened so quickly. He could hear the guests behind him shouting, and one guest jumped into the river and tried to grab Mark. But the crocodile pulled Mark further out into the river and the guest was left empty handed.

The guests could see Marks head under the water, and watched in horror as the crocodile dragged him further into the river until at a point Mark disappeared under the wa-

ter. Mark remembers that as the crocodile was swimming with him under the water, he put his left arm around the crocodiles' neck, and tried to get to his eyes, or put his hand into the animals' mouth – anything to deter him and get him to release his grasp. There was a thought to pull his hand out of the animal's mouth, but with a clear mind he decided that would be worse than trying to get the crocodile to let him go. As he was being dragged under the water, Mark kicked up to try and stop the Crocodile from taking him down to the riverbed.

At that point the crocodile started rolling, but Mark started kicking with his right leg, countering the animals turn. Suddenly it felt like the crocodile let Marks arm go, and the second Mark felt that vicelike grip release, he lurched for the surface. On breaking the surface, he saw that the riverbank was about a body length away and when he touched the sand, he lunged for the bank again. Mark had the image of the crocodile grabbing him from behind, and so he continued to lung frantically and partially pulled a hamstring in the process.

He finally managed to grab hold of some jackal berry roots that protruded into the river and pulled himself up onto the opposite bank. He stood up unsteadily, his right leg did not feel good. He forced himself not to look down for fear the crocodile had bitten his leg. Mark proceeded to hobble along the bank of the river, upstream to the shallow part where the group were originally going to get water and walked through the river to the concerned guests and fellow guide and went and lay under the shade of a tree.

The first aid responders in the group started doctoring him right there and then



Mark enjoying the trail (above) and his injury (above)



Photo's supplied

whilst the backup guide was on the satellite phone calling for help from the Kruger Park. A vehicle was sent to pick them up and take them to Skukuza, and from there it was in an ambulance for Mark and off to the Mediclinic in Nelspruit.

Three surgeries later there was no infection visible, and the wounds were healing well. Metal pins and plates were put into the hand and thankfully the hand was saved. It is believed that Mark will almost have normal use of the hand in the future.

Mark estimates that the crocodile was about 3,5 meters in length, and attributes his survival to his experiences from past encounters with wild animals in the bush and keeping a cool head at the time. But he was also fortunate that the crocodile let him go when it did.

Mark is vastly experienced having completed 113 backpack trails and about 30 Kruger trails. At the time he insisted that

this was merely an unfortunate incident and ensured that the guests got another guide and continued their trail the very next day! He says he is not traumatised by the experience but will be more weary of water and advises that one should always be vigilant and not drop one's guard in the bush.

A postscript note is that after writing this article, and during last week's operation, some infection was found in the finger which had to be cut away, followed up by another procedure to check all is well. Then in this last week, Mark would have seen the plastic surgeon to insert and attach some muscle to the finger to ensure proper healing and mobility.

You can support and help Mark by donating through BackaBuddy: <https://www.backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/mark-montgomery-5589438681713045524>

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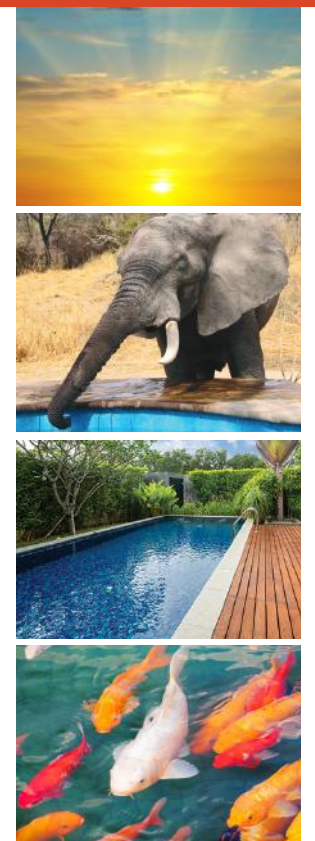
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# A journey into the Kalahari on a primitive trail



## Adventure Correspondent

As the sun rises over the southern Kalahari, casting a soft orange glow over the endless stretches of an iconic expanse, a sense of excitement and adventure takes hold. I am on the Lowveld Trails Company's (LTC) recently launched 'Kalahari Primitive Trail' experience.

In the distance, haunting calls of a black-backed jackal echoes through an otherwise silent landscape, sending a primal reminder down our spines. We are merely a product of this ecosystem. This is the Kalahari Primitive Trail, an immersive and thrilling experience that takes one on a journey into the heart of one of the most extreme and captivating environments on Earth.

The trails are led by expert Trails Guides, and participants spend a minimum of three self-sufficient nights in the wild. By carrying all your food and equipment on your back, you enter a world only accessible to a privileged few. Groups set their own pace and explore according to their interests and capabilities. There are no demarcated campsites or routes. Each night is spent at a pristine location under the stars (no tents), with participants sharing the responsibility of 'watch duty'.

In the distance, a herd of gemsbok gracefully moves across our path as the calls of southern pied babblers fill the air. Their frantic energy adds to the sense of adventure and excitement that surrounds us. The deep red sands of the Kalahari shift beneath our feet as we follow the oversized tracks of two black maned lions.

To say that the landscape is flat would be an understatement. Of the nine kilometres we would cover that day, our total elevation

gained was a modest six meters. At least four of those were spent moving out of Kgatlewa Pan, a large circular depression with a flat bottom. These endorheic pans are a characteristic feature of the southern Kalahari. Their centres are covered with short grass and their white calcrete edges are dominated by dwarf, non-fragrant shrubs. Springbok, gemsbok and blue wildebeest are ever present, but as long as seasonal surface water persists, these scattered pans put on a brilliant wildlife spectacle. The rapidly evaporating pools of rainwater that collect in the pans attract animals such as eland, red hartebeest, zebra, buffalo, black rhino, white rhino and a range of predators such as African wild dog, cheetah, leopard and the infamous Kalahari black maned lion.

During some of our nights spent out on these pans, we have also had the pleasure of interacting with bat-eared fox and brown hyena. Such is the backdrop of the 'Kalahari Primitive Trail', an experience that was launched by Lowveld Trails Company at the beginning of April this year.

"Our new destination is not just about offering an adventurous experience, but also about helping participants to connect with nature, find meaning, and enhance their overall well-being," said Wayne te Brake, one LTC's founders. "We believe that unsupported time spent in the wilderness is a powerful tool for promoting mental and physical strength, and our new destination has been specifically selected to provide visitors with an opportunity to experience these benefits first-hand."

The Kalahari Primitive Trail takes place in a remote part of North-West Province. Here, the vegetation community is classified as Molopo Bushveld, named after the Molopo

River, which is the northern boundary of the reserve, and the international boundary between South Africa and Botswana. Only eight tree species occur here, of which the mighty camel thorn, *Vachellia erioloba*, and the shady shepard's tree, *Boscia albitrunca* (locally known as Motopi), are two of the most common. It should therefore not be surprising that the Kalahari has the lowest tree species to area ratio in southern Africa. Nevertheless, this particular vegetation community has a stronger grass component than other parts of the Kalahari.

There has been no evidence of permanent flowing water in the southern Kalahari for the past 12 000 years. In fact, the region couldn't be settled permanently before the 1940's, at which stage the technology became available to extract water from below the 200-meter-deep sand sheets.

Nevertheless, the Molopo River holds seasonal water that would historically (before boundary fences and farming) have created a meandering lifeline and corridor into the otherwise dry eastern Kalahari Bushveld Region. It is along this course that larger, more water dependent mammals such as rhino, elephant and Cape buffalo would have seasonally migrated into the area where the reserve exists today. Evidence of their historic distribution and the fact that the vegetation community can still support them, have been the motivating factors for their reintroduction into this, the largest privately owned reserve in South Africa (95 000 ha).

One of the most attractive things about the area is that it holds strong intrinsic wilderness qualities such as isolation, quietude and a strong 'sense-of-place'. At night, the silence is deafening, and there is no sign

of light pollution along the flat, panoramic horizon. "We believe that the intrinsic wilderness qualities of the area make it an exceptional destination for anyone who has grown bored of areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape," said Brenden Pienaar, another LTC's founders. It is evident that this area is unique, raw, and remote offering an unparalleled sense of freedom.

The Kalahari is a land of extremes, with hot summer days and cold winter nights. That is why the Kalahari Primitive Trail season is limited to only sixteen trail departures during the 'Goldilocks' months - April and May. The short trail season also aligns with LTC's 'leave-no-trace' policy, which allows the environment to recover from an already negligible and nomadic impact. Their expert Trails Guides promote a culture of consideration and care for the environment and the self. "We've put a lot of effort into creating a unique experience that allows visitors to fully immerse themselves in nature and challenge themselves in new ways," said Leighton Barnard the Senior Trails Guide.

