



KRUGER2CANYON

NEWS

June 2024

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

Historic rewilding of 120 rhinos into the Greater Kruger National Park area



A capture team 'walks' a rhino to its crate after being darted on the African Parks Rhino Rewild location Photo: Mike Dexter

Sharon Haussmann
CEO, Greater Kruger Environmental Protection Foundation (GKEPF)

Environmental history was made on Friday 7 June 2024 when the last of 120 white rhinos were released into the network of private and communal reserves on the western border of the Kruger National Park. The operation was carried out under a strict veil of secrecy to ensure its security.

It has been over 15 years since the poaching crisis first hit Greater Kruger, when heightened demand for rhino horn in Asian markets sparked an unprecedented onslaught

on the world's largest rhino population.

It has been impossible to quantify the destruction of the crisis - on rhino populations and ecosystems, but above all, on the hearts, minds and morale of people who've had to witness its brutality day in and out.

Yet on Friday 7 June 2024, we celebrated an unexpected milestone amid significant anti-poaching successes. Over many weeks, a historic rewilding project has seen 120 southern white rhinos translocated to private reserves along Kruger National Park's western boundary. These rhinos arrived, marking a successful end to this translocation, which forms part of African Parks' Rhino Rewild initiative.

After such protracted devastation in this area, it is a remarkable sign of positivity, progress and hope.

In September last year, African Parks announced it would rewild the 2 000 rhinos it had bought from the world's largest private captive rhino breeding operation. Around the same time, along the western edges of Kruger, we were reflecting on security gains with cautious optimism. Criminality continues to be a significant threat, but poaching rates, particularly among our private reserves, have stabilised significantly. In the last three years, specifically, we have seen positive rhino population growth.

On behalf of our private member re-

serves, the Greater Kruger Environmental Protection Foundation (GKEPF) submitted a proposal to African Parks to return some of the rhino to their historic Greater Kruger habitat — an unfenced landscape of over 2,5 million hectares. Not only did it represent a chance to offset losses and restore a healthy rhino population in the landscape — but we could also offer a suitable habitat for the rhino to live a free and natural life. It was an extraordinary opportunity that arose through extraordinary circumstances.

Of course, there is no way to plan, coordinate and execute such a translocation without being clear-eyed about the many risks involved — Continued on page 3

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New truck stop in Maruleng is now open for business

It is no secret that the prominence of trucks on our roads in and around Hoedspruit is disturbingly high. With mining companies as well as freight companies using the main arterial roads through Hoedspruit to reach our borders and main towns, it does cause congestion and traffic frustrations in and around Hoedspruit.

A concern that is equally noticeable is the long hours of driving which truck drivers need to endure, resulting in driver fatigue and in turn, traffic accidents.

In addition to these challenges which truck drivers face, a safe place to overnight is often sought. Refuge is often found in the town of Hoedspruit, as it is considered a safe place for truck drivers. Unfortunately, there is minimal space to accommodate trucks in town overnight, or even to stop for refreshments.

It is with the above in mind that a new truck stop has been recently opened to accommodate overnight trucks. The new truck stop, situated at the old Klaserie 1 Stop is now open for business.

This truck stop, simply called Klaserie Truck Stop offers the following facilities:

security, bathrooms and showers, restaurant and take-aways, diesel will be available shortly, resting areas, refuse and rubbish bins. The Klaserie Truck Stop has both card and cash facilities.

A truck stop cannot be a large distance out of the way of the driver's normal route. Klaserie truck stop is situated only 400m off the normal route that trucks take when travelling to the borders or Mbombela, or coming back from these areas to the different mines. From Hoedspruit, travel south on the R40 towards Klaserie. At the Klaserie T-Junction, turn right and travel approximately 400 m. Klaserie Truck Stop is on the left. Directions will be well marked with correct signage.

Klaserie Truck Stop now offers a viable and comprehensive alternative to overnighing on the side of the road, and most certainly in Hoedspruit, because it has all the amenities required. We urge truck drivers and their management to make this stop as a matter of logistical operation – it is well worth it.

See Notice on page 15

The Hoedspruit hospital

Anyone going past the building site will see the unbelievable progress that has been made on the hospital. Construction of the Hoedspruit Hospital is on schedule, with hospital commissioning (equipping and staffing) to begin in late August, 2024. Over 4300 applications were received by careers@hphospital.co.za for just over one hundred positions.

The Hospital Manager and Head of Nursing are in the process of being appointed and will start on August 1, 2024, with other interviews to follow. Senior appointments will be announced on Facebook.

Hoedspruit Hospital is seeking service providers, preferably from Hoedspruit, for cleaning, laundry, signage, security, catering, pest control, waste removal, internet, restaurant, coffee shop, telephones and more. Local providers in Hoedspruit are encouraged to submit quotes. Service providers who have not been contacted can reach out to carien@hphospital.co.za.

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Farmwatch fund raising campaign

Love the Hoed® proudly supports Farmwatch, the champions of community safety, in their vital mission to ensure the safety of our town and its surrounds. With unwavering professionalism and ethics, Farmwatch stands as a beacon of security, protecting both residents and holiday homeowners alike. From preventing crime to monitoring vehicles and aiding in anti-poaching efforts, their dedication is unparalleled.

Today, they need our support to enhance

their capabilities. Farmwatch personnel give of their time for free, let us reciprocate by donating to ensure a sustainable, safer environment for everyone. Every contribution counts. Whether large or small, your donation will make a tangible difference in empowering Farmwatch to continue their vital mission effectively. Let's invest in our collective security and uphold the values of community safety and solidarity.

Let's act now to secure a safer tomorrow.

Together, we can ensure Farmwatch continues to excel in their critical roles, preserving our tranquil environment and cherished way of life. Donate today with Love the Hoed® and make a lasting impact on our community's safety and well-being. Whether you're a resident or a holiday homeowner, your support is pivotal in safeguarding our beloved surroundings.

Simply scan the Snapscan QR code and follow the prompts – your donation will make

a lasting impact on our community's safety. Love the Hoed® would like to thank all of you that join them in contributing to making your town safe. Thank you.

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Practice Nr: 0468096



060 548 5387
admin@hdlandman.co.za

SPAR Shopping Centre,
Shop 1, Leadwood Corner,
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Historic rewilding of 120 rhinos into the Greater Kruger National Park area



The rhinos are all dehorned and fitted with trackers to assist with locating and monitoring the rhinos once released into the Greater Kruger
Photo: Cathan Moo

Collaboration is at the heart of GKEPF's mandate. GKEPF CEO, Sharon Haussmann, talks to Benjamin Kossama from Sabi Sand Nature Reserve while watching rhino being released into a holding boma
Photo: Cathan Moore

Releasing the rhinos initially into a temporary holding boma allows time for mothers and calves to be reunited after their journey to the greater Kruger habitat
Photo Rifumo Mathebula

Cont. from page 1

Of course, there is no way to plan, coordinate and execute such a translocation without being clear-eyed about the many risks involved — including the ongoing threat of poaching. Thankfully, this is the most security-stable time to be taking this risk.

When the poaching onslaught first began, the threat was new. People equipped with the mindset, skills and propensity for a career in conservation suddenly found themselves scrambling to deter, mitigate and deal with a complex form of organised crime. Now, so many years and losses later, we have the partnerships, knowledge and expertise to be proactive and effective in our responses.

Hard-fought battle

Every day on this frontline has brought hard-won lessons. It has been a frequently painful school of life that has incurred a tremendous toll, but in the process, it has produced world leaders. A case in point is Proj-

ect Fire, an unprecedented study published last year, which analysed intervention and poaching data from 11 reserves in the area over a five-year period.

GKEPF was formed in 2016 as a security alliance of 11 parks and reserves to unite in their anti-poaching efforts and approach. We've been able to establish that most elusive of collaborations: a well-functioning public-private partnership. And we've seen significant anti-poaching success.

Dr Sam Ferreira, Large Mammal Ecologist at South African National Parks (SANParks) and Scientific Officer for the African Rhino Specialist Group, attributes this success to GKEPF's partnerships and operations.

"GKEPF focuses on workable areas, where reserves have been able to implement access controls and the cost-effective monitoring of rhino. They know their rhino well and have excellent situational awareness by covering small enough areas. They've also attained and manage high levels of integrity among personnel. All these factors, with strong partnerships at the core, have

enabled them to keep rhino safe."

He adds: "Despite many challenges, the management team are still positive about having a healthy population of free-ranging rhinos. The resilience shown in that is just remarkable. People in this landscape have earned the right to do this. They have earned the privilege."

Population boost

Ferreira also explains that the rewilding project is a tremendous opportunity to restore rhino populations and some of their vital ecological functions.

"As mega-herbivores, white rhino can be thought of as ecosystem engineers that contribute cascade effects in the landscape. For instance, where they graze, they leave behind shorter grass suitable for small antelope, which in turn provide prey for predators. They help to create water holes and wallows. And rhino dung helps to disperse seeds and provide nutrients that help multiple other species thrive."

How the rewilded rhino will adapt to their new landscape presents many unknowns — including how they will interact with existing populations, predators and other large mammals like elephant. That the habitat here is optimal for the species is indisputable, and this was a key consideration.

"This will be the first re-introduction of

rhino into this landscape in about 50 years," says Markus Hofmeyr, wildlife vet and Director of the Rhino Recovery Fund, who formed part of the rewilding planning and oversight. "We know rhino do well in the Lowveld. We know there will be losses from adaptation, but we don't expect them to be significant."

"The rhino are coming in dehorned, which has been shown to be a very effective way to decrease poaching risk in this landscape," adds Hofmeyr. "We do need to go in with our eyes wide open, which everybody is — but no success ever happens without taking some form of risk. We're at a point where this risk is well calculated."

While African Parks are donating the animals, the translocation itself comes with a hefty price tag — as does the close, ongoing security monitoring of the rhino. This is a critical part of the process, with extensive network surveillance.

The data gathered will help to inform future translocations for African Parks' Rhino Rewild initiative. But beyond that, in a time where "rewilding" has become a buzzword, it will also help to guide processes for restoring ecosystems across the globe.

"We can draw from these insights," says Hofmeyr. "It's an urgent and important function that we cannot discount, and we need to promote it positively as much as we can, so that people are willing to take those risks."

"Our own existence depends on having healthy ecosystems, and often animals are part of making sure those ecosystems function correctly."

