



KRUGER MAGAZINE

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WINTER 2026



KNP HISTORY:

Legends of the
Kruger - Henry
Charles Christoffel
(Harry) Wolhuter



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The first Centenary of the Kruger National Park - Part I

Conservation Project: Protect the future - Protect our home »

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pages 8 & 9 for
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SETTING the SCENE

Welcome to the
Winter 2026
issue of



*"There is a comfortable
stillness around, making
this our favourite time of
the year."*



The Kruger Lowveld is in its familiar winter jacket, with coloured leaves falling everywhere, and wild animals starting to flock to waterholes for a drink and the remaining patches of green vegetation. There is a comfortable stillness around, making this our favourite time of the year, as temperatures are warm during the day, with cooler evenings – perfect for lighting a fire to *braai*.

Part I of our celebration of Kruger National Park's 100th birthday by our expert contributor, Joep Stevens, makes for wonderful reading, as the article delves into the milestones reached over the past century. It is unbelievable that the development across all aspects of the Park happened simultaneously, and mostly through coordination and dedication. Read this on page 14.

As KRUGER MAGAZINE continues to celebrate the Kruger National Park Centenary, we also warmly invite stakeholders across the Greater Kruger landscape to participate in this important milestone through future issues and shared storytelling.

Animal communication has always intrigued mankind – how many times have you heard someone say, "If this animal could talk, I wonder what he would say?" Our new series on animal communication is most interesting, starting with elephants, our gentle giants. Find the fascinating article by our expert, Dr Ian Whyte, on page 32.

Where there is a beginning, there is also an end. The last article in the series about Life in the Rivers, by Dr Piet and his wife, Bronwyn Kotzé, invites us to pay attention to what lives in the waterways of the Kruger National Park. An undisputed fact is that if the life in the rivers is not there, the waterways are not healthy. Read the final article on page 74.

*Curl up in your favourite chair, and enjoy this 36th issue
of KRUGER MAGAZINE!*

Pat Botha and Quintus Strauss

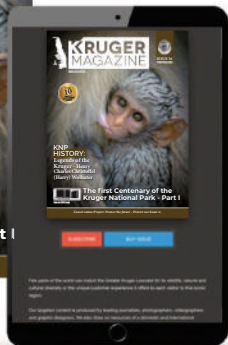
THE WORLD-RENOWNED KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

It is one of the largest game reserves in Africa. It covers an area of nearly two million hectares (20 000km²) in the province of Limpopo and Mpumalanga in the north-east of South Africa. It extends 360km from north to south and 65km from east to west.

It became South Africa's first National Park in 1926. In 1993, fences between Associated Private Nature Reserves (APNR) and the Kruger National Park were removed to encourage wildlife migration and the Greater Kruger National Park was born.







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Our choice for the Winter 2026 cover came from our entrant for the *My Kruger Experience* article. Vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*) babies are born after a gestation period of about 157-168 days and are cared for by their mothers and the community, developing strong social bonds early in life. At birth these little monkeys weigh only between 300 and 400 grams. For the first week after birth, the baby will cling to its mother's stomach for safety and warmth. Vervet monkey infants start to interact and play with other monkeys as early as one month old. Go to page 114 to read *My Kruger Experience*.

Photo © Lisl Moolman



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KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

CENTENNIAL WINE COLLECTION



The Kruger National Park celebrates its 100-year centenary in May 2026, marking a century of conservation and wildlife protection. Officially proclaimed on 31 May 1926, it has become one of the most iconic wildlife reserves in the world.

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Publisher: Pat Botha
Editor: Quintus Strauss

PRODUCTION TEAM

Erika Alberts
Meldt van der Spuy
Carmen le Roux

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Tanya Lacey

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Pat Botha
Quintus Strauss
Alfred Abia Mothlabedi
Joep Stevens
Dr Ian Whyte
Savanna Strauss
Ralf Kalwa
Dr Piet and Bronwyn Kotze
Nicolas Clair
Lisl Moolman

ADVERTISING SALES

Pat Botha
+27 (0)76 077 7035
pat@mlpmedia.co.za

Quintus Strauss
+27 (0)72 512 3589
quintus@mlpmedia.co.za

Debbie Montanari
+27 (0)83 230 6722
debbie@mlpmedia.co.za

ACCOUNTS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Financial Director: Pat Botha
+27 (0)76 077 7035
pat@mlpmedia.co.za

INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Managing Director: Erika Alberts
+27 (0)78 539 7700
erika@mlpmedia.co.za

PRINTING

CTP Printers Cape Town
+27 (0)21 203 8000

DISTRIBUTION

On The Dot Supply Chain Management
Tel: +27 (0)11 713 9879

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Winter months tend to slow down the pace somewhat, and therefore provide a perfect time to reflect. Naturally, with reflection comes realisation followed by decisions. Decisions to change certain things and for the majority mostly towards a more positive outcome.

Mother Nature intended it so. Mother Nature is not just for flora and fauna – it is also intended for us humans to take note and make use of the time she gives us.

With this in mind, the KRUGER MAGAZINE team makes time to breathe, reflect and be thankful. With all the electronics and digital advances around us, we are grateful to still be able to produce a printed magazine. Without our contributors, readers, sponsors and advertisers, this would not be possible. A warm thank you to all!

Together, we will certainly keep it going, so keep sharing your First Visit and Kruger Experiences with us. May your winter be warm, cosy and full of beautiful dreams that come true.

Enjoy this Winter 2026 issue of KRUGER MAGAZINE.

Pat Botha and Quintus Strauss

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For 100 years, Kruger National Park has safe guarded some of Africa's most extraordinary wildlife and landscapes. This special centenary collection honours that legacy while helping protect its future.

Proceeds from this range support a relief fund dedicated to preserving the park and ensuring that future generations can continue to experience the wild heart of Kruger.

All funds raised go directly to the SANParks Honorary Rangers, who play a vital role in supporting conservation efforts within the park.



Available exclusively at all Park's Shops in the Kruger National Park.

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MY FIRST VISIT TO GREATER KRUGER



Image © Vector Tradition



IRRESISTIBLE CALL TO RETURN

The Kruger National Park was not on my 'To Visit' list until September 2011 when out of boredom, I decided to give it a try. It wouldn't matter much even if we came out bored because we would have paid absolutely nothing.

We entered through the Orpen Gate and were greeted by a large troop of baboons. They were very entertaining with their playfulness, rebelliousness and tantrums, especially the young ones.

Further into the Park, the floodgates opened. Hardly 500m from reception, we encountered a large mixed herd of impala, kudu, wildebeest and zebra. We watched them for some time, not knowing that they are the most common species

We always encounter large herds of Burchell's zebra (*Equus quagga burchellii*) along the H1-6.



My first lion (*Panthera leo*) sighting along the H7.

in the Park, together with warthog, giraffe and waterbuck. About 8km from the gate we came across a large contingent of cars packed on either side of the road, some jockeying for better positions. Some tourists were hanging out of windows and others using the openings in the sunroofs to take photos. We followed their gaze and almost simultaneously we shouted: "Lions!".



Indeed! Lions on our first visit, feeding on the carcass of a zebra! Six of them! That was incredible! We stayed for about two hours at the scene before driving further, still overwhelmed by the exhilarating experience.

MY FIRST VISIT TO GREATER KRUGER

Members of the Miracle of God Church from Giyani.



Members of the Zinjhiva clan from Phalaborwa at Orpen Gate.



A herd of African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) crossing the road, causing a traffic jam.



Seeing an African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) live from close range was a real treat.

Further up the road we encountered yet another heart-stopping sighting. At the end of a bend, we stumbled upon a mother leopard and her young cub crossing the road. We stopped immediately and watched her as she slowly guided the hesitant cub across.

She frequently stared at us with her green, piercing eyes, at times snarling, sending chills down our spines. The leopard and her cub eventually crossed the road and disappeared into the bush, causing another chaos as the cars which were parked haphazardly tried to reverse or turn around. Up the road a large herd of buffalo crossed the road, and it took about twenty minutes before we could proceed.

We spent the whole day in the Park exploring the roads around Satara and retraced the H7 on our way back home. The lions have finished the zebra carcass but were still at the same spot, panting heavily with gorged bellies.

The visit led to many more follow-up visits and the excitement was always overwhelming. The thrill of waiting at reception to register and get your entry permit, the sweet scent of the bush, the symphony of bird calls, the suspense of what your first major sighting would be and the excitement of seeing stationary vehicles, all leave lasting memories within you.

During our visits to the Kruger throughout the years, we had exceptional sightings; cheetah making a kill after a patient, calculated stalking followed by a high-speed chase; wild dogs tearing a prey apart, and a pack of over twenty hyaenas intimidating two male lions feeding on the last scraps of a buffalo carcass, ultimately forcing them off their dinner.

Besides sightings of the big cats which always induce great excitement and satisfaction among tourists, there are other equally hair-raising sightings.

“Every visit to the Kruger begins with anticipation, but it is the moments you never expect.”

A large herd of buffalo rushing to a water hole during the dry season is a dramatic spectacle. What you see is a wave of dark, muscular bodies with formidable, curved horns, kicking up a massive cloud of dust amid the thundering of thousands of hooves and low contact grunts and bellows.

The friendliness among the people you meet in the Kruger towards one another is always amazing. You can freely start a conversation with anyone about wildlife and sightings, especially around sightings and rest spots.

A warm smile, together with a friendly wave or “hi” and a brief comment about the day’s sightings or the weather can be breaking the

Granny and grandchildren at N’wanetzi View Point.



Braai-time at Satara.



MY FIRST VISIT TO GREATER KRUGER



A mixed herd of Burchell's zebra and blue wildebeest (*Connochaetes taurinus*).

ice. At rest spots, where people are relaxing, questions like “Any luck spotting leopard/lion/cheetah today?” always kick-starts a friendly conversation, and if they had such a sighting, they are always ready to explain where and when the sighting was.

The more you visit the Park, the more you learn to read the language of the bush. Vultures descending in multiple numbers to the ground indicate that a carcass has been located, and if they are perched on the surrounding trees and on the ground, the possibility is that they are waiting for larger predators to finish feeding or leave the area before they could descend to feed on what is left. Antelopes and primates snorting or barking alarm calls signal the presence of a predator.

Water holes always attract large numbers of prey animals, especially during dry seasons, and the absence of such could mean that there are lions or any other prime predator nearby.

Elephants, despite their large size, don’t tolerate any predator, even if it poses little or no threat to them. I was watching elephants feeding peacefully when a hyaena emerged from behind a bush and stopped to watch them. On spotting the hyaena, the elephants lifted their massive heads, flared their flapping ears, held their swinging trunks high and rushed forward to the intruder amid sharp trumpeting roars. The hyaena let out a high-pitched cackle and fled, leaving the agitated herd behind.

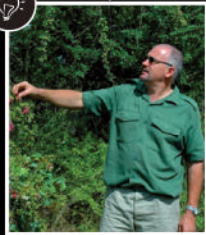


A trip to the Kruger is not just a vacation but an opportunity for one to connect with nature. The diverse landscapes, the thrilling game drives that exceed expectations, the sounds as well as the scents of the bush leave you with the desire to return again and again. ■

Alfred Abia Mothlabedi

The first Centenary of the Kruger National Park (1926 to 2026) – Part I of III

by Joep Stevens | Photos © Joep Stevens unless otherwise indicated



<< Joep Stevens

is a keen historian who was introduced to the Kruger National Park by his parents in 1966. This ignited his interest in and passion for the Park.



Watch this!

'Beyond the Wild – Kruger to the World | Discover Africa's Iconic Wilderness'. Published by SANParks, 9 Jul 2025. <https://tinyurl.com/msp959m8>

The monumental granite bust of Paul Kruger stands at the Paul Kruger Gate – the principal southern entrance to the Kruger National Park. The monument commemorates Kruger's role in proclaiming the Sabie Game Reserve in 1898, a landmark conservation decision that laid the foundation for what would later become the Kruger National Park.

Introduction

The Kruger National Park was officially proclaimed on 31 May 1926 and in this edition, we cover the pre-proclamation era including the provincial reserves and briefly look into earlier inhabitants of the area. We cover the Selati Railway Line, the residents after proclamation, the fencing of the Park, human capital, camp development and droughts & floods.

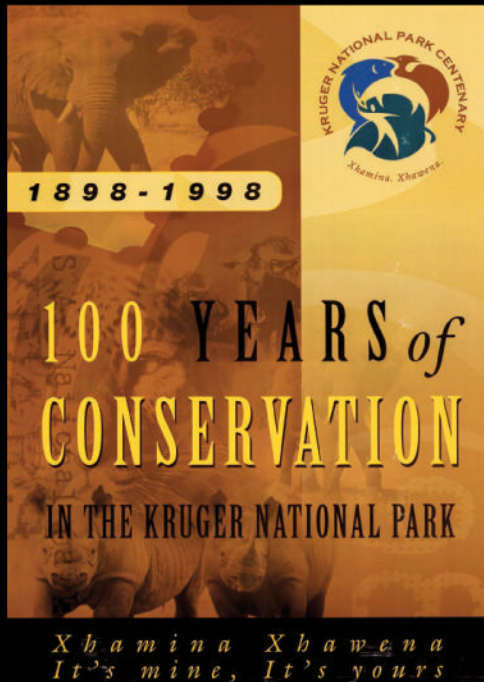


Over the remaining two editions of 2026, we will cover other topics of interest for the centenary, inter alia, wildlife population management, reintroductions of wildlife, water for wildlife, scientific research, guests under apartheid, game ranger sections, branding & logos, alien biota, wilderness trails, leopard attacks on humans, TEBA/ WNLA, sustainable utilisation of natural resources, tarring of roads, pontoons, etc.



Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) – 4 October 2016.





 President Nelson Mandela officially launched the Kruger National Park Centenary celebrations at Skukuza on 26 March 1998, commemorating 100 years since the proclamation of the Sabie Game Reserve in 1898 – the foundation from which the Kruger National Park would later emerge. The address highlighted conservation, regional cooperation and the importance of safeguarding South Africa's natural heritage for future generations.

  **Learn more!** Scan the QR code or visit: <https://tinyurl.com/2h2ab6sz> to read: 'Address at the launch of the Kruger National Park Centenary Celebrations Skukuza, 26 March 1998'.

Promotional poster for the 1998 centenary celebrating the formal proclamation of the 'Government' reserve, renamed Sabie Game Reserve in 1902.

Not long after the proclamation of the Kruger National Park, the crown jewel of South African National Parks, it soon became known and famous as one of the largest, most unique and best national parks in Africa and the world.

Background

In **1998** the Park celebrated 100 years of conservation under the motto *Xhamina Xawena*, meaning 'it's mine, it's yours' and the dignitaries were privileged to have the first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela, deliver the key-note address.

This centennial event related to the **26 March 1898** proclamation of the Government Game Reserve (called 'Gouvernements-Wildtuin'), essentially the considerably smaller area under conservation between the Sabie and Crocodile Rivers.

Although the Park is much revered by current guests due to its wilderness qualities and absence of human beings, (except for guests in designated



Commemorative ashtray celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Kruger Park and SANParks in 1976.

tourism facilities) as well as staff performing a great variety of functions, it is well known that human beings have actually been an integral part (albeit on a relatively small scale) of the landscape for millennia, and the Park abounds with evidence thereof. Since its inception, management has been driven by a desire to minimize human influence and maintain pristine characteristics.

 Interestingly, many guests experience the Park from a somewhat skewed philosophy of 'this is how it was before man came in' and before 20th century modernization.

Did you know?

Two major centenary milestones are associated with the Kruger National Park. In **1998**, celebrations marked 100 years since the proclamation of the **Sabie Game Reserve in 1898** – regarded as the foundation of modern conservation in the region. The year 2026 marks a different milestone: 100 years since the formal establishment of the **Kruger National Park** under the National Parks Act of 1926.



Commemorative mug showing the logo of the 1998 centenary.

KNP – CENTENARY

Iron goods from Masorini Heritage Site were used as currency during the Iron Age era – 10 June 2018.



Old iron furnace at Masorini Heritage Site with Shikumbu Hill in the background – 10 June 2018.



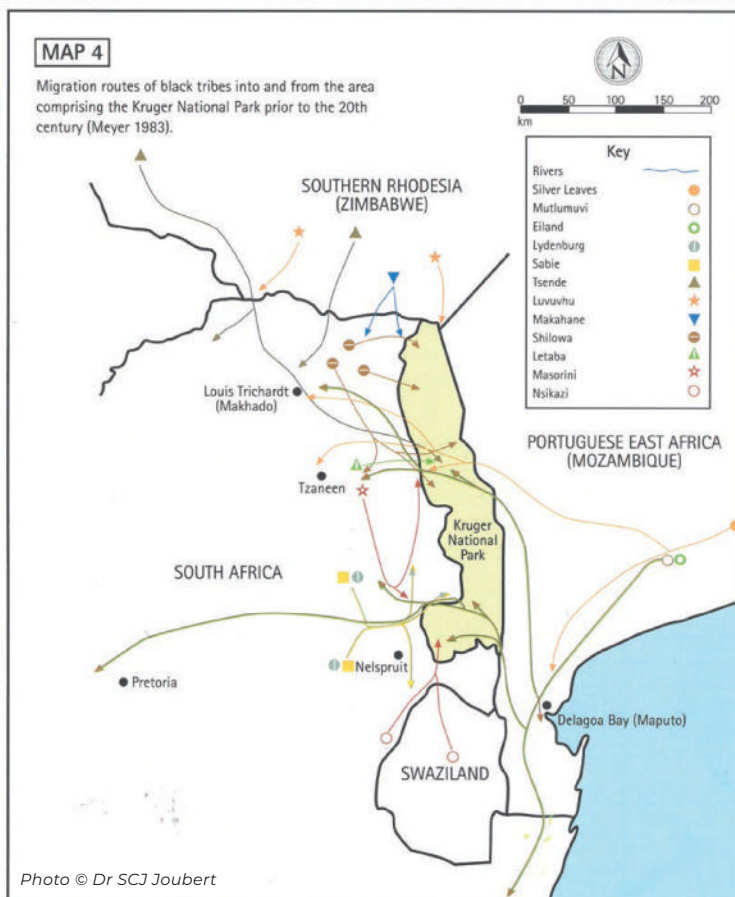
Before Proclamation

Stone Age inhabitants

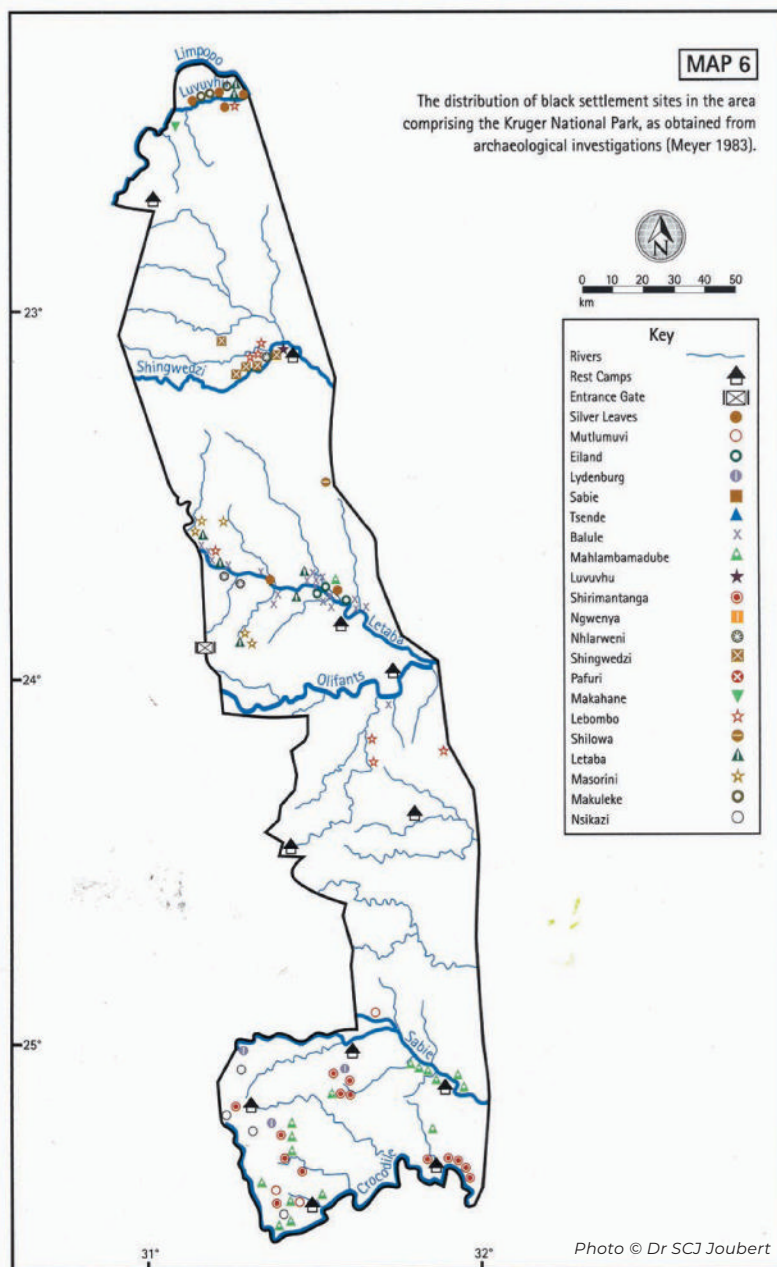
Early Stone age tools dating back about 200 000 years, have been found at several sites across the Park, especially in the southern areas. A hunter-gatherer lifestyle was followed, and the impact was low with a population estimated between 1 500 and 3 000 persons.

Iron Age era

This era commenced around 300AD with medium impact, and an estimated population of 15 000 dominated by metalworking skills and a more residential lifestyle based on hunting and pastoralism. Population fluctuations were driven by climatic factors and disease. The mid-1800's to 1900 was an unstable period, with tribal conflict and drought, resulting in migrations and resettlement.



Map showing migration routes of black tribes before the 20th century in the area that is today the Kruger National Park.



Map showing areas of black settlement determined from archaeological investigations – the majority being in the vicinity of rivers.

Rock art in the Kruger National Park.

Photo © SANParks archive



The founding of the Kruger National Park traces back to the proclamation of the Sabie Game Reserve in 1898 under President Paul Kruger. Early conservation pioneers including James Stevenson-Hamilton and Harry Wolhuter played a decisive role in protecting wildlife populations during a period of extensive hunting and frontier expansion.



Colonial influence

The first non-Africans influencing the area where the Park is today, were the Arabian traders up to the eighteenth century along the east coast, followed by the Portuguese who displaced them. The Dutch followed with the Voortrekker pioneers a century later from the south. The tsetse fly, as well as malaria, no doubt slowed down the exploration, exploitation and settlement of Europeans in the Lowveld in the nineteenth century.

The development of the Park had its beginnings in the recognition that the impact of humans on Lowveld game populations and hunting prospects in the late 1800's and early 1900's, was unsustainable and that the game needed protection.

The impacts of professional hunting in the erstwhile Transvaal were enormous.



Investigating the remains of the old railway line along the H5 road – September 2016.

The Railway Line

By **1894** the Selati Railway Line had been completed from Komatipoort up to Newington in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve (with the exception of the bridge over the Sabie River at what was later to become Skukuza), and widespread corruption and bribery were uncovered, resulting in the Government halting all work. The Second South African War (Anglo-Boer War) broke out in **1899** and only after the Union of South Africa was formed on **31 May 1910**, did work resume to complete the Selati Railway Line. The official opening up to Tzaneen took place on **25 October 1912**, and it joined the northern line (between Pretoria and Musina) at Zoekmekaar by **1915**. The line had both disadvantages and advantages for the Park.

In **1923** the first official tourists stayed on the train on the *Round in Nine* tours that were arranged from Johannesburg to the Lowveld and back, and the night spent on the train at Sabi Bridge (renamed Skukuza in **1932**), became a highlight of the tour.

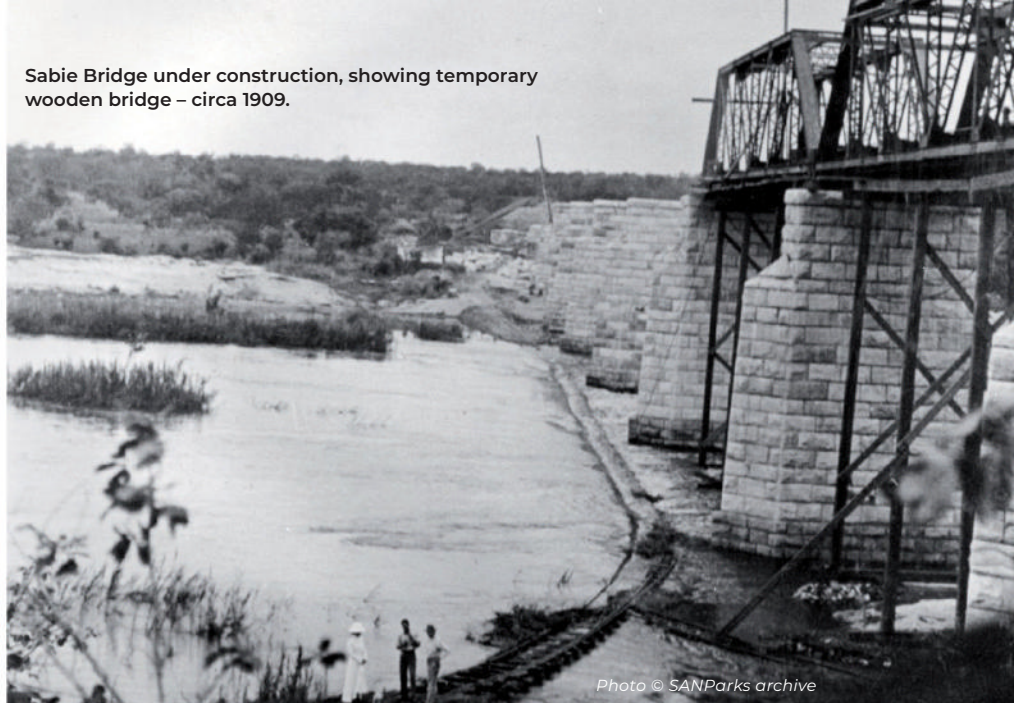
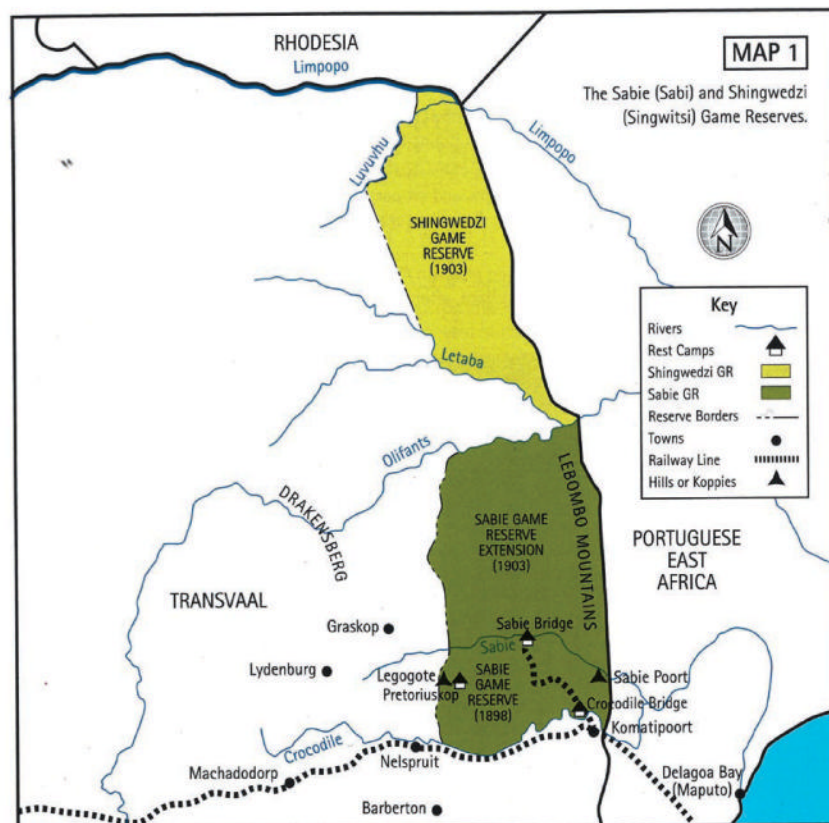


Photo © SANParks archive



Map showing the first provincial Sabie and Shingwedzi game reserves in 1903.