Based on the quality of their Trails Guides, the backdrop of a globally iconic landscape and limited seasonal supply, LTC's 'Kalahari Primitive Trail' experience may well have positioned itself as the country's first premium primitive trail. It is an opportunity to disconnect from the modern world and rewild yourself in the land of great thirst, where every step brings the promise of discovery and the unexpected.

*Bookings for April and May 2024 opens on 1 June 2023. Contact reservations@lowveldtrails.co.za to book your spot on this adventure.*

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# Encountering snakes

Johan Marais  
African Snakebite Institute

Every year, as the temperature drops and trees lose their leaves, we see a peak of snake activity. While our snakes do not really hibernate, they become inactive during winter and spend most of their time in underground burrows. But on warm winter days, especially in the Lowveld, snakes often come to the surface to bask.

Some snakes, like southern African pythons and puff adders, mate until the middle of June. The main reason for the increase in activity is that snakes are seeking their last meals before winter, and move around looking for an ideal underground hideout.

It is often said that, should you encounter a snake, it is best to stand perfectly still. I have no desire to stand still next to a hooding cobra or a black mamba with its mouth agape, exposing the black inner lining of the mouth. My advice is to immediately retreat at least five paces, no matter what the situation. Once you are five paces from any snake, indoors or outdoors, you are perfectly safe and cannot be bitten. It is also a safe distance from a Mozambique spitting cobra as they cannot eject their venom more than 3 meters.

Never try to kill a snake as you enter the danger zone, and any snake that is threatened will do whatever it can to defend itself, and in such situations we often see people getting bitten. It is also not advisable to try and capture any snake, no matter how small or harmless it appears. Braai tongs are not designed for the safe capture of a venomous snakes and are far too short for most adult snakes.

In the field you can simply retreat five paces and avoid any snake. There is no need to kill or capture it. In your house or garden, it is another story, and it is best to have the snake removed by a snake remover – someone who has been trained to deal with venomous snakes and has the right equipment to do so. There are more than 700 snake removers on the free African Snakebite Institute App ASI Snakes (see below).

While snakebites are quite rare in the Lowveld, there are several highly venomous snakes, and it is vitally important that the correct procedures are followed in the event of a bite.

Firstly, get the patient to the nearest hospital, no matter how far away the hospital is. Always choose a hospital with a trauma unit as they are geared to deal with emergencies. The most dangerous snakebite in the Lowveld is one from a black mamba – their venom is potently neurotoxic and fast-acting, and rapidly affects breathing. Bites on children are particularly life-threatening and in severe cases victims may experience difficulty with breathing within less than half an hour.

Bites from the puff adder, snouted cobra and Mozambique spitting cobra are usually



Puff Adder in striking position (above), juvenile black mamba (below) and the snouted cobra (bottom image) Images copyright: Johan Marais

painful and may result in progressive swelling. The sooner the patient reaches a hospital and receives the correct treatment, the better. In cases of severe envenomation, such a patient will require antivenom and, if necessary, the sooner it is administered the less the subsequent tissue damage. Boomslang venom is haemotoxic and slow-acting, taking several hours before the first symptoms are noticeable – usually some blood oozing from the fang punctures followed by a nosebleed. Bites from boomslang are extremely rare.

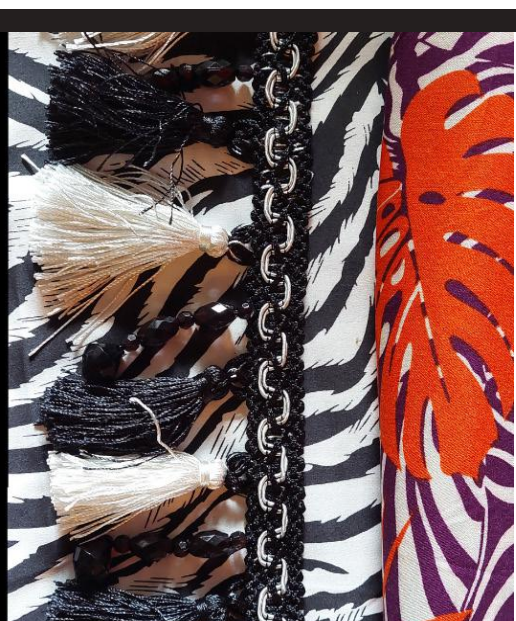
While antivenom is the correct treatment for serious snakebites, less than 10% of all snakebite victims are treated with antivenom. Identifying the snake responsible for a bite may be beneficial (a clear photograph) but is not essential, as doctors will draw blood for analyses and will then carefully monitor symptoms to establish how severe a bite is, and what treatment is required.

For a full list of what to do in the event of a snakebite (and what not to do) go to the first aid section of the ASI App ASI Snakes or obtain a book that covers first aid in snakebites.

*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](http://www.africansnakebiteinstitute.com) – get your free App on the link <http://bit.ly/snakebiteapp>*



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# The 'Big Five' trees of Kruger and how to identify them

Lauren Dold

If you rely only on seeing the "Big Five" animals, a drive in Kruger can be disappointing. When spotting game, it's always a 'right place, right time' scenario and of course, these cannot always be guaranteed. But if you turn your attention to the trees, you'll never return from a game drive unsatisfied. Trees never move, they photograph beautifully, they often house incredible sightings (sleeping leopards and the like) and it can be incredibly rewarding to identify a new tree.

While there is no official "Big Five" of trees, these are some of Kruger's biggest and best species, and a good place to start if you are new to identifying trees.

## The baobab/ Kremetart (*Adansonia Digitata*)

An easy one to identify, the mighty Baobab is first on the list as the undisputed biggest tree in Kruger. This is probably the Kruger's most distinctive tree, due to its gargantuan size. The larger baobabs in Kruger are thousands of years old! They are found mostly in the northern regions of the park, especially prevalent in the Punda Maria and Shingwedzi regions, but there are some specimens further south (the southernmost baobab is found about 25km south of Satara on the Satara-Tshokwane road at Kumana Dam).



### Identifying features:

- Stout, fleshy trunk (mostly grey, sometimes pinkish in the sun)
- Wide spreading crown
- White flowers (spring)
- Large pendulous pods, with a hard wooden shell and hairy appearance
- Deciduous tree (leaves in summer, bare in winter)

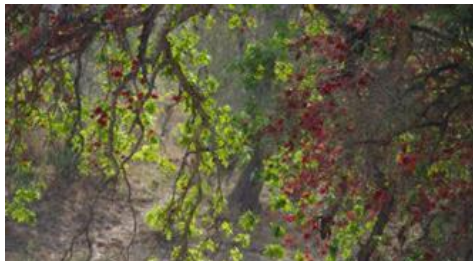
These bulbous, shiny 'upside-down' trees (so-called because their branches look a lot like roots) can grow over 20m tall and live for thousands of years. Their white flowers are pollinated by fruit bats, and the fruit is found within hard pods that hang from the tree.

There are smaller baobabs in some of Kruger's rest camps, but in their infancy (which in the case of a baobab is less than 200 years old) they can sometimes go unnoticed.

Monkeys, baboons and warthogs eat the fruit and seed pods, bush babies and bats feed on the nectar and elephants sometimes eat the spongy baobab bark.

## Weeping boerbean/ Huilboerboon (*Schotia Brachypetala*)

These magnificent trees often line riverbeds or drainage lines in Kruger, and grow well in or around termite mounds. While they can be found throughout the park, they are more abundant south of the Sabie river. In spring, they erupt with crimson red flowers, and can be spotted from miles away. The tree gets its name from the copious amount of nectar that overflows or "weeps" from the flowers. While not every tree will grow to be large, they can reach up to 22m in height.



### Identifying features:

- Single stem
- Large spreading, densely branched and rounded crown
- Glossy dark green leaves (young leaves are copper coloured)
- Bright red multi-petaled flowers (Usually in spring)
- Rough brown bark
- Evergreen (in warm areas like Kruger)

These trees, particularly when flowering are a hive of activity, attracting all sorts of birds and animals. Nectar-feeding birds, like sunbirds feed on the nectar, and insect-eating birds feed on the bees and other bugs that the nectar attracts. Monkeys and baboons feast on the flowers, and the leaves are eaten by various browsers, including black rhinos.

## Jackal berry/ Jackalsbessie (*Diospyros Mespiliformis*)

One of the savanna giants, jackal berries can live up to 200 years, growing up to 20m tall. This tree is found throughout Kruger in all soil types, but is especially prevalent in low-lying areas along riverbeds and streams. In these environments, it grows especially big.

Jackal berries, like marulas, are dioecious, which means male and female reproductive organs present separately on separate trees. In the case of jackal berries, the flowers on the male tree grow in clusters, while the flowers on the female tree grow individually on hairy stalks, and only the female trees bear fruit.