This article was previously published in the Daily Maverick – Our Burning Planet. The Greater Kruger Environmental Protection Foundation (GKEPF) is a registered not-for-profit organisation to assist with the co-operation and co-ordination necessary for combating environmental crime in the area. Visit their website at <https://gkepf.org/about/>

Catch up note:

Our own Samantha Collet (Kruger2Canyon News) managed to catch up with Sharon Haussmann within her busy schedule to get further insight on this story:

SC: How did you manage to get involved in this AP Rhino Rewild project?

SH: The Greater Kruger area is known to be an ideal habitat for rhinos, and we are in a period now where we seem to be holding the poaching threat at bay - and these are extraordinary circumstances with those rhinos having to find homes. We decided to take the risk and try and be part of the solution. It's been a long process with African Parks with a lot of scientific input from our side on how we go about it, and how we best mitigate all the obvious risks. We've got the first 120 in, and now we're monitoring them very closely to see how it develops further and how they settle into the new environment.

SC: Did you apply to African Parks for the rhinos, and did they put out a call for applications?

SH: Yes, we did submit an application. In terms of African Parks, they have a framework by which they want to rewild this population, so a potential applicant must match the framework criteria and only then can you put a proposal application in.

SC: Did African Parks support you with funding or did you have to raise the funds for the project?

SH: The rhinos were donated to us, we don't buy the rhinos, but we cover all the translocation costs which is very expensive operation. It's eye-watering, but we were very fortunate to get some donor funding to do this. One of our existing funders came up with 90% of the funding for us to go ahead.

SC: That's amazing, now the rhinos are relocated how long will you be monitoring them?

SH: we will monitor them very actively for six months after which we will integrate them into the existing population.

SC: How long has this rewilding process taken to this point?

SH: It's taken about a year - in the planning and consultations, and then the actual rewilding was over a period of a month. We brought the rhinos in in four batches.

SC: Have they been dehorned?

SH: Yes, all of them were dehorned on site.

SC: That's fantastic. So now that the rhinos are settled down and they're in their boma, what are your reflections of the project and what are your hopes for the future?

SH: They're only in the release boma for 48 hours, for the drugs to all work out and for us to make sure all the tracking devices work properly. And you do sometimes have sub-adults and cows and we just make sure they find each other again and bond before we open them up. After 48 hours we let the out

and they're basically out and off in the open system. Reflection-wise, I just think I've spent quite a bit of time where they've come from and it's just amazing to give these beautiful animals the hope and the opportunity of living free again, where rhinos live, and where it's in a very suited habitat. Where these rhinos have come from (Klerksdorp, Northwest Province), it's not how rhinos should live.

SC: Which is why this story is so important. It is, as you say, a second life, a second opportunity.

SH: It really is. It's incredible. It's been, for me, a humbling and rewarding process and experience that I never, on any level, ever expected.

Kruger2Canyon News would like to express our thanks to Sharon for allowing us the time for this interview. We hope the project surpasses all expectations and certainly in the hands of professionals with so much passion, there is a good chance it will.

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Chaîne de Rôtisseurs – promoting chef development and skills



Mark Bishop

SAMAC proudly sponsored a recent initiative by Chaîne de Rôtisseurs in South Africa, aimed at promoting culinary excellence and showcasing macadamia nuts in cuisine.

The initiative, centred around World Chaîne Day on 20 April, saw restaurants in five provinces feature macadamia-infused dishes. Its goal was to raise awareness among chefs about the versatility of macadamia nuts, inspiring creativity and enhancing culinary experiences. The collaboration between Chaîne de Rôtisseurs and SAMAC

lays a foundation for future culinary innovation and aligns with efforts to position South Africa as a top culinary destination.

The popularity of macadamia nut oil is soaring as it emerges as a versatile alternative to olive oil. Macadamia nut oil is prized for its buttery flavour and health benefits. Rich in monounsaturated fats, especially palmitoleic acid, it surpasses olive oil in heart health benefits and antioxidant content, including up to four times more vitamin E. With a high smoke point of 210°C, it excels in cooking and baking while offering anti-aging benefits for skin and hair. Its superior shelf stability and longevity further enhances its appeal for

culinary and wellness enthusiasts alike.

Macadamia oil stands out as a versatile staple in the kitchen, prized for its smooth, buttery flavour and diverse culinary applications. It's ideal for roasting, baking, and frying, even serving as a substitute for butter in baking. Beyond its culinary appeal, macadamia oil boasts impressive health benefits: rich in heart-friendly monounsaturated fats, cholesterol-free, and sodium-free, it aligns well with heart-healthy and vegan diets. From enhancing salad dressings to crisping up fish and chicken skin, macadamia oil offers a flavourful and nutritious addition to any meal preparation routine.

The upcoming Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Young Chefs Competition, scheduled for 17 and 18 October 2024 to be held over five provinces, promises to be a highlight in the culinary calendar, showcasing the talent and creativity of young chefs from across South Africa. Sponsored by Macadamias South Africa (SAMAC), the competition encourages participants to innovate with macadamias, highlighting their versatility and nutritional benefits in culinary creations. SAMAC may even look at certain sponsorships for the competition to help up and coming chefs within the industry.

On 17 October, the competition kicks off with young chefs demonstrating their skills and flair, incorporating macadamias into their dishes to impress judges and culinary enthusiasts alike. The event culminates the following day with a gala dinner and awards ceremony, where the top three chefs will be



honoured for their culinary prowess.

With over 25 000 members globally, Chaîne des Rôtisseurs promotes excellence in gastronomy and fosters a community of culinary professionals and enthusiasts. SAMAC's CEO, Lizel Pretorius, emphasizes the nutritional value and delightful taste of macadamias, encouraging broader adoption of these nuts in everyday meals.

Whether you're a participant, a spectator, or simply passionate about fine dining, the competition promises to be a celebration of culinary innovation and skill. For more information on how to engage with this prestigious event, or indeed participate please email the below contact. Don't miss this opportunity to witness the future of South Africa's culinary landscape unfold before your eyes.

Contact details are: ballidelegue@chaine.co.za

Curried Butternut Soup

Veggie Diva

As the weather gets cooler nothing beats a hearty bowl of soup with a hunk of crusty bread. A tried and tested butternut soup is perfect for this time of year. As butternuts are best harvested in autumn they are at their most flavourful.

Ingredients:

1 x tbl spoon coconut oil
1 x onion chopped
2 x cloves garlic crushed
1 ½ tsp curry powder
1 x medium butternut chopped
1 x tin coconut milk
400 ml vegetable stock
Seasoning

Topping:

Pumpkin seeds
Chopped coriander

Method:

Gently fry the onion in a large heavy bottom pan with some coconut. After a couple of minutes, add the garlic.

Once the onion is translucent add the butternut squash and curry powder. Give it a good stir, this will bring out the flavours of the curry powder.

Add the vegetable stock and cook until butternut is tender, add the coconut milk.

Cool slightly and then blend until smooth. If your soup is very thick add a little extra water.

Place the pumpkin seeds in a dry frying pan on high. Toss the seeds until they start to pop.

Serve the soup with the toasted seeds and a sprinkle of parsley or coriander and of course a crusty fresh loaf of bread.



CENTURY 21 Wildlife - Hoedspruit

Physical Address:

Shop 20 & 21,
Kamogelo Tourism Centre,
Main Road (R527),
Hoedspruit

Contact Information:

Business : +27 15 793 1534
E-Mail : hoedspruit@century21.co.za
Web Site : www.century21wildlife.co.za



SOLE MANDATE

NDLOVUMZI NATURE RESERVE R 4 458 000
Beds 4 | Baths 4 | Floor size: 300 m²

This tranquil home is situated overlooking the Olifants River and is surrounded by large riverine trees and rocky outcrops. The open plan living, dining and newly fitted kitchen are all under high vaulted ceilings that make this home light and bright, which makes the home appealing.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2152063



SOLE MANDATE

RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 950 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3.5 | Floor: 396 m²

Architect-designed home boasting unique character not typically found in Raptors View. Notable features include a new thatch roof, fresh paint, updated light fixtures, and a rentable cottage complete with a bedroom, kitchenette, and bathroom. VAT inclusive, no transfer duty applicable.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2194742



SOLE MANDATE

JEJANE, GREATER KRUGER, BIG 5 R 10 850 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor: 363 m²

Enjoy over 2,700 hectares of Big 5 traverse! This stunning home has an open plan kitchen with lounge area that leads to a large covered patio and open boma braai. The home also features a separate scullery, laundry and a studio which could easily be converted to a fourth bedroom.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2238309



SOLE MANDATE

RAPTORS LODGE R 2 800 000
Bedrooms 2 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: 84 m²

This unit is currently rented out on a self-catering, short-term basis, and has an established monthly income. It has an open plan lounge, well equipped, renovated kitchen with pantry and linen cupboard, and a covered patio with built in braai. The bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms with outdoor showers.

Michelle Severin - 083 468 3821 Ref: 2232710



SOLE MANDATE

OLIFANTS GAME RESERVE, BIG 5 R 5 500 000
Beds 4 | Bath 4.5 | Traverse: 9,000 ha

50% Share in a beautiful bush home within Greater Kruger. This share is inclusive of a Land Rover game viewer. An open plan kitchen leads to a lounge and dining area, opening onto a large covered deck. An open boma and braai area allows for many a night under the African skies.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2203910



SOLE MANDATE

MODITLO ESTATE, BIG 4 R 3 800 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor size: m²

This cosy home is well located within the estate. The air-conditioned open plan living area, comprises lounge, dining area and kitchen with separate scullery and courtyard. Sliding doors lead to a covered patio, pool and boma area with views down to the riverbed.

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2250254



SOLE MANDATE

NDLOVUMZI NATURE RESERVE R 5 200 000
Beds 8 | Baths 8 | Floor size: 480 m²

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

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2151582

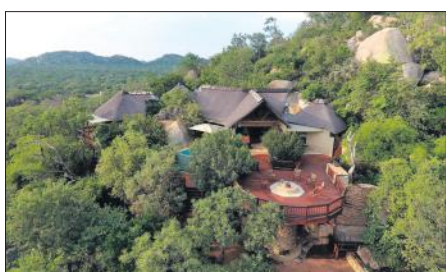


SOLE MANDATE

KAMPERSRUS R 2 450 000
Bedrooms 3 | Bathrooms 2 | Floor: 120 m²

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

Michelle Severin - 083 469 3821 Ref: 2247851



LEOPARD ROCK NATURE RESERVE R 10 300 000
Beds 5 | Baths 5.5 | Floor: 468 m²

Spectacular bush home, nestled into a granite rocky outcrop features a main home with open plan lounge, dining room and kitchen, with pantry and laundry, patio with bar area and pool, as well as the master suite. The four separate guest suites can be reached via wooden walkways.

