



## Parsons Nature Reserve Newsletter – April 2025 Edition

Dear valued members

### April in the Wild Heart of Our Home

As the seasons turn and the first whispers of winter ride the evening breeze, our reserve stirs with the quiet magic that reminds us why we are here — why we fell in love with this land in the first place. It is in the golden spill of the afternoon light over the savanna, the slow, deliberate steps of an old elephant bull at dusk, the chorus of night jars greeting the stars.

Parsons Nature Reserve is not just soil and sky; it is a living, breathing memory of Africa's timeless spirit. Every spoor in the sand, every rustle in the grass, connects us to something greater — something that humbles, inspires, and unites us.

This land doesn't just invite admiration — it demands it. It dares us to listen closer, to look deeper, to be part of something bigger than ourselves. It's where the pulse of Africa beats strongest, and where every sunrise promises an adventure waiting just beyond the horizon.

As members of this extraordinary reserve, we are reminded daily of how privileged we are to call this land home. To witness nature, unfold in its rawest, most breathtaking form is a gift — one that connects us not only to the wild, but to each other.

In this April edition, we celebrate the untamed beauty that binds us as custodians of this remarkable corner of the Greater Kruger. Let us continue to protect it, share it, and above all, marvel at it.

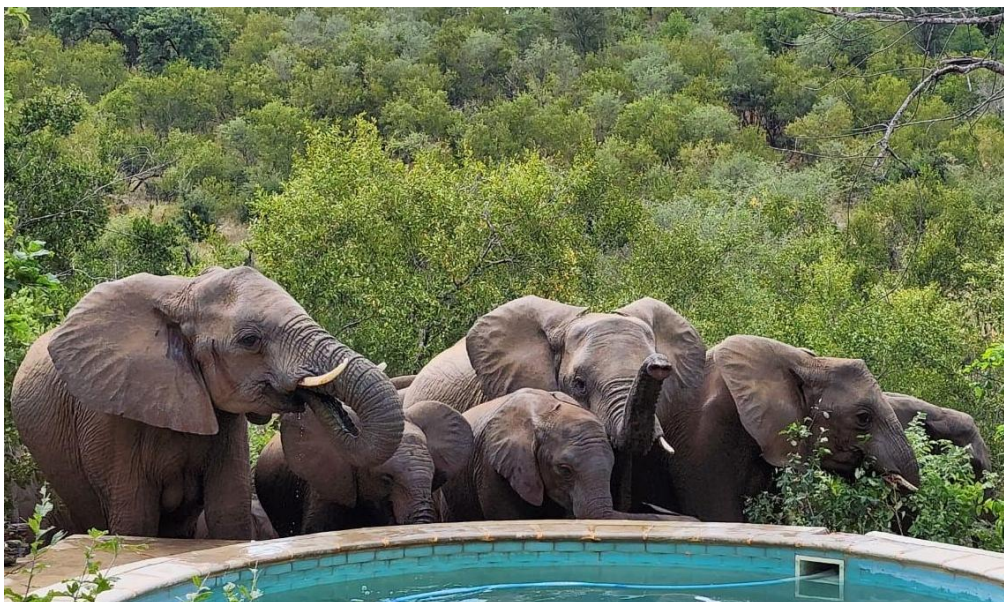


Photo taken by Lee Gutteridge

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## A Big Welcome to the PNR Family



We're thrilled to share a bit about our family as we settle into this new chapter! We're Dirk and Marcel, joined by our 4-month-old daughter, Stella.

Dirk grew up in Hartbeespoort with his older brother and two sisters, while I was raised in the concrete jungle of Johannesburg alongside my younger sister and brother. We first met in high school but didn't hit it off back then. By pure fate, we reconnected 15 years later in Mossel Bay, and the rest is history! I followed Dirk to the USA, where we learned we were expecting our little girl. Ultimately, we decided to return home to raise Stella close to family.