### Identifying features:

- Dense green canopy, semi-deciduous
- Tall, upright trunk with spreading branches
- Grey or dark brown bark, with a roughish texture
- Smallish dark green leaves with a dull shine
- New leaves (in spring) are red
- Cream-coloured, bell-shaped flowers
- Small fleshy oval fruit, mostly yellow in colour (It can turn a darker colour when ripe, but is mostly eaten before that stage)

The jackal berry supposedly gets its name because the fruit is often found in jackal dung, but if that is the only criteria then it could just as easily have been called a monkey or baboon-berry, or after any of the many animals that feed on this tree (including kudu, klipspringers, warthogs and dassies).

## Natal mahogany/ Rooiessenhout (*Trichilia emetica*)

Often found along riverbeds, but also occasionally in bushveld, Natal mahoganies have a distinct, very dense crown. This tree casts excellent shade for animals in the heat of summer (entire prides of lion have been seen sleeping in their shade), and is evergreen so it never loses its leaves. A water-loving species, Natal mahoganies are found along nearly all rivers in Kruger, with the exception of the Shingwedzi and its tributaries. To get a nice up close look at one of these beauties, there is a Natal mahogany in every rest camp (with the exception of Shingwedzi).



### Identifying features:

- Dark green glossy leaves (evergreen)
- Dense, spreading crown
- Smooth, dark brown bark
- Sweet smelling, light green flowers (August to November)
- Pear-shaped fruits, which split open when mature, revealing a bright red and black seeds

Birds are attracted to the dense shade of the Natal mahogany. Starlings, barbets, grey and purple crested louries and hornbills eat the seeds while baboons, monkeys and nyala eat the fruit.

## Sycamore fig/ Sycomorusvy (*Ficus sycomorus*)

Sycamore figs, also known as the African queen of trees, are found in the sandy soils along all the riverbeds and drainage lines in Kruger, and grow especially well near the

perennial rivers like the Timbavati. A good place to see some of these magnificent big trees is along the Timbavati river between Orpen and Satara. Sycamore figs can grow upwards of 20m, even reaching as tall as 35m.



### Identifying features:

- Mostly green, seldom leafless
- Dense and wide spreading crown
- Milky latex in all parts of the tree
- Large figs clustered along the branches; greenish-yellow then pale red when ripe
- Pale green, thin leaves rounded at the tip and rough to the touch
- Yellow-grey stem, with very pale papery bark that flakes off

The wood of a Sycamore fig is very light, in colour and in weight. The trees fruit throughout the year but peak between July and December. The figs attract all manner of birds and animals, from bats to elephants to monkeys to bushbabies. At Babalala picnic spot in northern Kruger, a beautiful fig grows through the thatched shade of the picnic site, a great place to get close to the tree and learn to identify it.

### Did you know?

This giant tree is dependent on a tiny little wasp, without whom this queen of trees would not prosper. The fig wasp, attracted to the scent of minuscule flowers within the fruit, enters the fig through a tiny gap. Full of pollen, as well as wasp eggs, these wasps pollinate the flowers, lay their eggs then die. Some of the flowers will become seeds, and others will form a kind of wasp nursery, protected by the tree.

Honourable mention must also go the nyala berry, tamboti and leadwood, who are also giants of Kruger and can be found throughout the park.

Previously posted on [www.getaway.co.za](http://www.getaway.co.za) - Jul 21

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## ANSWERS

6	5	8	2	7	1	4	9	3
3	7	2	9	4	8	6	5	1
4	9	1	6	3	5	2	8	7
2	8	7	5	6	3	1	4	9
9	4	5	8	1	7	3	6	2
1	3	6	4	9	2	8	7	5
7	6	4	1	2	9	5	3	8
8	2	3	7	5	6	9	1	4
5	1	9	3	8	4	7	2	6

# The survival of our local butterflies intricately linked to plants

Ian Sharp

A group of well-represented and commonly seen butterflies, even during winter months, are those belonging to the Pieridae family. These are commonly referred to as 'whites' due to the predominance of white patterning, but many are particularly colourful.

Noticeable members of this family are the migratory species, often seen on the wing in large numbers. At certain times of the year, the brown-veined white or caper white (*Belenois aurota aurota*) are seen to be migrating in large numbers in a north-easterly direction over the interior. This flight pattern can continue for many days as they migrate from areas where they emerge en masse.

The African migrant (*Catopsilla florella*) may also be noted as migrating to a cer-

eggs or large numbers of small larvae of the butterflies, aggregated together on the underside of the leaves. As is common in nature, there are always exceptions and some species utilizing the Capparaeaceae as larval host plants, do lay individual eggs scattered over the foliage and twigs.

In my opinion, an iconic representative species in the arid areas is the shepard's tree. Not only is it a beautiful ornamental tree and a well-utilized browse species for wildlife, but it also has some anthropogenic importance. History tells us that in the days gone by, the roots of the shepard's tree were pounded to be used as a porridge, or roasted as a substitute for brewing a type of 'coffee'. In ethnomedicinal herbal remedy usage, the bark, leaves and roots of the tree is used to treat a number of ailments.

will be a Bead-bean growing! Other Pierid species are also found to utilize this tree as a larval host. On the property where I live, west of Hoedspruit, a 6 m tall bead-bean was totally striped of all its foliage in mid-summer, by larvae of the veined tip (*Colotis vesta argillaceus*) and the brown-veined white (*Belenois aurota*), with only the characteristic pods remaining like some forgotten Christmas decoration. To my surprise, as would be normally expected, there was no new-leaf flush to sustain the tree for the rest of the season. The question is, will this tree flush again in spring?

The woolly caper bush (*Capparis tomentosa*) is another favourite larval host plant for the Peirid butterfly family. This untidy scrambling shrub, bearing some vicious thorns, is widespread in the area. It flowers prolifically with large typical Cap-

Here again the 'tips' are dominant with the bushveld purple tip (*Colotis ione*) and scarlet tip (*Colotis annae annae*) joined by the likes of the boldly patterned smokey orange tip (*Colotis eupippe omphale*). The brown-veined white (*Belenois aurota*) and African common white (*Belenois creona severina*) furthermore, feature as utilizers of the needle-leaved bush cherry as a larval host.

The rugged, untidy grey-leaved worm bush (*Cadaba termitaria*) shrub, generally found perched atop a termitaria, can easily be confused with other members of the Capparaeaceae until the flowers or strange pods are spotted. The petalless flowers have a hook-shaped pink to red androgynophore (stamens and style on a long stalk), giving it the strange appearance. The seed pods are reminiscent of the Bead-bean, but as they ripen and the



Image 1: Capparaeaceae - *Capparis tomentosa*; *Boscia albitrunca* & *Cadaba termitaria*



Image 4: Veined Tip; Vine-leaf Vagrant & Autumn-leaf Vagrant .

tain degree, with many individuals flying in the same general direction and hence the common name. Some years ago, while sitting out on the deep sea in a fishing boat many kilometres off the coast of Mozambique, I happened to notice an African migrant flying past heading east! Maybe it had some instinctive premonition on loadshedding and decided Australia was a better bet! See picture 1.

An interesting aspect applicable to a number of Pieridae butterflies is their association with the Capparaeaceae plant family as larval host plants. Well known tree species such as the shepard's tree

Picture 2. Locally the butterfly species that are recorded as utilizing the shepard's tree as a larval host plant total upward of twelve species. Some commonly seen 'white' butterflies throughout the Lowveld, for example the zebra white (*Pynacopteryx eriphia eriphia*), African common white (*Belenois creona severina*) and brown-veined white (*Belenois aurota*), and a number of 'tips' like the scarlet tip (*Colotis annae annae*), bushveld purple tip (*Colotis ione*), common orange tip (*Colotis evenina evenina*) and banded gold tip (*Teracolus eris eris*), show an affinity for using the shepard's tree as a larval host

paraceae flowers that are strongly scented, producing large globose seed pods. Though considered highly toxic, the roots are used for numerous ailments in ethnomedicinal herbal remedies. Various concoctions are applied to treat cattle illness as well. Picture 4.

At least twelve butterfly species are recorded as utilizing the woolly caper bush as a larval host plant. Members of the 'vagrants', 'whites' and 'tips' groups of species, including the colourful autumn-leaf vagrant (*Afrodryas leda*) and the vine-leaf vagrant (*Eronia cleodora*), indicates the importance of this plant species in the life

pod splits open, an orange powdery pulp is revealed in which the seeds are embedded. The most common visitor to this plant is the scarlet tip (*Colotis annae annae*) female as she flits through the branches searching for a suitable locality to oviposit. The eggs are often laid on the lobes of the calyx of the petalless flowers. Other users of this shrub as a larval host plant, are the sulphur orange tip (*Colotis auxo auxo*) and the black-veined white (*Dixeia doxo parva*). As with many of these Pierid butterflies, especially the 'tips', the larvae are difficult to spot and, sometimes, only some frass on a leaf is the tell-tale sign of a larva's presence.



Image 2: African Common White; Brown-veined White & Zebra White.