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2257358



HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE R 4 800 000
Beds 4 | Baths 4.5 | Floor: 286 m²

COMMERCIAL - This fully furnished and recently renovated guest house offers an open plan living, dining and kitchen area, leading to a patio with a raised viewing deck. Two carports, swimming pool and a boma area add to the features.

Yvette Thompson - 083 655 7176 Ref: 2255810



BEDFORD ESTATE, KAMPERSRUS R 3 850 000
Beds 3 | Baths 3 | Floor: 260 m²

This home offers an inviting open plan lounge and dining area with separate kitchen that has been well thought out. Leading from the lounge sliding doors open to the garden area with a pool. This home includes a full solar system connected to an inverter, and completed by a double garage.

Jason Jones - 083 267 4794 Ref: 2199589



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

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

Rob Severin - 083 469 3820 Ref: 2160187



RENTAL

RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 27 000 pm
Beds 3 | Bath 2 | Floor: 300 m²

Available from 1 July 2024 for 6 to 12 months, furnished, not pet friendly - A spacious lounge is open to a well-equipped kitchen and opens onto the pool deck where the mountain views can be enjoyed. All rooms have fans and aircons, and the house is equipped with an inverter system.

Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140 Ref: 2256351



RENTAL

RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE R 18 000 pm
Beds 4 | Baths 3 | Floor: 200 m²

Available from 1 June 2024 to 31 January 2025, unfurnished, not pet friendly - The main house comprises 2 bedrooms, an open plan living area with lounge, kitchen with separate scullery and loft. The 2-bedroom cottage has an open plan lounge, kitchen, loft, bathroom and garden.

Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140 Ref: 2247511



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Michelle Herb - 071 652 9140
Rental Agent (Candidate Property Practitioner)



numiknow™ - the outcomes

Thias Taute

Our previous article delved into the experiences of the (Social Employment Fund) SEF project participants, a significant event that highlighted their challenges and celebrated their triumphs. Today, we are thrilled to present the outcomes of the final numiknow™ competitions, a pivotal part of the SEF project. These competitions stand as a testament to the hard work and dedication of our learners in the Intermediate and Senior phases, as well as the participants in the SEF project, showcasing their remarkable achievements.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the participants who made the numiknow™ competitions a memorable and successful event. We also want to express admiration for the winners in each category, whose exceptional performance and dedication set them apart - in the Intermediate phase, the team from Makgaung Primary School (see picture

1) secured the first position, followed by the team from Mamokaile Primary School (picture 2) in second place, and the group from Mahlambandlopfu Primary School in third place (picture3).

The Senior phase winners were the team from German S Chiloane Secondary School pipping the group from Napsadi Secondary School to the post. The Maahlamela High School came in a close third place.

The last set of results came from the participants' competition. The winners were from Area 3, the runners-up were from Area 10, and the third place went to the team from Area 11.

SPAR Hoedspruit, SUPERSPAR Acornhoek, Blydevallei Boerdery, Landman Group, and BBI Packhouse sponsored the prizes for the winning teams. Sincere thanks go to them for their continuous support. PAINTSMITHS produced the playing surface for the numiknow™ Circle (below), a new addition to the games.

numiknow™ is very excited to announce the second allocation of a SEF project

to Hoedspruit Hub and the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region. The project will start in July 2024 and finish in April 2025. This project will focus on two key components - first, an environmental focus, where participants will contribute to beautifying and greening schools and their environments, and second, the establishment of numiknow™ clubs.

The numiknow™ clubs idea will be a catch-up program for learners who wish to improve their marks. The clubs will focus on a specific grade in each school. This program will last 20 weeks, with 4 - 5 weekly sessions of 1 hour each. The group will consist of 20 voluntary learners with 5 facilitators. The learners will play the compendium of games, and their performance in the games will be continuously assessed.

During the catch-up program, learners will be motivated through feedback on the growth of their numiknow™ (their own number power), rewards, leaderboards and competitions. We aim to use these as incentives to motivate learners

to improve their mathematical proficiency. While healthy competition is important for personal growth, we also want to include a nurturing component as part of the intervention to support and motivate learners not to give up on their journey to success.

To ensure that learners and participants keep their commitments, the School Governing Body and an appointed schoolteacher will be requested to monitor their attendance and take oversight responsibility. They will also do their best to keep the learners' enthusiasm and enjoyment at a peak by ensuring the implementation of the planned intervention activities, and the incentives by the participants facilitating the catchup programs. The financial value of this investment in the school could amount to R120 000 per school.

To contact Thias Taute about numiknow™ you can do so through the Hoedspruit Hub: 079 502 4727 or on email thias@hoedspruithub.com



picture 1



picture 3



picture 2



picture 4





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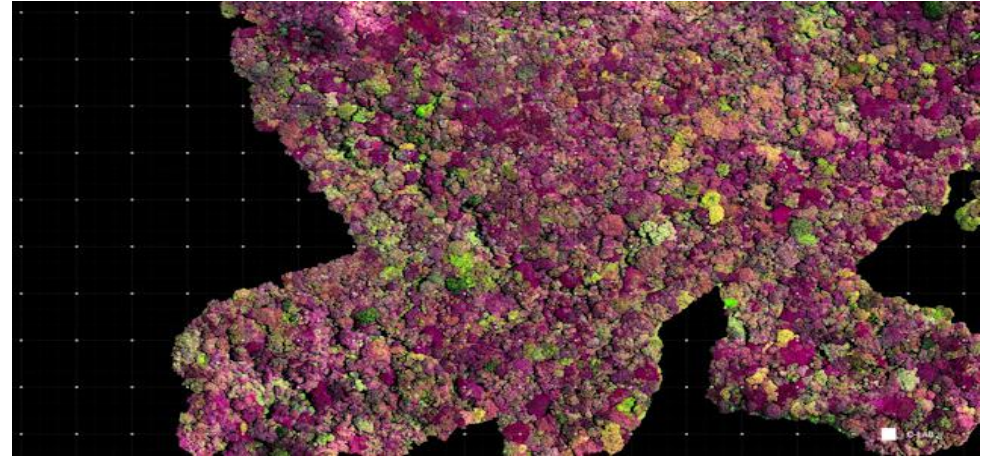
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Searching for a female partner for the world's 'loneliest' plant



The male cones are elongated and narrow. DerekTeo_Shutterstock (ABOVE LEFT). Laura Cinti looking at an *E. woodii* clone at Kew Gardens. C-LAB, CC BY-NC (middle) and map from drone mission search for the *Encephalartos Woodii* in the Ngoye Forest in South Africa. © C-LAB, CC BY-NC

Laura Cinti-Research Fellow Bio Art & Plant Behaviour, University of Southampton

"Surely this is the most solitary organism in the world," wrote palaeontologist Richard Fortey in his book about the evolution of life.

He was talking about *Encephalartos woodii* (*E. woodii*), a plant from South Africa. *E. woodii* is a member of the cycad family, heavy plants with thick trunks and large stiff leaves that form a majestic crown. These resilient survivors have outlasted dinosaurs and multiple mass extinctions. Once widespread, they are today one of the most threatened species on the planet.

The only known wild *E. woodii* was discovered in 1895 by the botanist John Medley Wood while he was on a botanical expedition in the Ngoye Forest in South Africa. He searched the vicinity for others, but none could be found. Over the next couple of decades, botanists removed stems and offshoots and cultivated them in gardens.

Fearing that the final stem would be destroyed, the Forestry Department removed it from the wild in 1916 for safekeeping in a protective enclosure in Pretoria, South Africa, making it extinct in the wild. The plant has since been propagated worldwide. However, the *E. woodii* faces an existential crisis. All the plants are clones from the Ngoye specimen. They are all males, and without a female, natural reproduction is impossible. *E. woodii*'s story is one of both survival and solitude.

My team's research was inspired by the dilemma of the lonely plant and the possibility that a female may still be out there. Our research involves using remote sensing technologies and artificial intelligence to assist in our search for a female in the Ngoye Forest.

The evolutionary journey of cycads

Cycads are the oldest surviving plant groups alive today and are often referred to as "living fossils" or "dinosaur plants" due to their evolutionary history dating back to the Carboniferous period, approximately 300 million years ago. During the Mesozoic era (250 - 66 million years ago), also known as the Age of Cycads, these plants were ubiquitous, thriving in the warm, humid climates that characterised the period.

Although they resemble ferns or palms, cycads are not related to either. Cycads are gymnosperms, a group that includes conifers and ginkgos. Unlike flowering plants (angiosperms), cycads reproduce using cones. It is impossible to tell male and female apart until they mature and produce their magnificent cones.

Female cones are typically wide and round, and male cones appear elongated and narrower. The male cones produce pollen, which is carried by insects (weevils) to the female cones. This ancient method of reproduction has remained largely unchanged for millions of years.

Despite their longevity, today cycads are ranked as the most endangered living organisms on Earth with the majority of the species

considered threatened with extinction. This is because of their slow growth and reproductive cycles, typically taking 10 - 20 years to mature, and habitat loss due to deforestation, grazing and over-collection. Cycads have become symbols of botanical rarity.

Their striking appearance and ancient lineage make them popular in exotic ornamental horticulture and that has led to illegal trade. Rare cycads can command exorbitant prices from US\$ 620 (£ 495) per cm with some specimens selling for millions of pounds each. The poaching of cycads is a threat to their survival.

Among the most valuable species is the *E. woodii*. It is protected in botanical gardens with security measures such as alarmed cages designed to deter poachers.

AI in the sky

In our search to find a female *E. woodii* we have used innovative technologies to explore areas of the forest from a vertical vantage point. In 2022 and 2024, our drone surveys covered an area of 195 acres or 148 football fields, creating detailed maps from thousands of photos taken by the drones. It's still a small portion of the Ngoye Forest, which covers 10 000 acres.

Our AI system enhanced the efficiency and accuracy of these searches. As *E. woodii* is considered extinct in the wild, synthetic images were used in the AI model's training to improve its ability, via an image recognition algorithm, to recognise cycads by shape in different ecological contexts.

Plant species globally are disappearing at an alarming rate. Since all existing *E. woodii* specimens are clones, their potential for genetic diversity in the face of environmental change and disease, is limited.

Notable examples include the Great Famine in 1840s Ireland, where the uniformity of cloned potatoes worsened the crisis, and the vulnerability of clonal Cavendish bananas to Panama disease, which threatens their production as it did with the Gros Michel banana in the 1950s.

