

KLASERIE

CHRONICLE

Autumn 2022

ISSUE 56

EXPECT THE
unexpected

TREE
OF LIFE

*Bush
romance*

THE LAST HORN

Wild
MUSIC

"THE SOUND OF THE BUSH"



0 737186 348472

R 69.00 (VAT incl)

Education + Conservation + Inspiration



Makumu Private Game Lodge
 An unforgettable African adventure
 in a luxurious and private setting

www.makumu.com | Reservations: +27 87 057 4512

KLASERIE CHRONICLE

In this issue

© Stefan Steenkamp



ADVERTORIAL

- 6 Just one more day
- 42 Last Word experience "beyond boutique" accommodation

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

- 11 True love in the bush Stefan's eyes over Africa

CONSERVATION

Game Rangers Association of Africa celebrates their 50th AGM

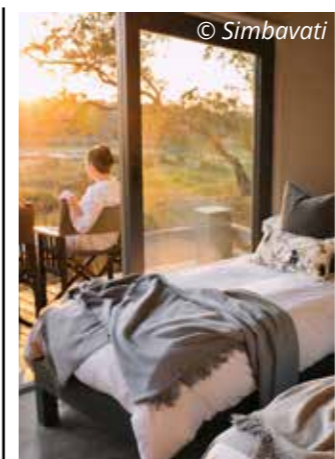
PHOTOGRAPHY

- 20 The last horn
- 24 Mobile phone photography on safari



© Siobhan Bentley

"The only way to ensure a better future for us all is by educating our children to look after our planet"



© Simbavati

COMMUNITY

- 28 The Legacy Experience Foundation visits Eco Children
- 32 Experiencing the Kruger first-hand
- 34 Hard work + determination = Success
- 36 Perspectives from our Bursary students
- 38 Library programme continues to improve
- 40 Walking Wild 4 Girls

BIRDING

- 47 Wild nursery
- 50 A musical world of birds
- 53 Goliath Heron

MAMMAL ID

- 54 Side-striped jackal

RESEARCH

- 56 Caught on camera

GUIDING

- 58 David Mathonsi from mine worker to safari guide

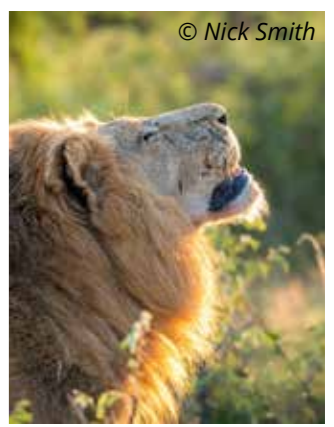
SIGHTINGS

- 60 Expect the unexpected
- 62 Ximuwu the tree of life
- 64 (Don't) go to Klaserie!
- 68 Lilies in the Bushveld
- 70 River pride
- 74 New kid on the block?
- 76 Chasing the pack

"Last Word properties are unique, small boutique properties"



© Last Word



© Nick Smith

INCREDIBLE PEOPLE

- 80 Wild Response



© Kevin Garrad

"From the bush of South Africa to the jungles of Thailand"

Editor's note



However, uncertainty can also be frightening and debilitating. Where some people thrive in uncertain times, others become emotionally paralysed.

We are facing an everchanging world and I truly understand we should appreciate what we have and expect the unexpected. Things may not work out the way we planned, but by expecting the unexpected we can be more open-minded and embrace change, instead of being scared of it. Plan B can be as fabulous as plan A, if you allow it to be.

One constant is the wonderful wildlife encounters and loads of positive community news you have come to expect from the *Klaserie Chronicle*. This edition is no different and, as in life, the sightings may not always be what you hoped for, but they're always awesome. Let's expect the unexpected and enjoy the ray of sunshine that emerges from the stormy clouds.

Humanity has been faced with many unpredictable, grave mayhems. We have seen irreplaceable loss, epic failures, and experienced pain like no other. But, in spite of all this, or maybe because of it, we have also grown and seen extraordinary advancements. We have experienced joy, happiness, and strength. And, time and again, we have seen the human spirit prevail.

After the past couple of years of uncertainty and unpredictable events, I have come to adopt this motto: Expect the unexpected. Life is splendid because it is uncertain and unpredictable.

Corne

CEO Eco Children

KLASERIE CHRONICLE

Readers' Queries

The Klaserie Chronicle is published tri-annually by Eco Children and distributed to KPNR members, as well as Eco Children donors, partners, advertisers and the broader Hoedspruit community. For any contributions or queries please email publication@ecochildren.co.za or corne@ecochildren.co.za. We look forward to hearing from you!

Contributors

Chloë Cooper, Catharina Robbertze, Cornè Havenga, Samuel Cox, Colin and Janice Rowles, Peter Lawson, Emily Whiting, Rebecca Rowles, Siobhan Bentley, Orla McEvoy, Warren Howson, Elly Suverein, Claudia de Agrelo, Amy Macaskill, Kesley le Voy, Sharon Gillbert-Rivett, Deni Barisic, Jessica Pentz, Thashen Subrayen, Werner Miller, Sabre Meeser

Photographs

Samuel Cox, Colin and Janice Rowles, Leon Marais, Sabrina Chielens, Emily Whiting, Stefan Steenkamp, Siobhan Bentley, Warren Howson, Nick Smith, Patrick Suverein, Justin Sullivan, Stefan Breur, Leon Marais, APNR Ground Hornbill Project, Deni Barisic, Werner Miller, Sabre Meeser, Kevin Garrod, Peter Chadwick, Global Conservation Corps (GCC), Chloë Cooper, Bill Drew

Thank You

Eco Children would like to thank all our sponsors, donors and supporters for your continued backing. Your contributions, however big or small are invaluable in our mission to sow seeds of change.



[facebook.com/ecochildrenSA](https://www.facebook.com/ecochildrenSA)

[@ecochildrensa](https://www.instagram.com/ecochildrensa)

[ecochildren.co.za](https://www.ecochildren.co.za)



<https://www.facebook.com/KlaseriePrivateNatureReserve/>

[@klaserieprivatenaturereserve](https://www.instagram.com/klaserieprivatenaturereserve)

[klaseriereserve.co.za](https://www.klaseriereserve.co.za)



<https://www.facebook.com/klaseriechronicle/>

[@klaseriechronicle](https://www.instagram.com/klaseriechronicle)

Meet the team



Sub-editor:
Catharina Robbertze

Catharina hales from Cape Town and has an Honours degree in Journalism. She is our dog-loving, adventure-seeking, no-nonsense wordsmith. Her positive, can-do attitude gets things done quickly.



Sub-editor:
Lizanda Lucas

Lizanda lives in Cape Town, but is originally from the Eastern Cape. She is partial to elephants and warthogs and passionate about photography, literature, and nature. Her methodical, yet curious, manner resonates aptly in this role.



Copywriter and research:
Chloë Cooper

Chloë is originally from Cape Town and has a degree in Organisational Psychology. She is our very own social media guru and copywriter extraordinaire. She is a nature dweller, travel lover, and all-around beautiful soul.



Design and layout:
Cecilia Theron-Du Preez

Cecilia is originally from Pretoria and has a degree in Visual Communication. This talented designer has a keen eye for all things beautiful and sees the details no-one else does to produce a beautiful publication. She is in pursuit of perfection.

KLASERIE CHRONICLE

Book NOW for advertising

To advertise, contact corne@ecochildren.co.za

Just one more day

Words Catharina Robbertze | Photos Simbavati River Lodge



SIMBAVATI
LODGE COLLECTION

It's quiet as we approach Simbavati River Lodge for the first time. We wonder if there are any other guests but, while we're being checked in, they all emerge from their rooms – ready for lunch. Everyone looks so relaxed. We soon learn why, as we sit down and the daily routine is explained.

The daily grind

Wake up as the sun rises for the 05:30 game drive. Sit back and relax on said game drive. Don't force it, the game will come – or your skilful guide and tracker will find it for you. Get back to the lodge around 08:30 and enjoy a scrumptious breakfast.

Head to your room to find it cleaned. And if you're anything like us, it's now nap-time. Wake up in time for lunch, before heading back to your room for a swim in your own personal splash pool. Another nap. Another splash in the pool. Grab a coffee and some cake to get you through the afternoon game drive. G&Ts, or a cold

drink of your choice, and light snacks as the sun sets on a perfect day in the bush. Return to the lodge in time for dinner in the boma. Watch out for the resident hyena who may pop in to see what's on the braai. Head back to your room for a night cap and a blissful night's sleep. Repeat at least three times.





Goldilocks

Simbavati River Lodge ticks all the boxes when it comes to luxuries but nothing here is forced. With each arrival, you're welcomed with warm or cold face towels depending on the weather. The staff is attentive but not overbearing. The bar is well-stocked. The meals are delicious and filling, but not too heavy. The rooms are far enough apart so you have complete privacy – that's if you don't mind a bushbuck watching you while you enjoy an outside shower. In fact, it's a bit of a Goldilocks situation: Not too hot, not too cold, just right. It feels like we're at home, but without the stresses of unanswered WhatsApps, Zoom calls, Facebook, and whatever else there is where there's internet.

We stay in one of two tented pool suites, which come highly recommended. They're the furthest away from the lodge and each has their own personal splash pool. There are six more luxury safari tents, each with a view of the river, and three two-bedroomed family chalets. (This is one of the few full-board lodges that cater for kids.) A safari spa, indoor gym, and kids' activity room complete the facilities. The lodge is unfenced, so if you don't feel like going on a game drive, you can simply chill on your deck and wait for the game to come to you. And come they will.

One more day

On our last day, we start checking our schedules to see if we can stay another day. Just one more day. No matter how many days you stay, I don't think you'll ever be here long enough.

Alas, we need to board the shuttle to the airport to take us home. It's only a three-hour flight to Cape Town, but as we walk through the arrival gates it feels like we've returned from another world. We're refreshed and we dream of Lowveld skies, hyenas skulking down a dirt road, bushveld sunsets, and Simbavati Lodge Collection's hospitality – captured in their unique brand essence of 'Africalm' – for many ensuing nights. Months later, we still need that extra day. We'll be back. ■





SIMBAVATI

LODGE COLLECTION

A natural reset

Experience the ultimate private **Klaserie Private Nature Reserve** safari through the Simbavati Lodge Collection, comprising **four luxury lodges**, where extraordinary experiences are brought to life by a family of dedicated luxury hospitality specialists.

PRIVATE LUXURY BIG FIVE SAFARI

Our Safari Lodges



Simbavati Camp George

A classic safari escape, set alongside a dry riverbed and within lush indigenous gardens designed for couples, family and friends. This intimate lodge comprises eight luxury suites, each with its own private deck.



Simbavati Homestead

A self-catered lodge combining the intimacy and warmth of a holiday home, with the game experience of a traditional safari lodge. In the heart of the reserve, you have the freedom of the African bush and its magnificent wildlife, but on your terms.



Simbavati Amani

A charming, intimate safari villa in the peaceful heart of the reserve, perfect for couples or exclusive use. Four luxury suites, a magnificent double volume sitting room, mezzanine library area, interactive kitchen and bar mean there is generous space to relax.



Simbavati Waterside

Flanking a large dam in the southern Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, this private luxury lodge offers the perfect getaway for every type of traveller. The carefully considered lodge structure affords both privacy for partners as well as family-friendly spaces.

Our Experiences



Bookings & Enquiries
+27 (0)87 151 4520 | res@simbavati.com
simbavati.com

Instagram and Facebook icons
@SimbavatiSafari

Africalm
IS OUR PROMISE

True Love in the Bush

Words and photos Colin and Janice Rowles

It was one of those typically hot December mornings, where the calling of the birds at the first light of dawn quickly gives way to the noise of insects, and the hotter it gets, the louder they chirp. Our family drank an early morning coffee at our shareblock home, which felt more like our second home: The bush bug had bitten us, and we visited every holiday and any other occasion that we could muster. As we sat drinking our coffee, fully immersed in this wonderful paradise, three figures emerged from the now lush, green, summer bush.

The lady exclaimed in a notable British accent, "Thank God!". As my mind began to comprehend what was happening, my first thought was that this was a novel excuse for wandering onto the shareblock. Many a member from the neighbouring shareblock



Janice Rowles' family shareblock holidays in the bush.



Janice Rowles and family at Christmas time in the bush.

had done the same while claiming they were lost. One look at these three and their very red, flushed faces indicated they had endured an ordeal. Before my mind could finish wondering if they were indeed trespassing, the lady – wearing a torn-up office file attached to each of her feet – blurted out, "I need water!" and then promptly began to fall into a faint.

Galvanised suddenly into action, we rushed to seat the faint woman, refreshing her with a glass of cold water. As she sat recovering, a tale began to emerge that was most unexpected ...