Image 5: Bushveld Purple Tip; Smokey Orange Tip & Small Orange

(*Boscia albitrunca*) and the bushveld bead-bean tree (*Maerua angolensis*), host larvae from a variety of 'white' butterflies. Even the smaller shrubby species of the Capparaeaceae are sort after, including the rambling woolly Caper bush (*Capparis tomentosa*) and needle-leaved bush cherry (*Maerua rosmarinoides*). Another member of this plant family is the grey-leaved worm bush (*Maerua termitaria*) that is interestingly associated with termitaria as indicated by the species name. The flower and seed pods of this shrub are strangely peculiar and warrant mention.

On closer inspection of these plant species, one will probably find clutches of

plant. Picture 3. The bushveld bead-bean tree (*Maerua angolensis*), or what I term the 'Lowveld lollipop tree', is also a preferred larval host plant for certain 'white' butterflies. Characteristically, the bead-bean grows tall (up to 9 m) on a single stem with a rounded crown penetrating through the woody layer stratum of the general vegetation. The veined tip (*Colotis vesta argillaceus*) has this tree species as a preferred larval host plant. If a couple of these butterflies are found flying in a certain area, there is a good chance that, if you look up, there

cycle of butterflies. Another important member of the Capparaeaceae, also utilized as a prominent larval host plant, is the needle-leaved bush cherry (*Maerua rosmarinoides*). This spindly small bush is not very noticeable until when in full flower. The large pincushion-type flowers are conspicuous in the lower vegetation stratum and draws your attention to the plant. Closer inspection once again may deliver eggs or larvae of a variety of Pierids. Six can be listed, but there are probably more that are utilizing the plant as a larval host.

Picture 5.

Picture 6. This short piece is considered indicative as to how important a few species of plants are to the survival of our amazing diversity of butterflies (never mind the large number of moth species!) in the Lowveld. The so-called 'progress' where the development of the Hoedspruit area is concerned, never bodes well for the smaller creatures. Whatever development we consider, cognizance of the impact on such organisms should always be considered. Next time, some more, hopefully tasty bits, on the Pierid family of butterflies.



Image 3: Common Orange Tip ♂; Common Orange Tip ♀ & Scarlet Tip.



Image 6: Red Tip; Sulphur Orange Tip & Banded Gold Tip.

# Creative JUICES !



Ben Coley

On April 14, 2023, the European Space Agency (ESA) launched JUICE. The space industry loves a good acronym and this is no exception. JUICE stands for Jupiter Icy Moon Explorer and is another huge step towards scouring our solar system for signs of life.

In 8 years' time, JUICE will reach its final destination and settle into orbit around the largest of our solar system's planets - Jupiter. Over the coming years, JUICE will orbit Jupiter and its 4 largest moons, known as the Galilean moons, examining them with a plethora of scientific instruments. Its goal is not too dissimilar to Star Trek's famous Starship Enterprise, "... to explore strange new worlds ... to seek out new life and civilisations ... to boldly go where no man has gone before".

Whilst finding new civilisations may be a bit of a stretch, its mission can be summarised as exploring and assessing Jupiter's moons for the presence of current or past life, as well as understanding their interactions with their host planet, and each other. But what is it about these bodies that has inspired this latest mission?

### History

Jupiter is home to 92 recognised moons, but the 4 largest have been known to science for over 400 years. Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto, were first discovered by the great Italian astronomer Galileo in the 1600's, with a telescope no more powerful than a pair of modern day 8x birding binoculars!

Not only were they the first moons discovered orbiting another planet, but their legacy proved vital in reshaping our understanding of the cosmos. Prior to this, the world still followed the ancient view that the Earth was the centre of everything, and that all other bodies orbited it. Galileo's observations provided some of the first empirical evidence that not everything was bound to Earth. This, along with various other discoveries, paved the way for the heliocentric model of the solar system - that the primary orbit of all the known planets was the Sun, and not Earth. Despite the magnitude of this revelation, it caused great tension between the scientific community and the church, the latter being firmly ensconced in the geocentric theory that placed the Earth at the centre of all things. For his work, Galileo was labelled as a heretic and placed under house arrest for the remaining 10 years of his life, and the church only relented to validate the heliocentric theory in the 1820's!

### The Galilean Moons

These 4 celestial bodies are some of the most interesting objects in our solar system, with each being unique in its own right.

#### Io

Io is the closest moon to Jupiter, and boasts a multicolour surface dashed with a cacophony of pinks, yellows and purples. Its visual beauty is born from the gravitational interactions between it, Jupiter and the other moons. Their mass tugs at this defenceless satellite, wrenching its interior to and fro,

causing massive geothermal unrest. Great volcanos spew toxic plumes of elements, 100's of kilometres into the atmosphere, and great fissures in its surface allow lava to ooze forth sulphurous compounds that coat and stain Io's surface, in a patchwork quilt of cthonian origin.

#### Europa

Europa may be the most scientifically significant body in the solar system. Radar imaging has confirmed that beneath its fractured, icy surface, resides a liquid salt water ocean, encircling the whole moon, estimated to be some 150 kms in depth. Within these watery depths, lies a primordial soup of carbon and hydrogen based compounds that form the building blocks of life here on Earth. The ocean is warmed by hydrothermal vents, caused by the tidal pull of Jupiter on its core, much like we see in our own ocean depths. On Earth, these vents are home to blossoming ecosystems, filled with organisms that have adapted to live in the hot, sunless, toxic environments with great success. Whilst no direct evidence exists yet, Europa is seen by many astrobiologists as one of the most likely bodies capable of supporting life.

#### Ganymede

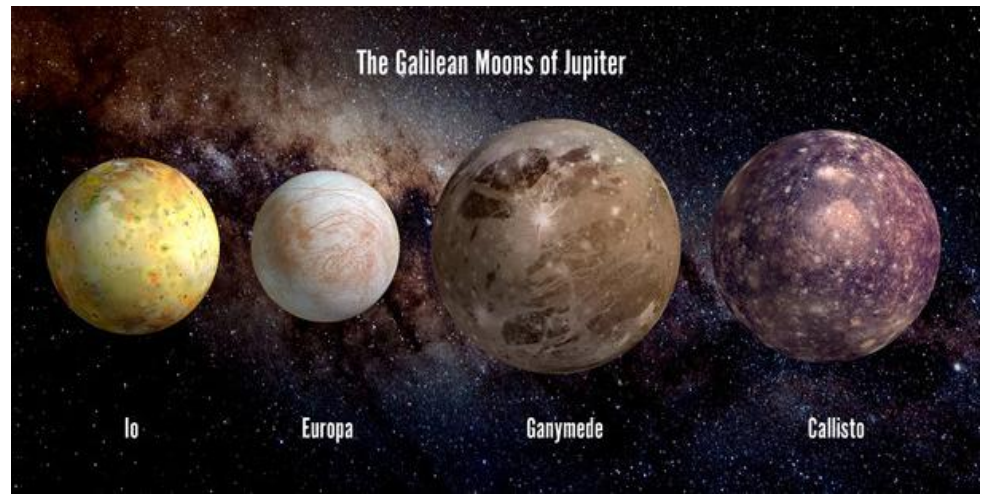
Ganymede is the largest moon in the solar system, dwarfing Mercury and three quarters the size of Mars. Like Europa, Ganymede is thought to harbour a deep subsurface ocean. What makes Ganymede unique however, is its magnetic field, the only known moon to be encapsulated in this invisible energy field. It has auroras just like the poles on Earth, and a thin atmosphere that contains some oxygen.

#### Callisto

Callisto is a lunar relict. Its surface is pitted with craters almost to the point of saturation and is thought to be unchanged since its creation over 4,5 billion years ago. Being further from Jupiter than its aforementioned brethren, its interior is not thought to be heated in the same manner, but subterranean oceans have not been ruled out. While the chances of life on Callisto are slim, its ancient surface offers a unique opportunity to study the history of the solar system.

So, what of JUICE? JUICE will use gravity assists from the Earth, our Moon and Venus to slingshot itself towards its final destination at thousands of kilometres per hour! Its mission will focus in studying Jupiter's largest moon Ganymede, examining its surface in exquisite detail, understanding its alien magnetic field, and searching for confirmation of the presence of salt water below its crust. It is hoped that its findings will unlock some of the secrets of the Jovian system and pave the way for future exploration.