Photo © Dr SCJ Joubert

The ranger would entertain the guests around a big fire, and guests loved the thrill of being watched by wild animals – and the warden accounted as follows:

“The interest betrayed by the public in the animals and the remarks I overheard when mixing with the

guests, made me at last confident that, could only our national park scheme mature, it would become popular and therefore an asset to the country. It was beyond measure encouraging to feel that the South African public, despite tradition, might be content to look at animals without wanting to kill them”.



Watch this! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/yb59wkft> to watch the video: 50s Kruger Lions on Trail. Published by Kruger National Park History.



Watch this! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/5n76kbyv> to watch the video: Battle at Kruger. Published by Jason Schlosberg, 3 May 2007.



Male lion (*Panthera leo*) – 26 March 2016.



The viral “Battle at Kruger” wildlife video, filmed in the Greater Kruger region, became one of the most widely viewed safari clips in YouTube history, attracting more than 95 million views globally and introducing millions of viewers to the drama and biodiversity associated with the Kruger National Park landscape. The extraordinary international reach of the footage highlighted the growing role of digital storytelling and wildlife tourism in elevating the Kruger’s global profile during the years leading towards the Park’s centenary celebrations.



White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*) – 3 January 2020.



The line also had its disadvantages, mainly collisions with animals on the rails and the risk of causing fires – and when there was increased pressure to develop and electrify the line during the late 1960’s, it was decided to build a new line that runs along the south-western border of the Park. This new section was commissioned on **23 August 1971**. By **1973**, all traffic on the line through the Park had ceased, and the actual railway line was used to erect the eastern boundary fence with Mozambique in **1975** (fence posts), and also to improve fences around rest camps.

Sabi and Shingwedzi Reserves

The years just prior to the **1926** proclamation (**1921** and **1922**) were particularly difficult, and this

related to the post-World War 1 situation, with increased criticism of the concept to ‘*conservation without a purpose*’ by many, especially the farmers who were eager to acquire land, specifically along the rivers. The Selati Railway Line had been completed to Tzaneen (in **1912**) but had no real

purpose and concessions were put out along the line just north of Crocodile Bridge, to be used for farming, harvesting wood and even mining. Further, there was pressure from the farm owners (between Sabie and Olifants Rivers) to start farming, amongst others, with cattle.

KNP – CENTENARY

Proclamation of the Kruger National Park

1 On **31 May 1926** the Kruger National Park was proclaimed under Proclamation No. 197 in the Government Gazette of **10 September 1926**, with borders described as recommended by the Ludorf Commission. On this day the National Parks Act (Act No. 56 of 1926) was passed by parliament.

2 The first Board was named by the Governor General and met on **16 September 1926** in Pretoria for the first time under chairmanship of Senator WJC (Jack) Brebner. This historic first meeting was also attended by the Minister of Lands, PGW Grobler.

Excerpt from inventory of residents for Section 9 (Shangoni) for October 1945. Photo © SANParks archive

O.P. 9.2306—1945—12.26. N.P.B. 42.

LOG OF JOURNEYS.

Track T.P. 3. *Dist of residents residing on 109.*

Speedometer Reading last day of month.

Date	Miles	Description of Journey
October 1945		
1st	1	Feol Adhloni Head of Family
2nd	2	Jely Adhloni
3rd	3	Kodinye Adhloni
4th	4	Keliche Adhloni
5th	5	Muchlay Adhloni
6th	6	Makibela Goni Head of Family
7th	7	Goni
8th	8	Goni
9th	9	Goni
10th	10	Goni
11th	11	Ponci Matabula Head of Family
12th	12	Konwani Matabula
13th	13	Shikayana Matabula
14th	14	Uyeyana Matabula
15th	15	Makibela Matabula
16th	16	Moyase Matabula
17th	17	Masamhlabi Matabula
18th	18	John Masinga
19th	19	Wilson Masinga
20th	20	Donor Masinga
21st	21	Salilam Mablanga Head of Family
22nd	22	Shimake Mablanga
23rd	23	Sem Mablanga
24th	24	Rongelw Mablanga
25th	25	Shelate Mablanga
26th	26	Suratane Malulike Head of Family
27th	27	Sibere Malulike
28th	28	Sherteli Malulike
29th	29	Mashula Malulike
30th	30	Alison Malulike
31st	31	Makashona Malulike
32nd	32	Sakalakas Malulike
33rd	33	Fie Malulike
34th	34	Thompson Malulike
35th	35	Mabali Malulike
36th	36	Setraye Malulike
37th	37	Katana Malulike
38th	38	Makibela Malulike
39th	39	Makibela Malulike

Disengagement of Officer 1/5.

97

3519—30/4/27—10-100. No. 1.

NATIONAL PARKS BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

Kruger National Park.—Native Squatters Rent.

207/2/18

£1. 10s.

357

RECEIVED from *M. Mbuluka c. Bema*

Chief Headman *Nchile*

Nationality *Orl.*

the sum of One Pound Ten Shillings in respect of his residence on and cultivation of the farm *Shantane Dabkum* No. *6*

situate in the Kruger National Park, for the Year ending 31st December, 1926.

NOTE.—The above amount includes grazing fees for 10 head of large stock or 20 head of small stock.

18 AUG 1927 Date Stamp.

M. Mbuluka *18/8/27*

J. Maw Warden, Kruger National Park.

Receipt dated 18 August 1927 for 'squatters rent' for residents during the early years. Photo © SANParks archive



Tsonga women in the early years of the Kruger National Park – circa early 1900s. Photo © SANParks archive



Young maiden in village during the early years of the Kruger National Park – circa early 1900s. Photo © SANParks archive

“At the time of proclamation there were still several villages with African inhabitants.”

Management

For many years there was tension between Stevenson-Hamilton and the Board. The National Parks Act did not define the precise organisational responsibilities and administrative structure of the parties involved, especially the warden and the Board.

After the retirement of Stevenson-Hamilton, this did not improve, in fact during the early 1950's there were some irregularities that resulted in the appointment of Prof. F Hoek as a one-man commission of inquiry into the affairs and administration of the Board.

His report resulted in changes to the organisational structure and lines of managerial responsibility. A full time Director (R Knobel) was appointed, and control was centralised in Pretoria.



Paying a visit to the last Park resident, Nkayinkayi Mavundla, at Magashula's Kraal near Phabeni Gate with visitor Leni Westerhof – October 1992
Photo © Dick Westerhof



Last Park resident Nkayinkayi Mavundla at his village at Magashula's Kraal near Phabeni Gate – October 1992. Photo © Dick Westerhof

Development of the Park

The positive response of the animal populations to the interventions and protection afforded them during the Sabie and Shingwedzi Game Reserve era, together with the newly acquired legal status, enabled the Kruger National Park to be developed.

Residents

At the time of proclamation there were still several villages with African inhabitants, mainly close to water. Ranger- and other staff were recruited mainly from these "squatters", as these residents were derogatively referred to, and during the early years they were charged annual rent, as they were staying on Crown (State) Land. Park records show the following number of residents:

Year	Number of Residents
1947	1721
1957	429
1967	263
1977	59
1987	20

The last resident, Nkayinkayi Samuel Mavundla passed away at his Phabeni residence on **31 August 2000** and lies buried with his mother, Mothasi Mavundla at Magashula's Kraal near Phabeni Gate.



Grave of the last Park resident, Nkayinkayi Samuel Mavundla, at Magashula's Kraal near Phabeni Gate – 11 November 2011.



Last residential village at Magashula's Kraal near Phabeni Gate where Nkayinkayi Mavundla stayed – circa 1990. Photo © Dr U de V Pienaar



Iconic President Nelson Mandela at transfrontier event on boundary between South Africa and Mozambique – 4 October 2001.

Fencing the Boundaries

As agricultural activities expanded on the periphery of the Park, Stevenson-Hamilton in **1945**, indicated that at some stage the Park would need to be fenced. This was for various reasons, inter alia, wildlife-domestic animal diseases, confining game to the Park, and keeping domestic animals outside the Park.

There was a lot of debate and consultation on some of the difficult sections, e.g. the southern boundary along the Crocodile River, and the western boundary between the Sabie and Olifants Rivers. Some in the Sabi Sand wanted inclusion, but still wished to retain the option to keep cattle. Fencing of the southern, western and northern boundaries had been completed by **July 1961**. The northern boundary fence ran along the northern bank of the Luvuvhu River, as at that stage Pafuri was not yet part of the Park. During **1962**, the section of the eastern boundary fence between the Crocodile and Sabie Rivers, between the N'wanetsi and Olifants Rivers, as well as a section of 5 miles on either side of the Shingwedzi River, was



Eastern international boundary (between South Africa and Mozambique) fence between the Komati and Sabie Rivers – 4 January 2020.



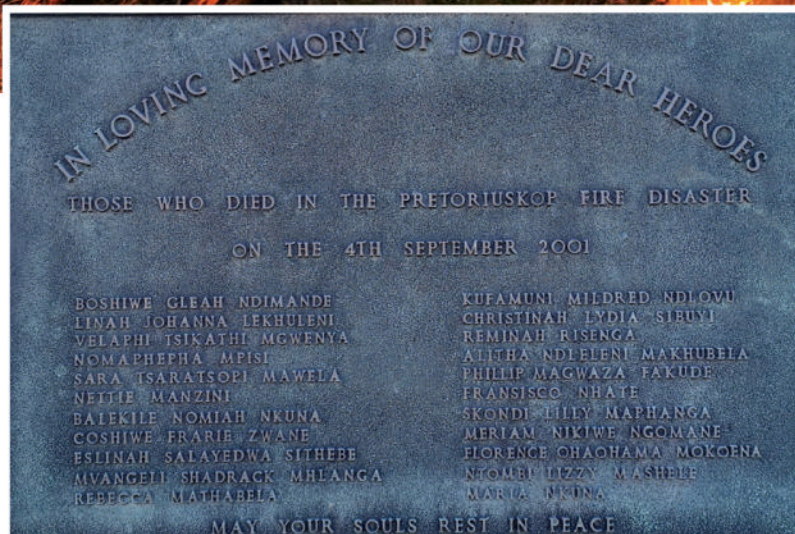
Maintenance being done on the western boundary of the Park – circa 1980s.
Photo © SANParks archive

completed. In **1967** a new fence was erected to the west of the Nsikazi River to cut off the area that had been de-proclaimed as a result of the changes to the Selati Railway Line and in **1968**, Numbi Hill was also fenced out.

When, in **1974** it became evident that Mozambique was soon to gain independence, the South African Government

issued an order that the entire eastern boundary was to be fenced without delay. Work commenced in **July 1974** and the fence, which also had to be elephant proof, was completed by **March 1976**. When the fence on the southern bank of the Limpopo River was completed in **1980**, the entire boundary of the Park was fenced.

Fires form part of nature in the Park, but can be dangerous, as was experienced on 4 September 2001 when 23 colleagues perished. Photo – 21 May 2020.



Memorial plaque at the staff cemetery at Kruger Gate where victims of the 4 September 2001 disaster lie buried – 25 September 2022.

During the 1990's an era of contractual and cross-international boundary co-operation commenced, and large sections of fence have since been removed, inter alia, the western boundary between the Sabie and Olifants Rivers in **1993** and large sections of the eastern boundary with Limpopo National Park in Mozambique from **2002** onwards.

Human Capital

The Kruger National Park would not have been this flagship

Park, nationally and globally, had it not been for the people who provided their labour, skills and commitment. Whether it be management, rangers who carry the burden of ensuring the integrity of the Park is maintained and wildlife is protected, scientists and researchers who ensure conservation decisions are well informed, technical staff who maintain roads and infrastructure, camp management and their teams, room attendants who ensure guests have a quality

stay in the Park, the finance management and staff who ensure revenues and expenditure are duly processed or the retail staff, ensuring guests are served and able to buy required products from the shops, to mention but a few – over the past century they have all contributed through loyalty, dedication and commitment to making this Park one of the best in the world!



I would like to pay tribute to the many employees who have paid the ultimate price and lost their lives while on duty in the Park over the past century. There are several dozen recorded. We think of the worst single disaster when nineteen contracted grasscutters and four rangers succumbed during the firestorm on **4 September 2001**. Several other fatalities were caused by road, train and plane accidents, many were due to attacks by wild animals, several were murdered by poachers, as well as shooting accidents, drownings and malaria. *RIP. May your sacrifice never be forgotten!*



Punda Maria Camp with communal kitchen and ablution facilities – 1957. Photo © Colin Bell

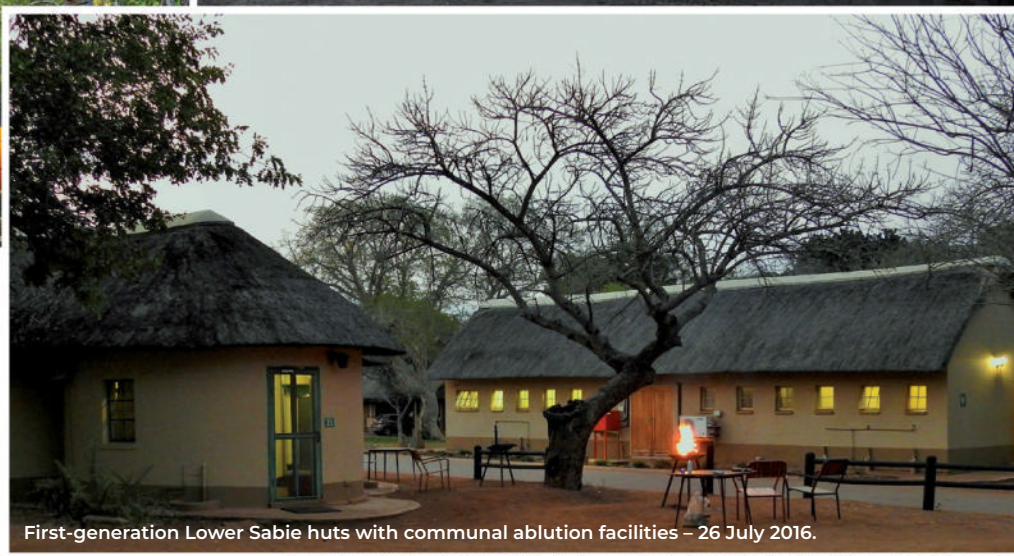


Olifants Camp – one of the second-generation camps showing bungalows with en-suite facilities – 1 June 2016.

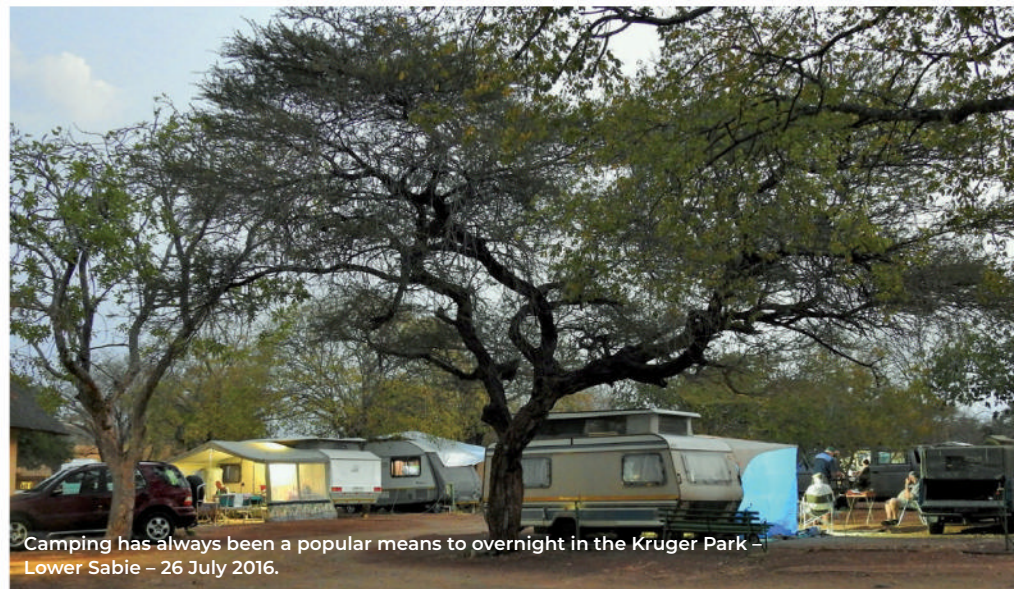
The thorny issue – development of ‘Tourism’

The development of ‘Tourism’ has always been a source of contention, whether it be on Board level, at Management level, between Conservation and Tourism or in public fora such as printed media, and more recently, social media.

The internal contentions were never hostile, as developments are guided by legislation, policies and park plans, and the roles of the different internal stakeholders are respected. It was seen as an important imperative in order to provide the Park and SANParks with the revenue required to perform its mandate. After proclamation, ‘Tourism’ started small with very basic facilities. Early overnight facilities were mainly provided at existing ranger posts or at gates/pontoons.



First-generation Lower Sabie huts with communal ablution facilities – 26 July 2016.



Camping has always been a popular means to overnight in the Kruger Park – Lower Sabie – 26 July 2016.

Pretoriuskop was the first camp that was developed from scratch and opened in **1928**. For several years it served as the main camp, as it was close to the main gate, initially called Pretoriuskop Gate, later renamed Numbi Gate, and the only camp that remained open all year round, while others were only open for 5 months in winter. Over time this changed, and facilities and roads were improved in order for camps to also remain open in summer. The last camps to open all year round were Shingwedzi and Punda Maria in **1977**.



Subsequent rest camps that were developed from scratch after Pretoriuskop (1928) were Punda Maria (1932), Shingwedzi (1933), Orpen (1954), Olifants (1960), Berg-en-Dal (1984) and Mopani (1991).



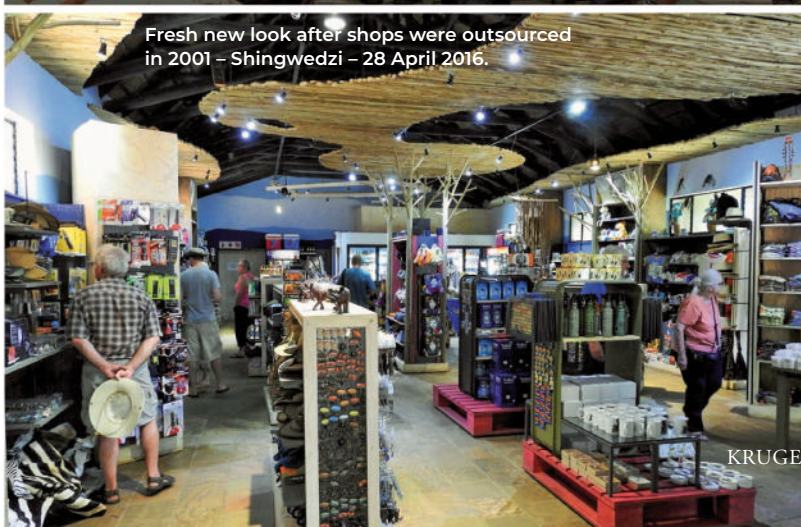
Major development at Skukuza with new restaurant, shop and reception being built – March 1954. Photo ©SANParks archive



Tshokwane Picnic Spot – arguably the most visited one in the Park – one of the many retail and food outlets that were outsourced in 2001 – 4 October 2016.



School children on an Environmental Education outing at Shingwedzi Camp – 28 April 2016.



Fresh new look after shops were outsourced in 2001 – Shingwedzi – 28 April 2016.



Smaller Bush Camps/ Lodges/ Satellite camps were in demand and Roodewal (1983), Jock (1983), Boulders (1985), Bateleur (1988), Shimuwini (1991), Talamati (1991), Sirheni (1991), Jakkalsbessie (1991), Biyamiti (1992), Tamboti (1995) and Pafuri Border Camp (2015) were opened.

In **2001**, SANParks decided to outsource food and retail outlets throughout the Park and also enter the five-star full-service lodge market and seven concessions were awarded. Subsequently, several other concessions were developed and awarded, and in **2020** Skukuza Safari Lodge was opened.

Floods and Droughts

A table is enclosed reflecting the average annual rainfall since rainfall started to be measured. The annual average comprises the total annual rainfall (1 July to 30 June), across the various stations where rainfall is measured and recorded. The number of stations has changed from early years and currently amounts to 23. The table shows the **1991/1992** rain year to have the lowest average since **1910/1911** (114 years). **2015/2016** was also a very dry year with many casualties amongst some of the herbivores, mainly hippopotamus and buffalo.

As with floods, the severity of droughts is influenced by a variety of factors, inter alia, the patchiness of rainfall, whether it was regional or widespread, what did previous-year figures look like (which would influence available water), etc.

With regards to floods, there are a few over the past century that fall in the megaflood category (in other words, record-breaking impacts, e.g. rainfall or river discharge (cubic metres per second)).

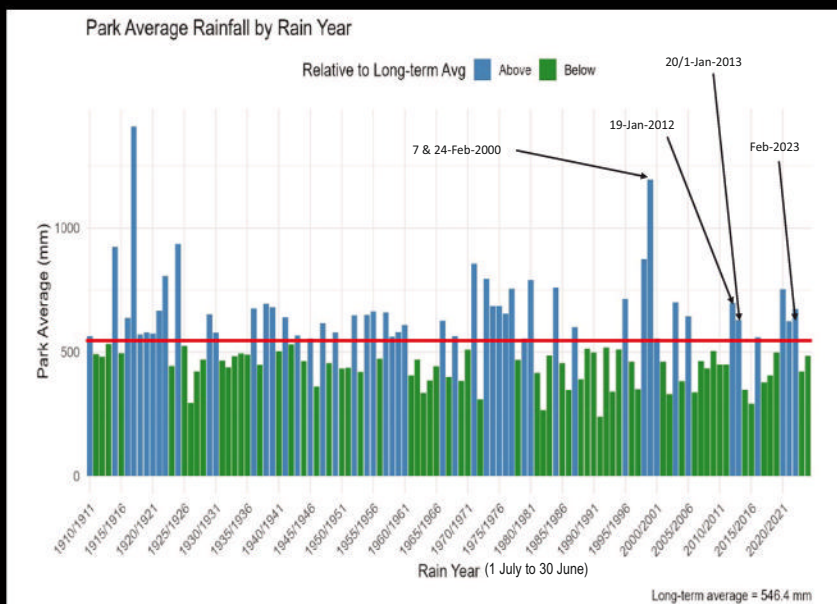


Chart reflecting annual rainfall averages across the Park and highlighting major megafloods over the past three decades. Image by SANParks



Watch this! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/4tsnest8> to watch the video: **Lessons and surprises from a drought in the Kruger National Park**. Published by Leadership for Conservation in Africa, 16 Jul 2020.

Well-trodden hippo path showing the long distances taken from water during droughts to find grazing – 17 December 2015.



Hippopotamus casualty during severe 2015–2016 drought – Lower Sabie area – 6 March 2016.



Buffalo carcass near Tshokwane during severe 2015–2016 drought – 6 March 2016.

7 February 2000 stands out as the record flood for the southern part of the Park, with the Sabie and Crocodile Rivers reaching record levels.

On **24 February 2000**, a second flood impacting the Park north of the Sabie River, contributed to the highest annual average achieved during the century, while also achieving the highest level on record at the Pafuri Pumpstation, at the confluence of the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers. The megaflood on **20/21 January 2013** in the

north of the Park resulted in the Shingwedzi River (after confluence with Mphongolo) reaching record levels and engulfing the entire camp.

On **19 January 2012**, the N'waswitsontso reached record levels in the Tshokwane vicinity, and the Olifants breached the high-water bridge on the H1-4/H1-5, for the first time ever. During **February 2023**, some of the internal rivers seemed to have reached record discharges, namely the N'watimhiri, N'watimwambu and the Salitje.

While the early years of the centenary (**1926**) started with a drought, the last year of the centenary (**2025/2026**) is very likely to be one of the wettest on record. The Letaba River reached record levels on **15 January 2026**, engulfing large portions of the camp and breaching the largest man-made dam in the Park, the Engelhard Dam. The past summer season was characterised by widespread rain across the Park (somewhat less in the south), and it is anticipated that by rain-year end on **30 June 2026**, the annual average will be one of the century's highest. ■

Photos © Marius Taljard



Learn more!

Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/44y79vdt> to access the Special Report by Joep Stevens. All issues are available in digital format on the KRUGER MAGAZINE App – now available to download from your preferred App store.

Raging floodwaters of the Letaba River, normally a calm stream at the Letaba high-water bridge on the H1-6, after heavy rains caused widespread flooding in January 2026. Refer to the special report, '2026 Floods Disrupt the Kruger National Park', in KRUGER MAGAZINE AUTUMN 2026.



Watch this!

The Story of Kruger Floods Over the Last Thirty Years. Published by Leadership for Conservation in Africa, 16 December 2025.



Watch this!

The Environmental Cost of the Kruger Floods. Published by Leadership for Conservation in Africa, 10 February 2026.

Kruger Untamed

TSHOKWANE RIVER CAMP
SATARA PLAINS CAMP



Winner of the Untamed Tales of Kruger Competition:

*"Some places stay with you forever.
Africa is one of them."*



Guilherme Nomelini Muniz

In the heart of the Lowveld, where the wild still writes its own rules, Kruger Untamed invited travellers to share their most unforgettable stories from Kruger National Park. **The Untamed Tales of Kruger** competition, launched across Kruger Untamed's social platforms and amplified by **KRUGER MAGAZINE**, called on visitors to capture those moments that linger long after the dust settles – encounters of tension, wonder, quiet revelation, or raw connection with Africa's greatest wildlife theatre.

Entries flowed in from all over the Park during the competition period. Some told of heart-stopping close calls with the Big Five. Others described transcendent sightings at first light or the profound stillness that only the African bush can offer. What mattered was authenticity and that unmistakable '*Kruger Untamed spirit*': raw, immersive, and deeply moving.

A distinguished panel first selected the top three entries. These were then presented to the wider community via Instagram Stories polls, where the audience had the final say.



Watch this! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/44mfddnr> to watch Guilherme Nomelini Muniz's winning entry in the **Untamed Tales of Kruger Competition**.



Tsholikasane (River Camp) (24°54'30" S 31°39'15" E)



Emerging victorious was **Guilherme Nomelini Muniz** (@gui_nomelini), whose entry captured the essence of what it means to be forever changed by this ancient landscape.