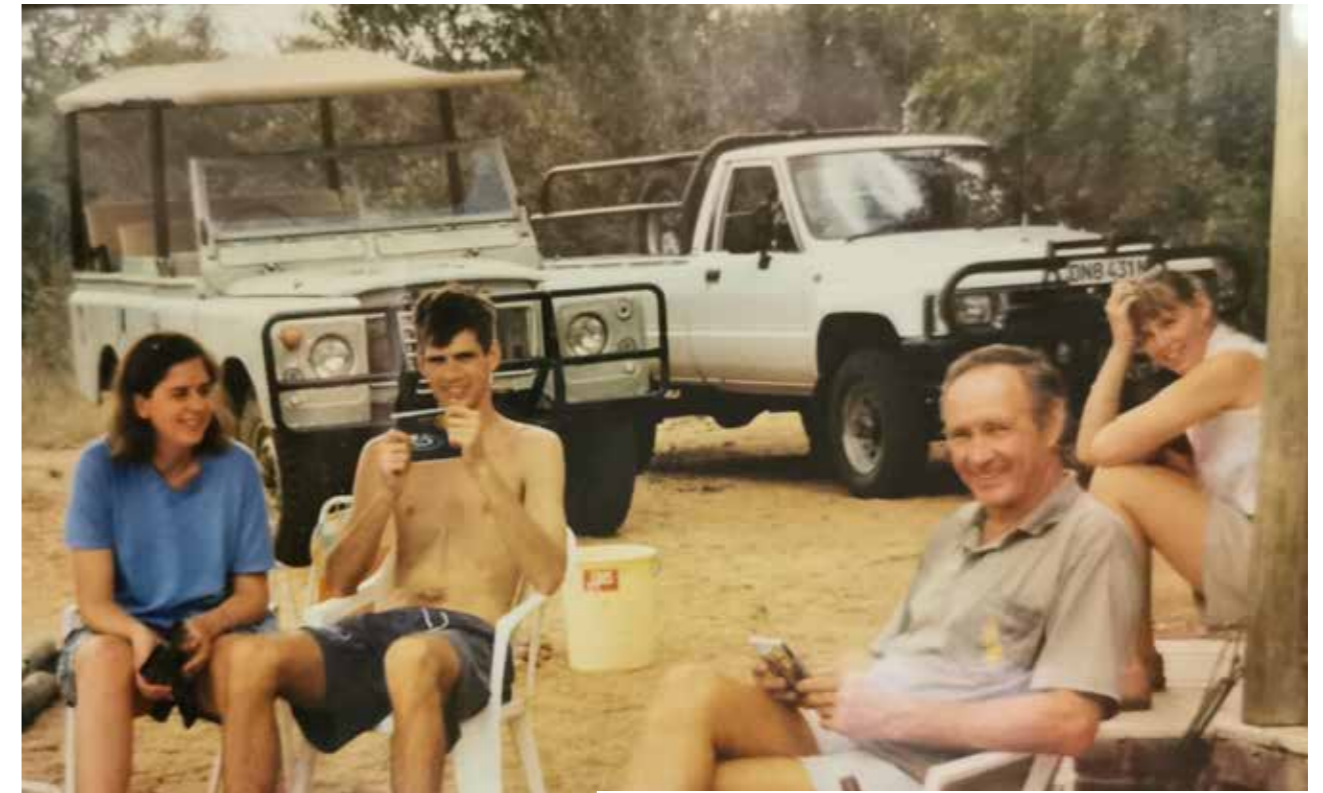
The wife, husband, and their son were from Great Britain and had been invited by a member of a neighbouring shareblock conservancy to his bungalow in the bush for an exciting African experience. They had arrived at the bungalow late the previous day and had had a few drinks around the fire when the owner of the bungalow insisted on taking them in his Honda Ballade to find a bird. As he drove in the darkness, he became disorientated (something that happens easily if the roads are not imprinted into one's mind in a photographic manner). One bush began to look like another, yet he apparently insisted he knew where he was. Hopelessly lost, the Honda Ballade arrived at the Kruger National Park border, which was still fenced in those days. The Honda Ballade then continued along the fence line and successfully crossed the N'tsiri riverbed and then the Sharalumi riverbed, and as it climbed up the steep, rocky slope out of the river, a tyre burst.

This Honda Ballade's achievements were certainly impressive and deserving of a performance award! It was not very late at night, but the occupants still had to spend the night sleeping in the vehicle in an unfamiliar, very dark, wild Africa. This British family experienced the African bush in a way they never expected to.

At first light, the bungalow owner instructed his guests to wait in the vehicle while he walked off to seek help. After he had disappeared from their view over the last visible ridge, the Brits decided they would rather not remain all alone in the vehicle but instead follow their friend. The wife, however, was not wearing any shoes and so a pair was quickly tied to her feet, fashioned out of an office file found lying in the Honda Ballade. They set off into the bush along the road, though soon realised they had no idea which way their friend had gone, so their son began applying his Boy Scout skills by arranging stones to form arrows at each turn, in case they got lost and needed to return to the vehicle. It certainly seems Boy Scouts has merits!

Eventually, the bedraggled family, underestimating the gruelling heat of the African bushveld summer, chanced upon our bungalow in the Greater Kruger bush where we happened to be spending our holiday, sipping our morning coffee.

Once we realised which shareblock they had come from, we loaded them into our vehicle. All of us going along for the ride so as not to lose out on any sightings and adventure the bush may provide, except my dad – he decided to go on his own search to find the missing bungalow owner still somewhere in the bush.



The Dukes family on holiday in the bush.

We arrived at the N'tsiri gate and explained the situation to the baffled gate guard. He then radioed Colin, who eventually arrived at the gate to hear of the missing members' adventure. It was agreed that Colin would follow us to where the Brits had been found, so that he could track them back and look for the missing owner. We now all clambered onto Colin's Land Cruiser and, worriedly, set off. On our journey, we came across my dad who had now also managed to puncture a tyre. Colin loaded the flat tyre onto his Land Cruiser, offering to fix it.

Some anxious moments were endured when Colin found the owner's tracks had been followed by lion tracks, but he was able to track the owner all the way to a private camp, at which point we discovered that the camp guard had given him a lift back to N'tsiri. It was ascertained he was probably now safely back at his home, so Colin dropped us all off at our bungalow where we continued to enjoy our bush holiday after such an unusual, adventurous morning.



Janice and Colin's historic game drive.

Two days before New Year's Eve, Colin's Land Cruiser appeared through the bush to drop off my dad's repaired tyre. He then very chivalrously approached my mom, asking if he could take me on a date to the New Year function at Ingwelala. After explaining I didn't have any smart clothes to wear, I ended up going in my old 'bush' takkies, shorts, and a t-shirt.

Call it chance, fate, destiny, or by accident, the stars had aligned and we had found each other in the bush. ■



Colin's Land Cruiser came to save the day.

Throughout history, mankind has been curious about the world we call our own. Come to think of it, perhaps it's not a curiosity for the world we've seen, but rather for the world we haven't. A view that's larger than life, a different perspective, if you will. Makumu Private Game Lodge owner, Stefan Breuer, is such a man.

The story of Stefan goes back to his younger years in 1973 when he was a 16-year-old boy. He accompanied his father out into the bush of the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR) and it was pure love at first sight! This was the beginning of an incredible story filled with adventure, discovery, and pure passion. Stefan found himself so deeply intrigued by the African continent and the exotic wildlife that inhabited it, that he returned time and time again over the ensuing years. He learnt everything there was to know about life in the bush to one day own a special part of it – that was his dream.

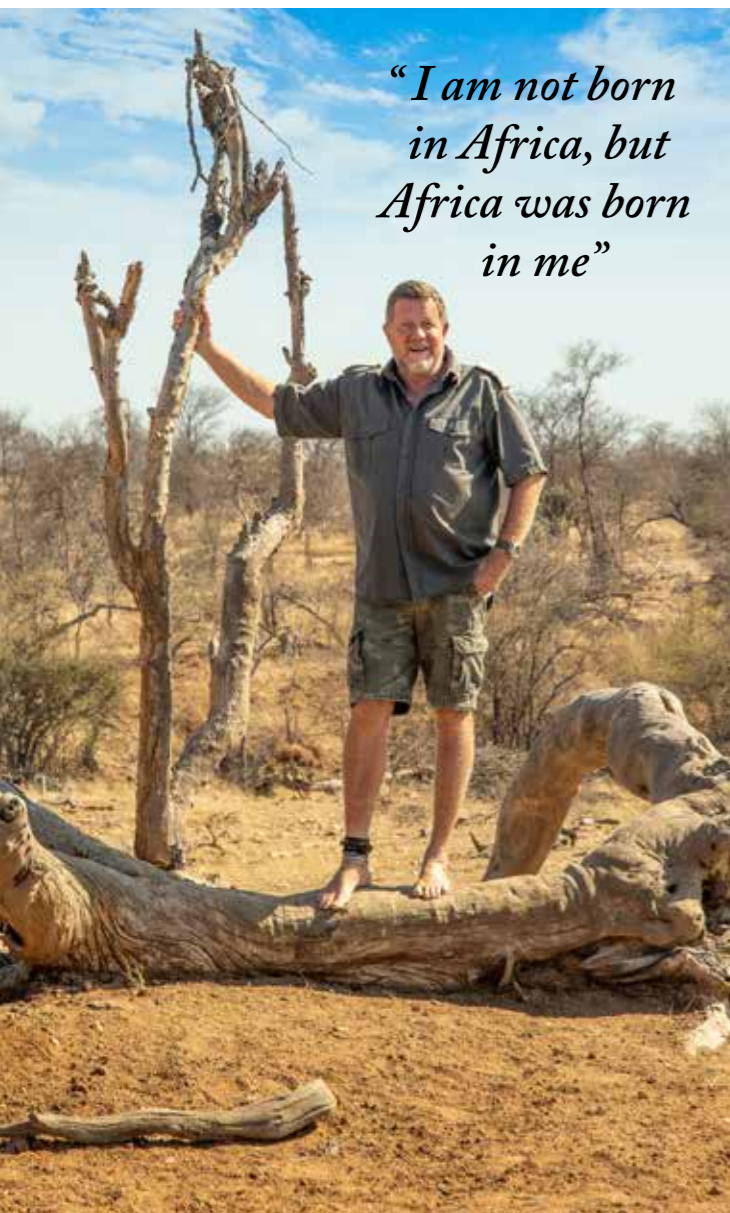
By 2001, he realised his dream by purchasing land that would later become the grounds of Makumu Private Game Lodge, with the lodge itself being built in 2002. This year thus marks the 20th anniversary celebration. Makumu – which means 'endless views' in Xitsonga – is the manifestation of Stefan's vision. A place where you arrive as a guest and leave as family. This is his home.

During the earlier years, Stefan wanted to expand on his journey and view matters from a different perspective: to see view upon view like a bird flying above the earth. This led him to his next exciting adventure, a nine-week photographic expedition in his bright red Agusta A109 helicopter from Hamburg, Germany, to

STEFAN'S EYES OVER AFRICA

Words Claudia de Agrela | Photos Stefan Breuer





“I am not born in Africa, but Africa was born in me”

Cape Town, South Africa. The idea came to Stefan in 2005 and by the September of 2006, he'd joined forces with professional photographer Michael Poliza, rescue pilot Roberto Poroli, and mountain patrol officer Franco Zanini, as they set off to tour the skies.

This never-been-done-before journey was captured in a series of 25,000 landscape, people, and wildlife images. The photographic journal was then amalgamated into a coffee-table book, 'Eyes Over Africa' by Michael Poliza. It was published in September 2007 and consisted of exclusive aerial photographs taken at varying heights – from 100 to 2,000 feet above ground – depicting some of the most spectacular and unique photographs ever seen of the African continent. The book is available to purchase on Amazon should you dare lose yourself in its pages ... or even better, visit Makumu Private Game Lodge where you'll find a copy in each suite to page through at leisure.

So as Stefan brings joy to all who come across his home, Makumu, his story is kept alive and continues to inspire others through his pure love for Africa. As Stefan likes to say, "I am not born in Africa, but Africa was born in me." ■

CARSEN

TURNKEY CONSTRUCTION SOLUTIONS



WE ARE A PREMIER CONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT COMPANY BASED IN HOEDSPRUIT

HOMES • LODGES • RENOVATIONS • MAINTENANCE

✉ CARL@CARSEN.CO.ZA

📞 084 744 6769

🌐 WWW.CARSEN.CO.ZA

One Enviro Loo can save up to 420 000 litres of water annually!

VARIOUS MODELS
< 40 DAILY USERS

INCLUDES 2 YEAR SERVICE PLAN

LONG LIFE SPAN

ODOURLESS

WATERLESS

CHEMICAL-FREE

NON-POLLUTING

COST EFFECTIVE

The Enviro Loo is a waterless, non-polluting, low maintenance toilet system, needing little more than the sun and some wind to operate.

The award winning Enviro Loo design has a proven track record and is presently used in many countries worldwide.

For more information call Thapelo Makwela on 071 609 9533 or 011 762 1624 or thapelo.makwela@enviro-loo.com

Enviro Loo
www.enviro-loo.com

SHEO National cert
Certified: ISO 9001:2015

Access to sanitation is a universal human right.

GAME RANGERS ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA *CELEBRATES THEIR 50th AGM*

Words Louise de Bruin | Photos Peter Chadwick



After a two-year delay, the Game Rangers Association of Africa (GRAA) is preparing to hold a long-anticipated celebration of its 50th anniversary and to conduct the 2022 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the presence of members and stakeholders. It will also host the second African Ranger

Congress, bringing rangers together from across the continent. Long-time professional members of the GRAA, Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR) Warden Colin Rowles and Security Manager Ernst Beylefeld were invited to Kasane, Botswana, to join colleagues in conservation from across Africa on the local Chobe River.

“Due to Covid-19, we’ve had to hold virtual AGMs for the past two years. While we’ve missed seeing members in person, these virtual meetings have enabled a greater number of members – from across the African continent and the rest of the world – to participate. So this year, we look forward to finally being able to come together, to celebrate, delve into various ranger issues, and share experiences with members and rangers from across the continent,” said GRAA Administrator Louise de Bruin.



Formed in 1970, GRAA is the oldest, largest, and most representative ranger association in Africa. They have an active membership of about 1,800 members representing more than 28 countries. The GRAA is a proud member of the International Ranger Federation (IRF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with recognised chapters in Angola, Ivory Coast, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zambia. Their members are from a variety of disciplines operating at the coalface of African conservation.

“2021 was a difficult year for the ranger community due to the Covid pandemic and the ranger community sadly lost many dedicated men and women because of it. Lockdowns and restrictions have also hindered the implementation of opportunities such as the GRAA’s bursary training and assessments,” continued de Bruin.

The GRAA’s Ranger Support Programme ensures holistic support for rangers working across protected areas in Africa. It is based on six pillars, which together are the cornerstone of ensuring ranger wellbeing.

The KPNR’s field rangers are trained to operate at their highest capability, receiving the guidance, skills, gear, care, connection, and recognition essential for them to perform at their best. The support of an organisation like the GRAA upholds the standard for ranger performance and emphasises the importance of meeting the needs of field rangers across Africa. ■

For more information about the GRAA and its work supporting Africa’s rangers, contact them at info@gameranger.org and www.gameranger.org.

THE *Last Horn*

Words Chloë Cooper | Photos Justin Sullivan

The Last Horn is a series of photographic images taken by conservation filmmaker, Justin Sullivan, who has witnessed over 200 rhino dehornings across the Greater Kruger during his career. In this collection, a black and white edit aptly paints a sombre scene. It captures moments that exist for only a second in time, and records them forever as evidence of this ongoing fight for survival. The fight we fight on behalf of another species.