Enter NASA's Europa Clipper. Some may wonder why JUICE will not be spending more time looking at Europa, considering its biological potential. Europa has been earmarked for exploration for years, and next year NASA will launch the Europa Clipper, whose primary objective is to study this fascinating, frosty body. Despite launching a year later, Clipper will arrive before JUICE and its scientific payload will already be hard at work searching for superficial evidence of

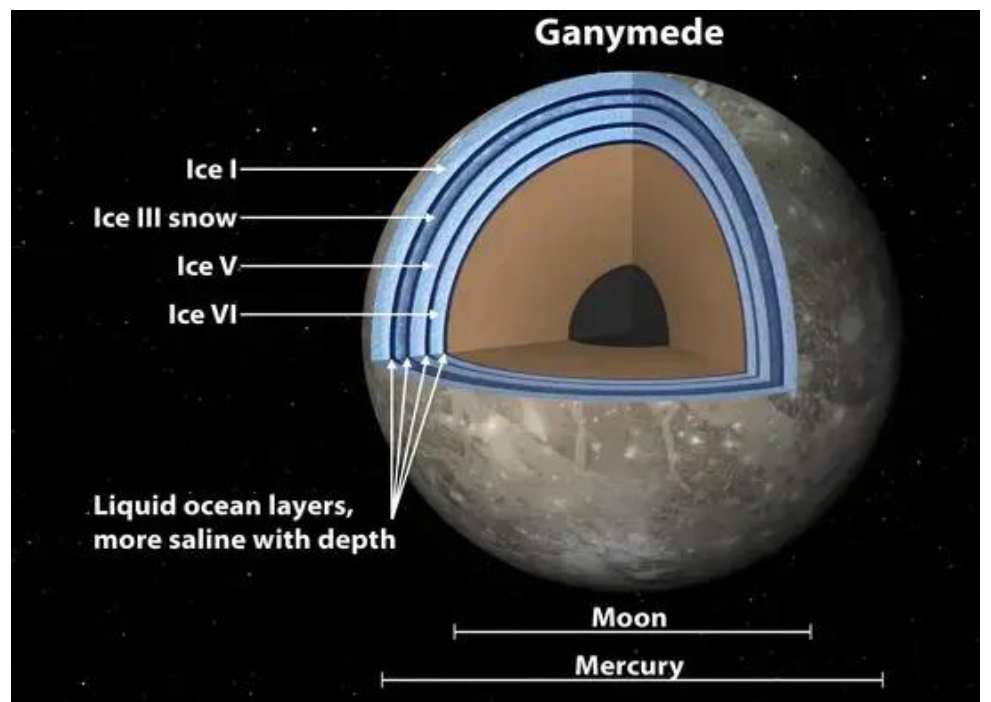


life in its icy depths.

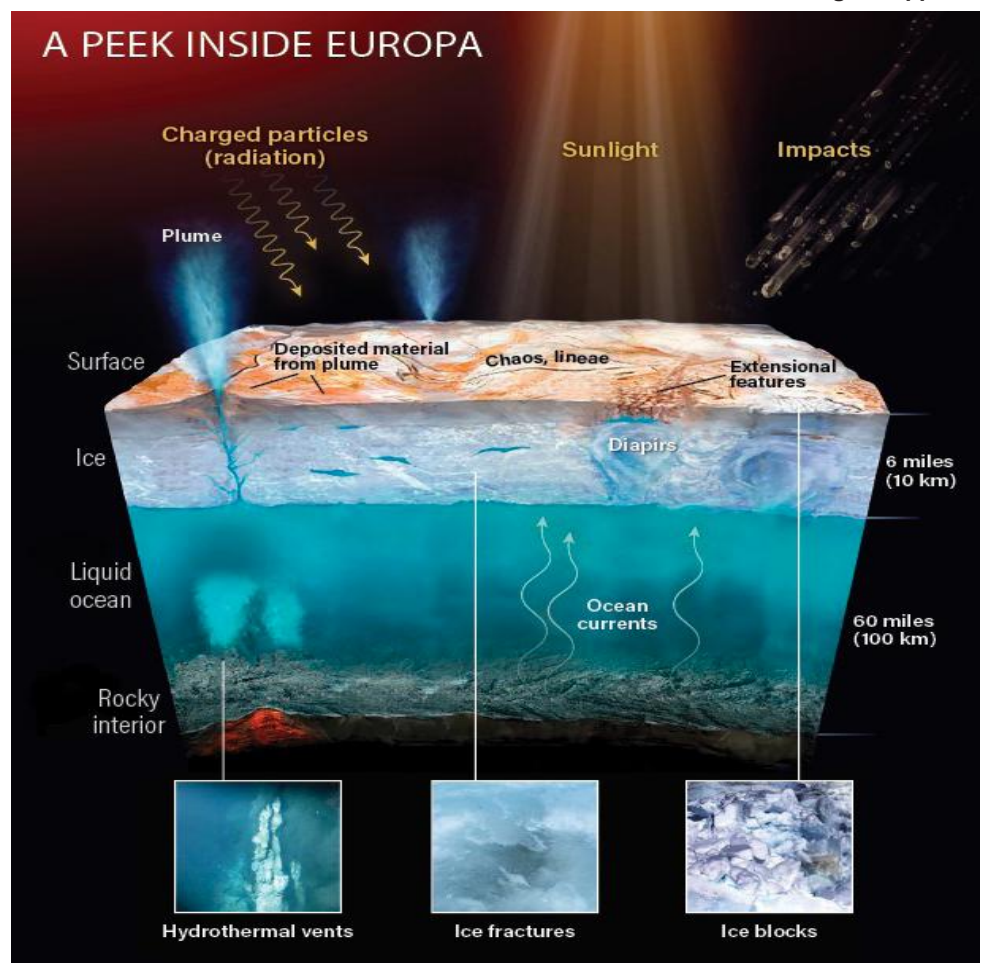
What either of these scientific marvels will find remains a mystery, and as mankind's expansion into the unknown of the solar system continues, what secrets they unearth could turn out to be some of the most monumental discoveries ever made.

Unfortunately, we will have to wait nearly a decade for any fruits of these great endeavours to be plucked, but as the years roll by, the anticipation will rise. And maybe, just maybe, we will finally be able to answer one of the great questions of the universe. Are we truly alone?

See *Celestial Events SA advert for contact details on page 8.*



Galilean moons (top right) Ganymede (above) and Jupiter (below) Images supplied



# Bird song and how to master it

Mike Meidlinger

**As winter sets in, and the days shorten as if on purpose, the stars adorn clear skies and frosty early mornings grace our small quadrant of the Lowveld. Despite the competitive scarcity of birds compared to the hot and humid midsummer, there are a still the plethora of residents for both local and travelling birders to appreciate. Despite the regularity of these species, many remain tricky to pick up for all but the most seasoned of 'avifans'.**

One of the most challenging aspects, even for those who are confident birders visually, is the ability to distinguish species according to the sounds they make. There are many factors which play a role, which all affect the ability to pick up clarity, or regularity, with many things sounding very similar and others being completely unknown sounds.

This state of affairs can persist for many years and the ability to define sounds from one another is often coveted towards those who can do it well. The main reason for this is that sounds that birds make are often incredibly varied, they are often erratic and uttered only briefly or with long intermission. Bird song, in many ways is a different language, much like when beginning to identify birds visually. In the beginning stages of practicing, many species went past too quickly to see well enough.

Over time though, as more and more accumulated experience occurred for each species, the easier and easier they became to recognize. In order to improve on the ability to bring sound recognition into one's regular birding, there are a number of individual concepts or principles which can help in the understanding of what learning bird sound entails. These are simple tips aimed to offer advice, rather than being dictatorial, they are presented as thoughts. The first, is that mastering of bird sound takes a long time of conscious effort and experience, so don't worry if there are unknown sounds. How one becomes better is by adding to their individual known sounds rather than assessing how many gaps they have.

If today one sound is known and tomorrow two sounds are known then that is learning, in this example, and within two weeks perhaps up to 10 species could be permanently locked in. One of the most daunting things when beginning to truly think about calls and songs, is that many species of bird can often be heard calling at the same time, even when well outside the classic dawn or evening chorus times, from a number of directions and at a range of distances.

## A Symphony of Sounds

One way to think of this, at times chaos, is to think of the medley of sound as an orchestra or a symphony playing in a grand hall. Some instruments, in other words some species, will be bold and obvious.

This is largely due to the rhythm or nature of their vocalisations, they are so distinct that they can be easily learnt and assimilated. After some experience these are readily identified even when at some distance. Other sounds will be less distinct or more difficult and thus are simply labelled as unknown, or erroneous, or simply blur into any mash of others that are equally indeterminate.

When out birding and attempting to assess what is calling, it is good to try and target the loud obvious instruments first. The trumpets, the trombone, the cymbals or piano, the drums or the violin. Species like black-collared barbet, African fish eagle, African green pigeon, common greenshank, yellow-fronted and yellow-rumped tinkerbirds are good examples of bold brassy species, with easily recognizable tunes.

For beginner birders, being able to know these sounds in-and-out, is one of the most pleasurable aspects of being out birding. At an intermediate level, by slowly increasing the number of species locked in through

learning by listening, more subtle species start to be picked up. Comparative instruments like the clarinet, the cello, the flute and others represent the sounds of species like yellow-bellied greenbul, cardinal woodpecker, blue waxbill, African firefinch, tawny-flanked prinia and wood sandpiper. These sounds, despite being less obvious, are often regularly heard and are often repeated a number of times by their stand-out owners.