In his winning submission – a powerful video reel accompanied by the heartfelt caption, “Some places stay with you forever! Africa is one of them. This was definitely one of those moments **#MyUntamedStory**” – Guilherme distilled the magic that keeps drawing people back to Kruger. His story embodies the competition’s core: not just witnessing wildlife, but feeling the Park move something deep within you. Whether it was a majestic sighting, a predator-prey drama unfolding at a waterhole, or a simple moment of profound connection under the African sky, Guilherme’s tale resonated strongly with both the judging panel and the public.

Satara (Plains Camp) (24°23'50" S 31°46'40" E)

Guilherme’s win highlights how **Kruger National Park** continues to create stories that transcend the ordinary. As one of the world’s most iconic wilderness areas, it offers far more than game viewing – it offers transformation. The camps may pack away each September, but the stories endure, carried in the hearts of those who have walked its roads and breathed its wild air.

KRUGER MAGAZINE is proud to publish Guilherme’s winning Untamed Tale in this Winter 2026 issue. His story joins a growing collection of lived experiences that celebrate the Park’s centenary spirit and the enduring power of wild places. Congratulations to Guilherme Nomelini Muniz – may his tale inspire many more to step into the wild and create their own *Untamed* memories. Submit your own story at the next opportunity and become part of Kruger’s living narrative. The bush is waiting.



Learn more!

Website: www.krugeruntamed.com

Instagram: @krugeruntamed

Contact: reservations@krugeruntamed.com





WHERE THE SAFARI DAY FINDS ITS RHYTHM

Kruger Station, Skukuza

 (24°59'37.2" S 31°35'44.2"E)



K

rugers Station, Selati Concession, Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park.

There is a particular kind of moment that defines a day in Kruger National Park – not the leopard sighting or the golden-hour drive, but the pause in between. The coffee before dawn. The unhurried lunch after a morning on the road. The children finally running free while parents exhale. Kruger Station, the lifestyle precinct nestled within the historic Skukuza Rest Camp, has quietly made itself the place where those moments happen.

Positioned along the historical Selati line, Kruger Station pays homage to a significant piece of South African history – and in doing so, it has created something rare: a destination with genuine character. The original Selati Railway once connected Komatipoort with Tzaneen during the gold rush era, and that layered

The lounge and bar carriage of the Selati Train Restaurant, still in use today at Kruger Station.



heritage gives the precinct a sense of place that no amount of theming could manufacture. This winter, as Kruger celebrates its Centenary year, that connection to the Park's past feels particularly resonant.

The anchor of the experience is the 3638 Restaurant – a family-friendly eatery set within the old station, fully roofed yet open to the air, so guests remain connected to the sounds and light of the surrounding bush. The menu leans into generous, comfort-led cooking: exactly what a family needs after an early morning game drive and exactly what winter in the Lowveld calls for. Warm meals, hot drinks, and the unhurried pleasure of sitting down properly.



 **Watch this!** Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/2ndkdxvf> to watch the video: 'Welcome to Kruger Station'.



KRUGER STATION

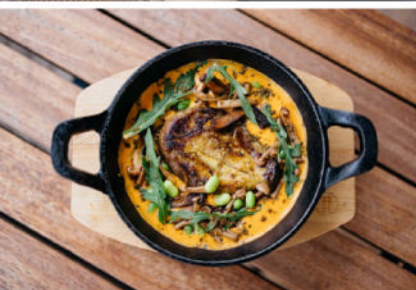


“This is where the safari extends beyond the vehicle – into shared meals, slower mornings, and the kind of time together that stays with families long after they’ve left the park gates behind.”

For those on the move, the En Route Grab N’ Go deli offers flexible breakfast and lunch options – a practical grace note for families working around gate times and afternoon drives. Two bar areas, including the Round in 9 Bar, provide distinct social spaces within the precinct, while the Departing Soon Café handles coffee and soft-serve duties with equal seriousness.

 Then there is Lil’ Gricers – a dedicated safe haven for children – semi-shaded, thoughtfully designed, and liberating for parents who need twenty minutes of uninterrupted conversation.

Add complimentary Wi-Fi and well-maintained facilities, and Kruger Station quietly becomes the most civilised pause point in the Park.



 **Learn more!** Kruger Station, Selati Concession, Skukuza Rest Camp, KNP. Tel: +27 (0)13 591 6000 | info@krugerstation.com Open daily 8AM – 11PM | www.krugerstation.com



 **Watch this!** To experience Kruger Station, scan the QR code or visit the Kruger Station YouTube Channel to watch the latest videos: <https://tinyurl.com/2ndkdxvf>

ELEPHANTS

Masters in animal communication!

by Ian Whyte



Watch this! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/42kwwmen> to watch the official trailer: 'A life Among Elephants'.



Learn more! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/2rhau4h3> to read the article: **SAVE THE ELEPHANTS**

Animal communication is the transfer of information between individuals through various signals which influence behaviour such as mating, foraging, defence and others. In some species, these signals might have simple functions, but some enable complex social interactions, such as territory marking, courtship or warnings of danger.

There are four basic modes of communication commonly used by animals:

1 Sound – vocalisations used to signal alarm, attract mates or maintain contact.

2 Smell – scent marking and chemical signals used to convey territory, status or reproductive condition.

3 Sight – visual cues such as body posture, colouration and movement.

4 Touch – physical contact used in bonding, reassurance and social interaction.



We will start off this series on animal communication by looking at elephants, as this species lives in multifaceted societies and make complex use of all of these modes.

“Elephants use every sense to communicate, binding together complex social lives.”

Most of what we have learned about the lives of elephants comes from earlier work in Kenya and Tanzania by Iain Douglas-Hamilton, Cynthia Moss, Joyce Poole and others who came later. Elephant communication is highly complex, and we cannot do justice to either the researchers or the elephants themselves by trying to summarise the complexity of elephant communication in just a few paragraphs.



<< Dr Ian Whyte

is an independent environmental consultant who retired from SANParks in 2007. He was previously engaged in full-time wildlife research in the Kruger National Park from 1970-2007. At the time of retirement, he was responsible for the coordination of all research projects pertaining to

elephant, buffalo and other large herbivores and rare antelope. He is a member of the IUCN's Species Survival Commission's African Elephant Specialist Group. He has co-authored two field guides to the birds of the Kruger National Park and in 2020, released his latest book about his life and work in the KNP.

Photo © Mat Hayward



African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) at a waterhole.

Photo © Simoneemanphoto



Learn more! Explore long-term research on elephant communication and social knowledge:
Vocal Communication and Social Knowledge in African Elephants (Cynthia Moss et al.)
<https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226542263.003.0010>

Sound

Acoustics (sound): Some examples of acoustic communication are the vocal sounds like bird songs, howls, warning growls, whale clicks and stridulation (chirping) of crickets. The frequencies of these sounds are in the mid-range which are used by most animals as they are good for relatively close communication. 'Ultrasounds' are high-pitched sounds in frequency ranges above those detectable by humans. Bats use this in echolocating their insect prey and for navigation at night as these sounds easily reflect back from objects in their environment.

Elephants, like most animals, have sophisticated ears which means that this form of communication is of extreme importance. They use both **mid-range frequencies** and **infrasounds**:

1 Mid-range sounds, such as screams, trumpets and rumbles, are audible to humans. Lower-frequency rumbles were heard by earlier hunters who mistakenly believed that the sounds were emanating from the elephant's stomach.

2 But elephants also use 'infrasounds' which are at a very low frequency and are below the range audible to humans. These sounds are used by elephants to communicate over long distances as these frequencies are less attenuated by objects in the environment such as trees and hills. They can be detected by other elephants over distances in excess of 10km!



Close-up of an elephant's eye.

Photo © Pierre

These sounds are complex and are used for social cohesion, reproduction, resource utilization and warnings of danger.



Elephants' use of infrasound was first detected by Katy Payne who 'felt the air throbbing' while she was indoors with a housed zoo elephant.



Learn more! Explore the discovery of infrasonic communication in elephants by Katy Payne:
<https://tinyurl.com/bdextrer8>



Baby elephants playing.

Photo © SD Bower



Young bull.

Photo © Eco View



Two elephant families joining at a waterhole.

Photo © Andrea Izzotti

Elephants live in complex, matriarchal societies. At the primary level is the family – a group of closely related females, usually led by the oldest female (grandmother) accompanied by her daughters who stay with her for life. The family thus consists of the matriarch, her closely related adult female offspring and all of their juvenile offspring. Young males leave the family group at about 14 years of age.

At the death of the matriarch, the older remaining females might separate from the family

to form their own family groups. These related groups will usually move separately, but they maintain strong social bonds and 'visit' occasionally. At the wider level, more distantly related females and their families also maintain social bonds, and in the Kruger National Park, will all occupy the same home range. These families are collectively

known as 'clans' which sometimes temporarily gather in large numbers when conditions allow.

 A herd of elephants is therefore not a fixed number but depends on which families are together at any one time. They thus live in what is known as a 'fission-fusion' society.



Watch this! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/f5nzb5> to watch the video: 'Elephant sound communication' by Carles Walcott.

ANIMAL COMMUNICATION

Seismic: Seismic communication might be considered to be a form of acoustic communication. Infrasonic rumbles are also transmitted seismically into the ground through the elephants' feet and are reportedly detectable by others at distances up to 20km! The seismic 'sounds' are detected through specialised sensors in the soles of their feet.

 This was discovered by Caitlin O'Connell-Rodwell who revealed that long-distant contact between families and other family groups of the clan is maintained not only by infrasounds, but also by seismic vibrations.

The researchers mentioned above have used sonograms to study these communications and they have determined that audible elephant sounds are highly complex and could be considered as a 'language'. There are many identifiable calls which are used in specific contexts. There are too many to cover here, but more can be learned by visiting www.elephantvoices.org

African elephant spoor with lion (*Panthera leo*) tracks overlying it.

Photo © Roger de la Harpe



Soles of elephant feet.

Photo © Kelly Ermis



Learn more! Explore how elephants communicate through seismic vibrations, based on pioneering work by Caitlin O'Connell-Rodwell: <https://tinyurl.com/3jsyeu5>



Elephant herd crossing the Olifants River, KNP.

Photo © Boshoff

Males and females have specific sounds used to advertise sexual state – males in musth and oestrus in females.

Matriarchs use what is called the 'Lets-Go' rumble which informs other family members that they are going to move.

Some other rumbles include indications of aggressive intent, rumbles associated with giving birth, warnings of danger and many others.

“Elephants communicate not only through sound, but also through vibrations felt through the ground.”



Some rumbles are used specifically when communicating with another particular elephant and researchers have likened this to elephants having 'names' for one another.



Learn more! African elephants address one another with individually specific name-like calls.

Published: 10 June 2024. <https://tinyurl.com/ms33529r>



Learn more! <https://www.elephantvoices.org>



Photo © Tiago Fernandez

Elephant smelling with its trunk upwards.



An example of an infrasonic warning of danger was related to me by an old Ranger, the late Ted Whitfield. This incident happened before anything was known about infrasound communication. He was conducting a foot patrol along the southern bank of the Olifants River.

He was on some high ground and could see a large herd of elephants strung out over a very long stretch of the river. To continue his patrol, he would have to get past them.

The wind was coming from the south, so he knew the first of them would get his scent when he got just up-wind of it. This is what happened, and as soon as the first one detected him, the whole herd swung around and began to move away from the river in a coordinated way. He had heard no warning sound and had wondered how that had been possible. Of course, we now know that the warning had been transmitted infrasonically.

Thunderstorms also emit sounds at the infrasonic level, and it is believed that elephants will respond by moving long distances to the areas where rain has fallen. Giraffes are the only other land mammal known to be capable of using infrasound. While long thought to be silent, recent studies have confirmed that their extensive frontal sinuses act as a resonance chamber to produce these low-frequency sounds which consist of a deep, sustained hum produced mainly at night.



ANIMAL COMMUNICATION

Elephant bull in musth.

Photo © Rudi Hulshof



Photo © HTRNR

Elephant bull in musth.



Photo © Paco Como

African bush elephants mating in the bushveld, KNP.

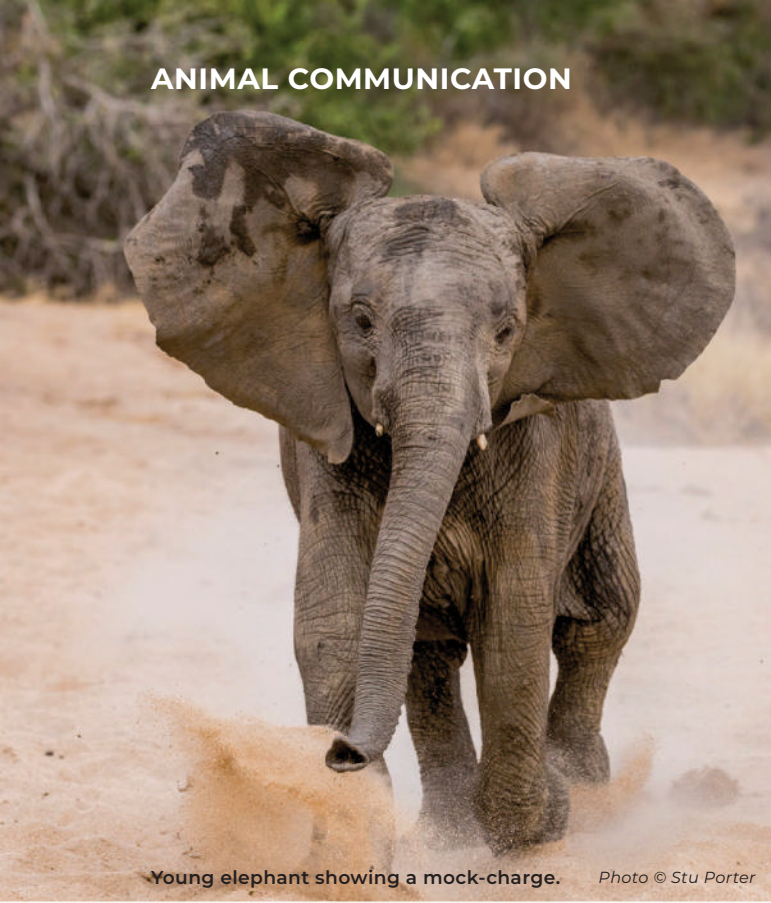
Smell

Chemical/Olfactory: Elephants have the highest number of olfactory receptors among mammals, twice the number of those in dogs and five times more than in humans. Smell is one of the most important communication mediums. As with sounds, smells transmit information over long distances. Pheromones and scents

are mainly used in chemical communication to mark territory, indicate reproductive status or guide others to food and water.

When a male is in musth, or a female is in oestrus, elephants can detect hormones or chemical molecules in the urine, faeces, and in secretions from the temporal glands, which are indicative of an individual's physiological state. Musth males also constantly dribble a pungent urine.

ANIMAL COMMUNICATION



Young elephant showing a mock-charge. Photo © Stu Porter



Young bull shaking his head.

Photo © Wirestock

Elephant curling its trunk.

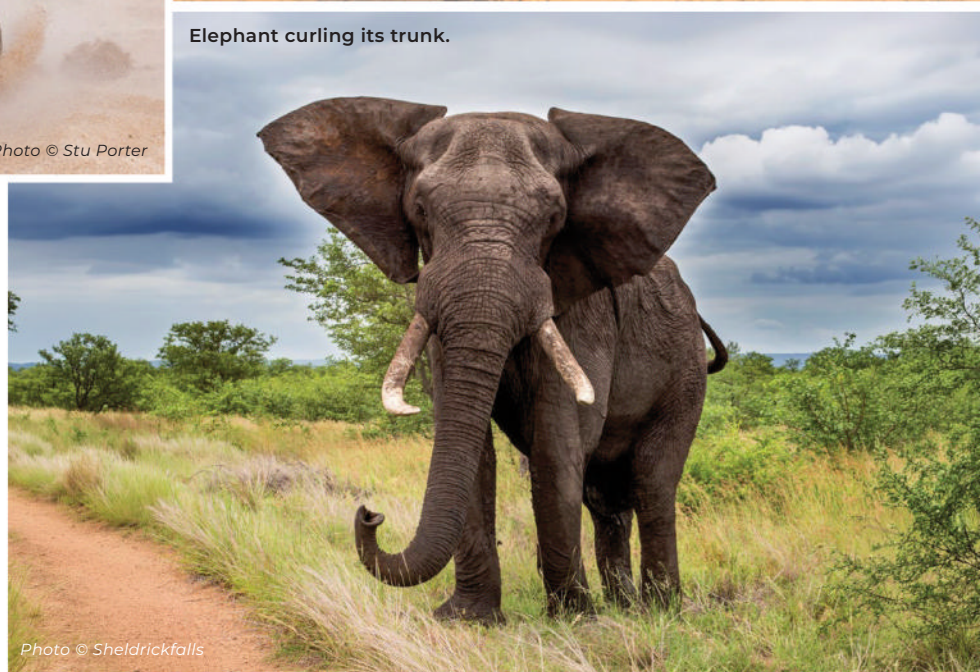
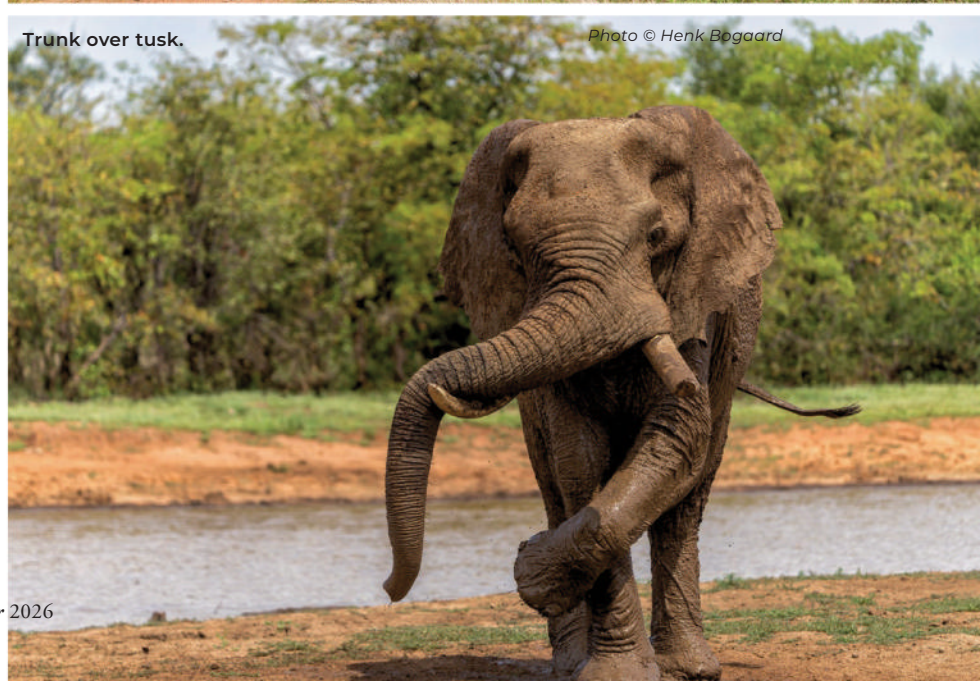


Photo © Sheldrickfalls

Trunk over tusk.

Photo © Henk Bogaard



Sight

Visual/Display: Some examples of visual communication are colour combinations and postures in birds' territorial and breeding behaviour. Threatening postures, such as enlarging your profile (like a cat's hair standing erect), baring of teeth or specialized body movements (e.g. nyala bulls posturing) are examples of this.

Elephants send complex visual signals using most body parts such as their heads, ears, tusks, trunk, tail and even the whole body to convey such messages. There are many descriptions of these visual displays such as angry elephants 'charging', 'flapping of ears', 'kicking up dust' or 'vigorous shaking of the head'. Researchers studying elephants' behaviour have described more specific displays such as 'the musth walk', 'standing tall' or 'trunk curling' to name but a few. During musth a bull elephant walks with his head held high and ears spread wide.



Elephant spreading its ears.

Photo © Duncan



ANIMAL COMMUNICATION

Raising its tail.

Photo © Ben's Lens Wirestock Creators

Two elephants interacting.



Photo © Ward

A threatening or dominant elephant signals its status by trying to appear larger, carrying its head high above its shoulders, spreading its ears, climbing onto higher ground (perhaps a termite mound) to look larger, while a subordinate elephant will carry his head low and his ears back. An elephant who is fearful will raise its tail and lift its chin.

Touch

Tactile/Touch: Physical contact is essential for bonding and social cohesion, and elephants purposefully touch one another using their trunk, ears, tusks, feet and tail. These interactions occur in a broad range of contexts including aggression, courtship, play and reassurance, especially

between a mother and her calf.

Elephants often use their ears to rub affectionately with other family members, or their tails to gently check for the presence of their calf. Apart from its more obvious functions, the trunk is used to caress and to assist a struggling calf, and also for touching or pushing one another during play, or to reach out to others for reassurance. In sexual contexts elephants use their trunks to explore, to test or to control the movements of another. And in more aggressive or defensive interactions, an elephant may use its trunk to slap an opponent or adversary.



Watch this! Joyce Poole, an expert on elephant communication, explains how elephants use sound to communicate and maintain strong social bonds. Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/5aw9d3uy> to watch the video: 'How Elephant Families Communicate and Bond | Secrets of the Elephants'. Published by National

Close-up view of an African elephant calf suckling from its mother.

Photo © rabbyh



“Elephants communicate through a layered system of signals beyond the visible.”



So, while what we experience with elephants is mainly visual, there are much more subtle interactions going on than meets the eye! ■

Protect The Future Protect our home

by Savanna Strauss in conversation with The Boucher Legacy.



The Boucher Legacy was established in 2012 with a clear purpose: to make a practical difference in conservation. What began with a strong focus on rhino protection has grown into a broader commitment to endangered mammals, with current programmes centred on rhinos, pangolins and African wild dogs.

For Mark Boucher, co-founder of The Boucher Legacy, this work is rooted in responsibility. In his opening address at the Art for Conservation Auction 2026, he reflected on the organisation's 14 years of work and its "fundamental impact on the tracking and protection of endangered mammals across Southern Africa". He also acknowledged that, despite this progress, there remains "a long way to go".



African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*).

The Boucher Legacy directors' team. Front: Donné Commins, Mark Boucher and Jordan Wallace. Back: Marc Taback and Alastair Hewitt.





Ground pangolin (*Smutsia temminckii*).

That message sits at the heart of the organisation. Southern Africa is home to exceptional nature and biodiversity, but that inheritance requires active protection. The Boucher Legacy's work focuses on funding, awareness, technology and field-based conservation support for species facing serious pressure.

African wild dogs remain one of Africa's most endangered carnivores. Their wide-ranging movements often take them beyond protected-area boundaries, where they may encounter snares, disease, vehicle strikes and conflict with people. In the Greater Kruger landscape, tracking collars and monitoring technology can help conservation teams follow pack movements, identify high-risk areas and respond more quickly when animals are in danger.

Pangolins, heavily targeted by illegal wildlife trafficking, require specialist rehabilitation and careful post-release monitoring. Through support for telemetry, conservation teams can follow rescued individuals after release, assess their adaptation and gather information that can improve future recovery efforts.

Rhino protection remains equally urgent. The Boucher Legacy supports work linked to DNA profiling, tracking, collaring, dehorning and orphan support – practical interventions that contribute to the wider effort to protect rhinos and strengthen conservation response.

Boucher also addressed a challenge familiar to many

conservation organisations: donor fatigue. "In conservation, donor fatigue is very real," he said.

This is why the organisation continues to find ways of bringing people together around wildlife protection, using events, partnerships and public awareness to keep endangered mammals in focus.



White rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*).



Sarah Richards' *Three Musketeers* – African wild dog set.



Graham Rex Edmunds' *Karma Chameleon*.

The Art for Conservation Auction

In the rolling Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, the Art for Conservation Auction 2026 brought together artists, collectors, conservation supporters and friends of The Boucher Legacy for an afternoon shaped by generosity, purpose and a shared concern for South Africa's endangered wildlife.

“In conservation, donor fatigue is very real. That's why events like this – combining art and conservation – are so powerful.” – Mark Boucher

Hosted at Netherwood Farm, with The Platform Gallery as curators, the auction was far more than a sale of beautiful works. It was a gathering of people who understood that art can do more than decorate a wall or fill a room. In the right hands, it can help fund fieldwork, support monitoring, and contribute to the protection of species under pressure.



Vincent Reid's *Sagole Baobab*.

The catalogue reflected the breadth and quality of the event, with 55 lots spanning bronze sculpture, original artworks, photographic prints, jewellery, watches and exclusive travel experiences.

Wildlife was present throughout the collection – from Sarah Richards' *Three Musketeers* Wild Dog set, Graham Edmonds' *Karma*

Chameleon piece, Vincent Reid's *Sagole Baobab*, David Whieldon's *Wild Dogs '26*, an original watercolour, to Steven John Wilkins' bronze *Butter Knife Pangolin II*, and James Cook's *Transcendence*. Each work carried its own artistic voice, yet together they formed a clear message: conservation needs many forms of support, and creativity can be one of them.

The atmosphere on the day was full of life. Guests moved between artworks, conversations and bidding moments, often sharing personal stories of why they had come. Some spoke of their connection to the bush; others of species they had seen, lost, studied or hoped their children would one day encounter in the wild.



One of the most touching stories was that of Mia, the youngest successful bidder at just seven years old, whose parents supported her in buying a meerkat piece – a small moment, but one that captured the heart of the auction.



David Whieldon's *Wild Dogs '26*, an original watercolour.

Steven John Wilkins' bronze sculpture, *Butter Knife Pangolin II*.



Mia Carreira, whose parents, Travis and Melissa Carreira supported her, at the art auction with Mark Boucher, where she placed the winning bid for Matthew Willman's *Meerkats of Namibia*.



The success of the day rested on many contributors: Rob and Annelie Kleinloog of Netherwood Farm, The Platform Gallery team, In2Assets, Icely, the participating artists, sponsors, media partners and the wider local community. Boucher also acknowledged **KRUGER MAGAZINE** and **REWILDING SOUTHERN AFRICA**

among the media sponsors supporting the event.



As the bidding unfolded, it became clear that people were not only buying artworks. They were investing in monitoring collars, rehabilitation, field protection and the future of species that form part of South Africa's natural heritage.

CONSERVATION PROJECT

There were also moments of scale and spectacle. Among the larger sculptural works, Llewellyn Davies' *Pie Jesu*, listed in the catalogue as a bronze measuring 200x330x260cm, brought a powerful physical presence to the collection. The event was a reminder that wildlife art can be intimate, playful, dramatic or monumental – but when linked to conservation, it becomes

part of a wider effort.

At Netherwood Farm, in a room filled with art and conviction, that message found its audience. The Art for Conservation Auction showed that legacy is not only built in the field. Sometimes it begins with a sculpture, a painting, a photograph – and the decision to raise a hand in support of wildlife that still has a future worth protecting.

“Let us remember what we are bidding for: the future of our planet, the sustainability of our mammals, and the hope, love and compassion that define a world where art and conservation walk hand in hand.”

– Mark Boucher



Watch this!

Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/383huhxw> to watch the video: '2026 Boucher Legacy Art for Conservation Auction I'.



Watch this!

Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/3vsmreu3> to watch the video: '2026 Boucher Legacy Art for Conservation Auction II'.