It's a relentless effort that requires challenging physical participation and emotional grit. As a long-term commitment, the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR) repeatedly dehornes the rhinos in the reserve. One hundred and eleven rhinos that were dehorned for the first time in 2019 have since been dehorned again, and will continue to be tracked from both land and air to monitor the natural regrowth and to carry out necessary follow-up operations.

“It's a relentless effort that requires challenging physical participation and emotional grit”



There is no denying that this invasive approach to rhino conservation demands a huge financial investment, careful co-ordination, multidisciplinary expertise, time, teamwork, and stamina. As humans, we've made a call to use our advanced technology, our pharmacological resources, our textbook knowledge, and our training to enter a wild world and change the physical appearance of the second largest land animal on earth. In one way, our human existence can be considered relatively insignificant in comparison to nature's long history, but in another, we are effecting dramatic and permanent change.

Having the opportunity to take a step back and look at these images allows us to truly see the impact of our actions. Of our human attempt to save a species whose existence long precedes our own. To see our helicopters churn rotor blades above the trees in which birds nest; to see our 4WD trucks spin their tyres in the mud



from soft seasonal rain; to see our steel manufactured darts land on leathery targets; and to see the wide eye of a rhino trying to make sense of it all before it is blindfolded to shield it from our human commotion.

It's jarring to comprehend the use of guns and chainsaws in a place that stands for peace and wilderness conservation. For the teams involved in this desperate attempt to prevent suffering and possible extinction of the rhino, the reality of it is all too clear. It's a necessary part of the job, and it's a job we are not all cut out to do. We commend the individuals involved in the dehorning of KPNR rhinos, and we thank the donors that make it possible to keep up our end of the bargain and do the work to keep our rhinos safe. ■

“Having the opportunity to take a step back and look at these images allows us to truly see the impact of our actions”



MOBILE PHONE PHOTOGRAPHY *on safari*

Words Samuel Cox



© Chloë Cooper

Do you know what the most popular camera is for a safari in these modern times? It's certainly not a mirrorless, DSLR, or a bridge camera. The usual and synonymous brands like Olympus, Canon, and Nikon aren't anywhere to be seen. Instead, it's the likes of Apple, Samsung, Huawei, and many more leading the new march on how casual photography is represented in the 21st century – and this includes whilst on safari.

Now that's not to say the Canon R5 or Sony A1 with 600mm primes are a thing of the past for wildlife photography. Of course not – and I can't imagine they'll be going out of fashion anytime soon – but they're designed and made for a specific photographer market. Camera phones? Well, they're for everyone and their ease of use reinforces this. Years ago, they were sneered at for their lack of quality; nowadays, they shoot in RAW, record video in 4k, and with apps like Lightroom at one's fingertips, it can be difficult to differentiate between a large sensor camera and an iPhone image. Plus, let's not forget they're infinitely more accessible, in price and in size – how handy is a camera that can be slipped into a shirt or back pocket. And due to their innovative camera settings technology, all you need to do is point and tap. It's that easy.

Aside from this ease, there are still some phone photography techniques and tips worth knowing to ensure you reap benefits. After all, the phone may register your settings, but it can't take the picture for you. So, let's imagine we're on safari – no DSLR or prime lens to be seen – just a smartphone and nature. What basic tips can help us render better photographs of what we may potentially spot while on a game drive?

1. THE CLOSER THE BETTER

The more you can fill the frame with your subject, generally the better. No one wants to look at a photograph and squint to make out the tiniest pride of lions in a distant corner. Bigger subjects like rhinos and elephants are usually easier to notice, but if you find yourself in a situation where you're close to any other wild, such as sleeping lions or curious hyenas, this is when you want to be taking advantage of your phone's built-in settings!

2. BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR ZOOM

If your camera phone has multiple lenses, using a zoom can be handy when your subject is just a bit too far away. If you're rocking just a single lens, then be aware that most zooms are 'digital zooms' – this means they merely crop into the frame to mimic the zoom function. The problem here is that the more you zoom in, the more you lose on image quality. So, rather to stay wide, take the photo, and then crop as needed during editing.

3. BINOCULARS

This might sound like a silly one, but it works very well and many people, including field guides, are doing it. Simply place your phone camera up to the eye piece of your binoculars and you'll get a telescopic view. It's a great way to get a rather good-looking zoomed photograph without much hassle, though your image sometimes has a circular black ring, which can be annoying composition-wise. This technique, however, is a perfect way to identify birds and showcase animals in the distance.

4. BASIC COMPOSITION RULES STILL APPLY

Just because we're now using a smartphone doesn't mean some photography rules don't apply. Take the time to look into basic composition techniques, such as the 'rule of thirds', 'frame within a frame', and the notions of looking/moving space. These alone will help restructure how you take photographs in general, giving you a creative boost that instantaneously also takes your images up a notch!

“Simply place your phone camera up to the eye piece of your binoculars and you'll get a telescopic view”



Photo Footsteps Through Africa



© Chloë Cooper



© GCC | Mbhoni Mzamani

5. DON'T FORGET VIDEO!

Photographs are amazing, but video can sometimes better represent a sighting: The sound and energy of a fight amongst buffalo; a leopard jumping out of a tree; a cheetah chasing an antelope. Considering most smartphones record in 4k and even do slow-motion, these are big moments that video can do way more justice to than a still image.

6. THINK AHEAD FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

If social media isn't your thing, then ignore this last tip. If you're wanting to share your photos online though, then take an extra second before tapping to plan for posting. For instance, we know Instagram favours 4x5 vertical aspect ratios as this gives the image maximum 'real-estate' on the feed. Why not then take advantage of this and look for opportunities to take vertical (portrait) photos you can later crop to those dimensions? It's the same for Insta stories and Facebook. Each sharing function and social media app has its own unique quirks, drawbacks, and positives, which makes them worth researching that extra bit to ensure your photographs are garnering an audience as best they can! ■



Nestled beneath tall, ancient trees on a horseshoe bend of the N'tsiri River, Tulela is an exclusive-use safari lodge offering exceptional comfort and luxury to families and friends in a private location in the Greater Kruger Park.

Discover more experiences at www.tulela.co.za

a Place of Peace

The Legacy Experience Foundation visit
Eco Children

Words Catharina Robbertze | Photos Sabrina Chielens



After two years of no in-person visits to schools, the funders of Eco Children's Eco Village project were finally able to visit the project in person this summer. The Legacy Experience Foundation has been supporting Eco Children since 2020 and been integral in the establishment and running of Eco Villages at local schools and the expansion of the organisation's bursary programme.

CEO of the foundation, Derek Macaskill, recently visited Kgwaditiba Primary School with the rest of the board – Kevin Pietersen, Don and Sean Bergsma, and Hilgon van Breda. They inspected the Eco Village facilities built by Eco Children – an Eco Garden, Eco Classroom, and a library – and joined a reading lesson in the library with learners from the school.



The board was impressed not only with the infrastructure, but especially the motivation and engagement of learners and teachers alike. Macaskill said, "It's an honour for our board to finally be able to visit this project and see for ourselves the incredible work Eco Children and the community have put in to make this happen. We are confident that initiatives such as this have a real positive impact on the viability of conservation areas such as the Kruger National Park, by educating the local population from a young age of the importance of these areas, not only from a conservation perspective but also from an economic perspective. We hope these youngsters will grow up to appreciate nature, and with the motivation to preserve and protect."





Corné Havenga, CEO of Eco Children, was overjoyed that the board could finally visit and get a feeling of what they've been supporting. "Visits like these are essential so funders can truly understand what we do. Pictures and reports can tell a story up to a point, but when you walk around the Eco Garden you truly grasp how much work the community has put into it, and how much pride they take in their work. You need to be here to see the seeds of change sprouting in these learners," she said.



Havenga thanked The Legacy Experience Foundation for their support throughout the years and concluded by saying, "The Legacy Experience Foundation has been essential to us continuing the Eco Village project. It has been there for us throughout the pandemic when everything ground to a halt, and we are overjoyed that we can continue partnering with them now that the project is back to its original purpose and day-to-day activities. The only way to ensure a better future for us all is by educating our children to look after our planet and we know this project is playing a huge part in that. Thank you The Legacy Experience Foundation, for having faith in us and for helping sow seeds of change. We look forward to expanding our initiatives in 2022." ■



THE LEGACY EXPERIENCE Foundation



BLYDE WILDLIFE ESTATE

R 5 550 000 ZANDSPRUIT

R 4 900 000

HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE

R 4 900 000



Above the Crowd!

Magnificent luxurious home on the banks of the river 4 bed 4 bath.

Annie van den Berg: 082 643 3776
annievandenber@remax.net

Ready to Move in

Sold with all the furniture, upmarket 2 bed 2 bath

Annie van den Berg: 082 643 3776
annievandenber@remax.net

Great location

Spacious 3 bed 3 bath in a great location.

Annie van den Berg: 082 643 3776
annievandenber@remax.net

BEDFORD ESTATE

R 2 600 000

RAPTOR'S VIEW WILDLIFE ESTATE

R 5 850 000

HOEDSPRUIT WILDLIFE ESTATE

R 3 995 000



Plot and Plan Option

A wonderful opportunity to own your own 3 bed home in an affordable estate.

Annie van den Berg: 082 643 3776
annievandenber@remax.net

The best house on the riverbed

Immaculate high end home comprising 3 bed 2 bath in a top location.

Annie van den Berg: 082 643 3776
annievandenber@remax.net

Commercial Opportunity

Popular lodge 3 bed 3 bath sold with all the furniture and future bookings.

Annie van den Berg: 082 643 3776
annievandenber@remax.net





Experiencing the Kruger FIRST-HAND

Words and photos Siobhan Bentley

In 2021, Eco Children partnered with Rhino Revolution and took 18 grade 7 learners from local schools into the Kruger National Park as incentive for their academic performance. This year, as regular activities pick up again, Eco Children and Rhino Revolution are ramping up the number of trips and planning on completing one trip each month. A lot of work has also gone into making sure these trips are of a high standard and promote conservation and sustainability.

Every month, one of the Eco Children adopted schools will be given the opportunity to take eight grade 7 learners into the park where they will play games, learn about wildlife, and even have their own braai. The top eight learners in terms of class results will be selected to go on the trip. Such incentives help inspire learners to work hard to improve their performance and their reward is a first-time visit to the park.



Training the trainers

In February 2022, Eco Children developed and facilitated a workshop for the Eco Children environmental educators who present the pre-lesson for the trip. During the workshop, the environmental educators were taught how to introduce the Kruger National Park, have open discussions about conservation and wildlife, and most importantly, get stuck into some bush art.

The environmental educators gathered natural materials and used these to create images of rhinos, elephants, and leopards. They will now be able to take these newly learned skills to the grade 7 learners so they can, in turn, partake in these fun activities. Every learner is given the opportunity to create their own bush art and truly explore their creative side. This ensures that even though most of the children in the pre-lesson will not be attending the Kruger trip, they still engage with the lesson and gain valuable knowledge. Corné Havenga, CEO of Eco Children, said, "It's important that the children not going on the trip do not feel excluded. This is why we involve all the grade 7s in the conversation about the importance of a facility such as the Kruger National Park and allow them to have fun in the lesson. Those who don't go on the trip should also be inspired and learn something new."

Visiting the Kruger

Eco Children's first Kruger trip of 2022 took place in March and the first school to visit the park was Makwetše Primary School. The day was filled with excitement and activities for the children. They were lucky enough to witness five juvenile male lions on a fresh buffalo kill. Three males were lying under a nearby tree while two others were busy eating their fill. The children couldn't believe their luck and were abuzz with excitement. Just as they were leaving the sighting, an elephant bull strolled past the three lions at the tree. No-one was paying any attention to another - the only thing that stressed the elephant was a butterfly that got a bit too close!

The sightings didn't stop with these incredible cats though. The children also saw Ground Hornbills, giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, and even a chameleon. Havenga said these trips are an incredible opportunity, not only for the learners but also for environmental educators. "Many people in our area are not able to access the park due to financial constraints and we are delighted that we are able to give everyone involved an experience that will have a lasting impact on their life," she said. ■





HARD WORK + DETERMINATION = SUCCESS

Words and photos Siobhan Bentley



Eco Children welcomed two new learners to their bursary programme in 2022. This is the second year that Eco Children opened the application process to all grade 6 and 7 learners in their eight adopted local schools. Once again, there was keen interest from all schools and numerous learners took part in the intensive screening process.

After completing various rounds of aptitude tests, focusing mostly on mathematical skills and English literacy, the top scoring learners proceeded to the next step: an interview with Eco Children CEO, Corné Havenga.

Lesiba Legodi from Makwetše Primary School and Perseverance Mashaba from Mahlathi Primary School were selected for the bursary programme. Both impressed the selection committee with their confidence, their determination to improve their schooling, and their drive to grab this opportunity with both hands.

Lesiba and Perseverance join three other Eco Children bursary learners, Vusi Chiloane, Emmanuel Theko, and Appreciate Magabe in grade 7 at Southern Cross Schools. Havenga was excited to have two more learners join the programme and enthused, "We know Lesiba and Perseverance will be welcomed with open arms by their fellow learners and teachers at the school. We have no doubt they will make the most of this opportunity and make us proud."

This is Vusi, Emmanuel, and Appreciate's second year at Southern Cross Schools as part of the bursary programme and they have made immense progress on both the academic and social fronts. As reward for their hard work, they all received bicycles from Eco Children earlier this year. Havenga explained that incentives like these are a great way to encourage learners on the bursary programme to continuously work hard and improve their results, leading to an even better education experience for the children on the programme. "Not only are these bikes an amazing gift, it also teaches these learners the importance of responsibility and taking pride in their belongings. We wish all our grade 7s the very best in their educational journey. We know they will achieve anything they set their minds to through hard work and diligence," she concluded. ■

A special thank you to Derek Macaskill from The Legacy Experience Foundation for sponsoring Vusi's bike.

PERSPECTIVES FROM OUR *Bursary Students*

Words Siobhan Bentley

Two Eco Children bursary learners, Chantal Mnisi and Malebo Sekome graduated with flying colours from high school last year before setting off on their next journey in tertiary education.

Chantal now attends Rosebank College in Pretoria where she is studying for her BCom in business administration, while Malebo is at Midrand's Varsity College and will transfer to her bachelor's degree in education and foundation phase teaching next year.

