



## **Parsons Nature Reserve Newsletter - December Edition**

Dear valued members

In a world dominated by screens and endless notifications, the bush gently calls us to put our phones down, step away from the noise of social media, and simply be. Here, time slows, and life unfolds in ways that remind us of what really matters. The bush holds a timeless soul. Moments like the quiet patience of a leopard on the hunt or the simple joy of an oxpecker tending to its companion can't be fully appreciated through a screen—they call for your presence, your attention, and your heart.



### **A Summer's Welcome from the African Bush**

As the year softly closes its chapter, we can't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for the incredible privilege of being part of this breathtaking place—Parsons Nature Reserve. For those lucky enough to live here or visit often, it's a daily reminder of just how extraordinary life can be when surrounded by the raw, unfiltered beauty of the African bushveld.

There's something humbling about witnessing nature's rhythm firsthand. The way the bush bends and thrives with each changing season, the perfect harmony that sustains every creature here—from the smallest dung beetle to the mighty elephant. Every dawn brings the promise of something new, and every dusk wraps the day in a symphony of wild calls, grounding us in a world far greater than ourselves.

Now, with summer embracing the land, the bush bursts into life with unstoppable energy. The rains quench the earth's thirst, carpeting the reserve in vibrant greens and awakening the wild with renewed vigour. It's a season of abundance, growth, and pure magic—a time when every heartbeat of the bush seems louder, every scent sharper, every sight more vivid.



As we step into this magnificent summer together, let's cherish the wonders of this place we hold so dear. Let's celebrate its beauty, its resilience, and our shared dedication to protecting it for generations to come. Here's to a season brimming with adventure, discovery, and the undeniable magic of the wild!

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## Latest sightings

### Nature's Newsflash: December Sightings

This month, the reserve has been buzzing with activity – both the wild and the wonderful! Here's a roundup of what's been spotted, with a sprinkle of humour and a dash of fascinating facts:

**Wild Dogs at the Main Gate:** Our painted predators made a bold entrance, probably wondering why they haven't been offered a QR code yet. Did you know wild dogs have a 60-90% hunting success rate, making them some of the savviest hunters in Africa?



**Dark Morph Jacobin Cuckoo:** This rare, feathered beauty stopped by for an exclusive cameo. Lesser-known fact? These cuckoos are professional freeloaders – they lay their eggs in other birds' nests and leave the parenting to their unsuspecting hosts.

**Hyenas Bathing:** Forget bubble baths; these cunning carnivores were caught cooling off in the midday heat. Fun fact: hyena "laughter" isn't comedy gold—it's a form of social communication that reveals their mood and status.



**Giraffes, Zebras, and Impalas at the Waterholes:** A true African version of a neighbourhood block party. Giraffes may look serene, but did you know their kick can knock out a lion? Meanwhile, zebras each have unique stripe patterns – nature’s barcodes – and impalas can jump over 10 meters in one leap!

**Elephants:** The gentle giants have been making their rounds, flapping their ears to stay cool. Here’s a fact you might not know elephants use their feet to "listen" for distant rumbles in the ground, detecting messages from miles away.

**Dark Chanting Goshawk:** This sleek raptor was sighted showcasing its hunting skills. Lesser-known trivia? They “chant” in a series of whistles, giving them their melodious name.

**Buffalo Herd:** With their imposing horns and gruff demeanour, these bovines looked ready for business. Did you know their collective nickname is a “buffalo herd,” but they’re also sometimes called the “Black Death” due to their unpredictable nature?

**Yellow-Throated Plated Lizard:** A colourful scurrier was seen darting about. These lizards have a sneaky defence – they can drop their tails to escape predators, which is like leaving behind a distracting "decoy."

**The Elusive Leopard:** Always the star of the show, a leopard was spotted this month. Leopards are solitary and stealthy, so this sighting was a treat. Fun fact? They can carry prey up to three times their weight into a tree!

**Pea Spider on the Hunt:** This tiny arachnid was seen weaving its web of tricks. Unlike most spiders, they use a silk tether to swing like mini-Tarzans to pounce on prey.



**Slithering Squad:** From Eastern bark snakes and sand snakes to pythons and boomslangs, our scaly friends have been out and about. Did you know the boomslang has some of the most potent venom of any snake in Africa but is famously shy? Pythons, on the other hand, are non-venomous constrictors capable of swallowing prey whole!

And that’s just the tip of the animal iceberg! Every day on the reserve brings new surprises, so keep your eyes peeled and your cameras ready – you never know what you’ll see next.

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## The Drama of Thunder and Lightning in Parsons



### Frequency and Seasonality



: A vivid illustration of cumulonimbus clouds towering over the savanna.

The Parsons region is most alive with thunderstorms during the summer rainy season (October to March). These dramatic weather events, fuelled by warm, rising air, bring bursts of life to the ecosystem after long, dry months.



### Electrical Activity and Fire



: A dynamic image of lightning striking dry grass, igniting a fire in the distance.

Lightning, a hallmark of these storms, often ignites wildfires. While destructive at first glance, these fires clear old vegetation, making way for nutrient-rich soil and fresh grass vital for grazers like zebras and impalas.



### Nutrient Cycling



: A vibrant close-up of fresh grass sprouting after a rainstorm.

Storm rains dissolve organic matter and minerals, rejuvenating the soil. Lightning also plays a critical role in nitrogen fixation, transforming atmospheric nitrogen into a form plants can absorb.



### Water Resource Replenishment



: An aerial view of rivers and pans replenished by stormwater.

These storms are lifelines for the region's water systems. Rivers like the Olifants, Sabie and Letaba swell with rain, sustaining iconic wildlife, from hippos to crocodiles, through the dry winter months.





### **Stimulating Biodiversity**



: A serene shot of frogs breeding in a temporary rain pool, with birds in the background. Life explodes after the rains. Frogs breed in ephemeral pools, drawing predators like snakes and birds. Termites swarm after storms, becoming essential food for animals like mongooses and hornbills.



### **Regulating Vegetation**



: A before-and-after image showing bush encroachment vs. open grassland restored by fire. Lightning fires maintain the balance between grasslands and woodlands. This balance is vital for grazers like wildebeest and browsers like giraffes, ensuring diverse habitats for wildlife.



### **Spectacle and Tourism**



: A time-lapse of lightning illuminating the night sky over Parson's landscape. Visitors are often captivated by these natural displays. The towering clouds, vivid lightning strikes, and deep rolling thunder offer unforgettable memories and a profound connection to nature.



### **Cultural and Symbolic Importance**



: Traditional artwork of storms, showcasing their symbolic role in local beliefs. For local communities, thunderstorms symbolize renewal and fertility, underscoring the interconnectedness of people and the land.



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## **Reflection**

As we reflect on the year gone by, we are filled with gratitude for your unwavering support and passion for Parsons Nature Reserve. Your commitment has been the cornerstone of everything we've achieved together, and it is with your continued dedication that we look toward a bright and promising 2025.



Together, we have made incredible strides, and together, we will reach even greater heights in the year ahead. We believe in the power of our community, and we are confident that, with your passion and drive, 2025 will be a year of significant achievements for us all.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful, prosperous, and fulfilling New Year. Here's to a brilliant 2025—together, we can achieve our goals and make an even bigger impact.

### **Proverb: “A Chattering Bird Builds No Nest”**

#### **Explanation:**

This proverb that is largely used by Cameroonians and Ugandans seeks to tell the listener that they should stop talking about what they want to do and actually do it.

It's an important message for everyone, whether you're a world leader or someone who wants to start driving change in your own community: Talking will not get any real work done. It is time to act.

With heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes,

Parsons Nature Reserve