The Art for Conservation Auction 2026 raised more

than **R4 million**. A total of **55 lots** went under the hammer, including three destination getaways: **Southern Stars Safari, Setari in the Okavango Delta, Botswana, and Moonstone Lodge, Mozambique.**

James Cook's *Transcendence*.



Llewellyn Davies' *Pie Jesu*.



Learn more!

Scan the QR code or visit <https://theplatform.gallery/> to view THE PLATFORM GALLERY.

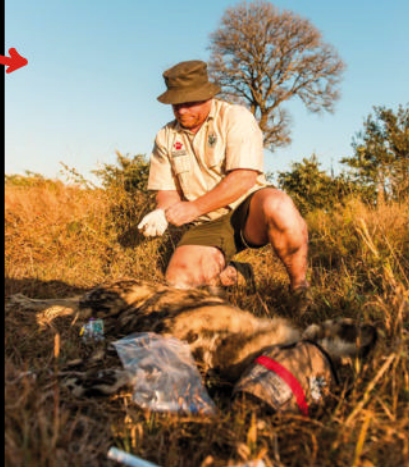
THE
PLATFORM GALLERY



The Boucher Legacy and Contemplate Wild teams, together with veterinary partners, conducting fieldwork in the Greater Kruger landscape in support of practical conservation interventions for endangered wildlife.



Pauli Viljoen of SANParks during a field operation in Kruger National Park, where African wild dogs were collared for monitoring and conservation management.



From left: Louis van Schalkwyk and Grant Beverley, Contemplate Wild; Mark Boucher and Alastair Hewitt, The Boucher Legacy.

A New Partnership for Field-Based Conservation

Contemplate Wild and **Boucher Legacy** have recently announced a new partnership built on a shared commitment to safeguarding South Africa's most vulnerable wildlife through targeted, high-impact conservation work.



The collaboration brings together complementary strengths. Boucher Legacy mobilises funding, awareness and public support, while Contemplate Wild provides technical field execution, monitoring and measurable conservation outcomes across the Greater Kruger landscape.

Through this newly formed partnership, donor support can be translated directly into operational impact on the ground – protecting endangered species, supporting rangers and strengthening conservation systems where they are needed most.



Learn more! To explore Contemplate Wild's current projects and field-based conservation activities, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/jhmp2w5v>



Marc Taback and Alastair Hewitt during a field trip in the Kruger.

CONSERVATION PROJECT

Leave a Legacy

Your Will can change the future for our wildlife.

You can leave a lasting legacy to help preserve our precious endangered wildlife for future generations. Making a contribution is simple and will help us to make our impact felt.

Why consider a legacy gift?

Leave a world worth living in:

Choosing to remember The Boucher Legacy with a donation in your Will is the perfect way to let your care and compassion for nature continue in years to come.

Amplify your impact: After your lifetime, it is possible to make a more significant gift

than you might otherwise be able to afford.

Enjoy tax benefits: By including charitable gifts in your estate planning, you may reduce or eliminate significant taxes payable upon your death.

There's no commitment:

Circumstances can change, and that is okay. Because you are not actually making a gift until after your lifetime, you can change your mind and your Will at any time.

What do you need to know?

When drafting your Will or adding a codicil, we recommend the following wording: "I, [name], bequeath [the residue of my estate, or percentage of my estate,

or a certain amount, etc.] to The Boucher Legacy, the conservation organisation, non-profit company with registration no. NPC 2012/180583/08, which has as its registered office PO Box 15815, Vlaeberg, 8018, Cape Town, Western Cape, to be used at the sole discretion of The Boucher Legacy, in terms of its constitution and for the conservation work of the organisation in South Africa."

NB: Bequests to The Boucher Legacy are exempt from estate duty. A gift in your Will to The Boucher Legacy is a gift of hope for future generations. It is a gift that will help protect our endangered wildlife.



"Together we can achieve extraordinary things – protecting our natural heritage for future generations."
– Mark Boucher



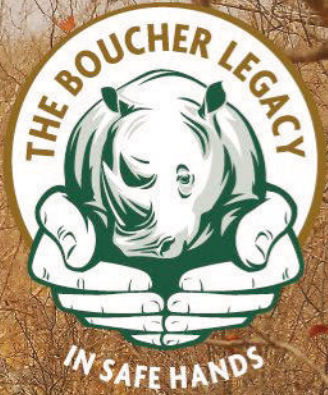
For KRUGER MAGAZINE

readers, this is a direct opportunity to support conservation work where it matters most – in the field. Contributions to Boucher Legacy help fund the collaring and monitoring of African wild dog packs in the Greater Kruger landscape, pangolin rehabilitation, high-tech tracking for endangered mammals, and ongoing rhino monitoring and protection. Every act of support strengthens the people, systems and field teams working to keep endangered wildlife in safe hands. ■



Learn more!

To support Boucher Legacy, make a donation, become a Friend of The Boucher Legacy, or consider leaving a gift in your Will, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/4c8c6dtn>



PROTECTING ENDANGERED MAMMALS

RHINO DEHORNING

We're actively expanding a comprehensive DNA database, collaring, tracking, dehorning rhinos, and supporting rhino orphans.

In 2012, former cricketer Mark Boucher established The Boucher Legacy. Today, it serves as a beacon of hope for African wildlife conservation, with a focus on protecting rhinos, African wild dogs, and pangolins with unwavering dedication.

PHOTO BY: GARETH THOMAS/ APWG



PANGOLIN TAGGING

We rehabilitate, release, and monitor pangolins using advanced telemetry tracking.

AFRICAN WILD DOG TAGGING

Having collared over 40 African wild dog packs in the greater Kruger National Park, we monitor and rescue them, remove snares, and provide rabies check-ups.



Your support is the heartbeat of our mission. Please visit www.boucherlegacy.co.za to make a donation, and help us preserve the beauty of our wildlife for future generations.

Geese - Egyptian, pygmy, spur-winged

by Ian Whyte

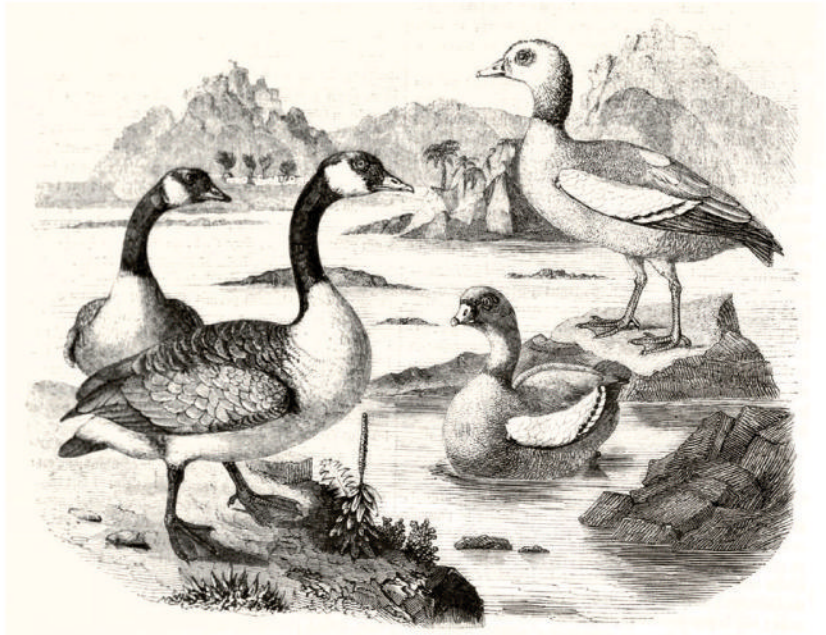




<< Dr Ian Whyte

is an independent environmental consultant who retired from SANParks in 2007. He was previously engaged in full-time wildlife research in the Kruger National Park from 1970-2007. At the time of retirement, he was responsible for the coordination of all research projects pertaining to elephant, buffalo and other

large herbivores and rare antelope. He is a member of the IUCN's Species Survival Commission's African Elephant Specialist Group. He has co-authored three field guides to the birds of the Kruger National Park and in 2020, released his book about his life and work in the KNP.



Historic illustration (1848) contrasting a true goose, the Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*), with the Egyptian goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) – highlighting their shared wetland associations but distinct lineages.

In the Kruger National Park (KNP), geese are represented by three species, none of which are in the same genus, and in fact, none of which are considered to be 'true' geese. The true geese are from the genera *Anser* and *Branta*, neither of which occur on the African continent. Here we have the Egyptian goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) which is more closely related to the shelducks, the spur-winged goose (*Plectropterus gambensis*) and the pygmy goose (*Nettapus auritus*) which have closer affinities to the 'perching ducks'.

But they all have characteristics which are goose like, and this has carried through to the word being incorporated into their common names. Geese, ducks and swans are waterfowl species in the family Anatidae. Generally, geese are larger than ducks and are herbivorous, eating grass and aquatic plants, while ducks are omnivorous taking snails, worms and also some plants. Geese are usually monogamous, forming life-long pair bonds, while ducks may choose a new partner for each breeding season. A male goose is known as a 'gander' and a male duck is called a 'drake'. Young geese are called 'goslings'.

“Not true geese, yet unmistakably so – three species, three lineages, united by form, behaviour and the wetlands they inhabit.”

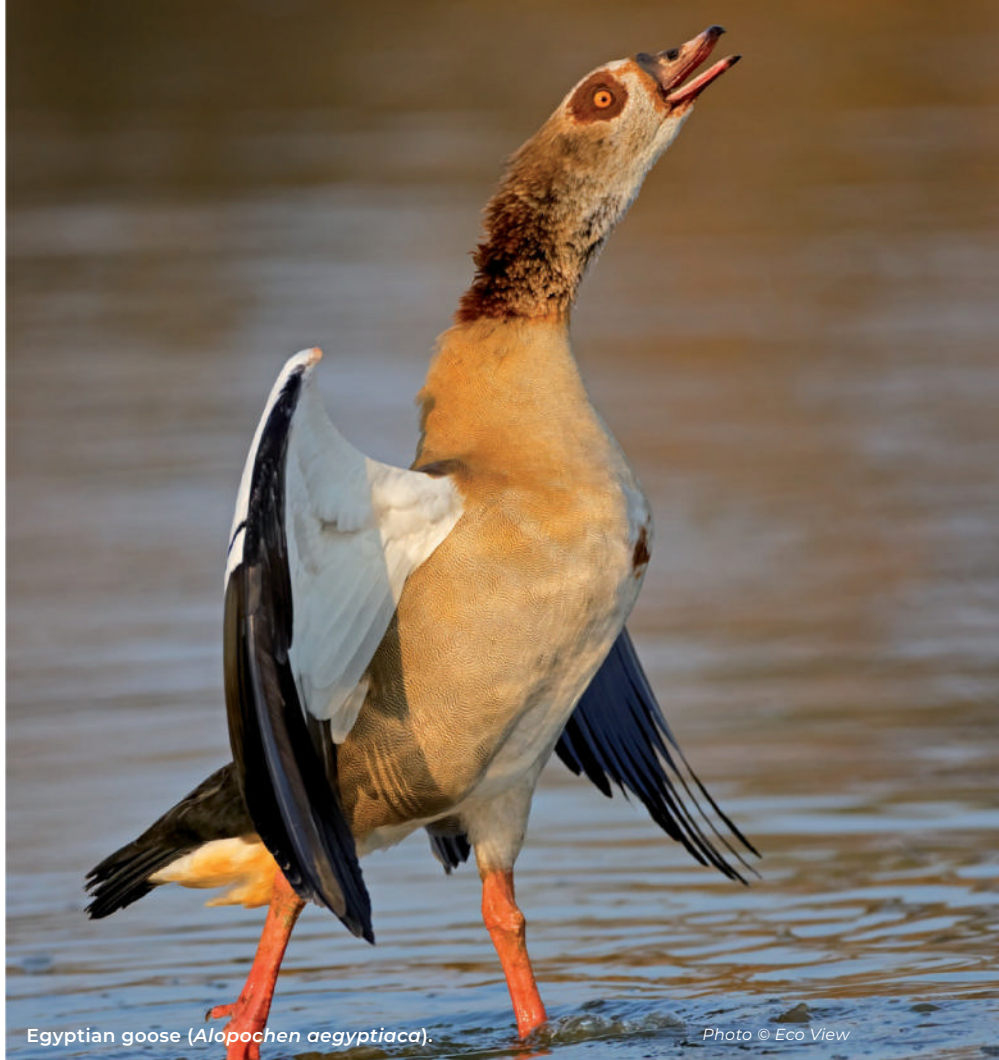
Photo © Paco Como

SPECIES ID – BIRDS

The **Egyptian goose** is very common and widespread throughout sub-Saharan Africa. The ancient Egyptians regarded it as sacred but in spite of its name, it no longer occurs in Egypt. This is probably the result of anthropogenic habitat modification along the Lower Nile River.

 In the KNP they can be found on almost every river and water body. They are beautiful birds but they have become so common that visitors seldom stop to appreciate them.

Outside of the KNP their populations have expanded to levels where they have almost reached 'agricultural pest' status. Habitat transformation has been the major force behind this huge population expansion through the widespread development of irrigation schemes and planting of grain crops. There has also been a widespread proliferation of small farm dams, most of which host one or more pairs of these geese.



Egyptian goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*).

Photo © Eco View



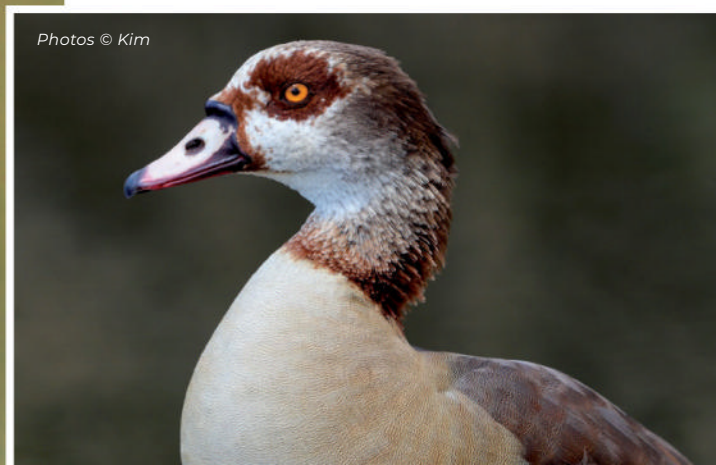
Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/3mzv6j5> for sound recordings, range map, and video clips of the Egyptian goose. Published by eBird.org.



Egyptian goose.

 Golf courses have been established in many areas of South Africa and these offer water holes and short grass areas which provide perfect habitat conditions for these geese. They do considerable damage to the manicured greens and fairways, much to the indignation of players and green keepers!

Photos © Kim



Each pair produces a brood of between five and eleven goslings annually which are driven off at the beginning of the next breeding season. These young birds all need to try to establish themselves and many find their way into the KNP where they sometimes gather on sandbanks of the major rivers in huge, noisy flocks of up to 300 or more. Such gatherings may form part of mate choosing rituals, but the drying up of smaller dams and pans during drier times also induces nomadism and dispersal.



Photo © Lukas

Mating pair of Egyptian geese.



Watch this! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/4ppayczu> to watch the video: 'Bird Outsmarts Leopard in a Chase'. Published by Nat Geo Animals.

"Once revered along the Nile, now abundant across southern Africa – the Egyptian goose thrives where water and human-altered landscapes converge."



A family of Egyptian geese.

Photos © Louis

Some of these displaced pairs may also wind up in these large gatherings on the KNP's rivers. Like other geese, Egyptians form life-long pair bonds.

They are highly territorial, vigorously defending their 'patch' against conspecifics. The sexes are identical, but they have different calls, the male making a hoarse hissing sound while the females make a louder, characteristic 'honk'.

The choice of nesting sites of Egyptian geese is very variable. Mostly they breed on the ground in a scrape lined with grass, reeds and feather down. The nest is built in dense cover by the female. But they will also nest in many other places - on top of disused nests of the hamerkop (*Scopus umbretta*) and buffalo weaver (*Bubalornis niger*), old raptor nests, on pylons or even buildings in urban areas.



Egyptian gosling.

Spur-winged goose (*Plectropterus gambensis*).



Photo © Ondrejprosicky

The **spur-winged goose** (*Plectropterus gambensis*) is a huge and unmistakable bird with iridescent black upper parts, a white belly and a bright red bill and feet. It is the world's largest goose, but its world distribution is limited to sub-Saharan Africa. It avoids arid areas and rain forests.

The average weight of males is around 6kg though some authors quote that males may achieve up to nine or 10kg!

They are noticeably larger than the females which average around 4.7kg. Despite their size, they make a weak, high-pitched 'cherwit' call, usually only during flight.

Spur-winged goose.



Photo © Marek R Swadzba

“The spurs (from which their name is derived) are sharp, keratinous growths on the carpal joint on the leading edge of the wing.”



Photo © Dixon

Spur-winged goose.

The spurs (from which their name is derived) are sharp, keratinous growths on the carpal joint on the leading edge of the wing. Both males and females have them. They are about 4cm in length and are primarily used for fighting over territorial rights with other geese. Their diet is plant based consisting of roots, shoots and leaves of aquatic plants as well as grasses and grain crops.

Throughout their range, they are considered common on seasonal and permanent marshes, larger rivers, lakes, reservoirs and particularly where there are adjacent areas of short grass or grain crops.



In the KNP however, they are considered to be uncommon but widespread visitors preferring the pans and dams. They are rarely seen on the rivers, except sometimes on the back waters of the larger dams. Their movements are dependent on rainfall, and they are therefore seldom seen in extreme dry conditions.

Like the Egyptian goose, the spur-wings' nests are built by the females and are similar in construction – a shallow scrape lined with grass, reeds and feather down in dense cover. Clutch size varies between 6 and 12 eggs. Though they are thought to be monogamous, the pair bond appears to be loose as the male plays an insignificant role in incubation and rearing of the goslings. The goslings are usually accompanied only by the female. It seems unclear if the same birds pair-off again in subsequent breeding seasons. Breeding occurs mainly in the wet season from November to February.

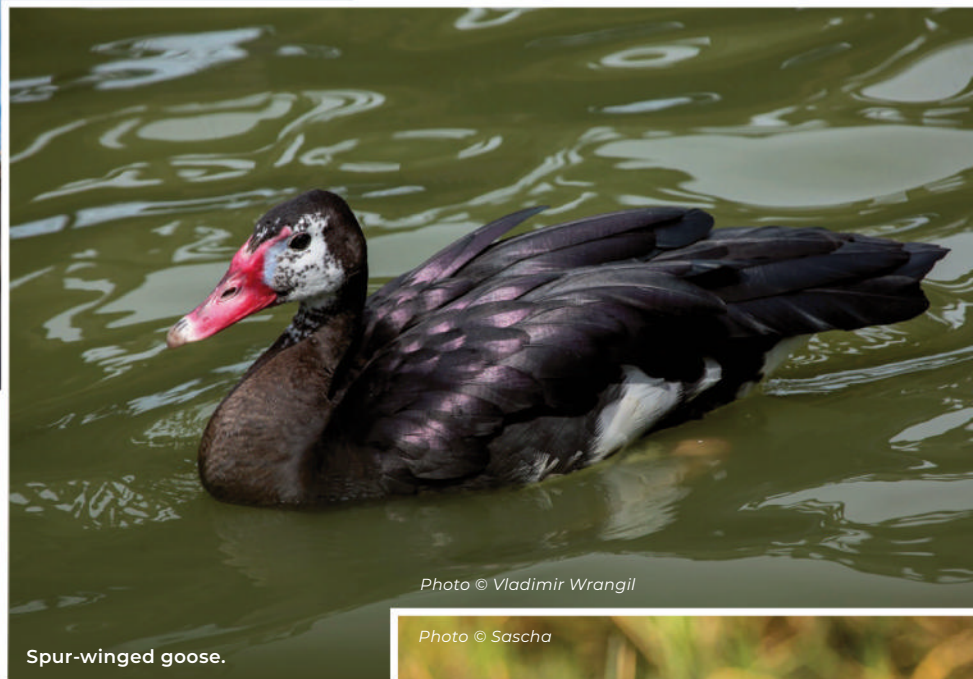
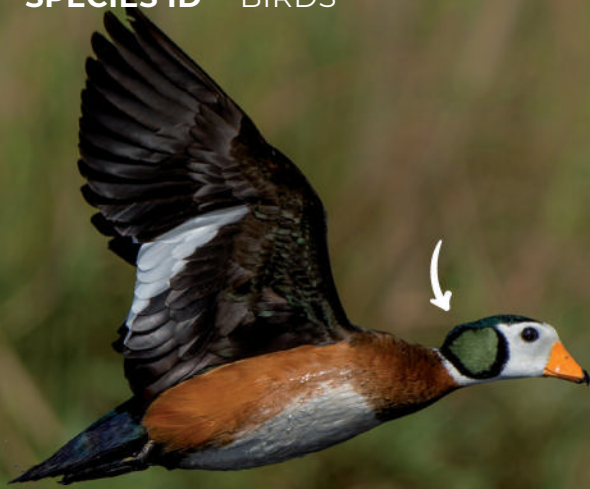


Photo © Vladimir Wrangil

Spur-winged goose.

Photo © Sascha





Pygmy goose (*Nettapus auritus*).

Photo © Henk Bogaard



Pygmy geese.

Photo © Sunil Singh



Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/mwan7hkw> for sound recordings, range map, and video clips of the Pygmy goose. Published by eBird.org

It has a wide distribution in sub-Saharan Africa but in Southern Africa it is absent from most of the south-western Cape, Namibia and Botswana (except for the Okavango region). It also occurs in Madagascar.

 In the KNP region it can usually only be found on natural pans, avoiding rivers and man-made dams except occasionally in quiet backwaters with plentiful suitable aquatic vegetation. It is an irregular visitor, being completely absent in the drier years. During these dry times it is thought that they probably congregate on the larger wetlands, mostly those in Botswana (Okavango), Mozambique, Zambia and northern KwaZulu-Natal.

But when the pans are full during the wetter times and the water lilies (both *Nymphaea* and *Nymphoides*) are flourishing and flowering, this is their preferred habitat.

 What a magical sight they are when seen feeding quietly among the blooming water lilies!

The pygmy goose (*Nettapus auritus*) is a tiny goose – the smallest of our waterfowl, weighing only about 260g (compared to the 6kg of the male spur-winged goose). But despite its small size it is certainly the most beautiful of all our waterbirds.

The male has a bright green head, nape and back, with a white face and a bright yellow bill. The breast and flanks are a buffy orange and the belly is white. The female is less colourful having a black head, nape and back and lacks the prominent face markings of the male.

Pygmy geese.

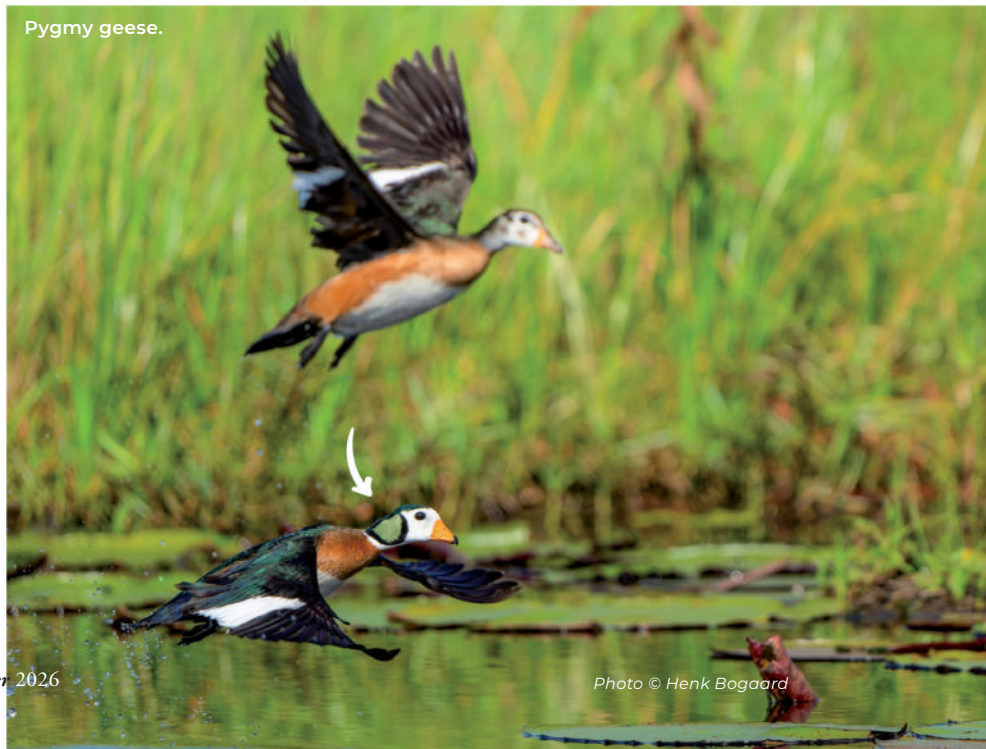
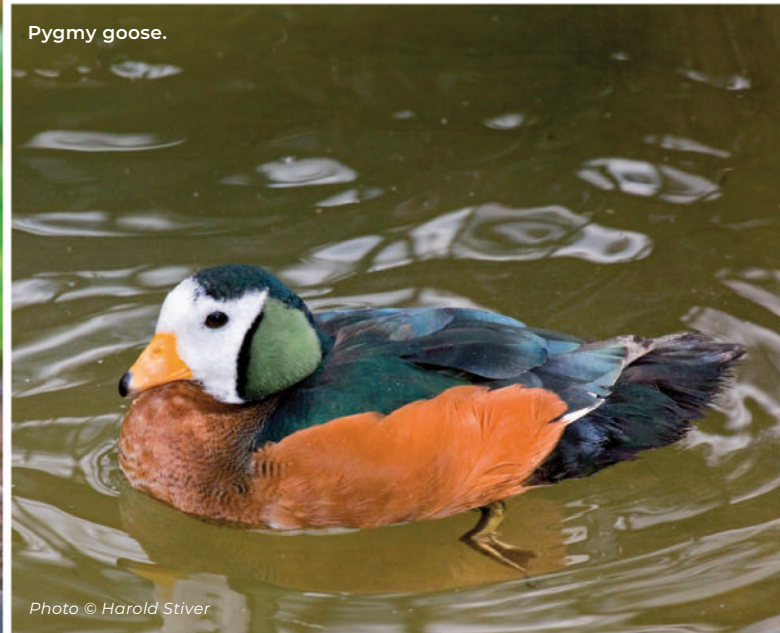


Photo © Henk Bogaard



Pygmy goose.

Photo © Dennis Jacobsen



Pygmy goose.

Photo © Harold Stiver

They feed mainly on the flowers and seed pods of these waterlilies, but will also feed on other aquatic plants and grasses. When disturbed, they will submerge and then surface quietly under a waterlily pad to breathe and observe.

Not many of these natural pans in the KNP are accessible to visitors – most of which are located in the far-north – but Leeupan, between Skukuza and Tshokwane, is a very reliable place to see them when the conditions are right.

These birds form strong pair bonds and are mostly found in pairs or small family groups. They usually breed in natural holes in trees or holes excavated by woodpeckers or barbets.

Both sexes search for suitable cavities reportedly flitting and clambering around like parrots! Suitable cavities are sometimes located up to a kilometre or more from the water. The young hatchlings are called out of the nest by the mother, and they then walk to the water.