Corné Havenga, CEO of Eco Children, commented, "We are all so proud of both these girls. It has been an absolute privilege to watch them develop into incredible young women and we cannot wait to see what their future holds."

As we celebrated International Women's Day in early-March, we reached out to these inspiring young women to find out how they're experiencing their new lives at university.

How are you enjoying university and life in Gauteng?

CHANTAL: I am loving university life as it is forcing me outside my comfort zone. I'm becoming more independent and discovering a new side to myself. I love the challenge that university brings me.

MALEBO: So far, university life is treating me well. I'm delighted with the course I've chosen. I honestly didn't think I'd enjoy it as much as I do, but I find all the modules extremely interesting. I am engaging in class more than I ever have. I feel this is bringing out the best in me.

How does university compare to high school?

CHANTAL: University is

more accommodating – I'm able to focus on things that I'm passionate about and what I really want to study. And I am doing something I love, which helps me stay focused on my studies.

MALEBO: High school and university are very different. University has a lot more freedom – but that comes with a lot more responsibility. At university, you need to be more disciplined and accountable as the lecturers don't follow up with you like teachers do when you're in high school.

What have been some of the biggest challenges you have had to overcome since starting university?

CHANTAL: I've had to learn how to become more independent, as I

was used to having people supporting me all the time. In university, you have to figure things out on your own – with less support.

MALEBO: The biggest challenge was the new start. I was very excited for this change, but also fearful of meeting new people in a place I'd never been exposed to before. I was struggling with homesickness at first, but I'm starting to settle in and have realised my family will always be there for me when I need them, no matter how far away they may be.

What is your hope for the future?

CHANTAL: I was very fortunate to receive support and care from Eco Children during my high

school career, and even with my move to university. I want to be able to make a difference in someone's life, like Eco Children made a difference in mine. I understand the challenges that face my community at home. I want to find a way to help address these issues and make it a community I can be proud of.

MALEBO: My hope for the future is to continuously learn and study as much as I can – maybe one day I'll even get to complete a PhD. I really want to make a difference in people's lives, particularly children's. I want to inspire young people to push themselves to do better, as their success will be my success and something I can be proud of.

What would your advice be to current bursary students in grade 7?

CHANTAL: My advice is to learn to adapt to the new system quickly. Ask for help if you need it. Be open to change. Be more accepting of new things and make friends, as they will be there to support you throughout your school career and can help guide you too.

MALEBO: I advise you to stay true to yourself. When going into high school, there are a lot of distractions and peer pressure; my advice is to know who you are and stay focused on your education. Be vocal in the classroom and always ask for help if you're struggling with something.

What would your advice be to students taking part in matric 2022?

CHANTAL: Manage your time well. Think ahead. Ask



Chantal and Malebo when they first joined the bursary programme in grade 8.

your teachers questions. Don't leave things to the last minute as time goes by faster than you realise.

MALEBO: As much as you will be studying, it's also important to take the time to step back, breathe, and not neglect your mental health. Take care of yourself, study, and you'll be fine – there is light at the end of the tunnel. ■



Library programme CONTINUES TO IMPROVE

Words Siobhan Bentley | Photos Sabrina Chielens

The Eco Children library programme has come a long way since the first library was built in 2014. There are now seven libraries and thousands of books have been sourced to fill the shelves at these facilities.

Eco Children's library programme was established due to a lack of reading comprehension among South Africa's youth. The country ranked last out of 50 countries in the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) study, which tested reading comprehension of learners in their fourth year of primary schooling. The study found that 78% of South African pupils at this level could not read for meaning.

The library programme has three main objectives: to create a reading culture, to develop reading

comprehension, and to create a space for students to express their personal views and question things without a fear of being wrong. Corné Havenga, CEO of Eco Children, states, "If we can reach these three main goals with all our students, who knows how far they will go in improving not only their education but also themselves as a person?"

It was clear from the outset that Eco Children would need to assist in encouraging learners to visit the libraries, as well as establish them as safe spaces for both learners and educators. An integral element of this initiative is that all environmental educators and librarians who work with Eco Children receive training to understand how to best utilise a library's facilities and subsequently improve their learners' experience of reading.



The training programme was developed by a former Belgian kindergarten teacher, Sabrina Chielens, who brings with her a wealth of experience and skill in assisting librarians and environmental educators to make reading a fun and enjoyable activity.

The first few weeks of training were filled with laughter as lessons focused on expressive reading. Expressive reading is crucial when reading to children: The more expressive you are, the more the children will engage and enjoy the story being read to them. This is also how children pick up words and actions, making it easier for them to begin understanding English. Something as simple as changing the tone and volume of one's voice, or overexaggerated facial expressions, can have a lasting impact on a young child's mind.

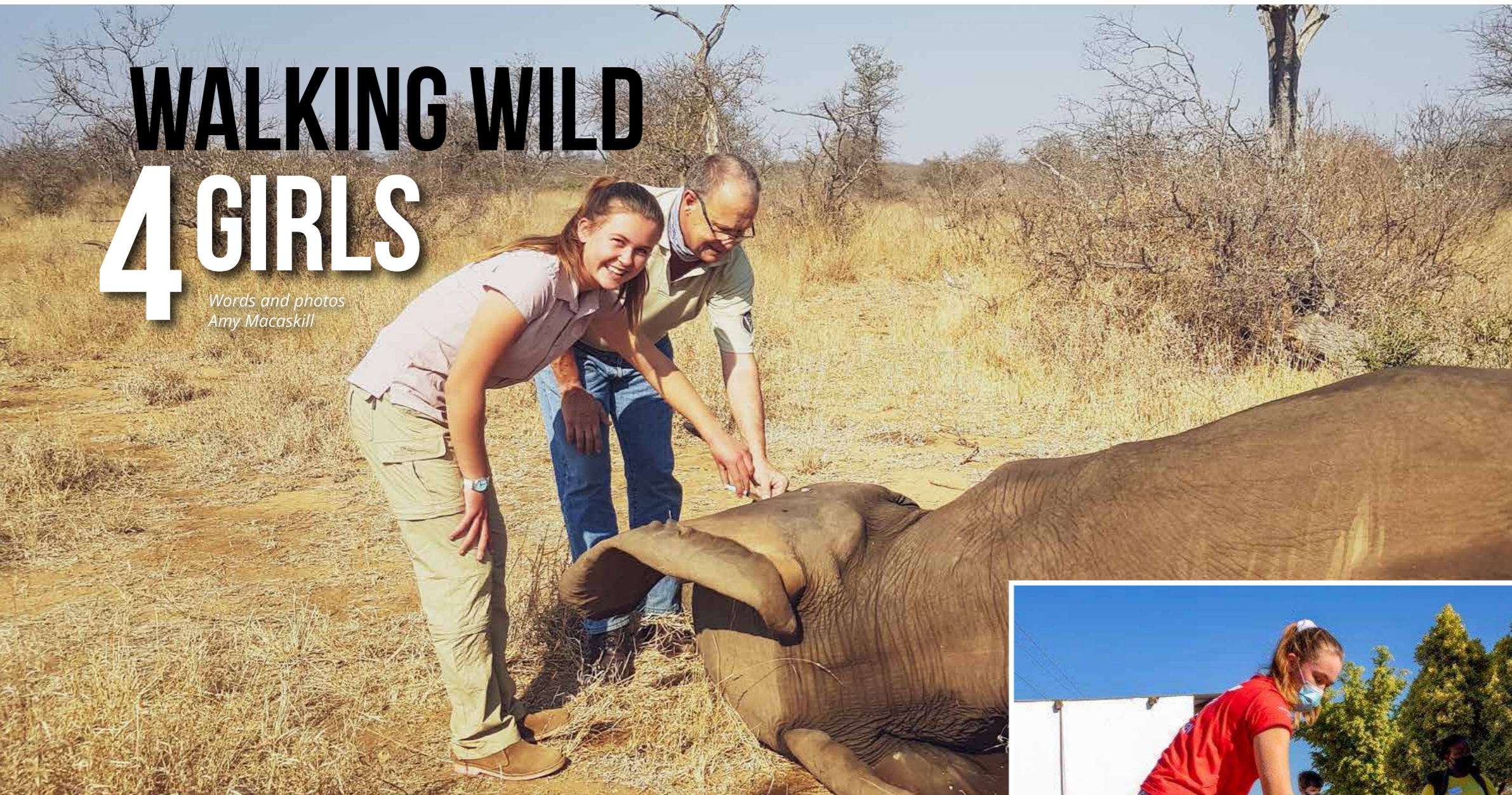
More recently, the environmental educators started the process of asking questions in line with the story. This has a direct correlation to reading comprehension. By asking students questions, educators can gauge if learners understand or need extra help. The environmental educators are also encouraged to ask questions that may require a personal opinion as an answer. The opportunity to express opinions in a safe place like this is vital for young people to develop their critical thinking capacity. The training of educators and librarians will continue, to assist them in developing their skills and to improve their learners' English literacy.

Havenga was happy with the progress made in the first few weeks of training and commented, "It's truly amazing to witness the incredible growth and improvement of each and every one of our environmental educators. I cannot wait to see how much of a difference this will make in all of our adopted schools. Training sessions like the library programme bring a new set of skills and experience to our team that will enrich our education programme, leading to a better education for all learners." ■



WALKING WILD 4 GIRLS

Words and photos
Amy Macaskill



My name is Amy Macaskill, I'm a grade 9 pupil at The Wykeham Collegiate in Pietermaritzburg, Kwazulu-Natal, and I have a vision that I'd like to share with you.

Last year, I read the incredible life story of Malala Yousafzai and was immediately inspired to make a difference in the lives of young girls in South Africa. Malala's story emphasised how profoundly education can impact the future of young people across the globe, and I wanted to make a difference in my own community. I have teamed up with the Eco Children Bursary Programme and the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR) to help give a young girl from the local community the opportunity to

attend Southern Cross Schools in Hoedspruit.

In order to raise the funds required annually, I have committed to the challenge of walking 90km over four days, along the Klaserie River in "Big 5 country" within the KPNR. I would like to appeal to anyone who might feel as motivated and inspired as I do to consider making a donation in support of this initiative. Together, we stand the chance of changing the life of one young South African girl and her family.

'We' with Klaserie Chronicle asked Amy a bit more about her plans and aspirations for this fundraising initiative, and what might come in the future.

Why did you choose to do a 90km walk in the Klaserie as a way to raise money?

The KPNR is very close to my heart because my mom's family has resided in the reserve since the early 1930s! The Klaserie was also instrumental in the establishment of Eco Children ten years ago, so it made sense to do the walk within the reserve.

Why is education such an important way to help young girls in South Africa?

An education gives young girls options in life. With an education, you can explore opportunities to always better yourself.

What did you learn from Malala that you will never forget?

I learnt to be courageous, to follow my dreams, and never, ever give up. I also learnt that no matter what hurdles life puts in front of you, remain true to yourself, and the journey will then make more sense.

What career do you envisage for yourself one day?

I'd like to work in the world of sport, whilst combining my passion for wildlife and the African bushveld.

What other plans do you have to keep raising funds on an annual basis?

I'd like to explore other unique feats of physical endurance nearer my home, so that my family and friends can join me. ■

In closing, Malala Yousafzai once said,

“One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world”

I say,

“One girl, one dream, and one chance can educate a nation”



Help Walking Wild 4 Girls (WW4G) fundraise for charity! | GivenGain

Last Word

Experience 'beyond boutique' accommodation



Is it the heart-stopping roar of a dominant male lion soaring over the bushveld breeze in the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve? Or the deep rumble of the mighty Atlantic Ocean's waves crashing on the fine silver sand of Kommetjie's Long Beach? The peaceful feeling that embraces you at sunset, as honeyed light stretches across the Franschhoek Valley? Perhaps the melodious, uplifting birdsong that greets each dawn in the leafy, urban oasis of Constantia?

It is all these things and much more. By design, each of Last Word Intimate Hotels & Safari Camps enjoys an iconic location in a stunning South Africa.

Experience 'beyond boutique' accommodation at Last Word Intimate Hotels & Safari Camps' secure, exclusive residences in the iconic Greater Kruger, storied Cape Winelands, and celebrated Cape Town. Last Word Long Beach sidled up against its namesake, one of Cape Town's most spectacular beaches in Kommetjie. Last Word Constantia, in the heart of South Africa's wine history beginnings yet strikingly close to the city's action-filled centre. Walk, explore, and taste South Africa's gourmet capital from Last Word Franschhoek. Last Word Kitara, tucked away in the secluded northwestern wedge of the Klaserie Nature Reserve, its eastern border giving over to the vastness of the world-famous Kruger National Park.

Here, pleasingly different luxury hideaway accommodation and warm South African hospitality meet. Enjoy thrilling safaris, memorable fine dining, and rare discoveries that remain uniquely yours.

Words To Live By

This family-owned hospitality brand enters its second decade of operation with a rebranding. The refreshed logo supports the unaffected strapline, 'Let Us Take You by the Hand', and embraces the ethos of personalised, luxury travel experiences. The Last Word brand, rooted in kindness and solid partnerships of integrity, is committed to ensuring its hospitality footprint benefits three pillars: community, conservation, and commerce.

Nicky Coenen, Group General Manager, comments, "Last Word properties are unique, small boutique properties with no more than ten rooms each. Exclusive and private, we offer guests a slowed-down setting of space and nature."

Lovely People, Lovely Places

The gorgeous Cape-based urban boutique hotels – Last Word Long Beach, Last Word Constantia, and Last Word Franschhoek – offer outstanding value. All offer luxury accommodation, breakfast, select beverages, wireless internet access, and bicycle use. The group's Greater Kruger crowning glory, Last Word Kitara, is all-inclusive of luxury



accommodation, three meals daily, tea/coffee, select beverages, and twice-daily game drives.

"Last Word properties are perfect for couples, families, and multi-generation travel. The nature of our hotels allows for the combination of Cape Town, Winelands, and safari all in one hotel group," continues Nicky. "A similar look and feel, together with authentic hospitality, ensure that guests are happy, looked after, and go home feeling part of our Last Word family. We are very hands-on in our approach to hospitality."