Finally at the advanced or intricate layer of a symphony, lie abstract objects like the oboe, the viola, the castanets. These, subtle, difficult to clearly distinguish instruments, can equate to birds like marsh warbler, brimstone canary, red-backed shrike and more.

While starting out, it is important to glean and learn from others. In many cases, one or two new additions of easy and mid-layer instruments, or birds, could potentially be added with each outing initially. In many cases, species seen in areas of regular birding are the same, and thus once one species is heard at a site, there is a good chance it will be heard again, in the same area, at another time. So keeping tuned in is important. One way to practice this concept is to try and always be aware of the two most prominent bird sounds that can be heard at any and all times, just in case someone were to ask you.

## Song vs Call

To add more fuel to the flames, most species of bird make a number of different sounds, in most cases up to ten different types of vocalization can be produced. However it is very important to differentiate the song of a species from the variety of calls that it makes.

Song is often the most diagnostic, regular, recognizable and most readily used sound for identification, but its primary purpose is actually to attract mates and ward off potential intruders. Songs are not just given during the mating season but, in fact, are produced throughout the year, each species with its own unique song. Calls on the other hand refer to all the other, often short clicks, buzzing, high-pitched notes, trills, 'tchacks', and other noises that birds make. There are a number of different types of calls, contact calls, alarm calls, excitement calls, flight calls and more.

When starting, the most imperative to learn is the song, this is the first part of recording for each bird within the apps. Calls, on the other hand, are the different sound that appear later in the recordings. Not all songs are melodic, some are raucous and grating, or hooting or croaking or screeching to name a few, but once learnt, most birds picked up correctly will be by their songs. Focusing on learning the song initially and augment additionally with the calls through time is a good way to leap into this challenge.

In many, but not all cases, the recognition of calls starts to happen at an intermediate and higher level, bettered through the experience and home study. Many species however have distinctive calls which can clinch or really help support other features in the identification between similar species in the field.

## Training the Ear

With our modern society of cars, trucks, sirens, airplanes and other distractions, for much of our lives we learn to tune sounds out. When attempting to separate and focus on bird song, the rare need arises to be able to really focus on our hearing. Initial attempts involve actively having to stop, keep quiet and still, and try to absorb. Despite its simplicity, to really hear properly, at all levels, this habit of attentive listening is tip-top essential.

Once stopped for a single sound, one is often confronted by what seem to be continually different sounds. It is difficult to separate one from another and all are coming

from any direction. Even trying to use an app can be confusing, as often in the field, birds utter sounds that are not quite like the individuals in recordings. In order to better achieve the ability to tune in, there are number of exercises suggested for those wishing to improve on their skill.

The first is not to be afraid of attempting to listen far away, as far in the distance as possible, a practice best done in relatively quiet surrounds. Often sounds can be picked up much further than expected and much to the surprise of those involved.

Listening to classical music, even a little tiny bit, is useful. If that is a completely alien experience, just one or two songs a week while considering what is below should do it. Listening to birds is in many ways similar to the variation experienced in this genre.

While listening, concentration on changes in pitch, tone, rhythm, softness and loudness as a few examples, can add huge value when applied to birding. Whether notes and phrases are thin or voluminous, delicate or bold, repetitive or varied, higher or lower pitched, faster or slower than others, as a few examples, all help as sticking points when looking at those species with more complex songs.

Once picking up on sounds, separating one from another and having basic confidence with a small baseline of ten species or more is a great place to start. One way to practice is to always be on the listen out for the two most prominent bird sounds no matter where one is, whether in the wilderness or traffic. Just the most obvious two sounds, as much as humanly possible. Another good technique is to listen out for those two top bird calls or more, while walking and talking with someone else. The ability to listen even through one's own speech often seems like magic.

## Homework?!

Learning the songs and calls of birds, especially here in a subtropical nation, where there can easily be over a hundred available in a single morning, can be extremely daunting and when starting from the beginning, almost impossible. For those that have hiked the world's highest peaks, consistent effort is an essential requirement. Putting one foot in front of the other consistently, gets them to the top. Bird songs and calls are essentially a new language which requires decoding, and as such does take time to truly master. However, through a little, but regular effort, this can yield quick and highly rewarding and intrinsically pleasing results.

One important aspect to try and retain things learnt today do that tomorrow they can be added to. If principles are not added to, it is easy to reach a road block. One way to try this to observe birds in an area and then practice their calls using an app or recordings, and then return to try pick up on the sounds they make. Another way, is just after visually confirming a species, move away and play the sound for oneself, then listen again, and perhaps that species can be heard nearby.

Getting into and really familiar with the sounds that birds make by using incredible tools like Robert's and Guy Gibbon's material, as well as more recent mecca like XenoCanto.org and the Merlin app, is an essential way to be able to grow, if you are not lucky enough to have mentors or others willing to help. If planning a trip, make a list of species and play their sounds while traveling down to tune in. Even in the garden, if there are house sparrows as an example, make a note and play the sound, it is interesting how often some species are around us which are picked up by sound alone. Homework really helps to solidify or prepare, and is a vital element of birding for those that hope to improve rapidly and with confidence.

## Keep Listening For Some Time

Finally, some birds make sounds consistently, others may have bouts where they sing

for several minutes then stop in between, when others still, call only once in a while. When listening to an unfamiliar sound, it can really help to stand very still and be patient, waiting for several minutes at least for the sound to be repeated for more clarity.

Often the impatient urge to move on can hinder the ability just to absorb new sounds. More importantly, if a bird is seen, it is often brushed past, but if singing, there is a trick to be had here by taking some time to observe. If seeing a Cape robin-chat singing for example, one can listen to the sound for an extended period, making a note of variations, consistencies and any other aspect that makes it unique.

Reading the information provided while playing the sound on an app, when listening to a known species, helps immensely. In many cases these can be mulled over, practiced and maybe even absorbed in real time while a bird is calling. This resonates best over a number of experiences with each species, eventually new birds and their sounds fall into the "easy" bin along with those that are already there.

Overall, the attempt to learn to identify birds by the sounds they produce is an admirable quest, and a journey in its own right. It is important to be patient with progress and to build on previous learning, bird by bird and sound by sound. Always be alert, listening and aware while asking advice, if needed, and using resources to their full potential.

This month, while out in the field, take note of any birds seen calling and log them to check later, better yet, if traveling, make a list and try pick them up by ear when there. With a little practice, adding a few species per week or month to one's knowledge is a highly pleasing and attainable goal, which adds a great sense of satisfaction when in the pursuit of birds.



**Marsh Warbler - the scratthes, trills and chacks of this species can go unnoticed, but is an example of where homework is key** Image: ebird



**Shelley's Francolin - some birds, such as this one, have distinctive donkey bridges which aid in identification by song** Image: supplied



**White-browed Scrub Robin - the thin sweet melodic repetitions of each individuals unique song mean that this species often is heard but rarely confidently identified** Image: supplied

# Protecting Paradise



Magnificent view in the Kruger National Park  
Image : Canva

*Local Correspondent*

Biodiversity is the lifeblood of our planet, supporting all forms of life. From the air we breathe to the food we eat, ecosystems teeming with animals, plants, and microorganisms provide us with essential services. Nature holds immense value, and while we may instinctively appreciate some aspects of biodiversity more than others, all of them are important.

Take pollinators, for example. Birds, bees, and insects are critical for a third of the world's crop production. Invertebrates maintain soil health, crucial for agriculture. The oceans serve as a primary source of animal protein, while trees, wetlands, grasslands, and coral reefs slow down water, shield coastlines from storms, absorb carbon dioxide, and purify the air we breathe. Not to mention the countless medicines and chemicals derived from plants.

But here's the grim reality: humanity's impact on the environment has caused global warming of 1.1°C since the industrial revolution began, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This has resulted in increasingly frequent and extreme weather events, wreaking havoc on people and nature worldwide. Just look at cyclone Freddy, which devastated Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, claiming hundreds of lives. It's a stark reminder that despite some progress in reducing climate risks, we remain ill-prepared for the existential threat posed by climate change.

However, all hope is not lost. With International Biodiversity Day having been on May 22, let's delve into the wonders of Kruger National Park and explore how hotels like Kruger Gate Hotel are contributing to its preservation.

"As a hotel operating in the heart of Kruger National Park, it's our responsibility to protect the environment that sustains us. Preserving the biodiversity of the region isn't just good for the planet, it's also good for business. We have noticed a significant shift in the demands of our corporate clients, who increasingly expect us to showcase how our sustainable initiatives are practically being implemented on our property during the bidding process. More importantly, we want the great grandchildren of our guests to not only know what a rhino is from a textbook, but to experience the awe-inspiring sight of these magnificent creatures in person, roaming freely in Kruger National Park. Preserving biodiversity is our legacy, ensuring future generations can experience the wonders of nature," says Anton Gillis, CEO at Kruger Gate Hotel.