Finding a female would mean *E. woodii* is no longer at the brink of extinction and could revive the species. A female would allow for sexual reproduction, bring in genetic diversity, and signify a breakthrough in conservation efforts.

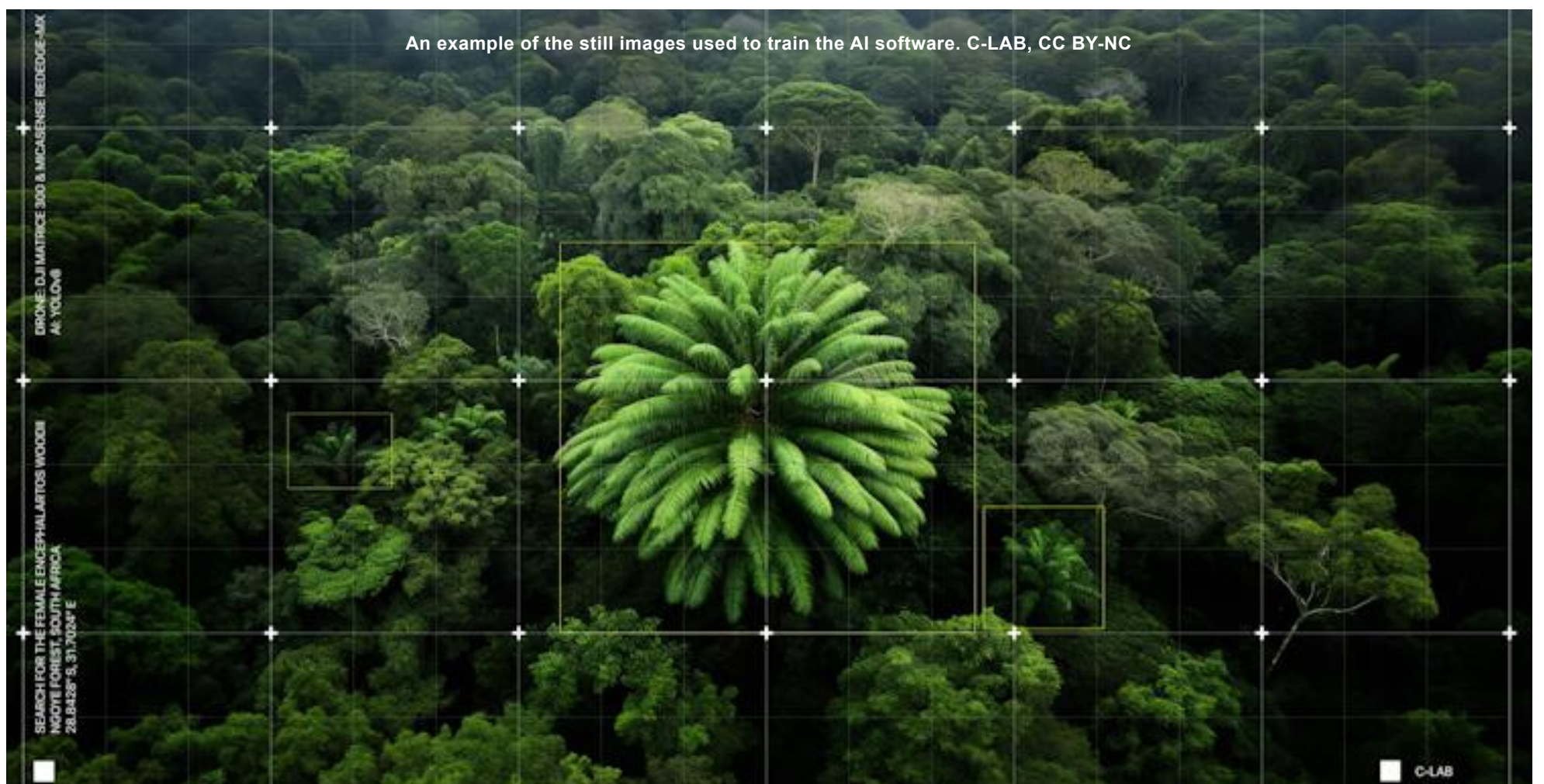
E. woodii is a sobering reminder of the fragility of life on Earth. But our quest to discover a female *E. woodii* shows there is hope even for the most endangered species if we act fast enough.

Laura Cinti does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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An example of the still images used to train the AI software. C-LAB, CC BY-NC



Safari Guide of the Year 2024



Mark Bishop

The excitement has been tangible, and everyone has been waiting for the announcement of this year's finalists in the Safari Guide of the Year (SGOTY). The time is upon us!

This competition, powered by the Field Guide Association of Southern Africa (FGASA), has been held since 2011. It is really an acknowledgement and recognition of those guides out there that often go unnoticed and seemingly operate in the background, despite having worked hard at honing their skills and working tirelessly to further their career as field guides.

As we know, this is not the case, they are noticed and the tourists' experience is almost always determined by the quality and knowledge of the field guide that they end up with. This guide spends more time with the guests than any other staff member during the guests' stay. Lodges have over the years come to realise that the standard and quality of the guide is paramount to a good guest experience, and that is why the go-to 'qualification' or grading for the majority of lodges in southern Africa (and beyond) is offered by FGASA.

Held over five days, and testing eight disciplines, this competition is not for the faint hearted. There is a minimum qualification to entry and anyone can nominate a potential competitor. There is stringent vetting of the nominated guides over a period of time, and out of that lot, five finalists are announced.

Let's meet the 2024 finalists in this prestigious competition. The list below is in no particular order.

Ashley Meintjes

Ashley is currently working at Lalibela Game Reserve, in the Eastern Cape. He is 37 years old, married with two kids. He was born and brought up in Durban. After school he decided to do an electrical apprenticeship, but he soon realised that his passion lay with nature and being in the bush.

The first three months of guiding he explains were "properly scary", but he gritted it out and progressed forward. Over time he has developed a passion for how all things in nature actually work together.

His specific interests are insects, birds and animal behaviour – but over the last 3 years he has got sucked into the marvellous, wonderful world of track and sign. His only regret is not having got involved in this aspect of the bush earlier.

His favourite colour is purple, and if asked to choose a meal he will always stray towards sushi. His favourite drink is coke – but being pushed he relented, and admitted that if there is some brandy adrift and in the vicinity, then it is coke and brandy!

The favourite book that Ashley currently lists is 'The way of the Kings' – a sci-fi epic! Going back to the bush, his favourite animal is the honey badger, and favourite bird is the black shouldered kite.

Ashley loves to explain to his guests things that they never knew existed, always with a bias to the impact that the interlinked natural world has on all its parts and creatures.



Ashley Meintjes (above), HJ Esterhuizen (middle) and Themba Mabunda (above right).

He openly admits that the administration of guiding is not his strong point.

An early girlfriends' father, Ashley's uncles and more especially his friend, Chris Reyneke, and his daughter, have been very instrumental in influencing and shaping his life.

If Ashley was to win SGOTY 24, he would like to broaden the footprint of the competition, get more people involved and to bring the camaraderie experienced at the competition, back to the Eastern Cape

Ashley's mantra is "Be the change (you wish to see)".

H.J. Esterhuizen

Hendrik Johannes, better known as 'HJ', hails from the Royal Malewane stable in the Greater Kruger. He is 31 years old and is married. Born in Johannesburg, brought up here in Hoedspruit and schooled in Phalaborwa – so I suppose one could call him local!

HJ found his passion for guiding whilst at school, where he would volunteer to work at lodges, eventually doing an apprenticeship at one of them. He literally came out of school and into guiding.

HJ has subsequently developed a deep passion for walking and tracking in the bush, something he even does in his spare time. Asked if he was not scared to go it alone in the bush, he replies "not scared just careful".

True to form his favourite colour is khaki, his favourite food is steak, and drink is coke. His favourite book is titled 'The Ivory Trail' by T.V.Bulpin. Who would have guessed that his favourite animal is the black rhino, and bird is the martial eagle.

HJ loves being with people. He thrives on the fact that he can influence them and educate them in the bush – something few people probably can do. He enjoys moving people to make better decisions about conservation.

What he does not like are the difficult clients – clients that are demanding, wanting nature to be on point at the drop of a hat. But he works hard at trying to change that view and over a relatively short period of time, would hope to bring them around.

His father was the most influential person in his life, standing behind him, never saying no, and always being super supportive.

If HJ was to win this event, he would take it as an opportunity to get more involved in training, but never leaving guiding. We would want to try an inspire and motivate young guides to do their very best and achieve!

HJ mantra is 'never give up', that's how he got to where he is today. It was not without obstacles, but he never wavered, he got up and pressed on.

Phillip Wessels

Phillip works at Cheetah Ridge Lodge, in



Nambiti Private Game Reserve, KwaZulu Natal. He is 44 years old and married. Born in Vereeniging, he grew up and was schooled in Middleburg.

From school he went directly into guiding. Having by chance met Lee Gutteridge at a vehicle breakdown, Lee helped him all the way to become a 'Ranger'. He then set up an interview at Mabula Game Lodge, was employed by them, and I suppose the obvious cliché is, 'the rest is history'.

His passion is to create an unforgettable experience for the guest. All guests in Phillips eyes are VIPs, and he has realised that the guide can make or break the guests experience.

Although Phillip claims blue to be his favourite colour – he is totally colourblind – that's why he's looking forward to the birding task! A juicy lamb chop on a braai is his food of choice, and his favourite drink is coffee. His favourite books are 'A time to Die' by Wilbur Smith, and 'The power of Prayer'.

On the favourite animal and bird front, those (despite being colourblind!) would be the spotted hyena, the violet eared waxbill, and the black faced waxbill.

What Phillip enjoys the most about guiding is the freedom to express himself in the way that he guides, and he is very adamant that the part of guiding he does not like, is arrogant guides.

The most influential person in his life is his wife, Arin. She has a major role in helping take decisions, giving advice and keeping him on the straight and narrow!

Should Phillip win this event he would stay where he is and work to get the guides in KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape recognised and expose them for who they really are (in a good way!). He would also like to give more exposure to the reserves in KwaZulu Natal.

His mantra is plain and simple "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord".

Themba Mabunda

Themba hails from Lion Sands Private Game Reserve in the Sabi Sands. He is 42 years old, has a partner and two kids.

Themba was born and bred in Utah Village – close to Dixie – and once he finished school he went directly into tracking. He spent 4 years at Singita as a tracker, all the time studying his FGASA manuals with the intentions and drive to become a guide. This led to him finding his way to Marataba, and finally, for the last one and a half years he has been at Lion Sands.