Favourites in the best hotel category in the annual Condé Nast Readers' Choice Awards are Last Word Constantia, Last Word Franschhoek, and Last Word Long Beach. The 2021 awards included:

- Condé Nast Traveller UK and US readers
- Publishing only the top 30 best hotels

Last Word Long Beach came in at number 23 and Last Word Franschhoek at 27. In 2020, the competition spanned Africa's entire continent, with Last Word Long Beach scooping the seventh best hotel in Africa - no mean feat.

Plan Your Journey

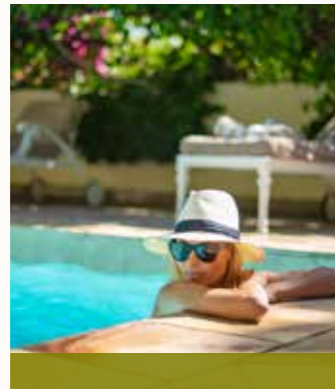
For your exclusive experience of South Africa, give their concierge team a try. Combine Last Word's hotels and get the best of a stunning South Africa. While each is unique, the consistent theme, 'Let Us Take You by the Hand', is a golden thread woven into their resplendent hospitality tapestry. ■



Safari, food, wine & beach



KITARA



CONSTANTIA



FRANSCHHOEK



LONG BEACH

See thelastword.co.za for our selection of unique hotels and beyond boutique experiences.

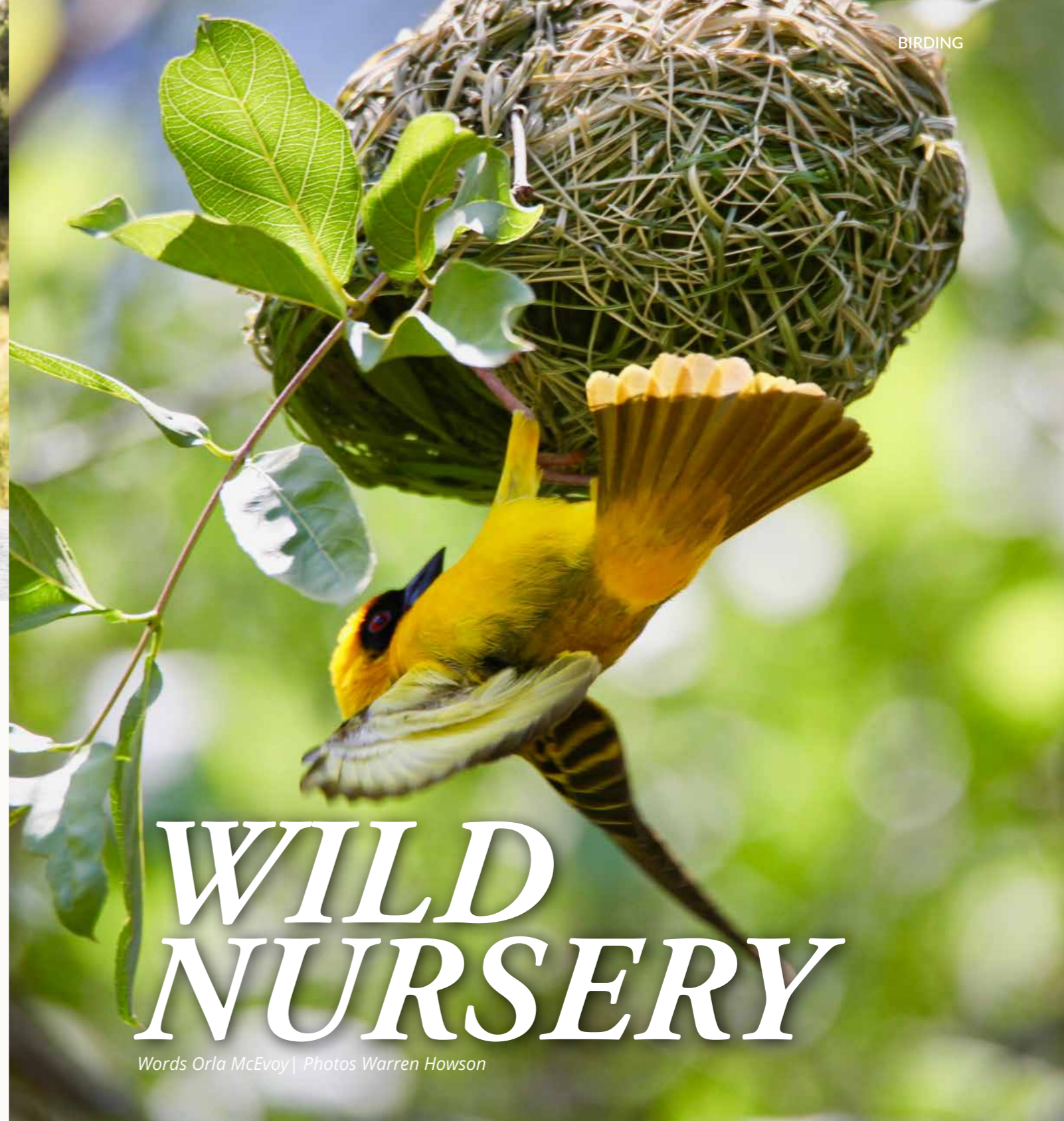


LAST WORD
INTIMATE HOTELS & SAFARI CAMPS

LET US TAKE YOU BY **THE HAND**

Reservations: 27 (0) 21 794 6561 | Email: stay@thelastword.co.za

www.thelastword.co.za



WILD NURSERY

Words Orla McEvoy | Photos Warren Howson

Any immersion in the bountiful Klaserie wilderness inevitably leads to close encounters – and even interactions with the local wildlife inhabitants who share their home with us. With such close living quarters, there is generally a natural rule not to interfere with Mother Nature, unless some human

or anthropogenic factors are at play. Wildlife making home in our man-made structures and the plight of global biodiversity provided the perfect opportunity to give a little back to Mother Nature during the recent Lowveld baby season.



A feathered friend

The cheery Southern Masked Weavers who join us at camp every summer are such a welcome sight and sound, as the males busily craft their intricate nests and proudly display to their female flocks. One turbulent afternoon though, we found a precious nest on the ground below the colony, possibly due to the stormy winds. We hung the nest back up, hoping to reunite what lay inside with the parents. Keeping a watchful eye from a distance, we were dismayed when no parent returned. So by nightfall we decided to take the nest inside and out of the rain to give the sole-surviving chick a chance to make it through the night.

Still blind and hued pink-purple at only a couple of days old, we didn't have too high hopes for this tiny chick. But we would do what we could. Warm, hydrated, and in a cosy, dark box, the vulnerable little bundle snuggled down for the night and we crossed our fingers.

The resilience of life and nature is nothing short of astounding. This little champion not only survived the night, but over subsequent days began thriving. Each time her eyes opened, she was greeted by small Weaver puppets; and during every two-hourly daytime feed, we played a recording of a parents' call so she didn't lose touch with her wild Weaver identity.

Days turned into weeks, and our little survivor never failed to impress with her progress. By day 10, she was



feathered, feeding ferociously, and had even taken a maiden flight. She looked almost surprised herself when she fluttered around our room for the first time. After two weeks, we moved her into a larger enclosure so she could strengthen her wings and here her favourite pastimes were gorging on mealworms and afternoon bath time. She soon even began to forage and feed on her own and by the time the yellow "baby bird" gape around her beak had fully disappeared, we knew she was ready to fly the nest. She'd already survived multiple attempts by a local Sparrowhawk and even a Western stripe-bellied sand snake in her short life – hopefully experiences she would carry with her.

After a little over five weeks, we left her enclosure door open so she could re-join Weaver society. She returned a short while later, landing on my hand for a nutritious mealworm snack. I took this as our last goodbye before she restarted her wild Klaserie-life.

Should I intervene?

Many chicks and nest fall from trees (particularly with increasingly unstable weather) and parents will most often return to them. The best thing to do is to give Mother Nature a chance: provide space and privacy for the caregivers to return while keeping any imminent dangers away, such as dogs and cats. If all else fails, call a local

wildlife rehabilitator who will be able to provide advice and assistance.

"Living with thatch roofs in the bush, it's a common occurrence for baby squirrels to fall from nests as they start to wriggle around. Usually mom will come to collect her precious, lost bundle once given the privacy and space to return. If mom doesn't return for a whole day, the best thing to do is then call a local wildlife rehabilitator (like Rewild) who can help and, if needed, raise the baby squirrel amongst its own kind. As socially complex and territorial mammals, it's imperative for squirrels to be raised among their own if they are to have a chance at a fulfilling wild life."

"Little free-tailed bats are another common occurrence among thatch roofs in the region. Particularly during baby season, young bats learning to fly can accidentally become grounded in and around dwellings. If found grounded during the day, you can transfer the little guys to the safety of a dark shoebox to keep cool and include some shallow water for them to rehydrate. Once night falls, you can simply hold them up above your head (with an outstretched arm on a towel) in a space with plenty of take-off clearance, and most often they will re-join their aerial buddies around them. If not, you can call a local wildlife rehabber (like Rewild) for support."



A Musical World of BIRDS

Words Kelsey le Voy | Photos Stefan Steenkamp

“These encounters continue to fascinate us: with their unique mannerisms and distinctive calls, no two sightings are alike”



Picture yourself relaxing beside the pool, listening to the river wash over the rocks and the hush of the grass as it sways in the breeze. As you turn the page of your exciting holiday read, you catch the sound of a gentle bird call coming from nearby. It's an unfamiliar sound, but one that tugs at your curiosity and has you searching for its source.

If you look carefully, perhaps under the guidance of Last Word Kitara's avid bird watcher, Stefan Steenkamp, you'll find a small owlet perched in a nearby tree. It is, of course, an African Barred Owlet, and this particular one has grown somewhat fond of the gardens and frequently graces guests with its presence. The call you heard is a yelping series of "kow" notes, often followed by a series of pitched purring "ptrrrrr" notes when excited. And it's a sound you'll certainly remember long after hearing it.

The large, yellow-green eyes swiftly capture your attention, and if you look carefully, you'll notice the cream- and cinnamon-coloured spots and bars on its face and upper body. Although the African Barred Owlet is a small bird – roughly 17cm when fully grown – its presence has taken up a large space in all our hearts here at Last Word Kitara.

The birdlife here is astonishing – and has become a highlight for recent guests. These encounters continue to fascinate us: with their unique mannerisms and distinctive calls, no two sightings are alike. The Pied Kingfisher, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, and Brown-hooded Kingfisher are just a few of the regularly spotted birds attracted to the water of the Klaserie River, alongside which the lodge is located. Recent sightings have also included the European Roller, Little Sparrowhawk, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Swainson's Spurfowl, and the White-crested Helmetshrike.

The presence of birds – particularly during summer in the bush – adds a musical dimension to any safari experience and captivates guests who sit back to enjoy the melodies of these perching, swooping, and soaring creatures. To settle in and let nature set the pace is to discover the true meaning of a 'soul safari'. Unrushed, untouched, unrivalled. ■



GOLIATH HERON

Ardea goliath

Words Peter Lawson | Photo Leon Marais

This is a special bird to add to your Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR) bird list as the Goliath Heron is scarce. It's not always present in the reserve, but does visit on occasions and is certainly worthwhile seeking along any shallow margins of large bodies of water.

Colouration closely resembles the more common Purple Heron, but the Goliath Heron is more than twice the size. In fact, it's the largest heron in the world, standing up to 1.5 metres in height, so 'Goliath' is certainly a well-chosen name!

They are normally solitary birds, but on occasions pairs may be found. It has a wide distribution in southern Africa and further afield, but is an uncommon resident heron. When away from protected areas, there is severe competition from over-fishing by humans. Sadly, this is a threat to its existence. So when you do see one in KPNR, consider how lucky it is to be in a protected area and how fortunate you are to encounter it.

The Goliath Heron feeds mostly on large fish, which it catches in the shallows by stabbing the fish with its enormous bill and then swallowing it whole. Frogs are also consumed, and on occasion even reptiles and small mammals.

When breeding, a large stick-nest platform is built in big trees close to, or overhanging, bodies of water. These nests can measure up to 1.5 metres in width. Goliath Herons have been known to breed in the nearby Kruger National Park, but as far as I am aware, breeding has not yet been recorded here in KPNR. I stand to correction on this, however.

Pairs nest solitarily and three large white eggs are laid, though very often only a single chick survives due to the scarcity of food. Chicks are fed on large, partly digested fish, which the adult birds regurgitate onto the nest. They are good parents and both spend time brooding and feeding their young.

You can certainly be proud if this lovely heron is on your KPNR bird list! ■

Side-striped Jackal

Words Peter Lawson | Photos Leon Marais



Not as common, nor as widespread as black-backed jackal – and not often seen as it is nocturnal and single – the side-striped jackal is still encountered more frequently than the black-backed jackal in the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR). As it occurs east and north in southern Africa, the reserve is almost at the furthest south-eastern extremity of this jackal's range. Warden Colin Rowles tells me it has been sighted throughout the reserve, but the area it frequents the most is the mopane veld/ woodland to the east.

Slightly larger than the common black-backed jackal, the side-striped jackal is also more dog-like in appearance. Over the years, I've heard tourists in Kruger National Park say they've seen a dog that must have crept through the boundary fence bordering populated rural areas. And to the inexperienced eye, they can look like a medium-sized mongrel dog. They are greyish-buff in colour and have an indistinct, pale stripe outlined with darker grey that runs along the flanks and across the back behind the shoulders, hence the name. The tail is bushy, black on top, and nearly always with a white tip. This is a particular distinguishing feature from the black-backed jackal (which has a black tip to the tail).

The habitat preference is woodland; the diet mainly vegetarian, consisting of fruit and seeds – but they do also eat rats and mice, insects, and small reptiles. They seldom eat carrion, but do so on occasion. Although nocturnal, side-striped jackal are occasionally seen at dusk and in the early morning. And that's when you'll be able to add this species to your KPNR mammal list. Their shelter is in dense undergrowth and also in holes in the ground or crevices among rocks.

They generally forage alone, but do live in mated pairs, and when they have pups (four to six) both parents tend to them and bring food. Should you be fortunate enough to see a side-striped jackal carrying food in its mouth, observe carefully where it's going as it will be taking the food to the pups. They are good parents and communicate during such times with a series of contact yaps, the call not drawn out though like that of black-backed jackal.