While globally Red Listed

as Least Concern, the species is experiencing regional declines in Southern Africa, driven by habitat loss and declining quality in wetlands. Also, only a small portion of the global population occurs here, so the species' Regional Status is therefore currently listed as **'Near Threatened'**.



Though there are only three species of goose in the KNP, we have Africa's largest, the smallest, the most common and the most beautiful! ■

Egyptian geese in flight.

Photo © Paco Como



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KRUGER NATIONAL PARK CENTENNIAL COLLECTION

The Kruger National Park celebrates its 100-year centenary in May 2026, marking a century of conservation and wildlife protection. Officially proclaimed on 31 May 1926, it has become one of the most iconic wildlife reserves in the world.



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Available exclusively at all Park's Shops in the Kruger National Park.

Mahlometela: Wilderness Trails

The Best Way to Experience
the Kruger National Park

by Ralf Kalwa

Early Days

In 1978 a Trails Section was formed in the Division of Wildlife Management and the first Trails Ranger, Mr TW Dearlove, was appointed. The first trails camp with tented accommodation was built along the Mavukani watercourse in the Stolsnek area.



The trail was named the Wollhuter Wilderness Trail and was officially opened in July 1978.

It was decided to limit trail groups to a maximum of eight persons between the ages of 12 and 60. (Joubert 2007).

Several additional camps followed in other wilderness areas of the Park, and the tents were replaced by A-frame huts designed by Senior Ranger Ben Pretorius first introduced in the Nyalaland Trails Camp.



« Ralf Kalwa is an Ecological Consultant at Malelane, a position he has held since December 2001. He established Rhengu Environmental Services in the Malelane area and is trails leader for the Lebombo Eco Trail. Prior to holding this position, Ralf

was Manager: IEM: Kruger National Park from 2000-2001 and Senior Section Ranger: Kruger National Park from 1994-2000.

“Every ranger in the Kruger gets a Shangaan name, given to him by his staff and fellow field rangers,” says Ralf. “Mine is Mahlometela... *the man who sees everything.*”



Photo © Udo Kieslich



Photo © Ian Meadowcroft



Typical walking experience.

Photo © Sacha Specker

Wolhuter Wilderness Trail – set between Berg-en-Dal and Afsaal – traverses a remote granite landscape rich in early cultural history and wildlife, named after ranger Harry Wolhuter; see *LEGENDS OF THE KRUGER* (page 96) for his remarkable story.

Wilderness Areas: A Rare Commodity

The definition of wilderness is relative, since it deals with the circumstances surrounding something or someone, but it is now accepted that one of the draw cards for visitors to conservation (natural) areas is the intangible '**wilderness qualities**' i.e., it was recognised that visitors to conservation areas seek intangible attributes such as solitude, remoteness and peace, in addition to simply viewing wildlife. African wilderness has become more of a threatened legacy in South Africa than African wildlife. The **wildness** and **wilderness** of Africa have played a large part in shaping the identity of South Africans, yet very little (quality) wilderness remains in this country.



Fortunately, the Kruger National Park conserves vast wilderness areas, which I was fortunate to traverse on foot in the company of enthusiastic trails assistants.



Wilderness Trails: A Chronology

1977: Concept for wilderness trails approved

1978: Wolhuter Trail established.

1979: Olifants Trail opened.

1980: Nyalaland Trail introduced.

1983: Bushmans Trail established.

1988: Metsi Metsi Trail added.

1990s–2000s: Trail system refined and expanded.

Today: Seven wilderness trails across the park.



Sweni Trails Camp.
Central region, succeeding
Metsi Metsi.



Photos © Monique Lincoln



On a Rhinoceros Trail with John Malwane

As the Section Ranger of Malelane, I was afforded the opportunity, on occasion, to step in for a trails ranger that had to attend to an urgent family matter and lead a trail in their absence. This allowed me to get back to basics and get away from a plethora of administrative- and staff management tasks and enjoy the splendours of the Kruger savannah on foot.

My trails assistant on one occasion was John Malwane. A cheerful fellow, well-spoken in several local languages including Afrikaans, and a scratch golfer with a strong sense of humour. We met our trails group late one Sunday afternoon at Berg-en-Dal Rest Camp. The group consisted of eight burly men that had one thing in common – they were all in the construction industry.



Judging by the amount of beer they loaded onto the trailer, they also had a particular interest in maintaining their shares in SA Breweries.

“The warning was given, but the mood around the fire suggested otherwise.”

Campfire.

Photo © Nicole



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At the Wolhuter Trails Camp we met up with James – the camp attendant and chef. I allocated a rustic room to each pair of trailists and then called them to the fireplace for a detailed briefing of the camp- and trails safety rules and procedures. I suggested that they take it easy on the alcoholic beverages, as our walk the following morning could be quite challenging.

After a scrumptious potjie of buffalo stew I called it a night. The trailists did not heed my warning and I could hear their banter late into the night.

Trails guides on a walking safari.

Photo © Katya Tsetkova



John woke me up at 04h30 when he filled the washbasins with hot water which was perched outside each hut on a tripod. I met up with the group at the kitchen for the customary coffee and rusks, and I could sense that they looked the worse for wear.

We left the camp in single file, John behind me as a back-up, and walked northwards towards Stolsnek Dam. The distinctive call from an oxpecker alerted us to something ahead and as we broke through a *Terminalia sericea* thicket we saw three white rhinoceros grazing in the shade of a marula tree. The wind was in our favour, and we stood quietly enjoying the sighting.

I explained the difference between white- and black rhinoceros to the group and emphasised how successful the conservation organisations had been in bringing these species back from the brink of extinction.

The best sightings are those when you leave and the animals are not aware of your presence. We continued in the direction of the dam and came across kudu, warthog and giraffe.

It was hot and I could hear the huffing and puffing of the trailists suffering from splitting headaches and the after-effects of the night before.

Rhinoceros tracks.



Photo © Cathy Whithers-Clarke

White rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*).

Photo © Martin Moxter



Southern giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa*).

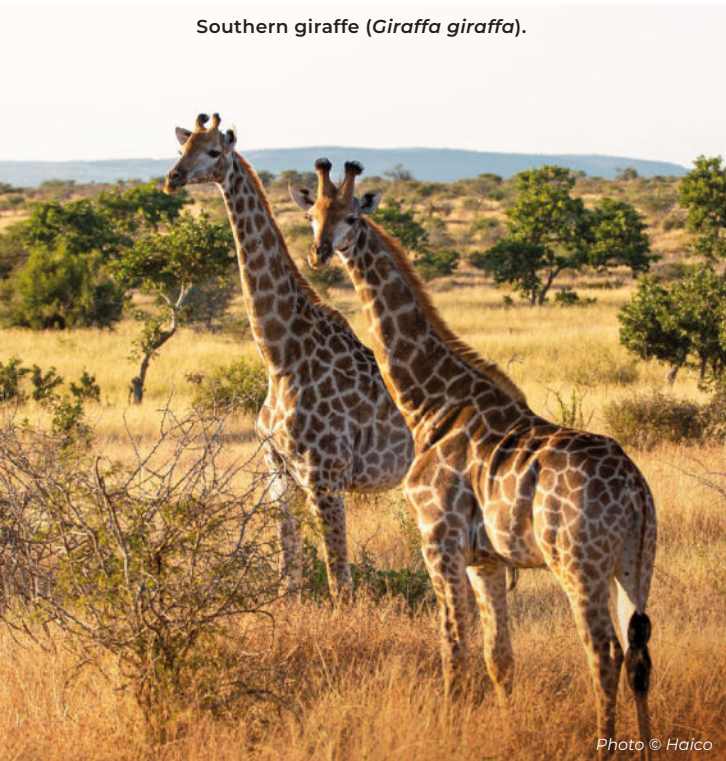


Photo © Haico

We circled around in an easterly direction and looked for shade cover near a granite koppie. I gave the group an opportunity to catch their breath, have a snack and quench their thirst with the water and fruit juices we had provided. As we were taking it easy, six white rhinoceros were seen grazing past some 200m away. A bull, three cows and a calf wandered down a rocky path and into a drainage line which held some water.

I could see the group was starting to wilt under the prevailing conditions, but I did not relent and thought we could get a bit closer to the rhinoceros for a closer view. Leading the way, bent over to not break cover, we crept closer to a termite mound overlooking the drainage line.

With the wind blowing towards us we had an unforgettable sighting of the animals wallowing and resting up in the mud pool.



“On foot, with the wind in our favour, the rhinoceros remained unaware, an encounter as it should be.”

Photo © Karlos Lomsky

Impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) with red-billed oxpeckers (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*).



Photo © John

Where are the impala?

We withdrew from the sighting and moved southwards towards the camp. It was hot, the trailists were sweating and I could see the burly, tough construction workers were not very interested in my explanations of geology, soils and vegetation landscapes. As we got closer to Wolhuter Camp, John pointed out some rhinoceros tracks in the elephant path ahead of us. As luck would have it, we met

up with four white rhinoceros drinking from the pan near the camp. A great end to a fruitful morning walk. As we entered the camp the one trailist cheekily remarked “Excuse me sir, don’t you have any impala here?”



The group also unanimously agreed to curtail their consumption of beverages and have an early night in preparation for another rhino expedition the following day.

A Close Encounter with Phineas Dzambukeri (aka Sjambok)

I first met Corporal Dzambukeri at Letaba Camp where he was stationed as the section leader. I am uncertain as to how he got his nickname, Sjambok, but I got to know him as soft spoken when required, assertive, and forceful if the situation demanded it. He was particularly strict with poachers and did not waver in pursuing the culprits until he could apprehend them. As he grew older, Sjambok was transferred to the trails section and I recall one memorable walk with him in the Mlambane area.

One of the advantages of doing a relief trail for a trails guide was that it afforded me an opportunity to walk in an area on my section which I had not traversed for some time, especially on foot. The Mlambane River winds its way through Stolsnek- and Malelane Sections down to a confluence with the Crocodile River. Large jackalberry and fig trees stabilise the embankment of the river and many elephants, buffalo, kudu, giraffe and general game are found along this special river.



Elephant tracks.

Photo © Jurgens



African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*).

Photo © Jurgens



African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*).

Photo © Paco Coma

Dung beetle (*Scarabaeidae*).



Photo © Henk Bogaard

Sjambok and I drove out early one morning from Wolhuter Camp with a group of enthusiastic trailists and parked off near the old windmill. We walked down the riverbed and out onto the northern embankment enjoying the pristine wilderness conditions of the early morning. We saw tracks of general game and, as I kneeled down to explain the life cycle of a dung beetle, Sjambok alerted me to a sighting with

a sharp click of his tongue. Looking up, I could see several buffalo walking casually 300m away.

We rallied the group and using the wind to our advantage circled around to a large marula tree. The herd, 200 strong, unaware of our presence, provided us with excellent photographic material. The many calves were a testament to the good rains we had received late the previous year.

“What seemed certain at a distance proved very different at close range.”



Black rhino (*Dicerus bicornis*).

Photo © Paco Como



Backpack and rifle on a break.

Photo © Vschikhting

We left the herd and moved eastwards in the direction of Renoster Pan. It was hot and the going was slow as we had an elderly group with us. As we came past several guarri bushes, I noticed the heads of some ‘white’ rhinoceros in the distance.

Between us and the animals was a large termite mound and I suggested we crawl up to the mound to get a better vantage of this group. As we huddled all together, I instructed them to stand up as one when I gave the signal. On my signal we all jumped up – and low and behold – I got a fright. In the pool of mud 50m away was a group of five ‘black’ rhinos huddled together. I immediately sank to my knees instructing the group to do the same. Both Sjambok

and I realised our predicament. If the black rhinos caught our scent, we could possibly face a dangerous situation, especially given the fact that we had such an elderly group with us.

As calm as could be, I instructed the group to back-track slowly and only walk faster when I gave the signal. Keeping an eye on the termite mound we retreated step by step until we reached a safer area. Black rhinoceros are seldom seen, if ever, in a group of five – hence my original assumption that they were white rhinoceros.

 *It just shows, just when you think you know all the answers, nature changes the questions. A close encounter indeed! ■*



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Impala Lily:

A Winter Signature in the Bushveld

Photos © Quintus Strauss unless otherwise indicated

Among the many botanical treasures of Southern Africa, few plants capture attention quite like the impala lily. Known scientifically as *Adenium multiflorum*, this striking species is as dramatic as the landscapes it inhabits.

General description

A deciduous, succulent shrub or small tree, typically reaching heights of between 0.5 and 3 metres. It is characterised by a swollen, often bottle-shaped trunk known as a caudex, which stores water and allows the plant to survive extended dry periods.

During the dry winter months, when the plant is leafless, it bursts into a profusion of flowers. These are among its most striking features – trumpet-shaped blooms that are white to pale pink with vivid crimson or magenta margins. The flowers often appear before the leaves, creating a dramatic contrast against the stark branches and the dry surrounding landscape. Leaves emerge with the onset of warmer, wetter conditions. They are glossy, dark green, and clustered near the tips of the branches.



The plant's overall growth form is often irregular but aesthetically pleasing, making it highly recognisable even when not in flower.

“Stripped of leaves, the impala lily stands defined by form and winter bloom.”

SPECIES ID – TREES

Identification

This species is relatively easy to identify due to its distinctive combination of features.

Bark

The bark is smooth and grey, sometimes with a slightly greenish hue, giving the plant a clean, almost sculpted appearance. The thickened trunk and branches reflect its succulent growth form, while the smooth bark and sparse branching give it a distinctive silhouette.

Trunk and branches.



Impala lilies (*Adenium multiflorum*) at Shingwedzi Rest Camp, KNP.



Full-grown tree.



Leaves.



Leaves

Leaves are absent for most of the year and are shed before the flowers appear. When in leaf, the plant's foliage is simple and often clustered near the tips of the branches. The leaves are oval to oblong, with a leathery texture.



Dry leaf.



Another identifying characteristic, though less obvious, is the milky latex sap that exudes when the plant is damaged – a trait common among many members of the Apocynaceae (dogbane family), many of which are toxic.

Flowers

The flowers are the most reliable identifying feature. Their colour pattern – pale centres with bold, darker margins – is characteristic, and they are typically borne in clusters at the ends of the branches. Flowering occurs mainly during the dry winter months (May–August in Southern Africa), when few other plants are in bloom.

Flower. Photo © Ava Peattle



Flower bud.



Flowers. Photo © Stoffel



Photo © Wichatsurin

Dry seed pod split open.

Distribution and Habitat



Occurs widely across parts of Southern Africa, including South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Eswatini. Within South Africa, it is most commonly found in the north-eastern regions, particularly in the Kruger National Park and adjacent Lowveld areas.

It favours rocky, well-drained soils and is often associated with granitic or sandy substrates. The species is well adapted to semi-arid conditions and is typically found in open woodland, bushveld and rocky outcrops.

The plant's ability to store water in its swollen stem allows it to endure prolonged dry spells, while its deciduous nature reduces water loss during unfavourable conditions. It is most frequently encountered in areas that experience a marked seasonal climate, with hot, wet summers and cool, dry winters.

Ecology

Ecologically, it plays a subtle but important role in its environment. Its flowers provide a valuable nectar source for insects, particularly bees and butterflies, during a time of year when few other flowering plants are available.

The timing of its flowering – in the dry season – gives it a competitive advantage in attracting pollinators. With less floral competition, its conspicuous blooms are highly visible and accessible.

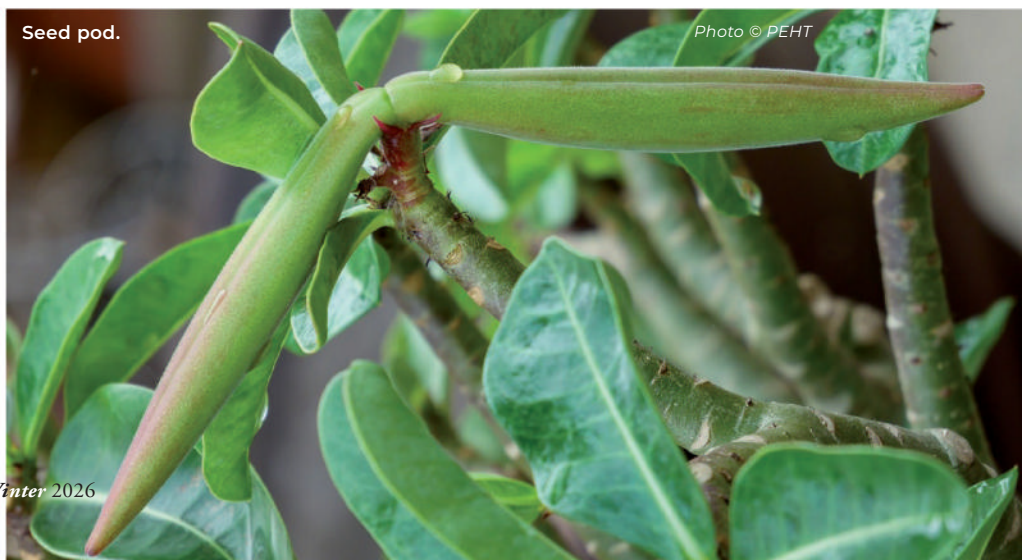
However, the plant is also well protected from herbivory. Its tissues contain potent cardiac glycosides, making it highly toxic to most animals.

As a result, it is seldom browsed, allowing it to persist even in areas with high densities of herbivores.

Seed dispersal occurs through wind. The plant produces paired seed pods that split open to release seeds equipped with tufts of silky hairs, enabling them to be carried over considerable distances.

Seed pod.

Photo © PEHT





Uses

Despite its toxicity, the impala lily has been utilised by various cultures for practical purposes. Traditionally, extracts from the plant have been used as arrow poison. The toxic compounds, when applied to arrow tips, were effective in hunting, as they could quickly immobilise or kill game animals.

In some cases, the latex has also been used as fish poison, introduced into water bodies to stun fish and make them easier to catch.

In modern times, the impala lily is valued primarily as an ornamental plant. Its unusual form and striking flowers make it popular in gardens, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions. It is also widely cultivated as a bonsai subject, where its swollen trunk and artistic branching can be showcased.

However, due to its toxicity, caution is required when handling the plant, especially in environments where children or livestock may be present.

Seeds. Photo © Tanya Ted



Flower in beautiful light.



“Enduring the dry, the impala lily flowers when little else does.”

Photo © Udo Kieslich



Watch this! Scan the QR code or visit https://youtu.be/Gov_PCZl65E?si=J92bbTbozmmFTnS- to watch the video: 'Flora Fridays: Impala Lily | Adenium multiflorum'. Published by EcoTraining TV.



Folklore

Like many striking plants, this one has found a place in local folklore and traditional beliefs. Its association with poison and its ability to survive in harsh conditions have contributed to a sense of respect and caution surrounding it.

In some traditions, plants with potent properties are believed to possess spiritual significance or protective qualities. While specific folklore varies between communities, the impala lily is often regarded as a plant not to be disturbed unnecessarily. Its dramatic flowering during the

otherwise bleak dry season may also symbolise resilience and renewal, reinforcing its presence as both a physical and symbolic feature of the landscape.

In the Kruger National Park and beyond, the impala lily stands as a reminder that survival in the wild often requires both adaptation and defence. Whether admired for its aesthetic appeal, studied for its ecological role or respected for its potent chemistry, the impala lily remains one of the most memorable and distinctive plants of the African bushveld. ■

THE YELLOWS, LABEOS & GOBIES

by Piet & Bronwyn Kotze | Images © Freshwater Fishes of Southern Africa - courtesy of Struik Nature unless otherwise indicated

“Often overlooked, river fish are vital to the balance and health of the Kruger’s ecosystems.”



<< Dr Piet (Vis) and Bronwyn Kotze

Piet Kotze is an independent environmental consultant at Clean Stream Biological Services. His initial introduction to the aquatic biodiversity of the Kruger National Park was gained during his postgraduate studies, under the watchful eye of the then aquatic ecologist of the Park, Dr Andrew Deacon. Together, they spent many days conducting monitoring surveys along the Park’s rivers, where he aptly received

the nickname ‘Piet Vis’ (English: Piet Fish), a name that has stuck to this day. As an aquatic ecologist, he is currently involved in many freshwater monitoring and research studies and has a special interest in the overall biodiversity the Park offers. His wife, Bronwyn, shares the same interests, and after completing her Master’s degree in Zoology on the Sabie River, they moved to the Lowveld and as a couple, they have shared many bush adventures together.

Introduction

The 'Life in the Rivers of the Kruger National Park' series of articles aims to introduce and encourage readers to seek out the prolific freshwater inhabitants that contribute greatly to the biodiversity, and intricate food webs of the Kruger's riverine ecosystems.



The Kruger National Park boasts the highest diversity of freshwater fish species amongst all the national parks in South Africa, with an estimated 49 fish species naturally occurring in the Park.

The first article in this series (Autumn 2025: Edition 31), featured the most charismatic and spectacular predator of the Kruger's rivers, namely the **tigerfish** (*Hydrocynus vittatus*).

In the second article (Winter 2025: Edition 32), we explored one of the most commonly observed fish species in the Kruger National Park,

namely the **tilapia** and in the third article (Spring 2025: Edition 33), we delved into the various **catfish** species. The fourth article (Summer 2025: Edition 34) introduced readers to some of the very unique fish species (such as the **mormyrids**, **lungfish** and **killifish**) while the fifth article (Autumn 2026: Edition 35) explored the very interesting life cycle of the **eel** species and the magnificent diversity of the smaller '**barb**' species (*Enteromius*).

This is the last article in this series covering the fish species that occur in the rivers of the of the Kruger National Park. Let us dive beneath the surface to explore the world of the well-renowned **yellowfish**, the less well-known **labeos** (mudfish) and the **gobies**.

While the big-game fish often get the glory, these 'bottom-dwellers' are the true engineers and indicators of river health, and the yellowfish and labeos play a crucial role in the aquatic ecosystems as the vacuum-cleaners of river beds.



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LIFE IN THE RIVERS OF KNP

The not-so-mellow-yellows

Topping the wish lists of most keen fly fishermen are undoubtedly the iconic yellowfish, more so due to their strength and tenacity which offer anglers an exciting challenge, than the spectacular golden yellow breeding colours of the male fish. This powerhouse is a favourite for fly-fishers, known for its golden scales and incredible strength. Yellowfish are the undisputed 'kings of the rapids', as they prefer the faster flowing river stretches that offer rapids and riffles, using their streamlined body forms to comfortably glide through, and utilize these fast river currents in their search of aquatic organisms. Due to their preference for flowing water, yellowfish are often used as indicator species when determining flow regimes for South African river systems, and are generally reliable indicators of overall river health.

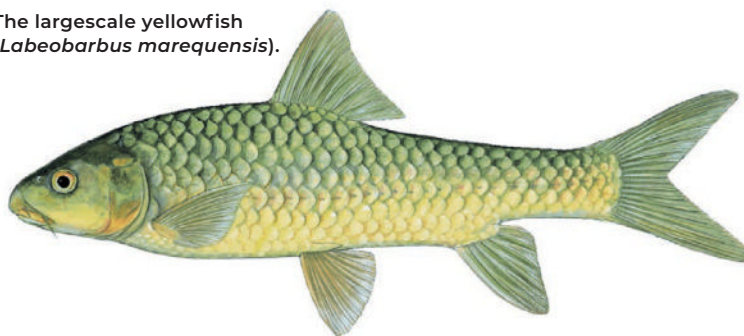
Something remarkable about the yellowfish group of species is their extensive variability in visual features, even between members within the same population. Just as chameleons change their colour palettes, so too do yellowfish colour hues vary with fluctuations in water clarity – with colours ranging from silvery, to pale olive, and to a bright gold-green-yellow combination.



From vantage points such as the Kruger Park's highwater bridges, the flashes of silver often observed in the water below, indicate the presence of yellowfish at work.

Their variability in appearance is also clearly displayed by the extreme variation in their

The largescale yellowfish (*Labeobarbus marequensis*).



The largescale yellowfish is the undisputed 'king of the rapids' in the Kruger National Park's rivers, displaying remarkable variability in body colour and mouth shape.



extendable mouths and lips, which may range from thin and firm (referred to as a chiselmouth), to thick and fleshy 'rubber-lips'. The lip development is determined both by genetics and environmental pressures, including habitat and feeding habits.

This variation in lip shape has also contributed to taxonomic differentiation in yellowfishes, with the straight-edged lower jaw group previously described as a completely separate group, called the chiselmouths (genus: *Varicorhinus*).

Photos © Dr Andrew Deacon

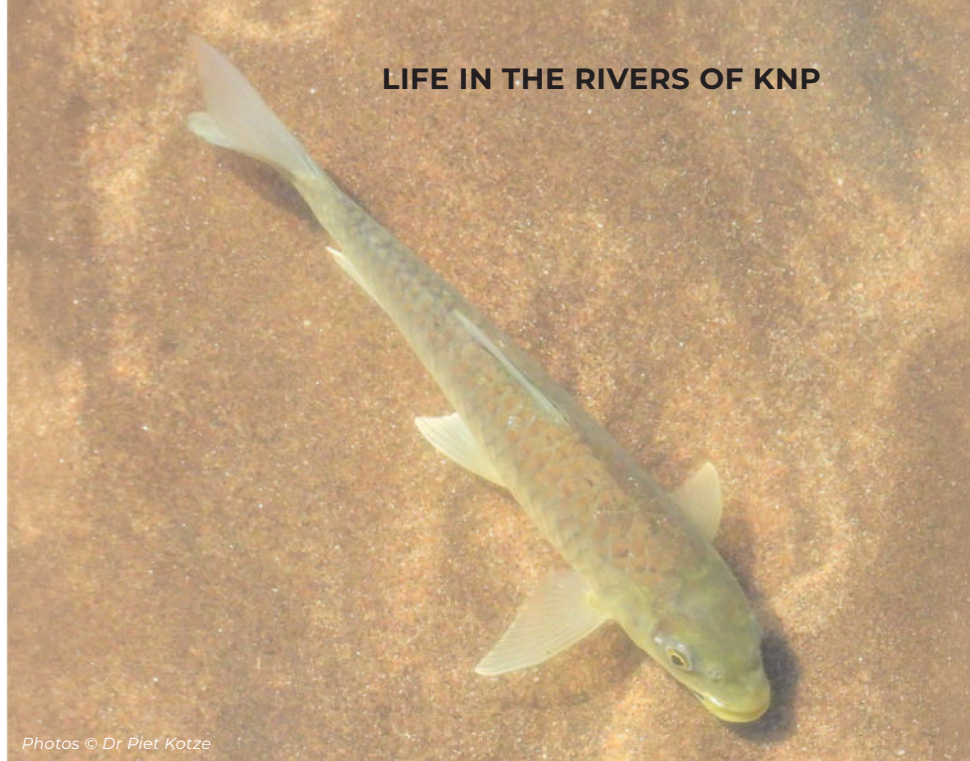


Worldwide, there are currently an estimated 127 yellowfish species in the genus *Labeobarbus*, with 11 species occurring in the rivers of Southern Africa. The largescale yellowfish (*Labeobarbus marequensis*) is the only yellowfish species that occurs in the rivers of the Kruger National Park. This species may attain lengths of almost 500mm, and the South African angling record is 5.75kg.

Yellowfish characteristically display strong migration tendencies during times of higher flows, and can be observed attempting to jump over physical migration barriers such as weirs and cascades, before congregating to spawn in large numbers in rocky, shallow rapids.