Covering an expansive area of 19 485 square kilometers, the Kruger National Park is one of Africa's largest game reserves, teeming with an extraordinary array of plant and animal species. It boasts over 2 000 plant species with 336 tree species, 500 bird species, six of which are known as the 'Big 6' and are native to the area. And, of course, it is also home to the beloved 'Big 5'. The park also accounts for roughly half of southern Africa's known insect species,

which totals at around 20 000 species. This carefully balanced ecosystem is a prime example of how biodiversity can thrive when conservation efforts are taken seriously.

The Kruger National Park is also an important conservation area. The South African National Parks (SANParks) management team works tirelessly to protect endangered species, combat poaching, and mitigate human impact. Notably, the SANParks Honorary Rangers' Conservation Services National Project provides essential counterpoaching support to the park's joint operation centre, a collaborative effort involving various sectors and agencies. Additionally, the park's management implements programs to control invasive species, conducts research and monitoring, and makes informed decisions to preserve this complex ecosystem.

"We are immensely grateful to SANParks for their unwavering dedication to preserving the park's ecosystems and wildlife. We recognise the crucial role that they play in maintaining the balance of nature in this unique environment. Our team is committed to working closely with SANParks to ensure that our operations continue to have a minimal impact on the park's delicate ecology, and that we are doing everything we can to support their conservation efforts," says Gillis.

Whilst many hotels in the region have embraced sustainable practices, such as using renewable energy sources, reducing waste, and minimising their environmental footprint, they can go beyond just adopting sus-

tainable practices, and educate both guests and staff about the importance of biodiversity and environmental protection.

Gillis emphasises the significance of educating staff in supporting wildlife conservation efforts. "Kruger Gate Hotel recently partnered with Access Professional Development to provide comprehensive training in snake identification, handling, and snakebite treatment to our onsite staff. This exercise was more than just a measure of safety; it's our way of ensuring that we can coexist harmoniously with the diverse wildlife of Kruger National Park and actively contribute to their protection," he adds.

Lastly, when visiting Kruger National Park, it's essential for travellers to understand their responsibility to protect the environment. By following the park's rules, staying on designated paths, and not disturbing wildlife, visitors can minimise their impact. Choosing hotels and tour operators that prioritise sustainability and making donations to conservation organisations further contribute to ongoing efforts.

"By joining forces, hotels and travellers alike can ensure that this precious ecosystem continues to flourish for generations to come. It's a collective effort that holds the power to preserve and celebrate the wonders of biodiversity in Kruger National Park, setting an inspiring example to the world. Let's rise to the occasion and make a difference together," Gillis concludes.

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Make every trip an adventure.

# Safari Guide of the Year 2023 is here!



Kimberlee



Jan



Pioneer



Ruan



Warren

Mark Bishop

Once again, the Safari Guide of the Year (SGOTY) competition is upon us. This very prestigious event is powered every year by FGASA (Field Guides Association of Southern Africa) and a major location sponsor – this year Kapama Private Game Reserve, a premium, five-star, luxury, wildlife destination in the Greater Kruger area.

There are other co-sponsors involved, including Ruggewear, Canon SA, Armadillo Media, Sapmok, FreeGo, Kruger2Canyon News and international guest sponsors. Key media partners include Kruger Sightings, Getaway, Out On Air, Kruger2Canyon News, and Chris Tosi. It takes place from the 2 – 8 June 2023.

The event showcases and recognises the very best guides in the safari industry. Guides are nominated, and the gruelling selection process is geared to select five finalists to compete against each other for the prestigious title of 'Safari Guide of the Year'.

The competition is structured into eight categories and is held over one week. All categories are individually judged, and the results finally collated to determine the winner. The competition categories are game drive, guided walk, track and sign, advanced rifle handling, birding slide and sound, guided photographic experience, hospitality and professionalism, and last but not least, storytelling.

This year the finalists (in no specific order), are Warren Deyzel, Pioneer Moyo, Kimberlee Le Hanie, Jan Dykema and Ruan Coetzee. I managed to get in touch with each of them to find out a little more about them in a fun way, to scratch under the surface, and reveal a little more than just the professional guide that they all are.

## Warren Deyzel

Warren is 36 years old and is single. He hails from Johannesburg. Every year from as far back as he can remember, his mother took him to the Kruger National Park. In fact, his first word, 'look', was uttered in the park much to the astonishment of his family. The Kruger Park was destined to be a big part of his life – which it now is.

Warren is a qualified Mechanical Engineer and Tool and Die Maker, and he gave up a six-year career in the aviation industry to pursue his life-long dream of becoming a nature guide. He now works at Imbali Safari Lodge and has been a guide for the past six and a half years.

He loves walking, and for him, his best is being able to explore the Kruger Park. Nothing challenges him more than being able to walk in unchartered areas. He explains that walking requires one to pay a lot of attention to many variables, have spatial awareness, process the environmental status, the vegetation, the animals, and there is the challenge of holding together your attention span over the duration of the walk. All that for him is very rewarding. And this is over and above the required protection that he must ensure for the guests that he is guiding.

Warren is excited at the prospect of being surrounded by the very best in the industry during the competition. He is looking to learn as much from them every day, and he also hopes to be mentored where necessary. He is viewing the whole experience as a measuring tool for his progress as a guide – where, and how far would he still need to go (in his mind) to get to be the very best. He states that "you can only assess that if you challenge yourself in a situation like SGOTY".

Warren is most looking forward to two categories of the competition, track and sign,

because it's something he loves and does every day of his life, and the rifle handling. He is most 'concerned' about the birding side of the competition and feels that this section of the competition might expose a chink in his armour.

He is ecstatic about being a part of SGOTY and winning may not be the ultimate goal – it's being in the competition, and learning, that is important for him. However, if he were to win the competition, for him it would be proof that all the sacrifice that he has made would have been worthwhile and proof that he had learnt and mastered something along the way.

On a lighter side his favourite colour is blue, he loves prawns and would wash them down with a healthy glass of water or fruit juice. His favourite animal is a leopard, and bird is a woodlands kingfisher.

A word of wisdom from Warren comes from the Bible, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

## Pioneer Moyo

Pioneer is 47 years old, is married, and has a 16-year-old daughter. He hails from Inyathi near Buluwayo in Zimbabwe. He works for Bushwise Field Guides and is stationed at the Southern African Wildlife College. Pioneer has been guiding since 2007 and is a man of few words but plenty action.

His best part of guiding is the interpretation of track and sign. Here he finds his 'mojo' and always loves the challenge of the interpretation and expression of the story. It's a never-ending learning curve.

Pioneer believes that having qualified as a finalist for this year's SGOTY, his hope is that this will inspire young guides to have the courage to really commit themselves to the journey of self-betterment as a guide. He would like to share that betterment route with other colleagues as they progress in their journey to a career in guiding.

For him to be able to share his experience of the week out in the field, will be very important. Mixing with the top guides in the industry, sharing stories and learning from them, is a once in a lifetime chance, and he hopes to make the best of it.

Pioneer is least looking forward to the rifle handling section of the competition. He's not exactly a fan of rifles but obviously understands the importance of it and the importance of rifle handling competency for the guide in his everyday work. But the Zimbabwean history of intertribal factions has impacted his psyche, such that the sound of rifle-fire brings back bad memories for him. This is the reason for his adverse feeling towards rifles.

If Pioneer were to win the competition it would change his life. "It would make me well known and I would feel very proud." Having said that, he already feels very proud to have been chosen as a finalist, where he will do his level best, enjoy it and nurture the experience.

Pioneer's favourite colour is olive green, he enjoys the traditional samp, meat and beans, and his favourite drink is Coca-Cola. His favourite animal is the gemsbok, and his favourite bird is the white-browed robin chat.

His mantra is that "If you do anything you like, all good things will follow".

## Kimberlee Le Hani

Kimberlee is 32 years old, single and hails from Benoni. She is currently positioned at Lions Sands in the Sabi Sand. She has been guiding for five and a half years.

Clearly a very motivated, focussed, and driven woman, Kimberlee dropped a five-and-a-half-year career as a pharmaceutical

representative to follow her passion and dream of becoming a nature guide.

She enjoys many aspects of guiding. She admits that she learns something every day and loves imparting her knowledge onto guests. She is thrilled to see the look on guests faces when they are in the wild, and to fulfil the hopes and dreams of her guests on safari. Seeing guests shed tears of awe and happiness is for her the best feeling, and then getting the guests return for another bush experience is very fulfilling. As she said, "we live this every day – they will only hold the memories of their time with me".

Being a finalist in SGOTY will allow her to learn from the masters, and to pick their brains when she can. She hopes to be able to soak it all in and always be present. She looks forward to developing a close friendship with the fellow contestants, being fulfilled, proud, and happy. There is also the camaraderie, exploring the reserve, and of course being close and personal with the mentors.

For such a confident and focussed person it was interesting to find out that she is most nervous about the story telling - but she looks forward to grasping that opportunity and to push past her limits and deliver!