Side-striped jackal may not be a particularly striking mammal for your list, but they are a good one to get due to the difficulty in finding them. So go for it, and you can certainly be proud when you add it! ■



CAUGHT on camera

Words Chloë Cooper | Photos APNR Ground Hornbill Project



“Camera traps play a crucial role in helping the team observe and understand the natural behaviour and environmental factors impacting the survival of the chicks”

the survival of the chicks and the dynamics of the groups. Curious creatures like baboons, or birds of prey which might utilise an empty nest, or predatory species like genets and leopards are all “seen while no one’s looking” and so offer a rare and unique insight into life in the wild.

This season, the camera trap revealed an unfortunate incident of predation on a 20-day-old chick in the Johnniesdale nest. “The leopard spent an entire day in the nest tree before the nestling was eventually pulled out and dropped. We knew we’d arrived at the nest shortly after this occurred as we subsequently ended up chasing the leopard away,” said Carrie.

Unfortunately for the Johnniesdale group, they lost this year’s chick. The camera trap video revealed all, allowing us an exceptional insight into the challenges faced by these birds as well as by the project itself: The leopard easily accesses the nest, which has a hole large enough to allow the adult female Ground Hornbill in and out the nest. Its natural curiosity and instinct to make a meal out of what is available means that this type of predation occurs frequently in the wild ecosystem of the Greater Kruger.

Whilst predation is a natural cause of death for Ground Hornbill chicks, the project is investigating ways to possibly protect the nestlings from a variety of nimble predators such as leopards, genets, snakes, and baboons. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, and while our human emotions sometimes get in the way of nature’s cycle, an incident like this is a natural thing.



This particular group of birds has had successful breeding years in the past. In fact, the population of Southern Ground-hornbills in the Associated Private Nature Reserves (APNR) : has a two to three times higher breeding success rate than groups elsewhere in South Africa, likely due to the implementation of artificial nests. The project – which has been running for over 22 years – continues to adapt to the changing climate and other environmental factors impacting the survival of this endangered species.

Keep an eye on the project’s social media channels for more behind-the-scenes camera trap footage and information on how you can help support their conservation work: @APNR_ground_hornbill_project. ■

It’s almost the end of the breeding season for Southern Ground-hornbills, and the team at the APNR Ground Hornbill Project have been hard at work monitoring groups with new nestlings across the Greater Kruger. Part of this year’s cycle was successfully harvesting redundant second-hatchlings handed over to partner organisation, the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project, to be reared and eventually released back into their historic range (which

has declined by up to 70% in the past century). Every year comes with its surprises, and the team prepares themselves for what might become of the newly hatched chicks as they enter their world in the wild.

“The breeding season got off to a slow start this year, with the first eggs of the season only being laid in early-November. There was a total of 13 breeding groups, of which there are currently eight remaining. Four of the

five failures occurred from predation and an unknown cause, occurring shortly after the chicks hatched. The final failure was due to a congenital deformity which unfortunately led to underdevelopment and the death of the chick at 45 days old,” said project researcher Carrie Hickman.

Camera traps play a crucial role in helping the team observe and understand the natural behaviour and environmental factors impacting

David Mathonsi

FROM MINE WORKER TO SAFARI GUIDE

Words Sharon Gilbert-Rivett | Photos Baobab Ridge



“After you've spent so much time deep underground, you need to see blue sky and breathe fresh air”

Baobab Ridge safari guide David Mathonsi stops his vehicle and peers intently into the bush ahead ... "There's a leopard," he whispers ardently, and sure enough, through the tangle of branches I spot the wave of a white-tipped tail and the mottled pattern of spots as said big cat moves through the undergrowth, soon disappearing from sight.

It's an epic spot, and one that helps David to maintain his record as Baobab Ridge's 'leopard king'.

"I'm just really good at finding them," he laughs. "And lucky, too!"

Life wasn't always this lucky for David, 55, born and schooled over in the Manyeleti. "I left high school early and got a job as a mine worker, eventually moving to Carletonville, near Johannesburg on the gold-rich West Rand of Gauteng," he says.

"I spent the next period of my working life underground, which was very challenging, working in very difficult conditions. Eventually,

it got too much for me and I began to think of ways I could leave mining and find work in the open air. After you have spent so much time deep underground, you need to see blue sky and breathe fresh air," he says wisely.

"I realised I could get a job close to where I was born, working as a tracker in the safari industry, so I left the mine and began as a trainee tracker at a safari lodge not far from here, learning my craft," he continues.

"I qualified and came to work in the Timbavati, at one of their first commercial lodges. I worked very hard and was promoted to guiding, doing my training there and going to guide school where I completed my FGASA Level 2 qualifications," says David proudly.

"Back then, I used to help out here at Baobab Ridge on my off days and eventually came here permanently, starting full-time in 2015. It was wonderful to become connected to the bush and to find my calling here in the wilderness, so close to where

I was born and raised. I hated being underground in the mines. I felt I was suffocating. I just love the bush and it's an important part of my heritage as a Shangaan man," he explains.

"I was very proud to learn about the bush. As a Shangaan man it is something we all learn, especially tracking," says David. "I used to follow my grandfather's cattle and learned to track them. Each cow had a unique track and I learned to tell the difference between them. When I started learning tracking in the Timbavati, it felt wonderful and very exciting. I felt like I was coming home. I used to love Johannesburg as a young man, but now I hate the city.

"It's also important as Shangaan people that we keep our traditions alive," adds David. "We have a long history and heritage with the bush here, and it's important to keep up with this and learn about the importance of protecting the wilderness and our heritage. It's our future." ■



EXPECT THE *unexpected*

Words and photos Deni Barisic



It's 05:15 in the morning. David, our ranger, points out the rusks and coffee. My girlfriend is still a bit sleepy; I'm not. I'm excited for what's coming. We're going on our first morning drive. She has no idea what to expect, but I know it might mean cats.

We climb into the 4x4, David checks in on the radio and starts driving. I'm 100 percent sure we're going to see a leopard. Why? Because ever since I was a little kid, it's been my favourite animal. During the three hour drive, we spot impala, a couple of elephants, and some birds. With slight disappointment, I asked David if he'd seen any leopards over the past few days and his answer was, "Yes, they call me the Leopard King. But every day is different, every drive is different. Nature has its own plan."

Back at the pool – we were staying at Baobab Ridge – I contemplated David's words. They made sense. We tend to plan everything, especially in the Netherlands where we are from. Knowing what's next gives us a sense of control. But if I wanted to see a leopard that badly, we could've also gone to a zoo. Somehow David's words made me think about the past three weeks. We'd been traveling from Cape Town to the Greater Kruger. Due to Covid, we hadn't booked anything in advance; we made plans day by day and went wherever it was sunny. Not knowing what to expect gave us the chance to be surprised. And surprised we were – by the warmth of the people, the delicious food, and the overwhelming nature. Those three weeks had been unforgettable.

So I decided to let go of the expectations I had for Klaserie. Of course, I still hoped to see a leopard but decided to instead lean back and let nature take its course. And it paid off. On the days and drives that followed, we were treated to something new every day. From a pack of wild dogs that had just caught an impala, to a pride of lions communicating with each other to regroup. We even saw two rhinos that had returned to Klaserie after two years of not being spotted in the area. At this point even David was excited – he told us rhinos are his favourite animals.

On day three, we were driving back to the area where we had seen the lions the day before. "Ingwe! Ingwe!" I yelled. My heart was racing. David had taught us some of the isiXhosa words they use on the radio for the animals, and *ingwe* means leopard. But what looked like a leopard from far away turned out to be an even bigger surprise: my first cheetah sighting ever. I never expected to spot a cheetah myself, but to aptly quote David again, "Nature is always cooking something new. Just enjoy." ■

XIMUWU THE TREE OF LIFE

Words Jessica Pentz | Photos Patrick Suverein

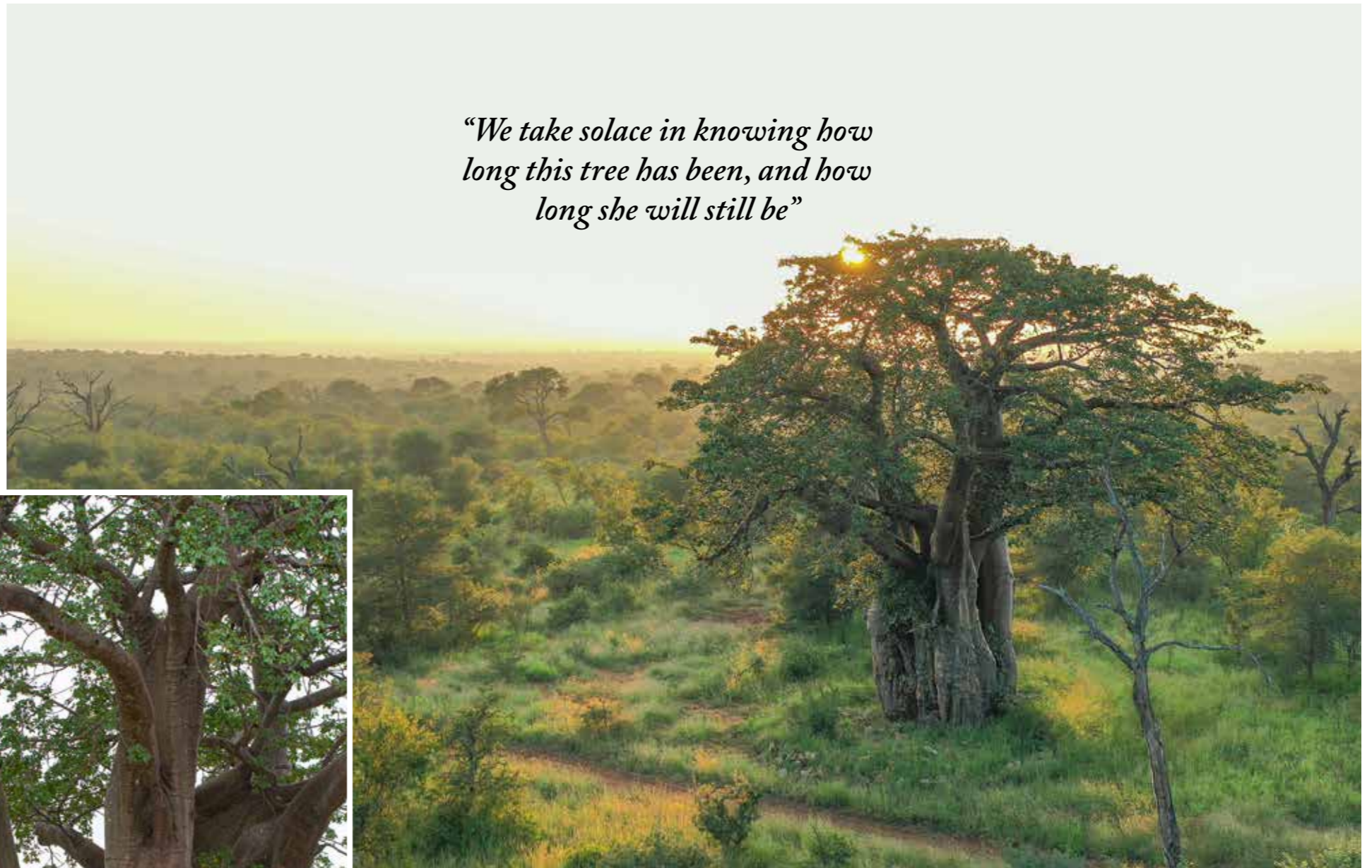
Ximuwu, pronounced “shi-moo-woo”, is the Shangaan word for baobab. And here at Ximuwu, we have a baobab tree that is known to be over 1,000 years old – by far the oldest specimen in the Klaserie.

The baobab is the world's largest succulent plant. It has the ability to store over 5,000 litres of water in its trunk, and because of this phenomenal accolade, it is known as the 'Tree of Life'.

Baobabs are incredibly resilient. Not only can they thrive in the harshest of climates, but they also have the unique ability to repair their bark and cambium layer when damaged or even stripped. Our own baobab has shown this resilience time and again, as elephants gouge at the trunk in search of water and nutrients. The tree very quickly regenerates, leaving behind just a small scar to tell the tale.

The fruit of the baobab has in recent years attracted global recognition as a new superfood, boasting five times more vitamin C than an orange and over 50 percent more calcium than spinach. Although relatively 'new' to the global market, the use of baobabs dates back thousands of years. Loved by locals for its delicious and versatile fruit, it has also been used for medicinal purposes. Baobab remedies for malaria, stomach ache, fever, and even dehydration have saved many lives across rural Africa. A study conducted by the UN even found that an aqueous baobab solution proved more effective at rehydrating children with severe diarrhea than standard World Health Organisation (WHO) remedies.

For as long as these trees have grown in Senegal and across southern Africa, they have been of great spiritual significance to the local people where they are found. Many cultures believe that baobabs connect them to their ancestors, and they look to the tree for spiritual guidance when making decisions. Loved ones who have passed are even buried at the base of the tree in the belief that this maintains a spiritual closeness between the living and the dead. The circle of life is continually complete when the nourishment of ancestors bares fruit that then nourishes



“We take solace in knowing how long this tree has been, and how long she will still be”



the living, essentially allowing old life to sustain new life. Here at Ximuwu we enjoy the comfort and deep shade of our beautiful baobab. Our love for the tree is shared with the animals around us, as creatures big and small make use of her life-giving properties. From the elephants who feed from her to the eagle that calls her canopy its home, life is all around her. We take solace in knowing how long this tree

has been, and how long she will still be. Sitting under her canopy, you can't help but feel an immense closeness to nature, dreaming of all the things she has witnessed over hundreds of years - a constant in an ever-changing world.

When naming our beloved property, and soon to be lodge, it seemed only right to pay homage to this incredible tree, the baobab. ■

We recently visited the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR) as a family of five, travelling from Cape Town to Hoedspruit airport. On arrival at Hoedspruit, we were greeted by Warren Howson from Ivory Wilderness Camp.

Now if you are looking for an average, run-of-the-mill, relaxing weekend, then please don't go to Klaserie!