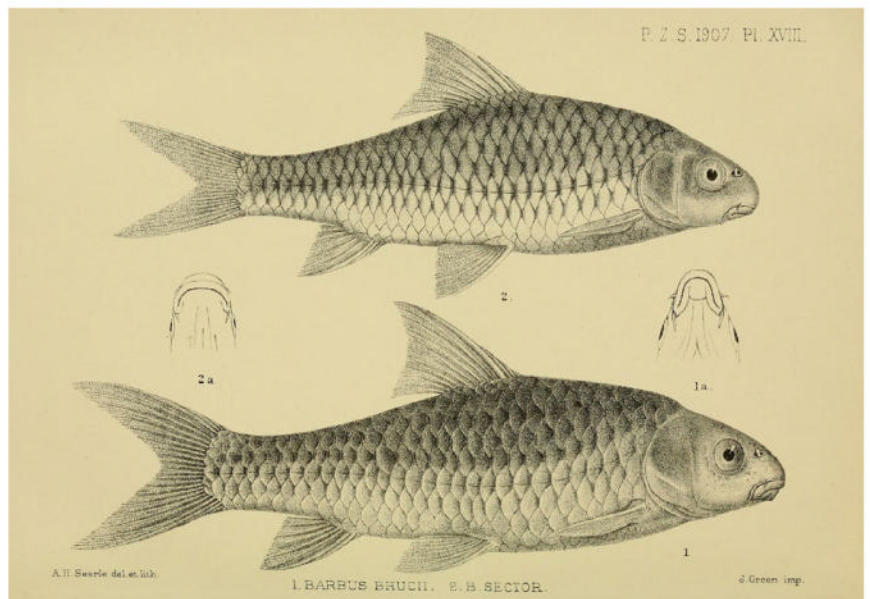
“Kings of the rapids, yellowfish reflect both the strength and condition of flowing rivers.”

! The building of dams, and subsequent regulation of river flows have been one of the major impacts on this species' survival. Other threats to the survival of yellowfish include instream habitat degradation, catchment alterations for urbanisation, agriculture, and also pollution.



Photos © Dr Piet Kotze

When staring down into the rivers from a highwater bridge in the Kruger, the flashes of silver often observed in the water down below gives away the presence of some yellowfish (*Labeobarbus marequensis*) at work.



This scientific illustration is **Plate XVIII** from the **1907** edition of the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London. It was created by the noted natural history artist **A.H. Searle**. The plate depicts two fish that were originally described as distinct species:

1. *Barbus bruchii* (bottom fish)
2. *Barbus sector* (top fish)

Modern Classification

Today, both of these fish are considered to be the same species: *Labeobarbus marequensis*, commonly known as the **Lowveld largescale yellowfish**. They are a prized

freshwater species native to the river systems of South Africa, particularly the Olifants and Limpopo basins.

Key Features of the Illustration

- **Mouth Variation:** The small diagrams labelled **1a** and **2a** show the underside of the fish's mouths. These highlight the extreme phenotypic variation (different physical forms) within the species. At the time, these different mouth shapes led scientists to believe they were looking at different species.
- **Scales:** The 'largescale' part of their name is evident in the detailed rendering of their thick, diamond-shaped scales.

LIFE IN THE RIVERS OF KNP



The bottom-dwelling redeye labeo (*Labeo cylindricus*).



The leaden labeo (*Labeo molybdinus*).



The bottom-dwelling redeye labeo feeds on algae from rocks and often displays remarkably bright red eyes.

“Labeos work quietly along the riverbed, processing algae and organic matter.”

The leaden labeo is another strong swimming bottom-dweller found in fast flowing rocky habitat where it feeds like a ‘creepy-crawly’ on the rocks and other substrates such as hippos.



The Labeos

A group of fish that may not be very well known, possibly due to their ‘bottom-dwelling’ behaviour, is the genus *Labeos*, also known as the ‘mudfish’. Similar to the yellowfish and smaller barb species, they are part of the group of fish called Cyprinoids – fishes characterised by modified vertebrae linking the swim bladder to the inner ear, thereby enhancing hearing sensitivity

and broadening the frequency range of sound detection in the water. Furthermore, they have scales on their bodies but not on their heads, and lack teeth on the jaws.

The genus *Labeo* includes around 60 species worldwide. All species are characterised by a distinct mouth form of ventral suctional discs, with well-developed lips and rostral caps, ideally suited for bottom-feeding and grazing algae from

rocks substrates.

The Kruger National Park’s rivers are home to five labeo species.

Three of these, namely the redeye labeo, leaden labeo and purple labeo, all prefer faster-flowing river habitats. Interestingly, all leave characteristic ‘kreepy crawly’ trails on rocky substrates, and even on the backs of hippos, when they glean algae from these surfaces.

The redeye labeo (*Labeo cylindricus*) often displays remarkably bright red eyes and share its habitat with leaden labeo (*Labeo molybdinus*). Both species are synonymous with the white-water riffles and rapids, where it actively feeds on algae and aufwuchs (the collection of microorganisms, algae, small crustaceans, and detritus that adhere to submerged surfaces such as rocks, plants, and logs in aquatic ecosystems).

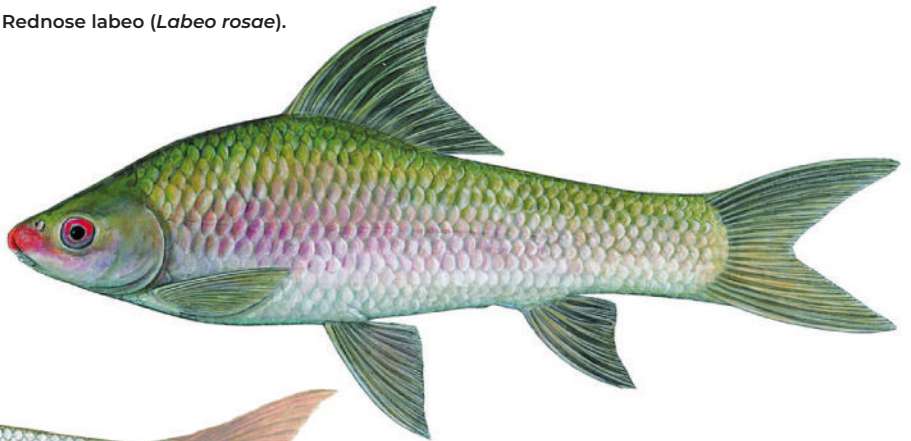
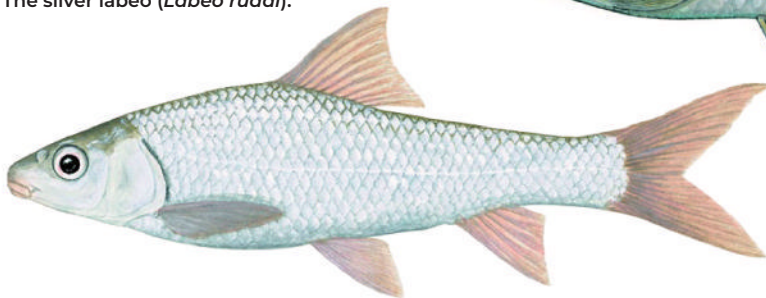
The purple labeo (*Labeo congoro*), is an exceptionally strong swimmer that prefers the strong-flowing rocky stretches of the Park's larger perennial rivers, often observed alongside tigerfish (*Hydrocynus vittatus*).

The two other labeo species found in the Park's rivers prefer slower habitats of both perennial and seasonal rivers.



Photo © Dr Piet Kotze

The purple labeo (*Labeo congoro*) displays purple patches on its sides, and is an exceptionally strong swimmer that prefers the strong-flowing rocky stretches of the Park's larger perennial rivers. Often observed alongside tigerfish (*Hydrocynus vittatus*).

Rednose labeo (*Labeo rosae*).The silver labeo (*Labeo ruddi*).

The silver labeo prefers quiet runs and pools, or standing water with muddy substrates, where it plays a vital 'vacuum-cleaner' role in processing organic matter.



Photo © Dr Andrew Deacon

The rednose labeo (*Labeo rosae*) displays small red dots on its nose and prefers sandy stretches where it feeds on detritus, algae and smaller invertebrates.

This species is a very active migrator in the swollen rivers during the summer period and is often observed leaping out of the water with great vigour to cross migration barriers. The silver labeo (*Labeo ruddi*) also prefers quiet runs and pools, or standing water with muddy substrates, where it plays a vital role in processing organic matter.

LIFE IN THE RIVERS OF KNP

Fresh water goby (*Awaous aeneofuscus*).



The Gobies

Gobies form part of many childhood memories... wildly scooping around in jagged seaside rockpools attempting to catch these fleeting fish, is something most of us remember about holidays at the coast. Comprising an astonishing 2 000 species, gobies form one of the largest fish families in the world.

Although they primarily inhabit inshore marine habitats, some species prefer estuarine and freshwater systems. Gobies are bottom-dwellers that are braced by their pelvic fins which are united in a disc.

“Small and often unseen, gobies are finely adapted to life along the riverbed.”

The primary purpose of this disc (often called a suction disc or pelvic sucker) is to provide attachment to substrates. This specialized structure allows them to cling to rocks or other surfaces to maintain stability in high-energy environments, such as strong currents.

Three goby species are indicated to be present in the rivers of the Kruger National Park, namely the freshwater goby (*Awaous aeneofuscus*), river goby (*Glossogobius callidus*) and the tank goby (*Glossogobius giuris*).



River goby (*Glossogobius callidus*).



Gobies are bottom-dwellers that are braced by their pelvic fins that are united in a disc (often called a suction disc or pelvic sucker) that allows them to cling to rocks or other surfaces.



Photos © Dr Andrew Deacon

The tank goby (*Glossogobius giuris*).



The tank goby is a carnivorous 'sit-and-wait predator', and with its large, upward-staring eyes and wide mouth, it looks like a miniature version of a prehistoric sea monster.



"Much of the life that sustains these rivers remains hidden, yet essential."

Photos © Paco Como

The freshwater goby is a master of disguise and is found in areas with sandy bottoms where it strategically buries itself beneath the sand, with only its head and large eyes exposed, waiting to ambush any unsuspecting meal that drifts by.

The river goby offers some drama in the shallows, as the male river goby prepares a nest, and once eggs have been laid by his wife, duly chases her away from the nest, taking on the role of guarding and tending to the eggs by fanning them and protecting them until the embryos hatch.

The tank goby a carnivorous 'sit-and-wait' predator, feeding on various small fish, invertebrates, as well as other gobies. With its large, upward-staring eyes and wide mouth, it looks like a

miniature version of a prehistoric sea monster. Being a large species, attaining lengths of approximately 350mm, it is sometimes caught by subsistence fishers and anglers.

Conclusion

This 'Life in the rivers of the Kruger National Park' series of articles aimed to introduce readers to the amazing diversity of fish in the rivers of the Kruger National Park, with 49 fish species discussed across six editions.

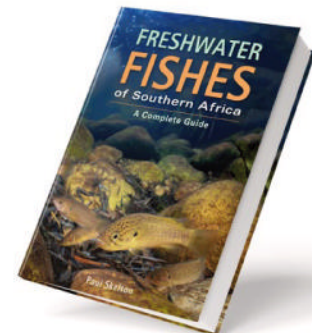
When next you have the opportunity to stare into the mysterious river waters as you traverse a bridge or rest under a shady riverside tree, we trust that you will be more aware of the diverse, spectacular

and complex ecosystems that exist beneath the surface – ecosystems largely invisible to tourists, yet play a critical role in the overall conservation value of this remarkable wildlife paradise. May this serve as a reminder of the vital role the Kruger National Park plays in the continued conservation of all species, and not only the charismatic Big Five.



Furthermore, let us remain cognisant of the fact that the Park's river systems are under enormous strain due to the impacts such as reduced flows and pollution, continually inflicted upon them in their upper catchments, many hundreds of kilometres beyond its boundaries. ■

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



With thanks to Struik Nature for the use of images from *Freshwater Fishes of Southern Africa* by Paul H. Skelton, a comprehensive reference on the region's freshwater fish diversity, ecology and conservation, supported by detailed illustrations and distribution maps.



Learn More!

'Freshwater Fishes of Southern Africa' – Struik Nature
<https://tinyurl.com/3rm29ybv>



TOP 10 AMATEUR photographs

WINTER 2026

1ST PRIZE!
A three-night midweek selfcatering stay for 4 persons at Leopard Rock Guest Lodge.

2ND PRIZE!
A four-night midweek stay for 2 people sharing at Raptor Retreat Game Lodge.

3RD PRIZE!
A two-night stay for 2 people sharing at Crocodile Bridge Safari Lodge.

When the *Birds, Bees, Bugs & Butterflies* theme comes up, we know we are going to receive exceptional entries.

This theme challenges photographers to seek out less ordinary wildlife shots, requiring them to find and photograph the smaller subjects in nature. It takes patience, concentration and considerable effort to keep the camera steady and click quickly, as these tiny subjects tend to move about at speed – with the photographer trying to keep up with the target.

We received outstanding entries, and once again it was no easy task selecting the TOP 50 from several hundred submissions.

Well done to all who entered, and congratulations to the deserving TOP 10!

For details of our next competition, keep an eye on our Kruger Magazine Facebook group – details will be announced during the second half of June 2026. It is of cardinal importance to read the Ts & Cs carefully to avoid having to re-enter.



1

Nicolas Clair – Winner

'Paradise joint venture'

Nicolas wins a 3-night midweek self-catering stay for four persons at Leopard Rock Guest Lodge.

Sponsor: Leopard Rock Guest Lodge

Camera: Canon R5 MKII

Lens: Canon EF 600mm III

Area: Tsendze Rustic Camp, KNP



PRIVATE BUSH ESCAPE | NEAR KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

LEOPARD ROCK

— GUEST LODGE —



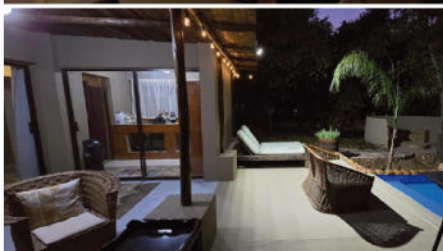
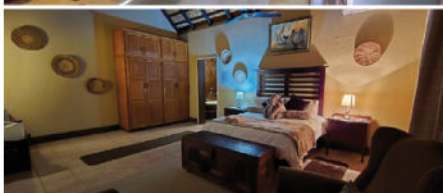
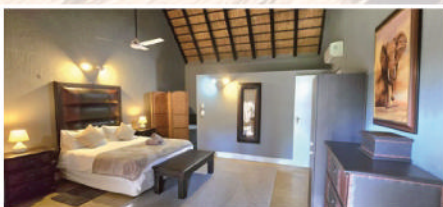
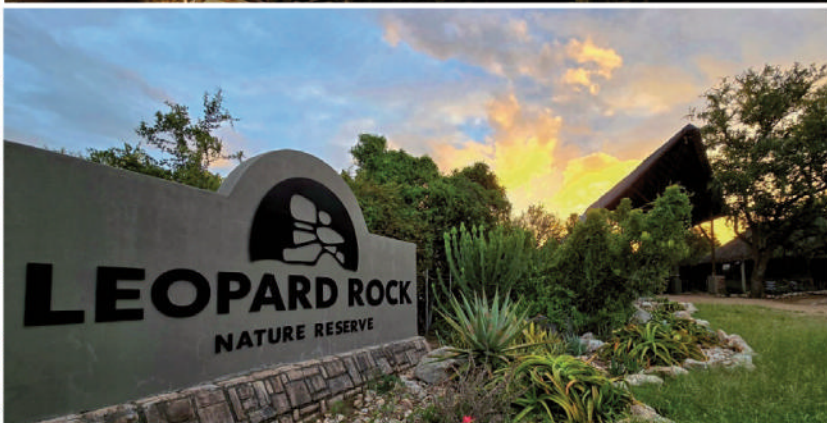
📍 R526, Hoedspruit Limpopo

COMPLIMENTARY GAME DRIVE

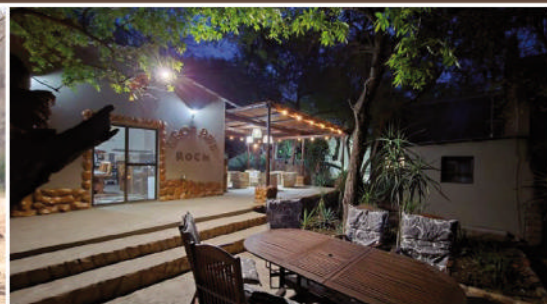
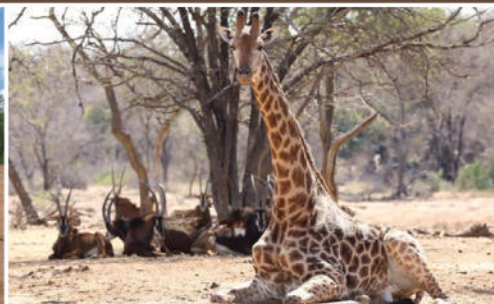
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The story behind the winning photograph

PARADISE JOINT VENTURE

Having lived in South Africa for the past ten years, we tend to visit the Kruger once a year. This time, our goal was to focus on birdwatching in the north and centre of the Park, with stops at Pafuri, Shingwedzi and Satara. Looking for an additional campsite before Satara, my wife Florence suggested trying Tsendze Rustic Camp, well known among bird enthusiasts. After some research, we chose campsite number 26; an excellent decision, as it turned out.

In December 2025, we arrived at Tsendze on a scorching summer day. We chatted with our neighbours, fellow travellers with a similar teardrop trailer. The discussion quickly shifted from camping gear to birds and photography. They mentioned that a pair of paradise flycatchers was nesting next to our campsite.

Finding the nest was not easy. Hidden among dense intertwined branches, it only revealed itself thanks to the repeated fly-bys of the parents. They were fiercely protective, dive-bombing any feathered intruder venturing too close before returning to feed their chicks.

Photographing them proved challenging. The foliage allowed only a tiny opening for framing, and the birds were moving incredibly fast.



I eventually set up the tripod and 600mm kit at a respectful distance, relying on patience and luck. I managed to get a few shots of either adult alternatively feeding the chicks. Then the perfect moment came! The female stood beside the nest while the male arrived carrying a large insect. In a split second, she moved closer, seemingly trying to snatch part of the meal before he fed a chick. And in that instant, the family portrait was captured.

It was our first close encounter with these stunning birds, with their deep colours and striking blue eye-rings, they are unforgettable. A regret? The male's spectacularly long tail barely fitted entirely into the frame.



It was a rare sighting for which the recent improved eye autofocus technology helped capture a sharp image with a shallow depth of field under low-light conditions. We are immensely grateful to the camp, its inhabitants and temporary residents, and we are looking forward to returning to the Kruger!

Nicolas Clair





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2

Antoinette Kloppers – 1st runner-up

'Lilac-breasted roller with centipede'

Antoinette wins a four-night midweek stay for two guests sharing at Raptor Retreat Game Lodge.

Sponsor: Raptor Retreat Game Lodge

Camera: Sony A9 III

Lens: Sony FE 200-600mm

Area: H10 Lower Sabie, KNP



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3

Lisl Moolman – 2nd runner-up

'European roller having a scorpion for lunch'

Lisl wins a two-night stay for two guests sharing at Crocodile Bridge Safari Lodge.

Sponsor: Crocodile Bridge Safari Lodge

Camera: Nikon D500

Lens: Tamron 150-600mm

Area: H10 Lower Sabie, KNP



4

Geo Cloete

**'Ground hornbill
(a time to rebuild)'**

Camera: Nikon Z8
Lens: Nikkor Z 180-600mm
Area: Shingwedzi, KNP



5

Bertie Kloppers

**'White-fronted bee-eater
with purple-tip butterfly'**

Camera: Sony A1
Lens: Sony 200-600mm
Area: S56 Mphongolo Loop, KNP



6

Johan Smit – ‘Mom, we are hungry’

Camera: Canon R5 | **Lens:** Canon EF 400mm | **Area:** Lake Panic, KNP



7

Linda Smit

‘Lilac-breasted roller’

Camera: Sony A1
Lens: Sony 200-600mm
Area: S41 Satara, KNP



8

Tristan Masterton

'Bateleur eagle'

Camera: Canon EOS R

Lens: Canon EF 400

Area: H7 Satara, KNP

9

Francois Smit

'Bad hair day'

Camera: Nikon D850

Lens: Sigma 150-600mm

Area: Punda Maria, KNP





10

Caroline Rowbottom

'Black-headed oriole'

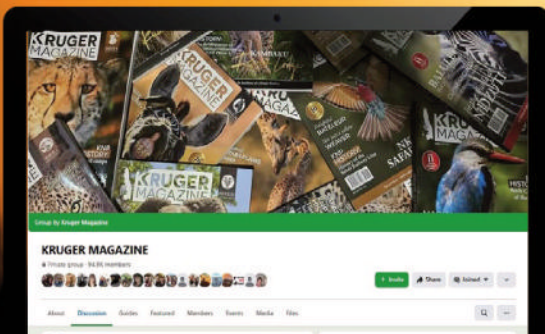
Camera: Canon D90

Lens: Sigma 150-600mm

Area: Satara, KNP

OUR **SPRING** 2026
**AMATEUR PHOTO
COMPETITION**
will kick off on

21 June 2026

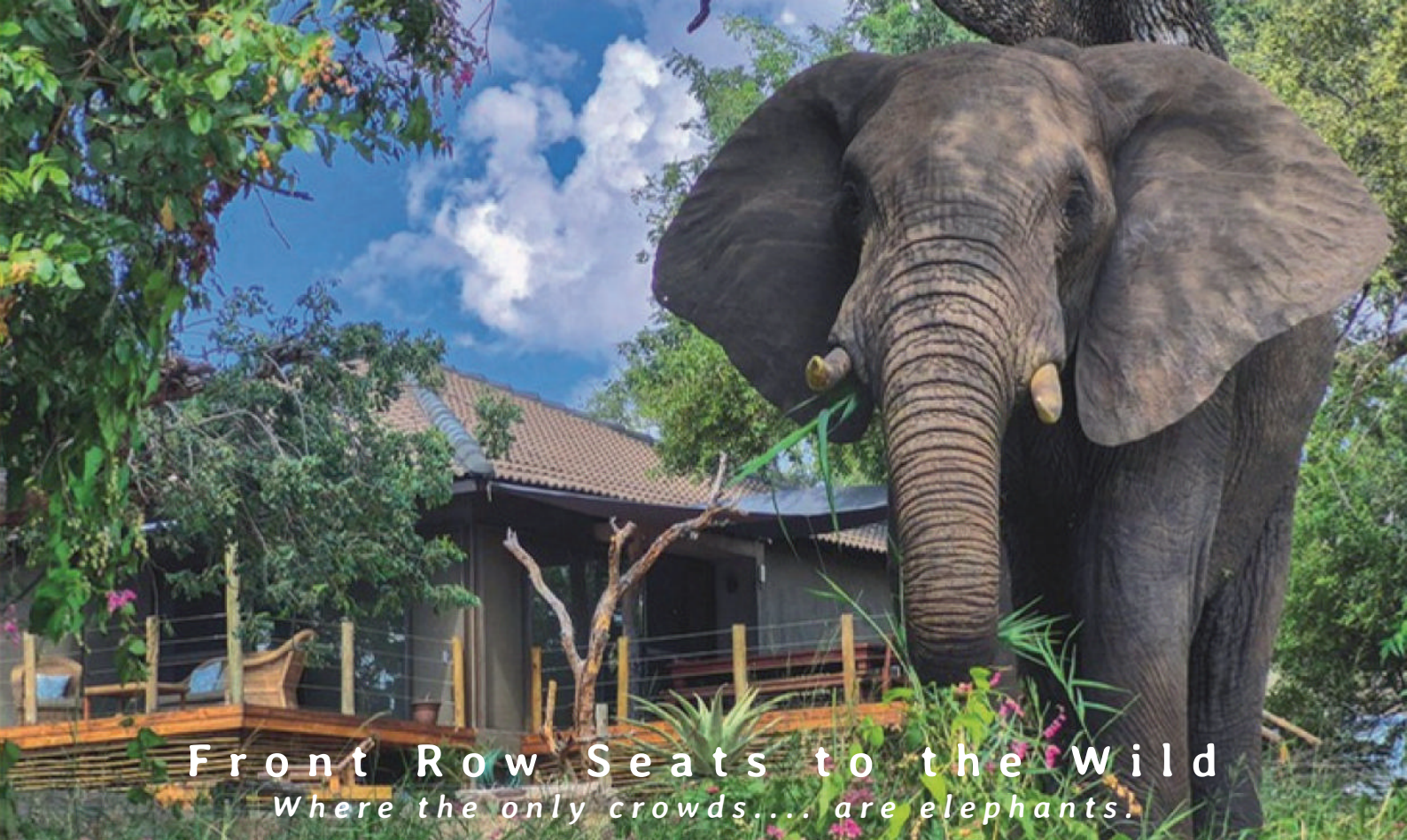


How do I enter?

- 1** Become a member of our KRUGER MAGAZINE Facebook group to enter your photo. This will also enable you to vote for your favourite entries!
- 2** Terms & conditions and prizes will be announced on Facebook on **21 June 2026** – be sure to stay tuned in. The TOP 50 will be announced on **19 July 2026**.
- 3** The top 10 photographs will be published in our Spring issue, to be distributed in **September 2026**.



[facebook.com/KRUGER MAGAZINE group](https://facebook.com/KRUGER%20MAGAZINE%20group)



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- Daily Game Drives
- Night Game Drives

2026 Workshops

21 - 27 June (2 spots available)

19 - 25 July (1 spot available)

16 - 22 August (1 spot available)



KNP HISTORY:

Legends of the Kruger – Henry Charles Christoffel (Harry) Wolhuter “Lindanda”

by Joep Stevens | Photos © Joep Stevens unless otherwise indicated

i In Issue 35 of KRUGER MAGAZINE, we commenced a series of articles on a selection of legendary individuals who worked in the Park during its early years and played a significant role in its development. This article focuses on the life of Harry Wolhuter, a ranger who served from 1901 (prior to the proclamation of the Kruger National Park) until his retirement on 30 April 1946.



<< Joep Stevens
is a keen historian who was introduced to the Kruger National Park by his parents in 1966. This ignited his interest in and passion for the Park.

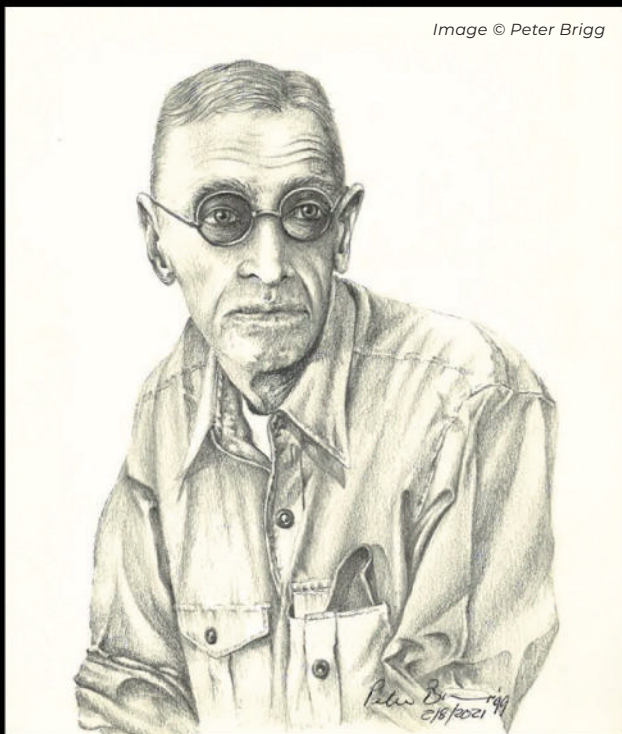


Image © Peter Brigg

Sketch of ageing Harry Wolhuter in late 1950s.