His passion is working with, and teaching people about nature. He loves game drives and bush walks.

His favourite colour is green, his food is pap, and his best drink is Coke. Themba says there are too many books to choose a favourite, but he loves bird books, his favourite animals is the leopard, and his favourite bird is the crested barbet.



He loves guiding, and teaching people, taking them out of their comfort zones and honing their views about nature whilst taking them back into nature. What he does not like about guiding is getting up in the mornings! But he admits "once up, up for good!".

He has been most influenced by his brother, Adam Mabunda, who became his father figure, and chief supporter and mentor. Adam is a senior tracker.

If Themba was to win SGOTY 2024, he believes it would present itself as motivation for colleagues, friends, and fellow guides, to show that hard work pays off. It would be amazing recognition, some place that he learnt from, and it would be etched in his history forever.

Themba's mantra is really being out and present in the wild.

Tracey Bruton

Tracey was following a totally different career in the film industry, when she decided that the bush was for her. So, although considered a relative 'late starter' (in her 30's), she's bounded through the ranks in quick time, and finds herself here as a finalist in SGOTY 2024.

Tracey is currently at Thornbush Game Lodge in Thornybush. She is 42 and single, was born in Grahamstown and brought up in Cape Town. The evolution of her career to nature was almost predetermined as she studied nature conservation before she went into film. She's now coming up to a decade of being immersed in the bush.

Her passion is broad, as she loves everything, meeting people, the bush life style and getting people excited about nature. She is quick to point out that "this is my life, a life, possibly a lifestyle, but definitely not a job", and she loves it!

Her favourite colour is green, loves ALL foods but sushi pips all others, and due to a recent trip to France, her favourite drink is now French champagne! Her favourite book has been The Clan of the Cave Bear by Jean Auel. Her favourite animals are the elephant and honey badger, and her favourite bird is the African hoopoe.

She loves sharing her enthusiasm and passion about all the animals in the bush. But there is something she does not like in the bush – the dust in winter and having to tuck her shirt in!

Her greatest influence has been her mother because of her strength.

Should Tracey win this year, she will push herself to get better qualified and wants to continue working on herself. She admits she still has a lot to learn from others and indeed herself – but with that all, wants to make a difference in conservation.

Her mantra is to continually say 'make it happen' as one word!

Continued on next page

- the finalists



Tracey Bruton (above), Phillip Wessels (middle) and Lewyn Maefala (above right). Location and host sponsor Mhondoro Safari Lodge and Villa located in the Welgevonden Game Reserve.

Lewyn Maefala (Invitational)

The invitational candidate this year is Lewyn. She is a whirlwind of enthusiasm and passion. She is the Founder of Bushbabies (under Transfrontier Africa) – an organisation that teaches children about the bush, introducing them to nature. It's basically environmental lessons for children from 5 – 18 years old.

Lewyn was born and brought up in Pretoria and her love for the bush and things wild was piqued and nurtured on her grandfather's farm where she spent many happy days. She was involved with the Pretoria Zoo from an early age and did the Junior Nature Conservation course there. She

then moved on and completed her Nature Conservation Diploma and it was whilst on a practical during the course that her life changed. That was it, she decided there and then that she wanted to advance forward within the conservation field.

Lewyn tells me that she is 31 – which in her view the new 12, but with the heart of a 9-year-old, eager to learn, sucking up the knowledge like a sponge and craving to discover. Her aim is for bigger and greater things in life, all within the paradise of the bush.

Attending SGOTY 2024 she hopes to gain a better sense of what is out there, to understand even more and learn from the experience of others.

Her favourite colour is light green, her favourite food is prawns with pasta, and her favourite drink is water! Her favourite, inspirational book is Can Do! by Kevin Chaplin. Her favourite animal is the elephant, and her favourite bird is the paradise flycatcher.

Lewyn's attributes the major portion of her life mentorship to Dr Cheryl Ogilvie, from the Tswane University of Technology. It is through her passion and direction that led Lewyn into conservation and teaching people.

Lewyn's mantra comes from the wonderful book by Dr Seuss, The Lorax. "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not".



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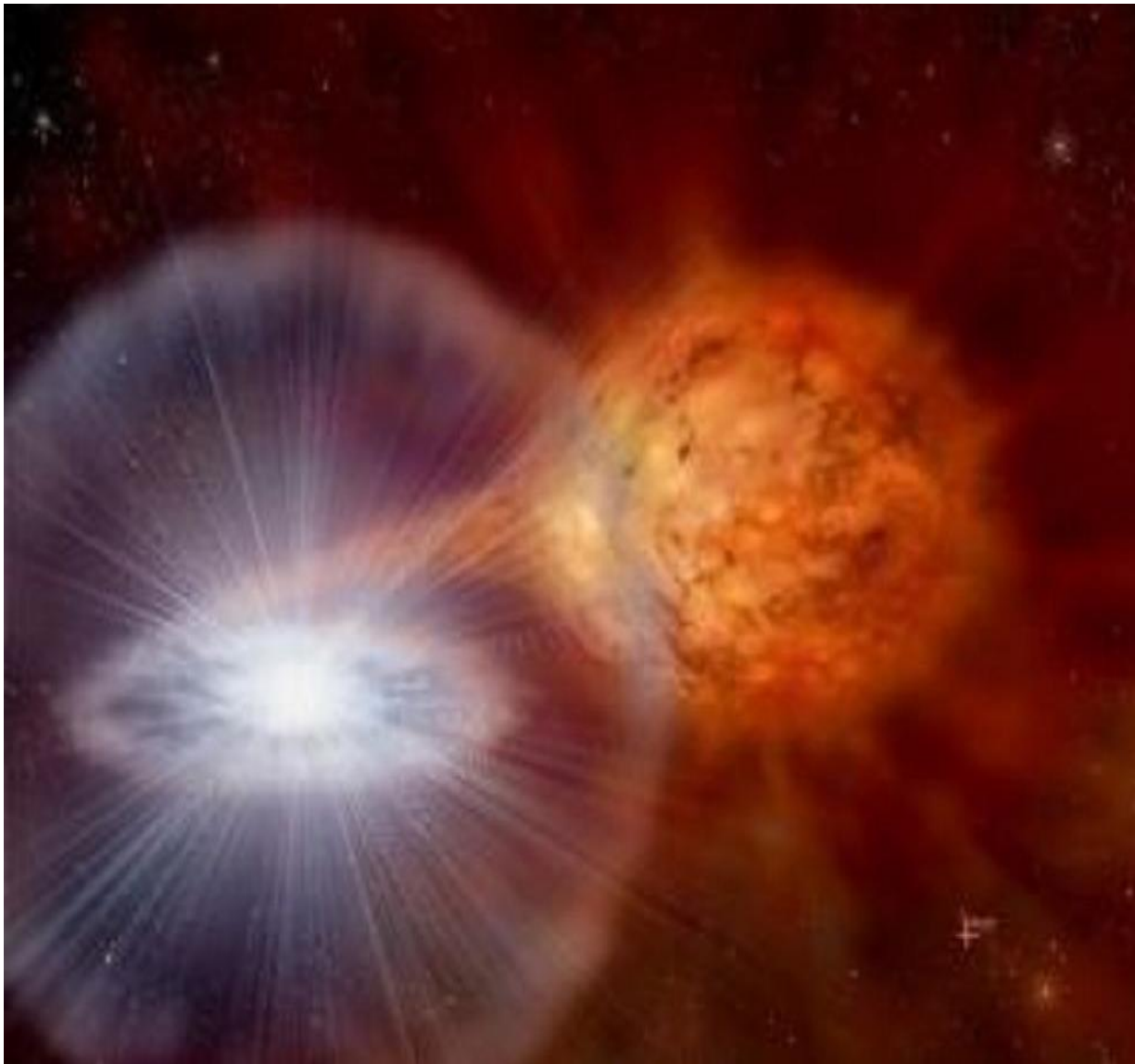
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In-NOVA-tion



Recurrent Nova (above left), Ariadne Crown (above right) and the blaze-star-corona-borealis (bottom)

Images supplied: Ben Coley

Ben Coley

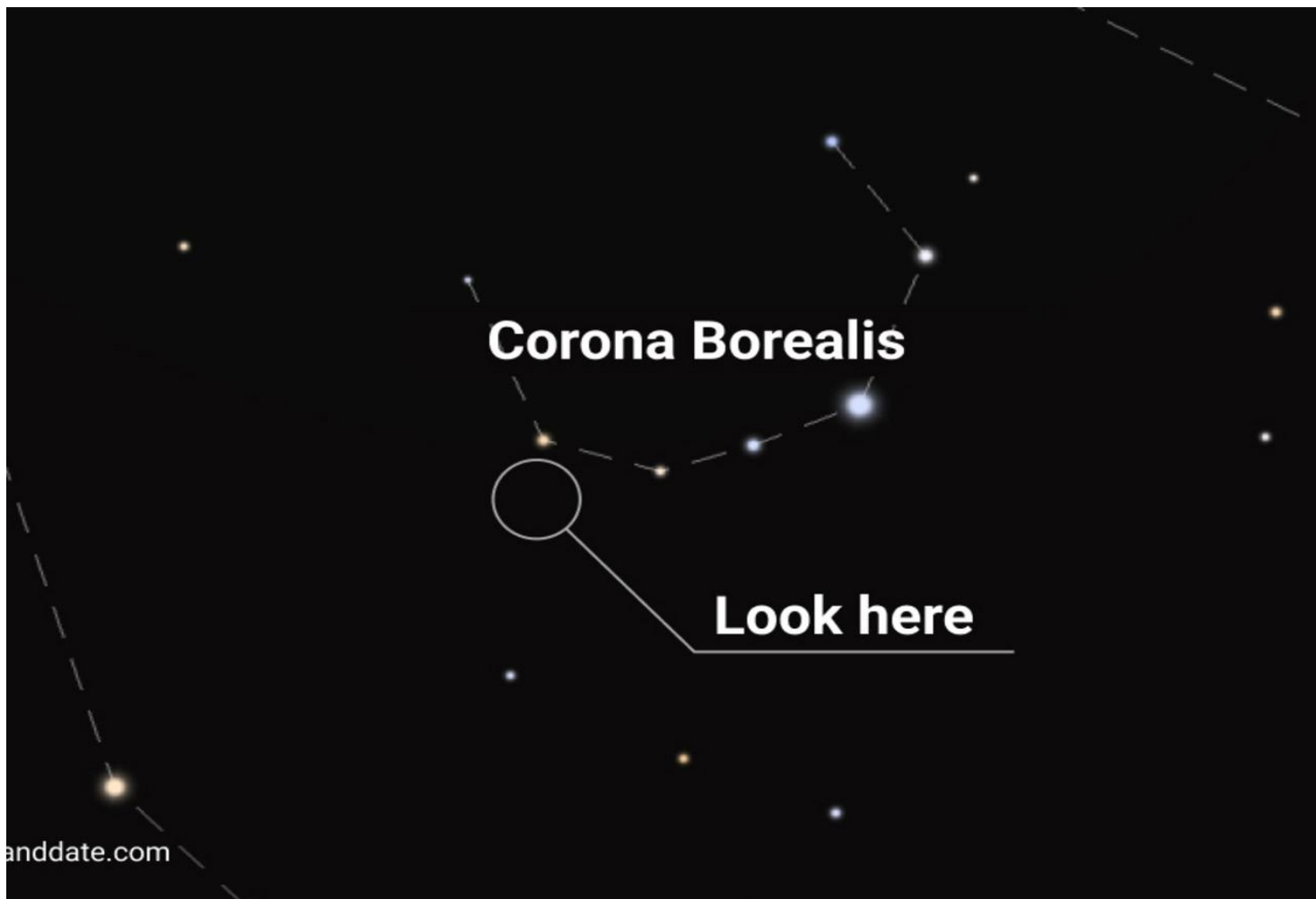
Those of you with their fingers on the pulse of the latest astronomical news, you may have seen the recent talk on social media about the explosion due to light up our skies over the next few months.