Our weekend began when, due to our over-excitement, we traipsed directly after our guide and almost forgot to collect our luggage! What we didn't expect was that this was where our holiday began. As our vehicle left the airport, our three kids bombarded Warren with countless questions. "What's the most dangerous animal?" "What's the most poisonous animal?" It felt like real-time Animal Planet. To be honest, I'm not sure whether my kids enjoyed hearing all the answers more than Warren enjoyed providing them.

We were extremely blessed to have amazing game sightings before even arriving at the lodge. This included seeing a committee of vultures awaiting a meal on a wounded antelope.

"We want to see leopard." This was our unrealistic, tourist request. Leopard had eluded us for many years: We'd been to numerous other game reserves and never sighted leopard, and we'd now waited many years to share such an experience with our children. On Day One, we met our guide Bill who'd already been alerted to our request. As we chatted, I asked whether he had any information about leopard sightings in the area.

"Don't worry, we'll find our own," came the answer. Wow, that's an answer, I thought. "Leopards are only seen when they want to be seen. They must allow you to see them." These were Bill's wise words.

Bill read tracks, heard calls, and true to his word, he tracked and found a magnificent male leopard for us. We were elated, but it didn't stop there as the next day we stumbled on a female leopard on a kill. Her cubs were close by, but nowhere to be seen. Apparently leopard cubs are the Holy Grail of game drives.

We saw four of the Big 5 and to our surprise, the one we missed this time was the rhino – an animal we usually spot early on during other adventures. But this is the wild, and apparently the animals



(Don't) **GO TO
KLASERIE!**

Words Thashen Subrayen

© Warren Howson

don't read the books we do. Anything can happen and at any time. Even though it was towards the end of the birding season, the birds we viewed were nothing short of breathtaking.

We booked six game drives overall – yes, six – and at the end we wished for even more. The night drives were spectacular. They included the stars, the chameleons, a jackal and scrub hare, and most fun of all was when we stopped in the middle of a river to become surrounded by fireflies as if in a Disney movie.



© Warren Howson



© Bill Drew

Whilst at the lodge, two male buffalo decided to visit the boundary fence when we were seated on the deck. In the evenings, a porcupine popped by to greet us, outdoing the hippo we saw at the fence the night before.

The hyena calls at supper fascinated me; my wife didn't share my excitement ... I could almost hear her racing heart. This entire experience though, from start to finish, can aptly be described as heart-racing.

On the last morning (as if nature decided we hadn't experienced enough), we heard a lion's roar in the distance and the Holy Grail decide to greet us: We crossed paths with two stunning leopard cubs.

You may ask why I'd say "(Don't) go"? Well, it's been a week since we left Klaserie and there has been not only countless animal pictures drawn by the children but animal TV channels watched continuously by us all as a family. Numerous animal books have been purchased and I myself am currently shopping for a better pair of binoculars. My wife has indicated that the Easter weekend might be a good time to return ...

So, if you want to have a normal life after the Klaserie, (don't) go! ■

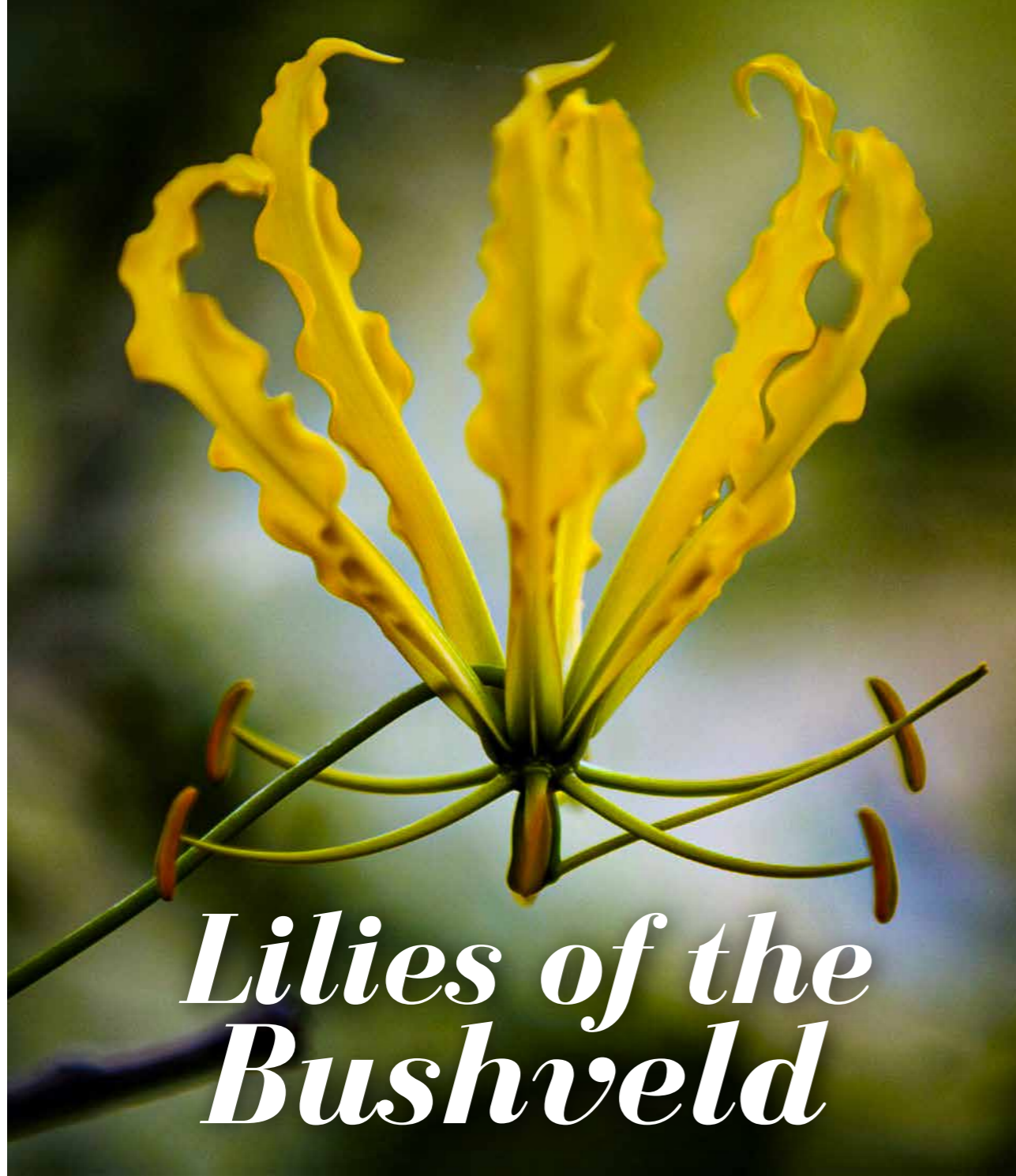


© Bill Drew

Remarkable wildlife experiences achieved through generations of passion, love, and respect for Klaserie and its inhabitants. Rooted in our intimate and exclusive River Rock Lodge, deep in the heart of the wild.

www.ivorywilderness.com | reservations@ivorywilderness.com





Lilies of the Bushveld

Words and photos Werner Miller

Throughout the ages, there have been a profound number of customs and traditions around the use of lilies. Not only have they found a decorative place in our modern-day homes, presented in beautiful vases, but they have served many cultures and religions dating back as far as Ancient Greece to bring meaning and purpose to symbolism and mythology. In China, many people also consider them a superfood because they are jam-packed with vitamins.

In the bush, the continuous appearance of lilies is a natural reminder of Mother Nature's delicate beauty. All year round and as the seasons change; lilies are in bloom.

Let's take a look at a selection of the unique lilies that are found in the Klaserie Nature Reserve (KPNR) in the vicinity of Tulela Lodge.

◀ Climbing lily, *Gloriosa superba*

This special lily is a true summer flower as it blooms from December to February. What's unique to this type of climbing lily found near Tulela is that it's the scarce all-yellow version of the *Gloriosa superba* (meaning 'glorious superb') family. It has a nodding flower, with its ovary underneath and petals that curl upwards. Found in the plant's tubers, in particular, is alkaloid colchicine – an extremely poisonous, though widely used and effective medicinal plant that cures conditions such as cramps, haemorrhoids, infertility, skin problems, and tick fever. Strict caution is imperative as incorrect dosages for human use can be fatal. Porcupines, on the other hand, are one of the lucky animals able to feed on this striking flower unaffected.

Impala lily, *Adenium obesum* ▶

A favourite and iconic bushveld flower – especially for people who frequent the bush during the dryer months of the year – is the impala lily, described as an African shrub with a swollen succulent stem bearing showy pink flowers. It blooms from June to October in the hotter areas and is also a flower to be cautious of as it produces a poisonous sap in its roots that contains cardiac glycosides. These flowers are seldom eaten by animals, and the sap is often used as arrow poison to hunt big game and as a fish toxin to poison the water.



◀ Blood lily, *Scadoxus puniceus*

Known as the 'blood lily', this flower is actually an amaryllis and is well-visited by sunbirds and other nectarivorous birds. In bloom from September through to November, three out of nine of the species are toxic to humans, but if it's used together with the roots, it can be a cure for a range of ailments including colds, asthma, leprosy, and even as an antidote to poison.

Yellow Mouse-whiskers, *Cleome angustifolia* ▶

One can clearly see the image of this flower by merely reading its name: yellow mouse-whiskers. This unique little flower is eaten as a vegetable by many cultures. Its vegetation makes it easy for people to obtain as it grows widespread next to roads where the soil is disturbed. ■



RIVER PRIDE

Words Chloë Cooper | Photos Nick Smith

During the last quarter of 2021, the River Pride had swelled to Super Pride status. Led by males Hosi and Socha, this pride of lions was a force to be reckoned with in the northern territory of the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR). Lodges in the area were seeing an average of 25 individual lions together – a captivating sight; full of power, potential, and promise.

In March 2022, three new pride members arrived in the secrecy of Dundee Creek, where one of the River Pride females broke away to give birth. A few photos emerged of the tiny new additions,

their typically mottled fur visible amongst the green leaves of the wattle thicket in which they were hidden. News spread quickly across the Klaserie and over time, a few more excited onlookers were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the cubs.

Makumu Private Game Lodge shared their first photo with us, taken by Adrian van Zyl, and Klaserie Drift Safari Camps' guide Nick Smith shared his image of one of the cubs nestling in the crook of its mother's foreleg. Precious moments we are so fortunate to witness! Lion cubs have a notoriously high mortality rate



(around 80%), but the River Pride has had above average success and very few newborns that we know of have not survived. Chatting to Klaserie Drift guide Emily Whiting, it sounds like there might be even more cubs: At the time this issue went to print, more than one female in the pride is suspected to have broken off to give birth. The males are likely to have mated with a number of different lionesses in oestrus, meaning cubs are often born quite close together in a pride this size, so watch this space!



As social cats, we expect to see lions in a family group, but knowing what it takes to feed and sustain animals of this size, there is tension around food and when it comes to survival, the gloves come off even in close-knit prides like this. As a result, pride fragmentation does occur and guides in the reserve have reported there is a fair amount of splitting off taking place.

Simbavati Camp George Manager Manie Esterhuizen told us the pride does split into smaller groups and then rejoin every few days. There are about 17 – 19 seen together as a large group, with various members fragmenting temporarily (which is only normal). Smaller groups can target and survive off smaller, easier prey species, while as a whole, the River Pride would need to be hunting giraffe and buffalo regularly in order to sustain themselves.

The two dominant males continue to patrol the territory and we will continue to see numbers of subadults nearing their exit age. Emily shared the opinion that perhaps the lionesses and subadult cubs that break off occasionally are essentially developing the youngsters' skill level in a smaller pride, which is important especially for male lions that will outgrow their large natal pride.

We look forward to watching the evolution of the Klaserie's River Pride and seeing new life brought into the pride as maturing lions begin to break away. It's fascinating and a privilege to watch the life cycle of Africa's king cat at such an intimate level. ■



New kid on the block?

Words and photos Sabre Meeser

Returning to work in the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR) after a five-year absence has certainly not been disappointing. Particularly so when it comes to leopards. In just six days, we were lucky to have brilliant sightings of five different individuals: Picturesque sightings up in trees, stalking, feeding, and even an unusual interaction with a giraffe on an open stretch of road. But one of my favourites was of a young male with an impala kill in rather a strange place. On a relatively quiet afternoon drive, we

decided to check out areas not yet ventured and on driving along a winding road through the mopane woodland on the Kateka property, it opened up to a surprisingly beautiful, secret pan. Earlier that morning, we had heard that other guides had had a sighting of not one, but two leopards not too far away. So naturally, we decided to check the closest water source, aptly named Leopard Pan. And while I was admiring the serene beauty of the pan, I spied the tell-tale sign of a hooked tail hanging from the bird hide ...

We slowly ventured closer to find a large, male leopard lying comfortably on the man-made platform, and on closer inspection we noticed the hooves of a fresh impala kill behind him! With his back to us, and a careless attitude pertaining to our presence, we initially assumed it to be the dominant male in the area, the Thomas male.

But when he eventually turned and looked at us, it was evident this was not Thomas but a new kid on the block. Overjoyed by the prospect of a new, relaxed male leopard in the area, we stayed still for a good while to get some decent ID shots of him.

Excitement stirred in the east block as we all

endeavoured to ascertain if anyone had seen this leopard before. As it turned out, he had been seen on a handful of other occasions. Still, no one is too sure where he comes from, but due to his relaxed nature, we can assume that he was seen a fair amount somewhere before. So if you recognise him, give us a shout!

As we humans infringe more on the natural world, animals have had to adapt. We notice them making more use of man-made infrastructures. Apparently this is not the first time this particular hide has been used by leopards. But can you blame them – comfort and height away from lurking hyenas? What a pleasure.

The next day it seemed it was not him, our new guy, but the Thomas male on the same carcass. How the night unfolded between these two male leopards was witnessed by no one. But I'm, for one, looking forward to hopefully seeing a lot more of him in the future! ■



CHASING THE PACK

Words and photos Emily Whiting

“Hooo – hooo – hooo” went the alarm, like a siren in the middle of the African bush. It was a strange sound that jarred against the usual, daytime backdrop of tuneful birds, rustling antelope, and even trumpeting elephants. Many are not familiar with it, but to a guide, this noise is pure magic to our ears! The endangered African wild dog (also known as a ‘painted wolf’) broadcasts this haunting, ghost-

like call when searching for other members of the pack. On hearing that initial, blissful note, it wasn’t long before the dogs were located on the old airstrip at Klaserie Drift Safari Camps, much to the delight of our guests.