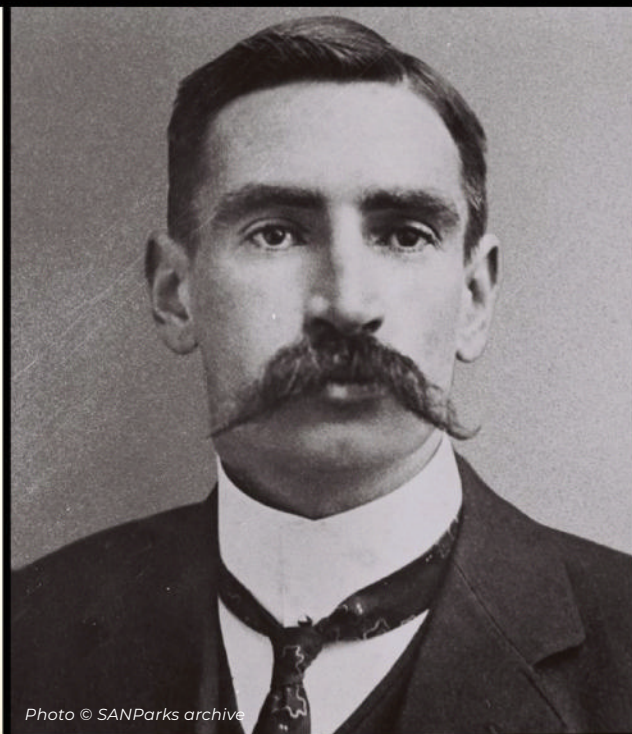


Photo © SANParks archive

Harry Wolhuter as a young man (about 30 years old) in 1905.



Colonel James Stevenson-Hamilton
(nicknamed Skukuza) (1867 - 1957).

Photo © Stevenson-Hamilton Collection

Introduction

When James Stevenson-Hamilton was appointed as warden of the newly proclaimed Sabi Game Reserve in July 1902, he was keen to find somebody that knew the area and its people and someone with experience who could serve him as guide, philosopher and friend. He writes as follows:

“Every ‘old hand’ whom I approached said the same thing, ‘Try to get hold of Harry Wolhuter; he knows the country better than anyone else; give him a horse, a rifle and a pair of saddlebags, and he will start from anywhere at five minutes notice!’

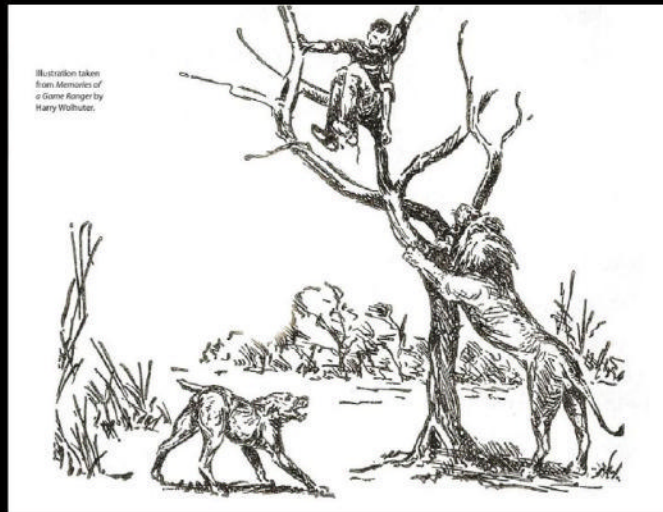
When at last I was successful in making contact with him, I found that Wolhuter’s appearance and manner justified his reputation. Tall, spare but powerfully built; purposeful, for all his quiet voice and unassuming manner, he seemed emblematic of the best type of pioneer hunter.

It did not take long to bring home to me how fortunate I was to have found such an assistant so soon, and in all the years of close companionship and friendship that



Photo © Wolhuter Collection

Harry Wolhuter (right) with James Stevenson-Hamilton after retirement – circa 1950s.



have since passed, I have never ceased to regard the day of the first meeting as a red letter one in my life.

I suppose there can be few if any men in all Africa possessing a deeper knowledge and wider experience of bush lore in all its phases and in his prime he held the qualities requisite to give effect to that knowledge and experience; a powerful frame, and iron constitution, cool courage and quiet determination. In respect of personal performance, there appears

no doubt a certain reticence and tendency to understatement, which are natural to Harry Wolhuter, and are very attractive traits in his character; he avoids personal credit when possible, and it is only after considerable difficulty that his friends induced him to put his various adventures on paper.

I esteem it as the highest privilege to have been asked to write a Foreword to my old friend’s memoirs”.

Who was Harry Wolhuter?

14 February 1876

Born in Beaufort West, Western Cape.

Circa 1889

Moved with parents to Johannesburg. He got his first job in a trading store in Maraisburg (Johannesburg). Later he accepted a position in a billiard saloon and canteen, the Black Cat, but he dearly wanted to follow his parents who had since settled on a farm in the White River district near Legogote.

His chance came when he got an opportunity to lead the oxen of a transport wagon on its way to Barberton. After his arrival in the Lowveld, he went to live with his parents on their farm and helped out in their shop.

He went on his first hunting trip when he accompanied an acquaintance of his parents on a visit to the current Satara area. His parents later moved to Belfast to give the younger children a better education. He stayed on at the farm, where he built up a considerable herd of cattle.

He issued loincloths to his workers and in turn he was given the nickname 'Lindanda' (meaning loincloth).

His nearest neighbour was the legendary hunter and farmer, William (Bill) Sanderson, who farmed on Peebles, and in time they forged a close friendship. Bill's brother, Bob, farmed a few kilometres away on another farm.



Conspicuous mountain called Legogote, located between White River and Numbi Gate (along the R538) – 26 November 2017.

1896-1897

Lost almost all his cattle in the rinderpest epidemic and was forced to work for H.L. Hall on his farm Riverside (later Mattafin). While there, he was commandeered to help the Boers quell the Makhado rebellion. After returning, he decided to undertake an extensive hunting expedition in the area that would become the Kruger National Park, as far north as beyond the Olifants River.

1899

On his return he learnt to his dismay that the Anglo-Boer War had broken out. His friend Bob Sanderson decided to move with his herd of cattle to Mozambique and Harry followed suit.

Upon their return, Colonel Ludwig Steinaecker was busy raising a border guard corps at Nomahasha in Eswatini.

Harry, and many other English-speaking volunteers from the Lowveld, decided to join Steinaecker's Horse, although he never signed anything. He served in this irregular British unit for the entire war and rose to the rank of sergeant. While he was stationed at the unit's



Signage to Legogote along the R538 between White River and Numbi Gate – 19 February 2017.

Sabie Bridge outpost, he helped build the blockhouse, which was later to become Warden James Stevenson-Hamilton's first quarters in Skukuza.

One of Harry's particular friends in Steinaeckers was a French-Canadian by the name of Perry, who, sometime after the war, obtained a grant on the farm 'Perry's Farm' on the Sabie River from the Government, on which he started a trading store. Having no family, he willed his farm to Harry and after his death and burial there, Harry was obliged to sell the farm in order to liquidate the debts. This farm was later to become the site of the Sabie River Bungalows and was known as 'Perry's Farm' and the bridge over the Sabie River there was 'Perry's Bridge'.

Rinderpest outbreak in South Africa – 1896.



July 1902

At the end of the war he was stationed at the Steinaeckers Horse headquarters in Komatipoort, and it was here that he met Stevenson-Hamilton – after the mediation of Major Greenhill – and was offered a position as ranger. He carefully considered the offer for three days, and on 17 August 1902 accepted on the one condition that he be allowed to operate from his residence at Mtimba on the (then) western border of the Sabie Game Reserve. Stevenson-Hamilton readily agreed and Harry carried out his duties as ranger from Mtimba for 36 years. At that stage the ranger sections had not been lineated and Harry's area was massive and also included Skukuza. Lineation of ranger sections only took place in 1924.

1903

During a patrol, Harry together with brother-in-law CA Yates, a teacher and scout officer from Barberton, discovered the ruins of João Albasini's house at Magashula's Kraal along the Sabie River near the Phabeni mouth.

Wolhuter's quarters at Mtimba in 1914, showing Legogote in the background.



Photo © SANParks archive



View down Moodies Pass, with Mtimba Hill in the background, when travelling from White River to Numbi Gate (R538) – 26 November 2017.



"Steinaecker Horse" emblem.



Learn more! Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/yywdy2c4> to read the publication, 'Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902): Von Steinaecker's Horse (SH) Unit – Wolfgang Witschas.'

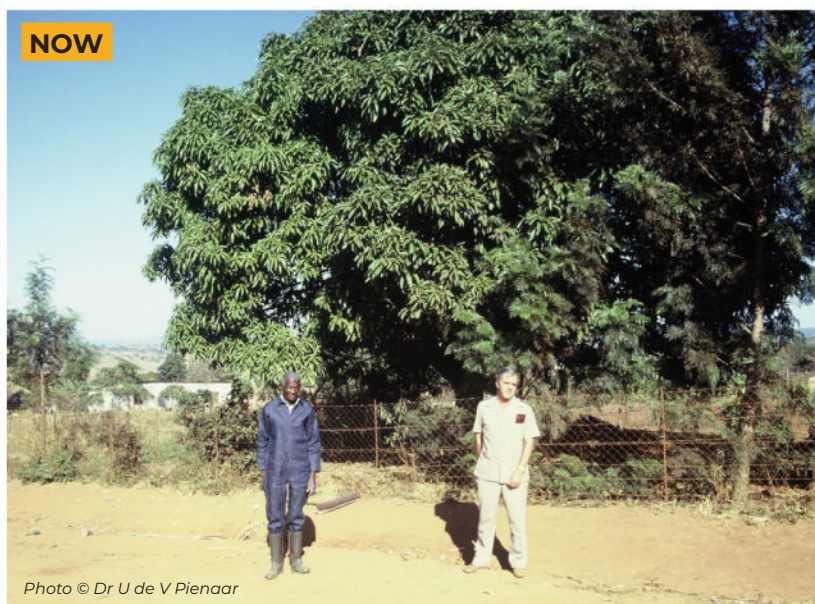


Photo © Dr U de V Pienaar

Remains of the ranger's post at Mtimba – 8 June 1984.



Male lion (*Panthera leo*) in the Kruger National Park – 28 September 2020.



Image courtesy of Kim Wolhuter

26 August 1903

Harry experienced the most dramatic and testing event of his life when on a return journey from a long horseback patrol to the Olifants River.

As evening fell, the small party was still a distance from its destination, so he rode ahead with his wire-haired dog 'Bull' to find a suitable camping site near water. His four black field rangers followed at a distance with the three pack donkeys.

It was already dusk when, close to the confluence of the Metsimetsi and Banyini creeks (-24.697448, 31.943355) he saw movement in the long grass along the footpath and he was under the impression that it was a couple of reedbuck, but Bull dashed ahead and started barking. Harry called the dog back, but the next moment he saw a large male lion to his right that was about to jump. There was no time to lift his rifle, a .400 Express, but he pulled his horse to the left and dug his spurs into its flanks. The horse bucked, with the result that the lion only managed to give his prey a swipe across



Small bronze sculpture depicting Wolhuter's struggle to the death in the Stevenson-Hamilton Library in Skukuza, by Bobby Lawrence – 11 April 2023.

the hindquarters. In the horse's crazed attempt to get away from the lion, Harry was thrown from the saddle. At that moment he saw a second lion storming towards him from the opposite side. He landed right in front of this lion and the animal immediately grabbed him while its mate set off in pursuit of the fleeing horse. When Harry came to, he was being dragged by the

lion along a game path. He was on his back under the belly of the lion, which was dragging him by his right shoulder and arm. It kept stepping on Harry and his thighs and trousers were torn to shreds. Harry had of course lost his rifle during the attack and the lion, presumably in anticipation of the awaiting meal, made a soft purring noise, much like a cat that had caught a mouse.



Photo © SANParks archive

Harry Wolhuter, Vinnie Robertson, James Stevenson-Hamilton and LB Steyn at Lindanda Tree – September 1937.

Because he was on his back, his spurs would catch in the bushes and the lion would give a yank that caused excruciating pain in the arm and shoulder of its prey. Harry tried to prepare himself for the worst, but then he remembered his hunting knife, which he wore in a sheath on his right side.



Harry acknowledged:

“One day when I was in Komatipoort, I visited the shop of a friend, and on the counter was a big Dutch cheese, beside which lay the knife used for cutting it. I picked up the knife and examined it, as I was always interested in sheath knives. This one, I observed, was the famous ‘Pipe Brand’ and far too good a knife to be wasted cutting cheese! So, I removed my own knife from its sheath on my belt, laid it alongside the cheese and put the ‘Pipe Brand’

knife in its place. This wicked theft was never noticed as the two knives were almost identical in form and size, my friend never suspected until I told him years later, suggesting that ‘fair exchange was no robbery’.

Because the lion had a hold on his right shoulder, he had to work his left hand underneath his back and feel for the knife and it seemed like an eternity before he managed to get a proper grip on it. It was an ordinary but sharp butcher’s ‘sticking’ type knife of the ‘Pipe Brand’ with an 11,5cm long blade, manufactured by the firm T. Williams in Smithfield London.

Harry only had one thought, and that was to survive! His entire concentration was focused on using the weapon as effectively as possible. He carefully felt with his left

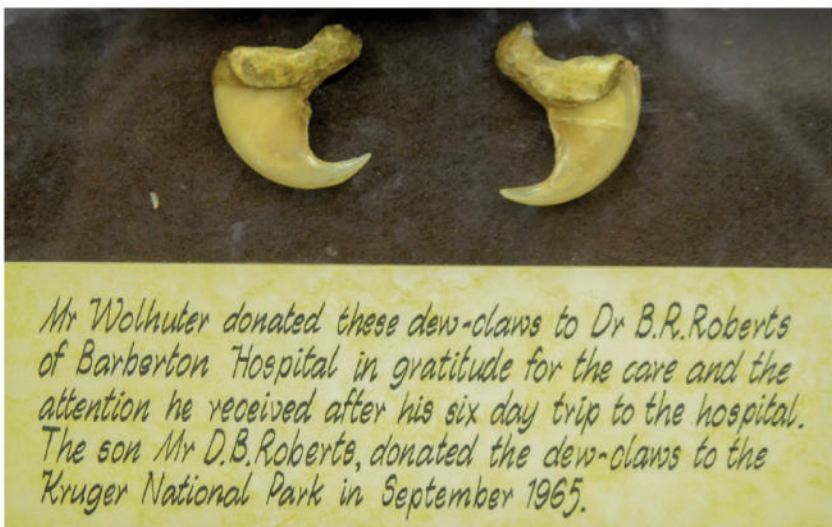
hand for the spot where he thought the lion’s heart should be and then gave it two stabs in quick succession behind the right shoulder. The lion immediately dropped him but still stood over him, growling. Harry desperately struck again and apparently hit a major artery because he was drenched in the animal’s blood. On receiving the last stab, the lion sprang away and backed off into the dark. Harry rose painfully and the two adversaries stood facing each other with only two or three feet between them. The ranger was convinced the growling lion would attack again, and came up with the plan that would save his life – he started yelling and swearing at the top of his voice. This had the desired effect, as the fatally wounded animal turned around and disappeared in the darkness. Harry could hear the growls turn into groans, which became fainter and fainter and finally ceased.



Photo © Claude Graham Collection

Bruce Kelly and Mr Armstrong at the tree at Lindanda in which Harry Wolhuter climbed – 1948.

Display of the dew claws of the lion that attacked Wolhuter, on display at the Stevenson-Hamilton Museum in Skukuza – 22 June 2011.



As quickly as his wounded shoulder allowed, Harry climbed into a young false-thorn (albizia) tree, because the other lion was still nearby. He was barely in the tree when the other male lion turned up.

Fortunately, Bull distracted the lion with his constant barking. The lion charged the dog a few times with no success, and when it discovered it could not reach the wounded man in the tree or get rid of the annoying dog, it walked off in the same direction as its mate. Harry, by this time faint with the loss of blood, tied himself to the tree with his belt.

After a while, he luckily heard the voices of his field rangers and when he started calling, they quickly came to help. The badly injured ranger was in great pain and terribly thirsty, but he had to walk another seven kilometres with his colleagues to one of his old outposts during his days with Steinaecker's Horse. They carried burning branches to keep the lions away. After what felt like an eternity, they eventually arrived at the camp and he could quench his thirst with a little muddy water that the men had to fetch from quite a distance. They also tried

to wash his wounds, but he found it too painful and there were no bandages for the wounds. The next morning, he had a fever.

The field rangers found his horse, which was unharmed except for the wound to its hindquarters. Of course, the bridle was broken, but the saddle was still quite alright. They also found his rifle and the dead lion, close to the scene of the attack the previous evening. The old male's canines show little wear, but his stomach was empty and he must have been terribly hungry. They skinned the lion and also brought the head.



Lion skin with sheath and ranger belt on display in the Stevenson-Hamilton Memorial Library in Skukuza – circa 1950s. Photo © Cecil Holmes

Harry sent his staff to the nearest village to get people to carry him to Komatipoort as he was unable to get onto a horse. He showed them how to make a stretcher, and they departed early the next morning. It took about 4 days, and Harry couldn't do anything but drank lots of water, which one of the staff carried in a calabash.

Upon arrival at Komatipoort, his arm was very swollen. The doctor there had no morphine for the pain and his friend Dickson accompanied him by train to the hospital in Barberton. He spent quite some time there until the arm and shoulder was healed, although the injury caused a permanent stiff shoulder and limited use of his arm.

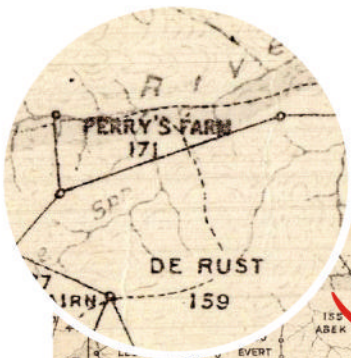
1910

Harry bought the farm De Rust, where he kept a big team of dogs and Arabian horses. A large portion of the current modern-day town of Hazyview lies on the farm De Rust.



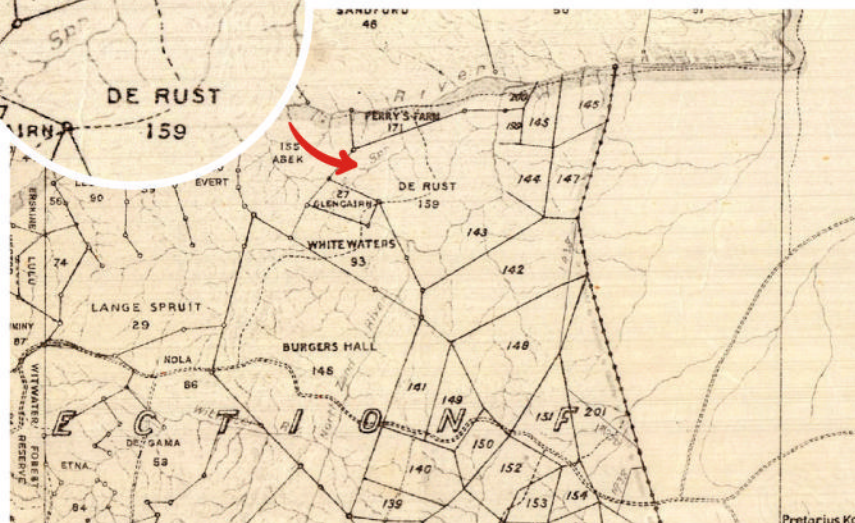
Photo © Dr U de V Piendat

Grave of Andrew James Wolhuter at Mtimba, where he died of Spanish flu in 1918 – 25 September 1984.



Excerpt from a topo-cadastral map dated October 1930, showing Perry's Farm and De Rust farms where Hazyview is today.

Photo © Surveyor General



1918

With a warden and two rangers (Healy & De Laporte) on active World War I service since early 1917, permission was obtained to appoint Harry's younger brother, Andrew James Wolhuter at De Laporte's post at Kaapmuiden. Here he acquitted himself well of his task and as a result of his excellent judgement in disputes, became known as 'Ngea-ngea' among local blacks meaning 'the arbiter'. Regrettably Andrew fell prey to the Spanish flu epidemic and died on 14 November 1918 in his brother's house at Mtimba and was buried there.

DOISPANE



Old Automobile Association (AA) road sign to Doispane – circa 1960s.

14 February 1919

Harry married Alice M Webster of Gourrock, Scotland.

29 June 1920

The only son of Harry and Alice, Henry Charles, was born in Barberton Hospital.

1923

On recommendation of the 1918 Game Reserve Commission, the area west of the Nsikazi River, including Mtimba, was excised from the reserve.

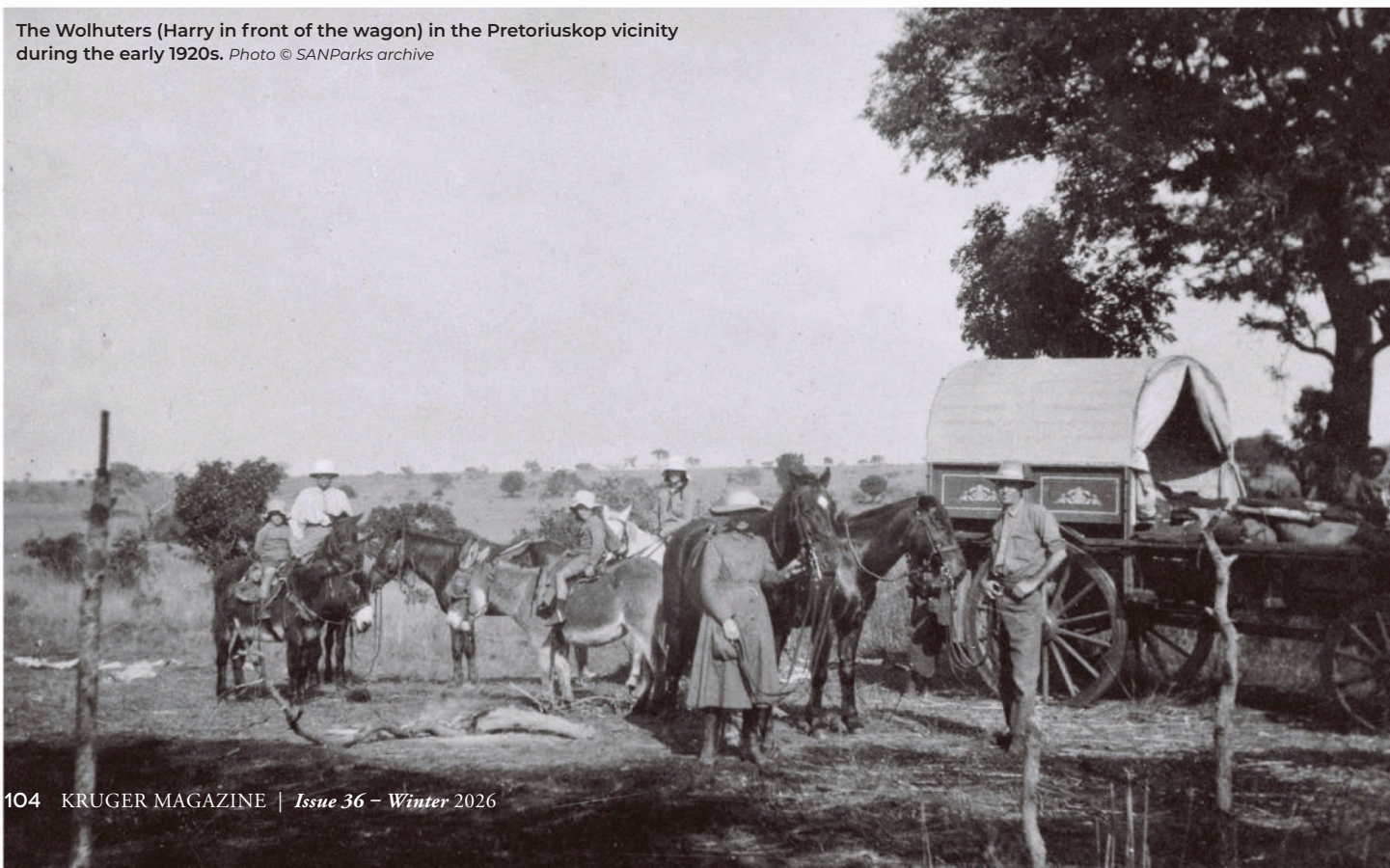
During the early years, supplies were transported by ox-wagon and due to the distance to Skukuza (then still called Sabie Bridge), Wolhuter established a comfortable overnight post at the kraal of Park employee Doispane (Holozane) Mongwe on the western bank of the Mtshawu Spruit. The site became known as Doispane and the name is still used today when referring to the main tarred road between Skukuza and Phabeni Gate (S1).



Photo © SANParks archive

From left to right: Captain Elliot Howe, Harry Wolhuter, Henry Wolhuter and Alice Wolhuter – circa 1927.

The Wolhuters (Harry in front of the wagon) in the Pretoriuskop vicinity during the early 1920s. Photo © SANParks archive



1933 map of the southern Kruger National Park showing Mtimba and Doispans.

Photo © Government Printer



November 1937

Harry showed the Warden, James Stevenson-Hamilton, the place where the lion attack had taken place.

1938

Three memorial plaques were erected at the lion attack site at Metsimetsi, financed by a R100 donation by Mr Vinnie Robertson of Amersfoort. The site later became known as Lindanda. With Mtimba now outside of the Park, it became difficult to carry out the duties in and around Pretoriuskop from his base at Mtimba, and a rangers' post was built for him near the rest camp.

1929 map of the Kruger National Park showing ranger sections 1 to 7. Wolhuter was responsible for Section 1.