As with many claims made by those clambering for followers, likes and hits, the true nature of this event has been somewhat over-dramatized, at least in terms of what will be visible to the casual stargazer, but its significance should not be under-estimated.

Space is dynamic, with galaxies, stars, planets, moons and more, being born, interacting, merging and dying in a seemingly endless cosmic soap opera on the biggest stage imaginable. But such is the size and scale of these events, the chances of any of us witnessing any of this in our meagre lifespans is, if you excuse the pun, astronomically slim.

However, astronomers are predicting that we may get to see something very special in the coming months – a *nova*. The word *nova* comes from the Latin meaning ‘new’, a poignant description since, from our perspective, a new star will be visible in the night sky. The site of this cosmic phenomenon will be the small, but beautiful constellation of Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown. This aesthetically pleasing arc of stars can be seen in South Africa for a few hours after sunset in the northern skies and represents the crown of Ariadne that was tossed into the sky in celebration of her wedding to the god, Dionysus.

A nova is not the birth of a new star, but more of a brief, fiery resurrection. Binary stars are pairs of stars locked by their mutual gravity, much like the Earth and Moon are bound. In this case, one of the stars is a Red Giant and the other is a White Dwarf, the core of an expired star. Red giants are old stars that are becoming unstable and prone to ejecting some of their hydrogen atmosphere into space. When this happens, the hydrogen is attracted by the white dwarf and begins to



build up on its surface, where it is heated to extreme temperatures. As we know all too well, heating hydrogen sufficiently can have disastrous consequences, and eventually produces a runaway thermonuclear explosion.

If the red giant was to have an exceptionally large outgassing event, it is possible that the dwarf star could accrue sufficient mass to destroy itself completely in what is known as a Type 1a Supernova, but in most cases, the denotation simply removes the shell of hydrogen that built up. This means that the process can recur, and often does so at very regular intervals.

Situated over 3 000 light years away T

Coronae Borealis, also known as the Blaze Star is an example of this. Its nova events occur at approximately 80-year intervals, with the last nova witnessed in 1946. Astronomers have been watching the star closely, eagerly awaiting its next eruption and all the signs point to it happening sometime before September this year.

When it does happen, there will not be a blinding flash in the night sky, but a patch of space that is normally empty (to the naked eye) will reveal a star that could get as bright as magnitude 2, about the same brightness as Polaris, the North Star, the 48th brightest star in the night sky. The explosion will be brief by astronomical standards, but the millions of tonnes of

hydrogen being vaporised will cause it to outshine all the stars in its native constellation of Corona Borealis for up to a week. Other famous, noticeable magnitude 2 stars include Hamal (Taurus), Nunki (Sagittarius) and The Peacock Star (Pavo).

Out of the 400 billion stars in the Milky Way, less than 15 recurring novae are known. That is a minuscule percentage, and whilst the spectacle may not be akin to science fiction CGI standards, simply having a chance to see the dynamic nature of our galaxy with our own eyes is a supreme honour and quite literally, the opportunity of a lifetime.

The common file snake - *Limaformosa capensis*

Luke Kemp
African Snakebite Institute

The common file snake is widespread throughout the warm eastern parts of southern Africa. It is a robust snake with a triangular profile and heavily keeled scales, giving this snake a rough appearance. A distinctive row of enlarged white scales extend down the centre of its back. Its colour is grey to black with some purple or pinkish interstitial skin visible between the scales. The head is usually darker than the rest of the body and the small eyes are dark black in colour. Despite being a widespread species, it is seldom seen, spending most of its life underground in burrows and holes.

It is often encountered on warm summer nights, especially after some decent rain. It is a large snake, reaching around 1,75m in length, although around 1,2m is the average size. The common file snake is a slow-moving and docile snake, which seldom attempts to bite, however it will emit a foul-smelling liquid from the cloaca if handled.

It feeds on a variety of prey items including rodents, frogs and lizards, but is especially well known for its snake-eating ability. Despite being a non-venomous constrictor, the snake is known to eat highly venomous snakes including Mozambique spitting cobras and puff adders. A 1,5m individual killed on a road near Mala-Mala was cut open to examine the stomach content. In the stomach was a 1m olive grass snake, a young 80cm southern African python, a 50cm brown water snake and a 48cm Mozambique spitting cobra - a good example of the preference for snakes in its diet! The common file snake appears to have some immunity to the venom of other snakes and will often swallow the other snake live.



The beautiful common file snake

Images: Johan Marais

They lay around 3 - 13 eggs in early summer and the eggs take around 70 days to hatch. The young will measure around 30 - 45cm after hatching and are perfect replicas of the adults – they are also not often seen, probably living underground.

In some African cultures, the file snake along with the ground hornbill, is considered an omen of death and if one is found at your residence, it means someone will die soon. Unfortunately, because of this, file snakes are often killed, despite being a harmless and docile snake that will eat other potentially dangerous snakes in the area.

These beautiful docile snakes are a lucky sighting and finding a large individual is rare and should be a treasured encounter.

Check out the website on www.africansnakebiteinstitute.com – and get your FREE App on the link <http://bit.ly/snakebiteapp>

The black button spider - *Latrodectus sp.*

Tim Baynham
Wildlife Safety Solutions

This month we take a closer look at perhaps the world's most well-known and notorious group of spiders, the infamous black widow spiders, of which there are numerous species in the genus *Latrodectus*. In South Africa we know them as black button spiders and in Australia they are referred to as red-back spiders. They belong to the family Theridiidae, the comb-footed spiders, so named due to the comb like structure consisting of six to ten modified hairs called setae, which are located on the tarsus of the fourth leg. The setae are used to cast silk out and over captured prey.

Black button spiders, unlike the closely related brown button spiders, prefer natural undisturbed habitat and consequently are not commonly found in and around human dwellings. Black button spiders are widely distributed throughout much of South Africa and maybe found hiding under rocks, in logs and bushes.

They are 'web bound spiders', living their lives in the confines of their web. They construct rather messy 'retreat webs' under a variety of natural debris. The funnel shaped 'retreat' is built off to one side of the web. Often one or more egg cases are visible in the web. The egg sacs are slightly larger than a pea, spherical in shape and have a smooth exterior surface, differing from the brown button spider egg sacs which are 'spikey'.

Black button spiders are medium sized spiders, measuring between 20 - 40mm across and males are smaller than females. These spiders are black in colour and have a large bulbous abdomen. Most have some form of orange/red marking or markings on the dorsal surface of the abdomen above the spinneret. They feed



The black button spider

Images: Tim Baynham

on a variety of flying and crawling insects that become trapped in their web.

They are inoffensive, shy spiders and when disturbed or threatened, typically form a tight ball and drop to the ground, feigning death. Their venom is potently neurotoxic and of medical importance. If bitten, one should immediately seek medical assistance. Fortunately bites on humans are rare and usually occur when the spider is accidentally squashed. The bite is painful and will be immediately noticeable. Symptoms may include burning pain at the bite site, tender regional lymph nodes, generalized muscle pain and cramps, headache, nausea, abdominal pain and cramps, weakness in the legs, a feeling of constriction of the chest muscles, raised blood pressure, profuse sweating, swelling of the face and especially the eye lids and the patient may become restless, agitated and anxious.

Anti-venom is produced for the treatment of bites and is the only effective treatment in severe envenomations. In cases where anti-venom is not administered symptoms may persist for a week or more. There are no known fatalities from this species in South Africa. Make sure to wear gloves when working in the garden to minimize your risk of a bite.

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

Unveiling FGASA: The ‘Gold Standard’ in Field Guiding

For those navigating South Africa’s vibrant safari tourism sector, FGASA isn’t just an acronym — it’s the mark of field guiding excellence. Established in 1990 by a group of visionary guides, the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) emerged from a need to define professionalism and elevate standards in wildlife guiding. Prior to its inception, the industry lacked uniformity in training and ethics, leaving aspiring guides adrift in their pursuits.

Driven by passion and armed with expertise, FGASA’s founding members pooled resources to craft a rigorous framework for environmental and guiding education. Their mission: to cultivate a breed of guides steeped in knowledge, ethics, and safety protocols. This dedication birthed a reputation that lodges and employers now covet — a FGASA badge on a guide’s uniform signifies not just competence and professionalism, but a commitment to preserving and sharing Africa’s natural wonders, and delivering a service way above the standard norm. That is why FGASA members are in demand.

From its humble beginnings, FGASA has evolved into a cornerstone of the safari industry. Accredited by CATHSSETA in 2004 and registered as a non-profit company in 2005, FGASA operates on a model intricately tied to the philosophy of ‘by guides, for guides’. This ensures that every contribution fuels educational resources and professional development, and the standard is set firstly by the facilitation by FGASA endorsed delivery partners, and secondly by the quality of their assessors and mentors who have all themselves qualified at the minimum standard of a Professional Field Guide. Membership dues, a modest R640 annually,



unlock a treasure trove of benefits: recognized qualifications, employment opportunities, career guidance, mentorship, and access to a global network of like-minded professionals, and selected services.