I'm a qualified Graphic Designer with an unexpected passion for admin work, while Dirk studied Game Ranch Management at TUT. His love for nature shines through in his work, whether he's helping wild animals or capturing stunning moments with his camera. Stella recently mastered smacking her lips and loves a lively, drama-packed "gossip" session with anyone willing to chat. Together, we're a crew that thrives on adventure—whether it's exploring a new mountain pass, trying out recipes from social media, or cozying up for family movie nights.

We're excited to be at Parsons, eager to discover new favourite spots, make friends, and embrace this journey. Thank you for the warm welcomes—we can't wait to connect!

Best,  
Die Boshoffs

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**Lappet-faced vulture**



**Cloud formation (Brendan Marsay)**

## Latest sightings

### April Wildlife Sightings Update – Nature’s Masterclass Unfolding

April brought with it crisp mornings, golden light, and a wildlife spectacle that left us awe-struck. From predator drama to miniature marvels, here’s what Mother Nature had on display at Parsons this month:

#### Resident Pride of Lions (*Panthera leo*)

Our beloved resident pride continues to thrive, with the cubs growing rapidly into their oversized paws and mischievous personalities. The pride’s cohesion is strong, often seen lounging in dappled shade or stalking through the savanna with quiet confidence.

**Interesting fact:** Lion cubs begin to roar at around one year old, but a full, thundering roar only matures by age three.

#### The Regal Scavenger – Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*)

Unmistakable with its bald crimson head and wrinkled “lappets” flanking its neck.

**Interesting fact:** The Lappet-faced Vulture is Africa’s largest vulture by wingspan and strength. Its powerful beak can tear through the toughest hides and tendons, often making the initial opening at carcasses that other scavengers depend on. Without them, much of the bush’s natural cleanup process would grind to a halt.

#### Blotched Long-horned Owlfly (*Tmesibasis* sp.)

A rare and delicate sighting! This winged insect looks like a cross between a dragonfly and a butterfly but is neither.

**Interesting fact:** Owlflies belong to the same order as antlions (Neuroptera) and have keen vision, hence their name—those large eyes are not just for show.

#### Breeding Herds of Elephants (*Loxodonta africana*)

Gentle giants roamed in strong family units this month, drinking, dust bathing, and delighting onlookers with their playful calves.

**Interesting fact:** Elephant herds are matriarchal—led by the oldest female—who passes down generations of wisdom and knowledge of seasonal movements.

#### Cape Buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*)

Large herds congregated along the mighty Olifants River; their imposing forms stood tall in the overcast light.



**Interesting fact:** Cape buffalo are known to "vote" on the herd's direction—cows will stand up, look in a preferred direction, then lie back down. The majority's choice often determines the route.



Monkey Moth Caterpillar (Harm Schreurs)



Little Sparrowhawk



Puff Adder (Japie Bradley)

### **Dazzling Zebras (*Equus quagga*)**

Their stripes shimmered in the heat haze, a dazzle of zebras often found grazing peacefully in open areas.

**Interesting fact:** Each zebra's stripe pattern is unique, like a human fingerprint. They also help with thermoregulation and possibly confuse predators.

### **Majestic Giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis*)**

Silhouetted against painted skies, giraffes graced the landscape with their unhurried elegance.

**Interesting fact:** Despite their long necks, giraffes have the same number of neck vertebrae as humans—seven!

### **Amazing Cloud Formations**

From thunderous cumulonimbus towers to swirling lenticular layers, the skies this month rivalled the bush below.

**Interesting fact:** Certain cloud types, like mammatus clouds, can indicate severe weather but also make for jaw-dropping sunsets.

### **Puff Adders (*Bitis arietans*)**

Well-camouflaged and sluggish until disturbed—these formidable snakes are not to be underestimated.

**Interesting fact:** Despite their slow movements, puff adders are responsible for more snakebite fatalities in Africa than any other species due to their wide distribution and excellent camouflage.

### **Little Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter minullus*)**

This small but fierce raptor zipped through the canopy in pursuit of unsuspecting prey.

**Interesting fact:** The little sparrowhawk is Africa's smallest Accipiter and often takes prey mid-flight with astonishing agility.