Photo © SANParks archive

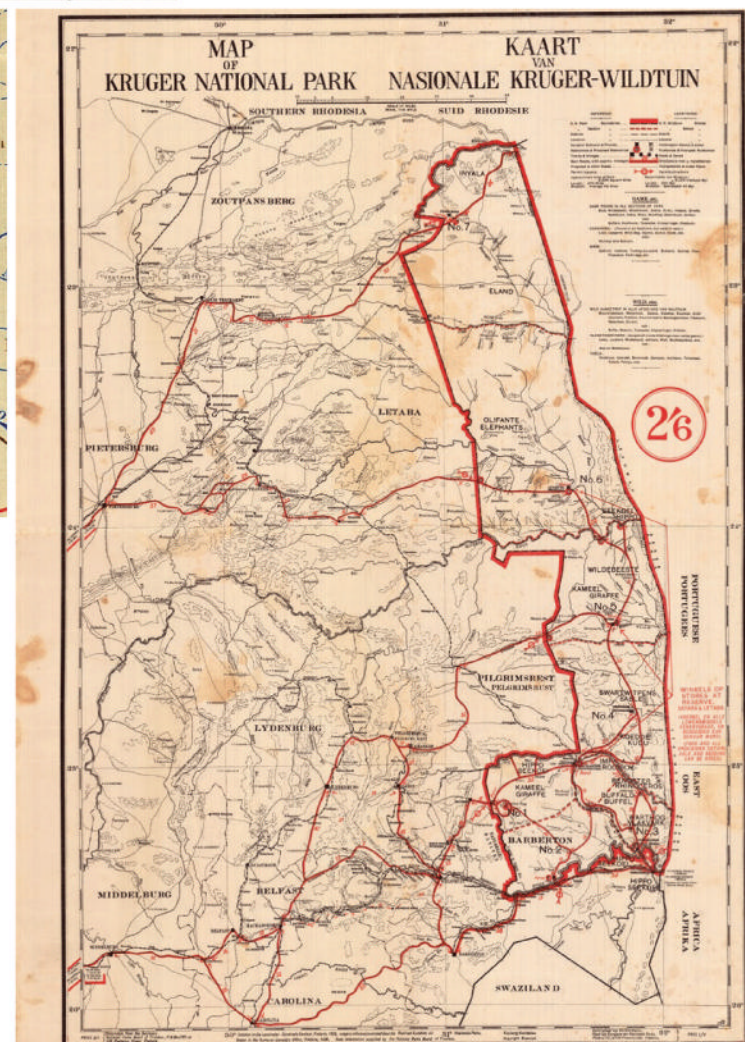


1946 map of the southern Kruger National Park.

Photo © Government Printer



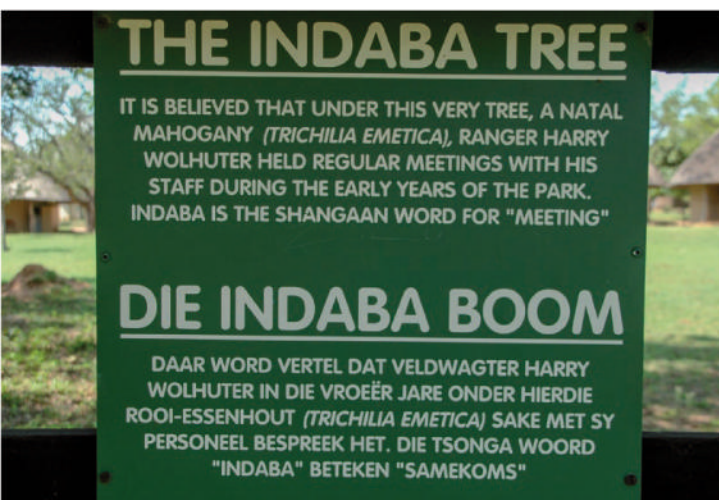
At Metsimetsi - now known as Lindanda - memory is etched not only in stone, but in story. Here, Harry Wolhuter returned with quiet resolve to show James Stevenson-Hamilton the exact ground where instinct, endurance, and chance collided in one of the most extraordinary encounters in ranger history. Today, Lindanda stands as a place of reflection: where the boundary between man and wilderness was once tested, and where the enduring narrative of courage continues to echo across the Lowveld.





Wolhuter Tree – Natal mahogany (*Trichilia emetica*) in Pretoriuskop Rest Camp, under which Wolhuter met with his staff.





Signage at Wolhuter Tree – Natal mahogany in Pretoriuskop Rest Camp – 21 November 2006.

1940

A comfortable brick house was built to replace the rondavel camp at Pretoriuskop.

1941

Harry accompanied several board members on a visit to the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park.

30 April 1946

Harry, aged 70 years, retired from the Kruger National Park and settled on his farm Lindandene just outside White River.

Aerial view of Spanplek, with the current tourist road (S4) in the foreground and the old wagon route in the background – 8 June 1984.



Photo © Dr U de V Pienaar



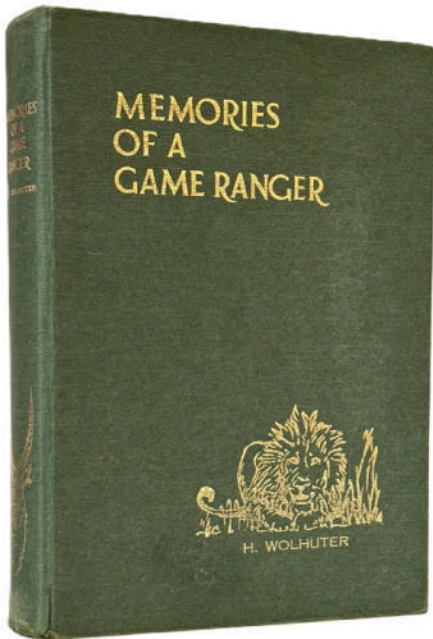
Existing ranger's house at Pretoriuskop, originally built in 1940 after Wolhuter moved from Mtimba in 1938 – 24 September 2007.



New ranger's quarters built at Pretoriuskop after Wolhuter moved from Mtimba in 1938 – 24 September 2007.



Aerial view of Pretoriuskop Camp, with the ranger residence and quarters in the foreground – 8 June 1984. Photo © Dr U de V Pienaar



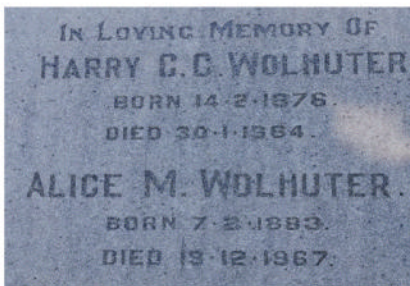
1948

At Lindandene, he wrote about his adventurous life and work, and called it *Memories of a Game Ranger*, with illustrations by well-known wildlife artist Charles T Astley-Maberly, was published.

30 January 1964

Harry passed away just short of his 88th birthday, and his wife Alice, just after her 84th birthday on 19 December 1967. They both lie buried in White River Cemetery.

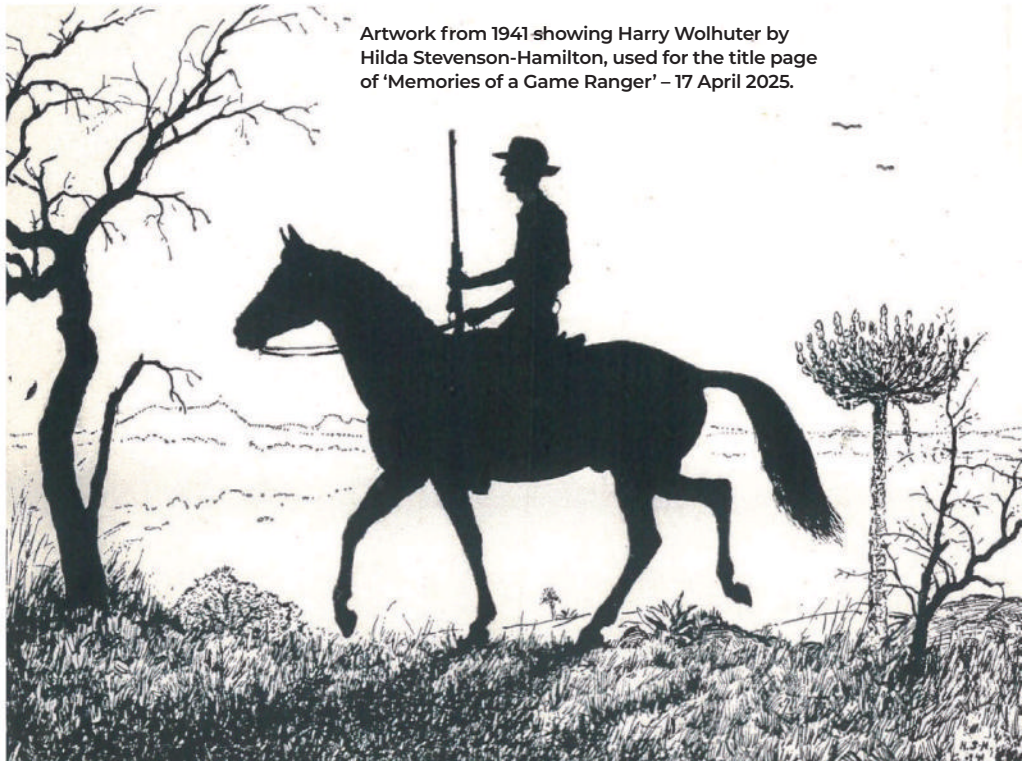
Gravestone of Harry and Alice Wolhuter in White River Cemetery – 10 July 2021.



Newspaper article published after Harry Wolhuter passed away.
The Star – 6 February 1964.

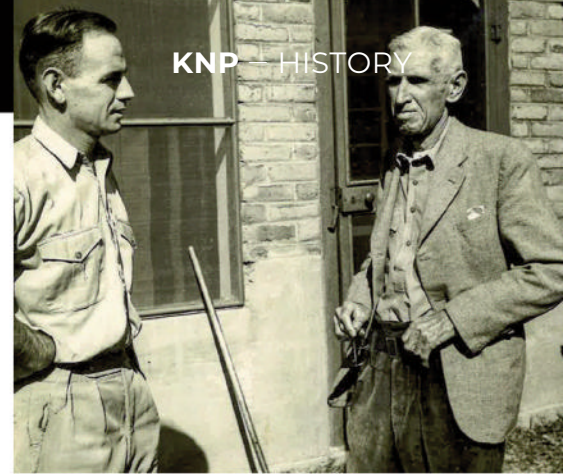


Excerpt from *The Sunday Times* article dated 5 December 1948, announcing the publication of Wolhuter's autobiography, 'Memories of a Game Ranger'.



Artwork from 1941 showing Harry Wolhuter by Hilda Stevenson-Hamilton, used for the title page of 'Memories of a Game Ranger' – 17 April 2025.





Harry (right) with son Henry – circa early 1960s.

Photo © Emetica Wolhuter Collection



Gravestone of Harry Wolhuter's son Henry and his wife in White River Cemetery – 29 November 2019.

His son, Henry, took over from him as Pretoriuskop ranger on **1 May 1946**.

Henry excelled in his position and in **April 1954**, he was promoted to district ranger for the Southern District, comprising the area between the Sabie and Crocodile rivers and from **1 April 1961**, he was promoted to senior ranger based in Skukuza.

In **October 1961**, the translocation of white rhino from KwaZulu-Natal started and this was a great pleasure to and challenge for him. He played an important role in this translocation programme and often went on the long and difficult journey through Eswatini (previously Swaziland) to the Kruger National Park with a precious load of white rhino.

In **December 1963** he developed serious emphysema for the first time and this debilitating lung disease led to his being hospitalised repeatedly until **May 1964**, by which time his condition improved to such an extent that he could work at head office in Pretoria. On **10 December 1964**, the emphysema monster pounced again and on **14 December 1964** Henry, aged only 44 years, passed away in the warden's home after a short sickbed.

His death was a great shock to his colleagues and everybody who had known him. Henry's wife, Joan, would live another 45 years and passed away on **6 August 2010**, aged 85 years, and they lie buried together in White River.



Having served the Park as Game Ranger, Section 1 (Pretoriuskop), for almost 44 years and having survived the 1903 lion attack, almost miraculously, Harry Wolhuter is arguably one of the most famous and most revered game rangers to have served the Park. ■



Learn more!

Scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/5n9an3df> to read more about the Wolhuter Family.

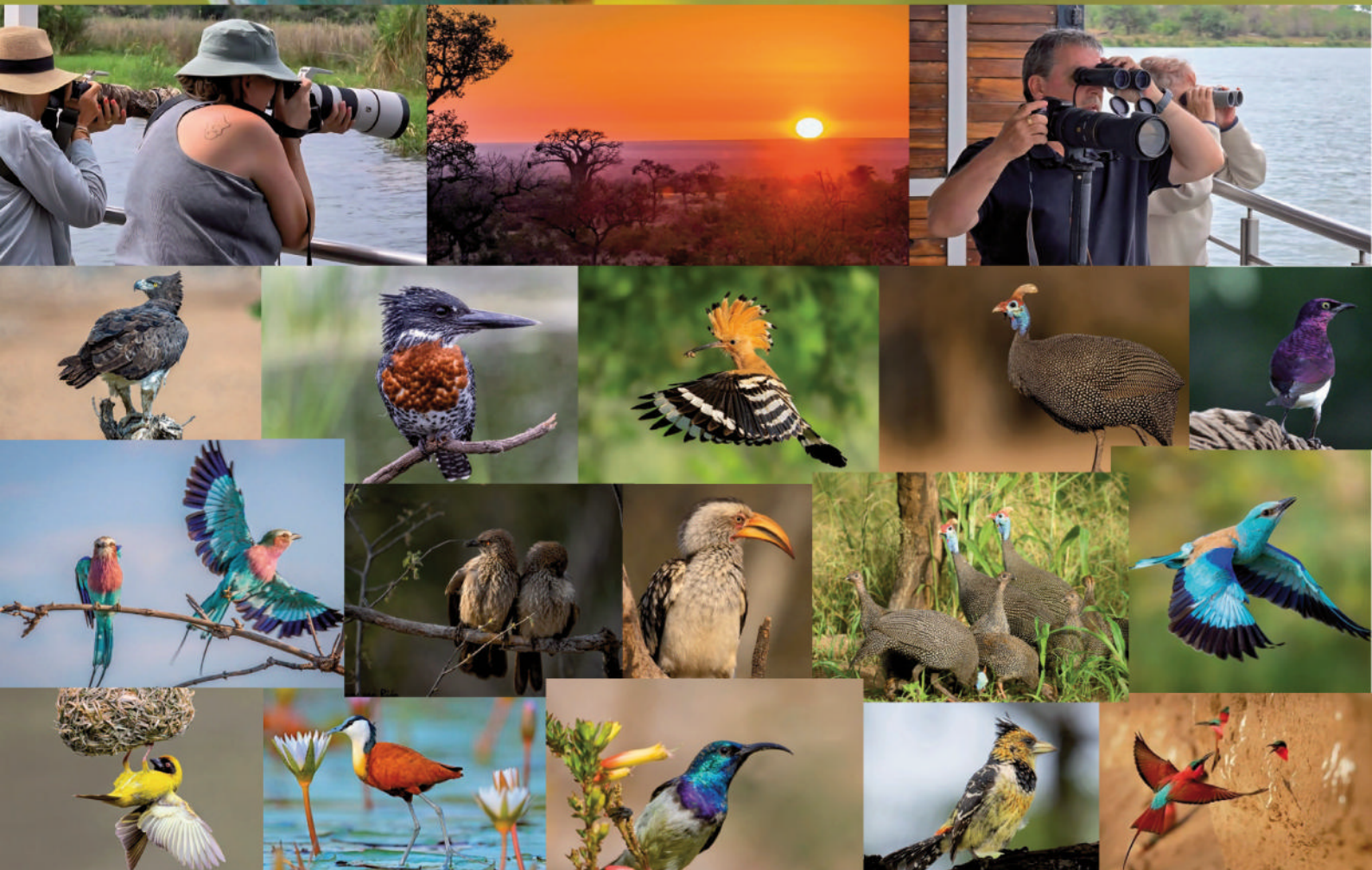


Typical traditional A-frame huts at Wolhuter Wilderness Trail base camp. This was the first of the Parks Wilderness Trails opened on 4 July 1978, that carry the surname of the famous two rangers that collectively served the Park for 64 years.



Birding Week

A celebration of South Africa's extraordinary bird life





South Africa is widely regarded as one of the world's great birding destinations – a true birding paradise where an astonishing diversity of habitats supports more than 870 recorded bird species.

From coastal estuaries and montane grasslands to arid savannas and subtropical river systems, the country offers birding enthusiasts an unrivalled opportunity to observe an extraordinary variety of resident and migratory birds within relatively accessible distances.

For many birders, the Greater Kruger region remains one of the finest birding destinations in Africa. Here, spectacular scenery combines with exceptional biodiversity to create unforgettable

birding experiences. It is therefore no surprise that birding continues to grow rapidly in popularity across South Africa, with thousands of enthusiasts belonging to bird clubs, conservation organisations and specialist birding groups nationwide. Recognising this passion for birds and conservation, KRUGER MAGAZINE proudly presents its exclusive Birding Week – five days of non-stop birding through some of the country's most productive and scenic birding habitats.

Hosted within the iconic Kruger National Park and the magnificent Blyde River Canyon region, Birding Week offers participants the opportunity to photograph, identify and record as many bird species as possible while enjoying an immersive wilderness experience.



The carefully planned itinerary includes accommodation at Leopard Rock Guest Lodge in private en-suite air-conditioned rooms, as well as a memorable two-day Northern Kruger sleep-out experience. Participants will also enjoy guided excursions to the Blyde River Canyon, boat trips on the Blyde and Klaserie Dams, a Big 5 Olifants River boat safari in the Greater Kruger National Park, gamedrives, night drives, bird hides and nature walks.

“South Africa is widely regarded as one of the world’s great birding destinations.”

These diverse habitats provide excellent opportunities to encounter some of the region’s most sought-after species, including kingfishers, bee-eaters, rollers, hornbills, storks, raptors, sunbirds and many others. Whether you are an experienced birder, wildlife photographer or enthusiastic beginner, Birding Week promises exceptional sightings and unforgettable moments in the African bush.

Birding Week takes place during the peak summer birding season when migratory species are present and bird activity is at its most prolific.

Join KRUGER MAGAZINE for an unforgettable birding adventure celebrating the remarkable avian diversity of South Africa’s wild places. ■

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29 November – 4 December 2026
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24 – 28 January 2027

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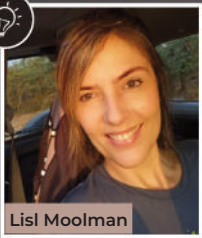
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MY KRUGER EXPERIENCE

Life on the Park's Doorstep



Lisl Moolman

People who know me well, rarely get their hopes up when they see me parked in the Kruger! They are well aware that I stop for absolutely everything, being curious and enamored with nature in general.

“Three leopard cubs, their vigilant mother, and hours that slipped quietly into memory.”

Whether it might be to enjoy and/or photograph landscapes or a sunrise, observing impala interacting, taking time out at a favourite spot like Sable Dam, watching birds feed on flying ants or watching dung beetles form their dung balls.



Southern giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa*) drinking.



Living on the doorstep of the Kruger, and in the only town adjacent to the Kruger (Phalaborwa), offers a wide variety of options and opportunities to spend your time if you are a bush lover. Moving here 18 years ago,

I realized that word and excitement get out quickly to the locals if there is a sighting nearby. You get the chance to catch up with friends and acquaintances while watching a pride of lions feeding on a giraffe kill at Sable Dam!



African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) at Sable Dam.

A quick Kruger drive before work, a sunset drive on a Saturday afternoon, an outing for the day with or without friends and family, long weekends, a quick breakaway on a weekday, or a proper holiday without spending numerous days in transit to reach the Kruger. These are all some of the magnificent possibilities when staying in close proximity of a Kruger entrance gate.

A fresh story of a stand-off with a bull elephant in musth is shared with a friend – heart-stopping moments surrounded by elephants at Sable dam are bound to happen. Hearing hyaenas and lions at night is a regular occurrence, as well as fish eagles calling during the day. Having elephants, hippos and the occasional lion and leopard spotted in town, mostly at night, is no exception. *Live and let live.*



Receiving fresh footage on our Neighbourhood Watch group of which animals (not only criminally inclined people) are captured roaming the streets is to be expected on a regular basis.



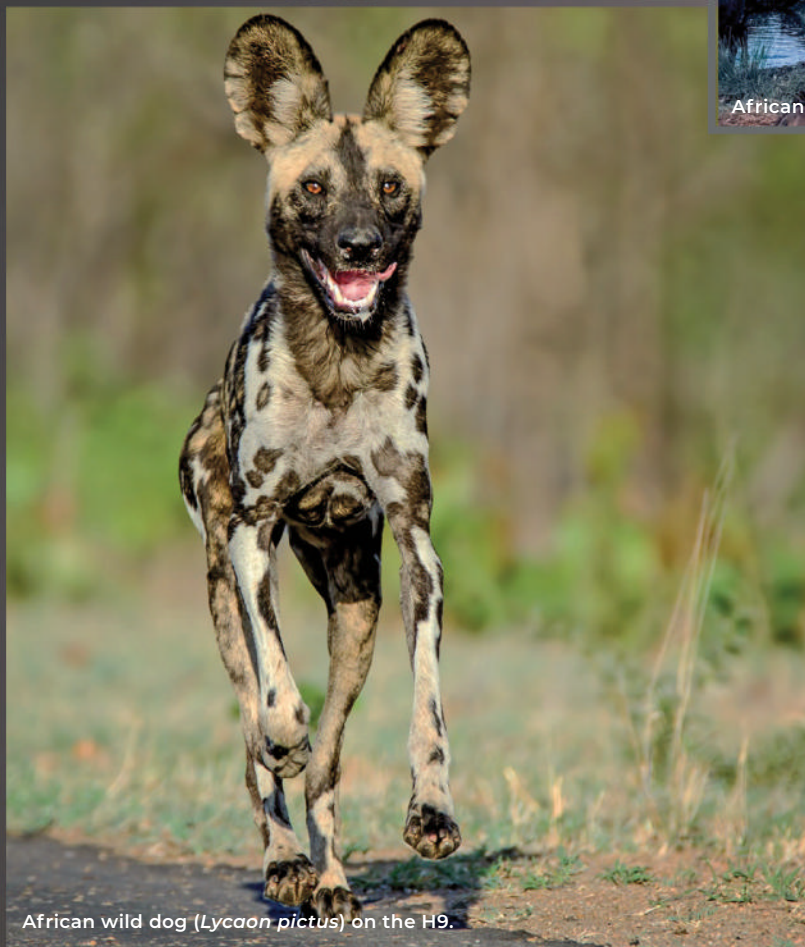
Male lion (*Panthera leo*) at Sable Dam.



Close-up of a Burchell's zebra (*Equus quagga burchellii*) on the H14.



African buffalo (*Synserus caffer*) herd on the H9 Letaba.



African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*) on the H9.

Buffalo bulls.



Visiting the quieter North is my firm favourite, where you find solitude, silence, beautiful landscapes and game in abundance. Nature recharges my soul and is a primary need to keep me calibrated! But yet again, any day spent in the bush and the Kruger is a day well spent, irrespective of the location.

“Some of my fondest Kruger memories are not only of animals, but of the rituals that made every visit feel like Kruger.”

I've been here to experience floods, of which January 2026's was particularly devastating. Droughts so bad, where for a period of time I avoided visiting the Park as it became too upsetting to consistently witness the demise of both the fauna and flora.

Regular Kruger and other National Park visits with our parents triggered our love for nature. We would visit the park mostly during winter holidays as we had to travel from the Boland.

Black-backed jackal (*Lupulella mesomelas*) pups.



Lappet-faced vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*).



Some of my fondest Kruger memories are the following:

1. The apprehension and excitement of witnessing my mother opening the large Kruger Reservation Envelope with the printed kudu head to see if she succeeded in reserving the requested accommodation.
2. The typical smell of a Kruger bungalow, Kruger issued soaps and open fires where kettles of boiling water were made available to visitors.
3. The beating of the drums played just before dinner at the restaurants!

These memories capture the essence of a visit to the Park for me, of which its animals form only a part.

Us kids grouping together to attend the movie nights under the open starry skies, blanket under the arm and small torch in hand, while the parents 'tjop & dop', so the hungry kids get fed upon their return. Getting lost many times afterwards on your way back to your accommodation was part of the excitement, as well as doing fence walks at night.



Kudu bull (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) and a klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*).

MY KRUGER EXPERIENCE



Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) and southern ground hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*) at Ngobeni Loop.



Female leopard sitting on her haunches.



Leopard loses fight with porcupine (*Hystriidae*).

“The most memorable sightings are often the ones you could never have imagined.”

10 Memorable moments

I have been fortunate to have witnessed some rare and what I perceive as special moments:

1. A female leopard sitting on her haunches searching for one of her cubs in the long grass.
2. Seeing how a leopard loses the fight to a porcupine and only has some wounds to show for the fight.
3. Seeing a leopard stalk a seemingly ill warthog at Sable Dam where it was resting next to the dam, then gently touching it with one paw. This moment I captured photographically and call it “*The Last Touch*”.
4. Sub-adult male lions play-fighting in the road, seemingly ‘dancing’.



A leopard stalking a warthog (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus*).



Sub-adult male lions playing.



Southern ground hornbill.



Lion cub playing.

5. Seeing ground hornbills kill and feed on a hare.
6. I have twice witnessed fish eagles swim to shore (the first time I thought the eagle was drowning) as their prey was way too heavy to fly away with.
7. Seeing two leopards tumble to the ground after the one attacked the other in a tree.
8. Seeing a leopard successfully stalking an impala. After suffocating it for a couple of minutes, a nearby passing baboon made the leopard flee the scene, and with gaping mouths we saw the impala drunkenly get up and wobble off.
9. Seeing the Kruger in flood several times. The magnitude of this has been overwhelming – how insignificant and helpless humans are against nature in full force.
10. An opportunistic honey badger killing a female rock monitor while she and her mate were stationary while mating in Shingwedzi camp.



African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) splashing water.



Baby vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*).

Summer list

Each year I look forward to ticking off my summer list:

1. Seeing my first new born baby impalas and wildebeest.
2. Seeing my first European roller of the season.
3. Hearing my first Woodland kingfisher call of the season.
4. Hoping to see mopani worms, but they have noticeably become much less common over the years.

“I’ve learned never to take nature for granted, and always to expect the unexpected.”

Sense(s) and sensibility

Visiting the Park enables me to connect with nature using all my senses and gives me the opportunity to enjoy doing wildlife and nature photography.



Photo art.

I rarely drive with a closed window. Hearing the alarm call of impalas and baboons, roaring lions in the distance, the panicked or angry trumpeting of a herd of elephants or smelling a carcass – have led me to experience special moments in the past.

I’ve learned not to ever take nature for granted, and *always* to expect the unexpected. Just when you imagine you have nature more or less figured out, it presents you with surreal moments! ■

Lisl Moolman

HIDDEN GEMS IN THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Nkuhlu Tented Camp is a hidden treasure nestled in the heart of the renowned Kruger National Park. Experience the true essence of the African wilderness at Nkuhlu Tented Camp with seven self-catering tents overlooking the Sabie River that guarantee a serene and unforgettable safari experience.



Skukuza Safari Lodge is located within the renowned Skukuza Rest Camp in Kruger National Park. The lodge is your gateway to the ultimate bush escape, where you can immerse yourself in the untamed beauty of the African wilderness while enjoying luxurious comforts and unrivalled biodiversity.

Nkambeni Safari Camp is specifically designed to leave the smallest possible foot-print in this pristine wilderness, the 150 en-suite luxury tented suites are tastefully decorated to provide comfort and an authentic African bush ambiance. Your timber and canvas suite overlooks the bush and you can enjoy the rare privilege of a (completely private) outdoor shower under the wide African sky.



Buffalo Rock is perfectly located in a private and secluded part of the Nkambeni Private Concession, within the borders of the world-renowned Kruger National Park. Offering guests the opportunity to commune with nature in a pristine and unspoilt wildlife-rich wilderness. In order to leave the smallest possible foot-print in this pristine wilderness, Buffalo Rock Safari Camp is purely powered by solar energy, making this camp an ideal choice for eco-warriors.

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