Crucially, FGASA isn’t just a certifier—it’s a career architect. Its structured pathways nurture guides from novice to expert, providing stability and growth in a competitive field. Embraced by the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) as a full member, FGASA guides stand tall on the global stage, backed by a UN-affiliated advocate for their profession.

Today, FGASA stands as a testament to 34 years of setting and upholding superior guiding standards. More than an association, it’s a guarantee of quality, endorsed by lodges and revered by professionals worldwide. As a leading training provider on the continent, and in collaboration with its delivery partners, assessors and mentors,

FGASA continues to steer the future of field guiding with unwavering commitment and a legacy built on excellence.

Not resting on their achievements to date, FGASA is moving forward, and has embarked on the application process to become the registered professional body (through the South African Quality Authority – SAQA) of the nature guiding sector in South Africa.

This is FGASA, dynamic, representative, ethical, professional, tried, tested and trusted.

A very brief history of FGASA

A meeting was held to discuss possible co-operation in Informal Environmental Education on the 15th of January 1990. It was attended by four people: Clive Walker, Marilyn Dougall, Laurie Wright, and Frances Gamble with an apology from John Ledger.

Their aim was to set up an association that could implement and regulate some form of standard for Field Guides working in Big 5 areas given that there was no formal qualification, registration, standard or regulation for the job function as a guide.

This committee allocated R1 000 from available funds to launch the Association. The first formal FGASA meeting took place on the 4th of August 1990 and included eight people with the list of members above, Steve Johnson, Neil Harmse and Drummond Densham.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Association took place on the 24th of July 1991 attended by 70 people.

On the 3rd of August 1991 the first formal committee meeting took place. The members of the first committee consisted

of: Clive Walker (Chairman), Laurie Wright (Vice-Chair), Drummond Densham, Johan Fourie, Murray MacGregor, Bruce Thackwell, Barrie Walker, Alan Wedderburn, Ria Milburn, and Ben Vermeulen. At the AGM on the 21st of August 1993, the membership stood at 226 (not all paid-up).

In 1996 Ria Milburn took over the Administration of the Association with Tonki Rice (secretary). Douwe van der Zee was appointed CEO of FGASA in June 1999 and ran the Association until April 2001.

Grant Hine was appointed CEO as of the 1st of May 2001 a position he held for 14 years and then held the position as Academic Director and left the position in April 2018 having served FGASA for 17 years. The position of CEO (Managing Director) was briefly held by Nicolette van Brakel from October 2014 after which Brian Serrao stood in as acting MD until the appointment of Michelle du Plessis in 2018.

Today, there are 4 458 active members, and 33 560 members that have registered over the last 34 years.

The current Directors are: Stephan Beal (Chairman), Juan Pinto (Vice Chairman), Michelle du Plessis (Managing Director), Solomon Ndlovu, Andrew Kearney, and Bernice Kelly (FGASA Management).

The Executive Committee is: Isaiah Banda (Waterberg), Neil Whyte (Sabi Sand Western Sector), Richard Pearse (Eastern Cape), Andrew Khosa (Northern Mpumalanga), Nic Knott-Craig (Gauteng), John Ditsele and Jonathan Wightman (Madikwe), Bennet de Klerk (North West), Alan Taylor (Kwa-Zulu Natal), Joslin Abrahams (Western Cape), and Armin Junkuhn (Namibia).

Why do birds migrate ?

Birds essentially migrate to improve survival chances during seasons when conditions are unfavourable. The most important aspect of this seasonal movement is the shortage of food, the related increase in nutritional stress and competition for resources it presents. The bird is therefore faced with a simple choice: stay and possibly die or move away (migrate) to areas that offer the resource and improved chances of survival. Shortening daylight hours followed by decreasing temperatures and scarcity of food are mostly responsible for promoting migration. Many bird species are dependent on insects, flowers, fruit and seeds for survival. These food sources are invariably at their highest concentrations in warmer areas, allowing birds that migrate to have a better chance of survival, particularly if they have to breed.

Breeding migrants set about breeding almost immediately after arrival to ensure that the reproductive cycle is completed before having to depart. Some species take a leisurely trip, stopping



frequently at places of interest along the way. They take up to two months or more to move from Europe to southern Africa. Others do not mess around and cover the 13 000 kilometres in as little as

three weeks.

True migration is a predictable seasonal movement of animals on a regular route, ultimately returning to the same location within a calendar year. Some

bird migrations can cover thousands of kilometres, but some may be as little as 200 kilometres. The shorter ones are more correctly called local movements and are a response to weather and food changes. Birds that migrate within the African continent are called intra-African migrants - the majority of which breed when they visit southern Africa. Those that come from Europe, extreme North Africa (north of the Sahara) and Asia are called Palaearctic migrants, the majority of which do not breed here. This is because the further a bird migrates, the less time it spends at the destination, making breeding difficult and therefore unlikely. Some species change altitude as seasons change and are called Altitudinal migrants.

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

Trivia

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|----|--|
| 1 | The average person in a lifetime grows slightly more than 2 m of what? | 7 | What dogs have the best eyesight? | 14 | If you are born between August 24 to September 23, what star sign are you? |
| 2 | Collective nouns – often called a tribe or trip of what? | 8 | Unusual words - what’s the only English word has four double letters in a row? | 15 | What is a pismire? |
| 3 | What country has three capital cities Administrative, Legislative, and Judicial? | 9 | The average adult does it 17 times a day - what? | 16 | Who wrote the book - Call of the Wild? |
| 4 | The human bodies got just over 72 km of them - what? | 10 | The Eggplant is part of what family of plants? | 17 | What is the main ingredient of tahini? |
| 5 | Johnny Depp suffers from coulrophobia. What is it? | 11 | What ancient languages writing had no spaces between words? | 18 | Who sent Stanley to Africa to look for Living stone? |
| 6 | Samuel Morse the inventor was originally what till he was 46? | 12 | Collective nouns - a group of swans are called what? | 19 | What place was nicknamed “The Pearl of the Orient”? |
| | | 13 | Duffel bags were made in Duffel – in what country? | 20 | What country is still known as “The Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon”? |

Navigating the complexities of university admissions: a parent guide

Online forums are awash with parents seeking guidance on how to navigate the offer for university admission (or the failure of an admission offer). This situation, both in terms of what they must do now, as well as seeking advice on how to help their child cope with the disappointment, impacts their plans for the future. It is critical to put the matter into perspective, and to consider the various pathways open to these prospective students.

During Grade 11 and Matric, the stress and anxiety for students and parents can be overwhelming, not only because of the pressure to perform well during exams and assessments but also because of the complexities and uncertainties brought about by applying for university placement.

Apart from the stressful and exhausting application process to various universities and for different qualifications, many students endure the disappointment of not being placed in the universities they applied to and having to decide on their next steps.

“While this situation now facing thousands upon thousands of prospective students throughout South Africa feels like an intractable problem for them and their families, it is important to put the matter into perspective and, first of all, not take it personally or view it as a failure,” says Dr Linda Meyer, MD of IIE Rosebank College.

“Of course, it is frustrating not to be able to cross this item off your to-do-list, especially if you have worked very hard and were not accepted while many of your peers already received offers. But view this

as a temporary hurdle rather than a permanent roadblock,” she says.

The 26 Public Universities in South Africa only accept around 210 000 first-year students annually, and this reality can create significant worry about what will happen if a future student’s plans to attend a public university unfold differently than expected.

“The reality of the admissions process is that only a small number of students will receive an acceptance letter from their preferred institution for their preferred degree. The competition is intense, with tens of thousands of matric students vying for a limited number of spots. It’s natural for parents and students to feel anxious about whether they will achieve the necessary results to secure a place at a university,” says Dr Meyer.

She urges parents and students to remember that there are many pathways to success and that a university or college acceptance is not the only – or even best – route to a fulfilling and successful career.

Alternatives to consider

Technical and vocational training colleges: Vocational training programmes and technical colleges offer specialised education in various fields such as engineering, healthcare, information technology and the arts. These institutions often have more flexible admission requirements and provide practical, hands-on experience that can lead directly to employment.

Distance learning and online education: Distance learning and online education

have become increasingly popular and accessible. These programmes offer flexibility for students to learn at their own pace and often at a lower cost than traditional universities. Many reputable institutions offer accredited online courses and degrees.

Bridging Courses and Foundation Programmes: For students who may need to meet the direct entry requirements for university, bridging courses and foundation programmes are an excellent option. These programmes are designed to help students build the necessary skills and knowledge to qualify for their desired courses in the future.

Internships and learnerships: Internships and learnerships provide valuable on-the-job training and experience. These programmes allow students to earn while they learn, gaining practical skills and industry insights that can be highly advantageous in the job market. Contact a SETA for further information.

Private higher education institutions: The only significant difference between a registered and accredited Private Higher Education Institution and a public university is that the former is not government funded. PHEIs remain a valuable alternative to studying at a public university, and their graduates are in high demand in the workplace. It is essential, however, to ensure that you confirm your qualifications. SAQA must register all qualifications in South Africa, and the provider must appear on the DHET list of licenced providers. The Coun-

cil of Higher Education oversees public and private higher education providers as the responsible quality council.

“Starting from Grade 11, the period leading up to and following Matric exams is undoubtedly challenging for students and parents. The uncertainty surrounding university admissions adds to the stress, but it’s essential to remember that there are numerous paths to success,” says Dr Meyer.

“By exploring alternative education options, managing stress effectively, and keeping an open mind, students can find fulfilling and rewarding career opportunities regardless of the outcome of their university applications. The journey to success is rarely a straight line, and flexibility and resilience are vital to navigating it successfully.”

Note:

Dr Linda Meyer is the Managing Director of the Independent Institute of Education’s Rosebank College has held several Executive roles in the public and private sectors. She is a serving member of the SAQA Board. She holds several qualifications, including a Doctor of Philosophy (RSA), Doctor of Business Administration (USA), Master of Business Administration (UK), Post Graduate Diploma in Management Studies (UK), Bachelor of Business Administration, B. Com (Law) and several other Diplomas and Higher Certificates and professional certifications.

Students during technical training
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Local artist is shortlisted as a finalist in prestigious international art competition



Sophie's "Ethereal stalker"

Local correspondent

Local artist Sophie Niemann, has been shortlisted as a finalist for the prestigious David Shepherd Wildlife Artist of the Year Award 2024 (1 – 6 July, 2024), a competition often considered the 'Oscars' of the wildlife art world.