### **Leopardess with Two Cubs (*Panthera pardus*)**

A privileged sighting of raw beauty and maternal instinct—this elusive cat led her curious cubs through the undergrowth.

**Interesting fact:** Leopard cubs are born blind and only open their eyes after 10 days; their early survival depends entirely on the mother's stealth.

### **Monkey Moth Caterpillar (Family: *Eupterotidae*)** *(Difficult to find reliable info on this guy)*

A true oddball of the bush—a wiggling wonder covered in long, hairy protrusions.

**Interesting fact:** These caterpillars can release urticating hairs that deter predators and curious fingers alike.



### **Net-casting Spider (Family: Deinopidae)**

With alien-like eyes and unique hunting tactics, this spider was seen patiently waiting to fling its web like a net onto unsuspecting prey.

**Interesting fact:** These spiders can see many times better than humans in the dark, thanks to their enormous eyes.

### **Hyenas x 4 (*Crocuta crocuta*)**

An extraordinary sighting—four hyenas gathered at one of our member's water points. Rare for Parsons!

**Interesting fact:** Spotted hyenas live in matriarchal clans and communicate with a sophisticated range of vocalizations, including the famous "laugh."



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## **PNR Activities for the Month**



### **RAINFALL**

17.3 0mm rain recorded for the month in four rainfall events. Total for the season – 458mm.

### **SECURITY**

- Routine snare sweeps around houses and lodges.
- Regular radio tests done on Monday and Friday mornings.
- Parsons is an active member of Mica Farm Watch and does regular patrols.

### **ORIENTATIONS**

- New guide x1 –Hilltop
- Member/Staff x2 PN16, x2 PNR20
- Members are asked to contact Joe when they are next down to do a refresher orientation so that they are aware of the new rules that were adopted at the 2024 AGM.

## ROADS

- Opened Game Drive E as part of the Extended Game Drive network
- Dragged tyres/A-frame:  
Tsakane, Platklip, Game Drive A, portion of Game Drive E, Parsons East, Balule River Road to No14
- Replaced road signs at Granite, Parsons East, Richard's Rocks and Game Drive A.
- Filled in some potholes on the Internal Access Road.

## GENERAL

### FIRE DANGER!

We are going into the dry season, and fires will become a danger to properties. Some insurance companies have recommended the following minimal standards as firebreaks for this area.

- Clear grass vegetation 1m around buildings.
- Slash grass to ankle height 5m around buildings.
- Remove any dead wood/branches laying in that 5m zone.
- Trim trees so that branches are not touching the roof.

### KURHULA LODGE EXPANSION

As part of a basic assessment process for the expansion of the lodge, Interested and Affected Parties can register their interest by emailing Chauke Hlahla on [chauke@earthlinkenvironmental.co.za](mailto:chauke@earthlinkenvironmental.co.za) with their name and contact details. Parsons Nature Reserve policies and processes will be applicable.

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## Lesser Bushbabies



Lesser bushbabies, or Galago moholi, are small, wide-eyed primates commonly found in the Balule, though they're more often heard than seen due to their nocturnal habits and astonishing agility. Their distinctive calls—high-pitched clicks, whistles, and cries—pierce the night, hinting at their presence as they leap between trees using their powerful hind legs and long tails for balance. As insectivores, they play a crucial role in controlling insect populations, including those of pest species that might otherwise damage vegetation or spread disease. In addition to insects, bushbabies also feed on tree



gum and fruit. By consuming fruit and excreting seeds in different locations, they help maintain plant diversity and contribute to tree regeneration.

Their importance doesn't end there—they are a key food source for a variety of nocturnal predators such as owls, snakes, and small carnivores like genets. This places them as a vital link in the food web, supporting the survival of many other species in the ecosystem. Despite their small size, lesser bushbabies are ecologically significant, highlighting the interconnectedness of even the tiniest inhabitants in Balule's complex wilderness.

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**Proverb:** *"Even the best cooking pot will not produce food."*

– African proverb (Zulu)

**Meaning:** Having the tools is not enough; you need effort and action to achieve results.

With heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes,

Parsons Nature Reserve