She openly admits that it has taken a lot to get where she is today – financially, emotionally, and socially. But she is proud to have pushed the limits, and she hopes to inspire more females to put their names out there, to be vulnerable and strive for the best within themselves.

Kimberlee's favourites are as follows: colour – yellow, food – sushi, beverage – iron brew. Her favourite animal is the spotted hyena and favourite bird is the violet-eared waxbill.

Kimberlee's words of wisdom are quite straightforward: "When you are passionate about something and it comes from the heart, naturally you'll give everything you've got. Stay disciplined and always find good in every moment, and then keep your focus there".

## Jan Dykema

Jan is a larger than life individual. He is 37, married to Lize-Marie, and has a son. Originally hailing from Vryheid in Kwa-Zulu Natal, he spent most of his informative years in Kroonstad, in the Free State.

His story of progression to this stage in life is a long one. From selling Tupperware, to being in the military, and cashing in all he had to attend a selection course at Shamwari Private Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape. He accepted the offered post (after selection) with them 13 years ago. He has never left.

For Jan the best thing about guiding is seeing guests experience wild animals for the first time, being out in the bush with the wind in their faces and seeing their excitement, is for Jan a priceless experience. Jan loves people, getting to know them, communicating with them, giving them a special, sometimes once in a life-time experience. Seeing guest leave, satisfied at having learnt something and having memories etched in their minds, is what gives Jan a thrill. He views it as having changed the guests lives forever.

For Jan SGOTY is not about the winning, but about giving back to the industry. Setting the awareness out there that this is in fact a career path of fulfilment, love and passion. One should never hold back, only give it all. Jan appreciates the recognition that will be exposed worldwide, where people will be able to see what guides are made of. He views this as a chance to gain from the experience and hopefully the Eastern Cape will be boosted by his participation.

He looks forward to meeting the fellow competitors and judges, many of whom he has only heard of by name, the camaraderie, and the sharing of experiences.

The thing that Jan is least looking forward to about SGOTY, is the road trip from the Eastern Cape! Sixteen and a half hours is not something to look forward to. Having said that he is wary about the photographic section of the competition, for Jan his camera lies in his memories.

Jan's favourite colour is blue or black (he could not choose), a braaied steak is his favourite food and coffee his favourite beverage. His favourite animal is the elephant, and his favourite bird is the marina trogon.

Jan honestly feels that SGOTY is earth-moving for him, and if by chance he could bring the trophy back to the Eastern Cape, it would be the most amazing achievement for him in the world. It would open a new world for guides in the area and motivate them to strive for the stars!

Jan's words of wisdom: "Win the morning, win the day".

## Ruan Coetzee

Hailing from Johannesburg, Ruan is 30 years old, engaged to Debbie. He studied theology before becoming a guide. The move into guiding was courtesy of a lightbulb moment in Mozambique, whilst on an outreach program. Ruan realised that he had a passion for nature, and that is where he wanted to be.

Ruan works at Kapama Private Nature Reserve and has been guiding for 8 years. He revels in the fact that no day is ever the same when guiding. There are always different experiences, new people to meet, leaving footprints behind on a trail not done before, and every day offers opportunities to grow and better oneself.

He is a deep thinker, and he is looking forward to SGOTY because he views it as the next step in pushing him out of his comfort zone. He wants to inspire colleagues to push and better themselves and to also, one day, be part of SGOTY. Ruan is of the opinion that all guides are ambassadors of nature and FGASA, and all guides should carry forward those ethics both environmentally and socially that FGASA subscribes to.

Ruan is looking forward to spending time with the iconic individuals in the industry, sharing in the camaraderie and having fun. He states that being a guide is not at all stressful (generally), and it's about teaching, loving, humility, and passion, and to continue in that mindset is what being a guide is all about.

Ruan is not looking forward to all the cameras and being in the spotlight because that is when is English gets tested, and the stress of all those cameras could cause a language breakdown for him – although there is absolutely nothing wrong with his English!

Should Ruan win the competition he believes he'll brag at first, for a bit ... jokingly said. He'll grab it, as he will the experience with both hands, and hopefully, and humbly be a role model for others. He will push himself to continue with the bigger dream and grow into the SKS (Special Knowledge Skills) status. Overall, he is proud and grateful for what FGASA has done for him, and the others on this incredible journey. It would be a dream come true, confirming that all the work and sacrifices done and made have paid off, and making a positive input into the industry, whatever that might be.

Ruan's favourite colour is brown, his favourite food is pizza, and his drink is a 'healthy', rum and coke. His favourite animal is a pangolin although he relates most to lions. His favourite bird is a violet-backed starling.

Ruan's words of wisdom: "Don't wait for something good to happen in your life before you become happy – live each day as if it were your last. Making people happy and excited enriches your own life – believe me you get back far more than you give".

Keep up with all the Safari Guide of the Year action on social media, FGASA Instagram Account, FGASA Facebook, and Safari Guide of the Year Facebook page. There will also be LIVE daily broadcasts on all social platforms as well as the Safari Guide of the Year YouTube channel.

# Why do prey animals sometimes collectively stare in one direction?

Cont. form page 3.

This is usually a sign that the herd has noticed an unidentified movement that they are investigating. It is not necessarily a predator, but often simply something they cannot be certain is harmless. They will therefore all concentrate in that direction to assure themselves that there is no threat. The scent of predators does not commonly seem to initiate this behaviour because it is difficult to pinpoint. The animals in such a situation often dash around in a stop-start fashion while trying to locate the danger or decide where to flee. The initial 'movement' is located by one member of the herd that gives an alarm signal, either auditory or visual, or both, whereupon all other members immediately respond by gazing in the same direction. If a predator is positively identified, a lot of snorting, or an equivalent alarm call, usually ensues.

Most predators have a poor success rate when it comes to making kills. Often the prey sees them before they are close enough and, without the element of surprise, most predators will not succeed. The prey will usually only bound a way if the predator breaks cover and makes an attack. Should the predator remain where it is, the prey will often - amid alarm snorts, grunts and barks - stay put and concentrate on the predator. The prey sometimes even approaches the predator to get a better look, never taking its eyes off it. The predator, knowing the game is up, will move away in

clear view of the prey to seek some other victim or simply stay where it is, and makes no effort to minimise or conceal its movements. The prey, monitoring the predator, will generally maintain a safe flight distance (this differs between species and for the particular predator) and will continue as normal.

This has led many people to erroneously believe that the prey somehow sense that the predator is not hungry, and therefore allow it to get fairly close. In reality, the predator has simply lost the surprise ele-

ment and will not waste energy attacking - even if very hungry. In turn, the prey would rather stay close and keep an eye on it than run away, lose sight of the danger and risk being stalked again. Predators staring intently in one direction usually indicate the presence of prey, another predator (enemy) or another member of their species/social group.

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



Impala making sure there is no threat  
Image: Canva



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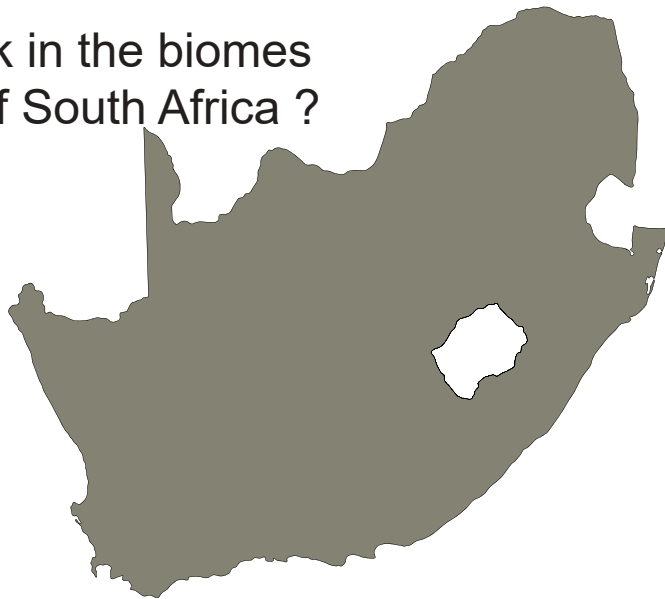
# What is a biome ?

Biomes are large areas with similar climate, fauna (animals) and flora (plants). The flora and fauna of each biome have specific traits that enable them to survive in their biome. There are terrestrial biomes (land) and aquatic biomes (water).

The plants and animals of each biome have traits that help them to survive in their biome. Plants and animals that live within smaller areas of a biome also depend on each other for survival. These smaller areas are called ecosystems. Each biome has many ecosystems

Can you mark in the biomes on the map of South Africa ?

- Answers**
1. Desert
  2. Forest
  3. Succulent Karoo
  4. Grassland
  5. Nama Karoo
  6. Savannah
  7. Indian Ocean costal
  8. Fynbos
  9. Thicket



# Can you match the picture with the correct biome



Forest

Savanna

Fynbos

Succulent Karoo

Grassland

Thicket

Nama Karoo

Desert

Indian Ocean Coastal Belt



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