Sophie is a local artist who has been based near Hoedspruit for the past 27 years. She was originally from the UK and came over to SA in 1996 and was a safari guide at Makalali Game Reserve, before working for Global Vision International setting up conservation and community volunteer programmes around Africa. She was more recently known as the founder and director of Bushwise Field Guides. She turned to a career as a full time artist in 2022. She has quickly become known in the art world for her unique 'thread painting'

technique. Sophie now dedicates herself fully to her art, exhibiting locally and internationally.

This year the competition received entries from 46 countries and over 1500 artworks. "It has been a goal of mine to be shortlisted for a few years now, it feels amazing to make it this far, so I am over the moon" commented Sophie.

Sophie's competition entry, "Ethereal stalker", is made only with thread on fabric and this, and her other artwork has received significant attention due to this unique technique known as 'thread painting'. She skilfully uses cotton thread as her paint, and a sewing machine as her brush. "In this artwork, I hope to capture the elusive and transcendent essence of a stalking leopard, moving with ghostly elegance in and out of the shadows, whilst approaching its prey."

Since becoming a full-time artist, she has been showcasing her work at a number of gallery's in South Africa, including locally in the Warren Carey Wildlife Gallery and the Hoedspruit Art Gallery. Her unique and captivating pieces have also found homes in international collections.

Sophie is asking the local Hoedspruit community for their support in the upcoming public vote, which runs concurrently with the exhibition from 26 June to 1 July. To support Sophie and her work, cast your vote during this period at the link below, and we all wish her luck!.

Note:

The David Shepherd Wildlife Artist of the Year Award is an internationally renowned wildlife art competition and exhibition. Each year it attracts entries from some of the most talented artists around

the globe, who come together to celebrate the beauty of the natural world. The competition has attracted more than 17 500 entries, and through entry fees, exhibition sales, and sponsorships, has raised nearly £2 million.

There is also an online exhibition of all the artworks which will run from 26 June - 6 July in the David Shepard Wildlife Foundation gallery and shop.

To vote follow this link: <https://david-shepherd.org/wildlife-art/competitions/wildlife-artist-of-the-year/way-2024/peoples-choice-award-voting/> For more information about the artist and her work, please visit www.sophie-niemannart@gmail.com

Trivia answers

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 1 | Nose Hair | 11 | Ancient Greek and Latin |
| 2 | Goats | 12 | Generally, a bevy, bank or herd |
| 3 | South Africa | 13 | Belgium |
| 4 | Nerves | 14 | Virgo |
| 5 | A fear of clowns | 15 | An archaic term for an ant |
| 6 | Painter | 16 | Jack London |
| 7 | Sighthounds: like greyhounds, whippets | 17 | Sesame seeds |
| 8 | Subbookkeeper | 18 | James Gordon Bennett Jr., Editor of the New York Herald |
| 9 | Laugh | 19 | Manila capital of the Philippines |
| 10 | Nightshade | 20 | Bhutan |



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From Hoedspruit, drive South on R40 towards Klaserie T-Junction.

Turn right at T Junction (R531) and drive 400m. Follow the road signs.

Klaserie Truck Stop entrance is on your left.

From Acornhoek, drive on R40 North towards Klaserie. Do not turn right towards Hoedspruit, Phalaborwa but drive straight onwards 400m past turn off. Klaserie Truck Stop is on your left. There are signs to the Klaserie Truck Stop.

GPS Co-Ordinates:

24°32' 24.02" S
31°01' 31.09" E

Please note that Maruleng Municipal and Provincial Traffic officials will strictly monitor and take the necessary action to ensure adherence to this.

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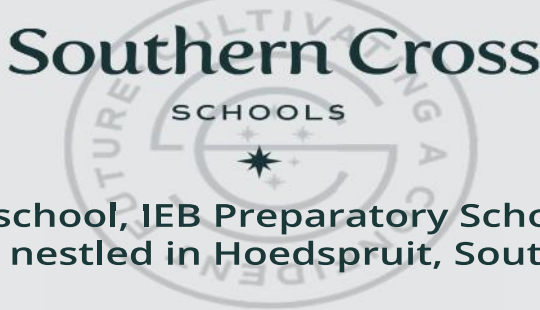
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Coalition governments: the balancing act of democracy

AI perspective 'correspondent'

In the realm of democratic governance, coalition governments stand as a testament to compromise and cooperation. In such arrangements, political parties join forces to form a government, often when no single party holds a clear majority in the legislature. While coalition governments offer a pathway to inclusivity and stability, they also pose challenges that can hinder decision-making and policy implementation. Let's delve into the pros and cons of coalition governments, examining their impact on governance and society.

Pros

Representation and inclusivity. Perhaps the most significant advantage of coalition governments is their ability to represent a diverse range of voices within the political spectrum. By bringing together multiple parties, coalition governments often reflect a broader array of interests and ideologies than single-party administrations. This inclusivity can enhance the legitimacy of government decisions and foster a sense of participation among citizens who may feel marginalized under a majority-rule system.

Stability through compromise. Coalition governments require parties to negotiate and compromise on policy issues, fostering political stability. In contrast to winner-takes-all scenarios, where a single party may push through its agenda unchecked, coalition governments necessitate consen-

sus-building and cooperation. This stability can be particularly crucial in times of crisis or uncertainty, as diverse perspectives are brought to the table to address complex challenges.

Checks and balances. The presence of multiple parties in a coalition government can act as a check on power, preventing any single party from monopolizing decision-making. This dispersion of authority can mitigate the risk of authoritarian tendencies and encourage transparency and accountability. In essence, coalition governments promote a system of checks and balances that ensures a more deliberative approach to governance.

Policy flexibility. Coalition governments often produce policies that reflect a blend of different party ideologies. While this may complicate decision-making processes, it also allows for more nuanced and comprehensive policy solutions. By drawing on the strengths of each participating party, coalition governments can address diverse societal needs and adapt to changing circumstances more effectively than rigidly ideological administrations.

Cons

Compromise and gridlock. The necessity of compromise in coalition governments can lead to gridlock and inefficiency. Negotiating agreements among multiple parties with divergent interests and priorities can be time-consuming and arduous, resulting in delays or watered-down policies. In ex-

treme cases, deadlock may occur, stalling government functions and eroding public confidence in the political process.

Policy instability. Coalition governments are inherently fragile, as shifts in party alliances or internal disagreements can destabilize the government and lead to early elections or even collapse. The constant need to maintain coalition unity can undermine long-term policy planning and implementation, as parties prioritize short-term political survival over strategic governance.

Accountability challenges. With power dispersed among multiple parties, it can be difficult for voters to hold the government accountable for its actions. Coalition agreements and negotiations often take place behind closed doors, obscuring the decision-making process from public scrutiny. This lack of transparency can weaken the link between elected officials and their constituents, eroding trust in the democratic system.

Ideological dilution. In the quest for consensus, coalition governments may dilute or abandon core ideological principles, leading to policy compromises that satisfy no one fully. While flexibility is a strength, excessive accommodation can result in watered-down policies that fail to address pressing societal issues effectively. Ideological clashes within the coalition can further exacerbate this problem, undermining the coherence and effectiveness of government action.



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Conclusion

Coalition governments represent a delicate balancing act in the realm of democratic governance, offering both opportunities and challenges. While they promote inclusivity, stability through compromise, and checks on power, they also face obstacles such as gridlock, instability, accountability challenges, and ideological dilution.

Ultimately, the success of a coalition government depends on the willingness of participating parties to cooperate, compromise, and prioritize the public interest over partisan gain. As citizens, it is essential to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of coalition governance and actively engage in shaping the future of our democratic institutions.

Credit: ChatGPT, chat.openai.com

My 5 sent

Oupa Bobbili

'Botox' – nou vra ek jou met trane in my oë, wie dink die goed uit? Is die mense so behup met hulle gesiggies en lyfies dat 'n onnatuurlike voorkoms die norm is? Ek dink televisie, skoonheid tydskrifte en geld gedrewe mense dra die skuld vir die sonde. Almal wil soos hulle "idols" lyk. Kom ons wees eerlik, ek dink nie Tom Cruise wil soos enige van ons lyk nie. Ek glo diep in my hart dat Jennifer Lopez nie soos die tannie in ons plaaslike biltong kèffie wil lyk nie. Dan dink ek ook rêrig hulle wil nie hê jy moet soos hulle lyk nie, want dan is hulle ook nie meer uniek nie.

Ek wil ook nie vir die res van my lewe jonk lyk nie. Ek is net baie bly plooi is nie pynlik nie. Dit help ook nie jy lyk soos 'n skool seun of dogter maar die lyf val uit mekaar uit soos 'n model T Ford nie. Jy glimlag met jou vals sneeu-wit tande, maar kan nie 'n lekker stuk biltong afbyt nie. Dit help ook nie jou gesiggie is plooieloos maar jy het drie vias

nodig om nie jou voete nat te piepie nie.

Kyk nou die dag na een van ons eie plaaslike Afrikaanse sangeresse, en daar herken ek die pop nie. Soos 'n aap vra ek "nou wie is die?" Toe hulle haar naam sê toe ek kry ek eintlik skaam vir haar part. Sy is so kryf getrek, tot die stembande klink na silikoon. Hoekom? Wat is die nut van alles?

Vals ooghare, vals tande, grimering, vals boobies en boude, vals hare, gesiggie opgepomp tot 3 'bar', vals naels en op geveerde sonbrand en jy soek opregte liefde. Genade dit is nou vir jou 'n ding. As jou lyfie vals is, hoe is jou hart en siel? Dink nie dit kan te opreg wees nie. Kom wees nou eerlik, almal kyk na 'n mooi mens.


Mans weet waarna hulle kyk, en die nooiens weet waarvoor hulle kyk. Lees gou mooi hier, net die mooiste siele kry die regte verhoudings. Geen kuit, beursie, bors, "six-pack" of opgepompte lip bou 'n verhouding nie.

Môre is daai aardse geite weg, en wat dan? As jy rêrig mooi wil lyk, doen dit op



Images Canva Pro


die natuurlike manier. Oefen, drink water, slaap genoeg, eet gesond, gebruik jou roompies, glimlag en manifesteer 'n mooi hart en siel. So eenvoudig soos dit. Dit is nie "rocket science" nie. Koester elke litteken, rekmerk en plooi. Want dit is waar ons stories en wysheid vandaan kom. Onthou elke rekmerk het 'n naam en is groot gemaak en is daardie ouer se trots. Elke litteken het 'n storie, soms van oorlewing. En elke plooi beteken jy het gelag, gehuil en gelewe. Groete.



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