Pulling up to the sighting, I instantly noticed something was amiss. The entire pack of 27 dogs stood to attention, visibly concerned, and were

staring in the direction where I knew some lions were resting. One dog repeated the sombre call, over and over, as if pleading for a lost friend and pack-mate to reappear. Although not an unusual occurrence for dogs to misplace their pack members – they run fast and far through the bush and so often become separated – it was the disturbed behaviour, coupled with the knowledge of the lions nearby that disarmed me.

For more than 20 minutes, we watched the scene play out with no sign of resolution. On several occasions, another male growled defensively at something only he seemed aware of until, eventually, even he resigned himself to silence. The alpha female, a strong and competent leader, seized the moment to move her pack on, away from the danger. Perhaps she knew where she might find the lost comrade, or maybe she trusted that he or she would locate them in time. Silently, I prayed it wasn’t because she was aware of a more ominous fate of the missing dog ... The truth, it seems, I would never know.

With their alpha back in charge, the pack re-energised and jumped into step behind her. Eager to continue with the sighting, I trailed at the back, watching the flurry of black, white, and tan trotting down the road. But just then, quick

as a flash, they changed course and dived into some thick bush. For a few minutes, I’d lost all sign of them and had no choice but to continue on in their original direction, skirting the bushes and hoping they would pop out again at any moment. They run so fast and freely in even the most difficult terrains; I knew I didn’t have long to relocate them before they disappeared, so I switched off my vehicle to listen more acutely.



And there it was.

“Hooo – hooo – hooo.” It was faint, pushing away from me, but I could tell exactly where they were headed: the river. Back in gear, we zoomed across the ridge towards our lookout point over the Klaserie River and bumped into all 27, huddled tightly together and jogging down the road. At the water’s edge, they paused momentarily to splash and drink – being ever watchful of crocodiles – before changing direction and darting off once more.

I was slowly moving with the back half of the pack when, quite suddenly, a commotion of excited twittering and activity broke out ahead. Unable to see anything through the long grass, we could only listen to the sharp, piercing sounds emanating from the bush as we waited for more clues. Then a young pup burst out of the undergrowth, proudly parading the head of a baby impala in its jaws. A

grisly scene, though I couldn’t help but marvel that within the mere seconds it took us to join the sight of the frenzy, the tiny antelope was already reduced to a few, remaining scraps. As playful and friendly as they seem, African wild dogs are truly such incredible and unequalled predators.

With the food finished, the front of the pack moved on; a single antelope would not be satiating sufficient mouths in this huge family. We continued alongside for a few minutes, the boastful pup fiercely guarding its prize as others attempted to snatch it away. The alpha then led her obedient followers off-road once more and, having experienced a most memorable morning, we decided to leave her be: after all, chef JB’s famous breakfast was ready and waiting for us back at camp! ■



Your one-stop shop

for all your quality building materials

HOEDSPRUIT
Build it
Bolder. Brighter. Better.

Please enquire in-store for more details
Contact us for Pricing
015 793 0116 - henry@hoedbuild.co.za

PG GLASS

DOOR GLASS & REAR / BACK GLASS

QUALITY & SERVICE YOU CAN TRUST

OUR MOBILE CREW WILL COME TO YOU !

We provide chip repairs, new windscreen, Smash & Grab Film, Mirrors and Aluminium Windows & Doors. We only fit locally made windscreens, top-quality windscreens, Shatterprufe.

**PG Glass Phalaborwa, 35 Palm Street,
Tel: (015) 781 2471, Cell: 082 928 5911
sales@pgphala.co.za**

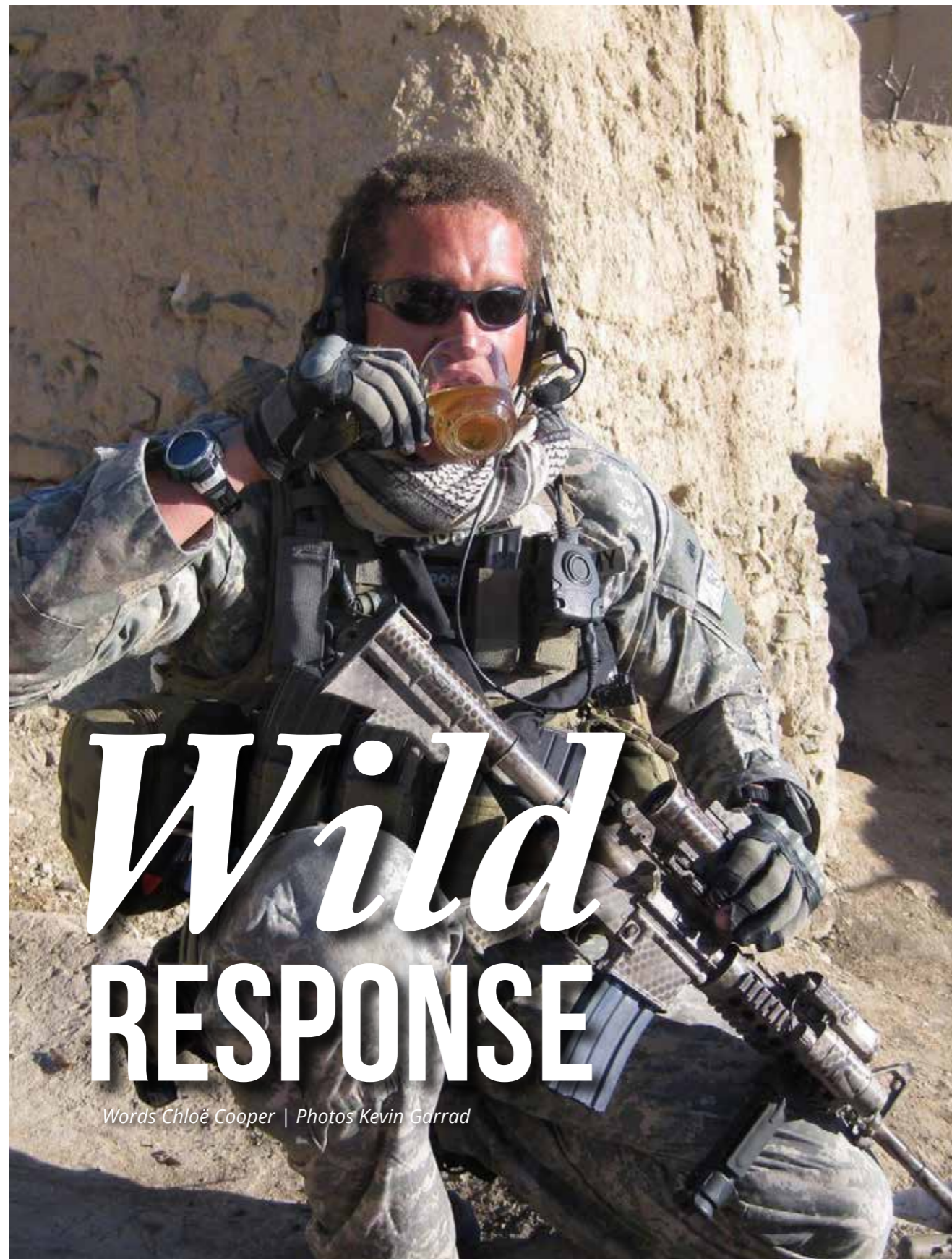


Southern Cross
SCHOOLS

A Pre-school, IEB Preparatory School and College nestled in Hoedspruit, South Africa

ISASA
www.thescschools.com
raptor@scschools.co.za
+27 15 793 0590/1

jeb



Wild RESPONSE

Words Chloë Cooper | Photos Kevin Garrad

Once a little boy growing up in England and dreaming of being a zookeeper, Kevin Garrad realised his childhood passion for animals in South Africa, where he now runs Wild Response – a worldwide organisation creating lasting solutions to protect endangered species and improve the lives of wildlife rangers and the communities they serve. In between, he spent 18 years in the US Special Forces, serving eight tours of duty. The powerful combination of a deep love for wildlife, tempered by a unique military background, led Kevin to some of the world's most remote destinations. From the bush of South Africa to the jungles of Thailand, Kevin and his team at Wild Response are contributing to conservation efforts by providing critical training to field rangers.

We sat down with Kevin to find out where it all began and to chat about his aspirations for the future. What a pleasure to meet another incredible person in conservation.



Q: WHEN WE FIRST GOT YOU ON THE PHONE, YOU WERE IN THAILAND. WHAT WORK ARE YOU DOING THERE?

KG: We are training wildlife rangers, offering support to our NGO partners, and developing our future programs in Thailand, all of which is part of our ongoing work in southeast Asia. The rangers and conservation services are massively under-equipped and under-supplied and as a result, natural rainforests and endangered species – like tigers and elephants – are under serious threat. An amazing aspect to working in that part of the world is the Thai culture and the diversity of the landscape. In harmony with 2022 being the 'year of the tiger', our main focus is on tigers as the keystone species and the rangers who protect them. We are also supporting ongoing efforts in reforestation and the planting of trees; this is vital to the survival of tigers in the wild. Their range is shrinking at an alarming rate. It's all about sustainability.

Q: AS A TEENAGER, YOU MOVED FROM THE UK TO THE US AND JOINED THE US ARMY. TELL US ABOUT THAT TRANSITION?

KG: I grew up in Hertfordshire, England and when I finished school at 16, I moved to the United States with my family. It was 2001 when I joined the army and the events of 9/11 put me on a military path for the next 18 years. I obtained US citizenship through my service in war zones and after eight tours of duty, I retired due to injuries. I'd spent ten of those years as a Special Forces 'Green Beret' so by the time I left, I was

ready to find somewhere far away and warm to pursue my childhood passion: wildlife conservation.

Q: WHERE DID YOUR PASSION FOR WILDLIFE AND WILD PLACES COME FROM?

KG: I've always loved animals. My cousin worked with endangered red species at the zoo (the red pandas were my favourite) so I had an insight into the different threats facing these animals in their natural habitats. This struck a chord with a younger me. I was fascinated by the work involved in conserving these special animals and thought being a zookeeper would one day be my dream job! But, it wasn't the path my parents wanted me to take ... I was told "it doesn't pay very much" and "it's for dreadlock hippies". That's why educating the youth about how to get into conservation really speaks to me.

Q: TELL US ABOUT THE WORK YOU'RE DOING IN KLASERIE?

KG: A large focus is on supplying the field rangers in Klaserie and the Associated Private Nature Reserves (APNR) with life-saving medical training developed specifically for their environment and associated threats. There are rangers working all over the world without the adequate training or equipment to keep themselves safe; this results in one in seven rangers being seriously injured while working. Only 15% of rangers we've asked have said they're equipped with sufficient medical supplies and training, and this is just too low. In early-2020, we ran the first Ranger Combat Casualty Care course in South Africa and this has since expanded and evolved into the Ranger Advanced Medical Program (RAMP). It's a realistic, hands-on, scenario-based training that is already saving lives in the

field. Currently, we have trained more than 250 rangers and conservation practitioners and donated over 150 individual first aid trauma kits. The spread of these kits and training throughout the region makes the area safer and increases the likelihood of a life being saved in the future.

Q: WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER A CAREER HIGHLIGHT?

KG: I definitely have two career highlights. Becoming a member of the Special Forces and getting that 'Green Beret' ... I mean after a year-long selection process, it was a gruelling but monumental moment in my career. And the other highlight was after I took off my beret and rekindled my childhood passion by founding my own wildlife conservation organisation, Wild Response. It really has been a gratifying, full-circle moment for me.

Q: DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL HERO?

KG: Of course, that would be my spirit animal, Sir David Attenborough! I grew up watching four TV channels and he'd play on BBC TV on a Sunday night. I think any kid dreaming of working with animals would look up to him as a hero. So right from the early days, dreaming of being a conservationist and working on the ground in far-off countries to help save endangered wildlife, Sir David was an inspiration.

Q: THE 10-YEAR GOAL FOR WILD RESPONSE?

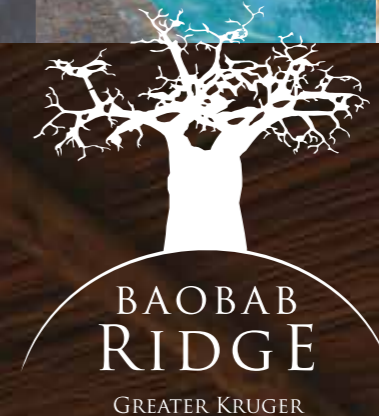
KG: My ultimate, personal goal in life is to prevent endangered species from being pushed into extinction. We want to expand considerably over the next ten

years and see our partners grow with us. I seriously want to have a measurable impact on the future and see partnerships as the way to achieve this. I'd like to see Wild Response established as a global wildlife conservation NGO in Africa, Asia, and South America, and witness the success of programs we've set up now receive the necessary support to grow and evolve.

As an organization, I want our staff to become role models to others who want to immerse themselves in conservation; by sharing deeply their own learning on how to become involved responsibly.

Q: HOW CAN PEOPLE HELP?

KG: Awareness is key. When people who are passionate about wildlife conservation follow our journey and share our stories and successes, we are widening our reach. A really simple, yet effective, way to help is by tuning in to our social media channels where we share our own news as well as important conservation news from around the world. Please follow our @wild_response handle on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. ■



WWW.BAOBABRIDGE.COM



THE DISCOVERY SPORT.
CHALLENGE THE ORDINARY.



ABOVE & BEYOND



The Discovery Sport is carefully crafted for your craving for more. From its modern grille design and Matrix LED headlamps that add to its demanding presence, to its exhilarating capabilities built to push the boundaries, this SUV truly is fit for every lifestyle. Get ready to discover how an inspiring combination of refined Land Rover strength, versatility and the finest embodiment of luxurious design has come together to challenge the ordinary.

Land Rover Waterford
Witkoppen Rd & Waterford Dr, Fourways, Johannesburg, 2191
011 658 1445

<https://retailers.landrover.co.za/waterford>