



Parsons Nature Reserve Newsletter – August 2025 Edition

August drifts in on a whispering wind, carrying with it the deep, resonant boom of the Southern Ground-Hornbill, echoing over the hills like the voice of the ancient earth itself. Each dawn stirs us from slumber with a promise of renewal. The horizon igniting in hues of fire and gold, while the evening sky bows out in a symphony of purples and crimson, as if the day itself has painted a farewell. Between sunrise and sunset, the bush reveals its mysteries: Birdsong tumbling through the crisp morning air, vervet monkeys chattering alarms, guineafowl scattering in a flurry, and tree squirrels warning of unseen hunters moving in the shadows.

Here, every sound tells a story, every footprint a chapter in the great unfolding book of the wild. To awaken in this place is to live not apart from nature, but within it, entwined in its rhythms. All creatures, great and small, share equal weight in this eternal cycle: from the elephant shaping pathways through our beloved reserve, to the tiniest insect turning soil - each life threads into the balance of the whole. None greater, none lesser, each offering its presence as part of a harmony older than time.

To be part of Parsons Nature Reserve is to walk gently in a world both fragile and fierce, where beauty and survival dance together. It is a privilege that humbles us. Reminding us, that we are not masters here but guardians, entrusted to keep the wilderness wild, so its magic may endure forever.

And it is within this shared guardianship that our strength lies. Each member of this association is a vital thread in the tapestry of Parsons Nature Reserve. Protectors, storytellers and dreamers of a wilder tomorrow. Together we hold the promise that the calls of the hornbill will forever echo over these hills, that every sunrise will still stir the heart and that this sacred land will remain a sanctuary for all life, for all time.



Photo courtesy of Maninghi Lodge

August Wildlife Sightings – A Month of Untamed Wonders

August has blessed us with stirring moments in the wild, reminding us of the untamed beauty that defines Parsons Nature Reserve.

The **Broken Tooth Pride** of lions (*Panthera leo*), with their confident sub-adults and formidable lionesses, have graced different corners of the reserve. Their dominant male, a monarch of raw strength, occasionally trails behind his family. A living reminder of the delicate balance between power and unity. In contrast, a mysterious, solitary lioness, muscular and self-assured, was seen along the Olifants River on a



kudu bull kill. The drama of her feast lured in the aerial scavengers: **White-backed Vultures** (*Gyps africanus*) and the smaller but fierce **Hooded Vultures** (*Necrosyrtes monachus*), each playing their vital role in nature's cycle of renewal.



Photos courtesy of Vera Bower

Across the plains, the towering silhouettes of **Giraffes** (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) moved gracefully through the bush, their stately presence enchanting members and guests alike. Scattered among them, the antelope kingdom: **Bushbuck** (*Tragelaphus scriptus*), **Steenbok** (*Raphicerus campestris*), **Common Duiker** (*Sylvicapra grimmia*), **Kudu** (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) and the ever-watchful **Impala** (*Aepyceros melampus*) painted the reserve with their quiet elegance.

The great **Elephants** (*Loxodonta africana*), herds young and old, brought power to their favourite drinking spots, often asserting their dominance over other thirsty species. Their presence, at once tender and formidable, never ceases to stir the heart.



Photo courtesy of Maninghi Lodge



Photo courtesy of Paul Slyer

The elusive and mysterious **Leopards** (*Panthera pardus*) gifted us several unforgettable sightings: the territorial "Question mark" marking his domain, the devoted mother with her two inquisitive offspring, a young male drifting like a shadow on the edges of safety and the solitary princess, Ngatana, embodying grace and secrecy.

In the skies, the **African Hawk-Eagle** (*Aquila spilogaster*) patrolled both north and south, its fierce gaze a nightmare for unsuspecting prey. One extraordinary scene unfolded when a **Waterbuck** (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*) boldly approached an eagle drinking on the riverbank chasing the raptor off in a rare reversal of roles.



Nightfall revealed secrets of its own: a pair of **African Civets** (*Civettictis civetta*) slipped past our cameras, their masked faces and banded coats a whisper of wilderness. And the deep-voiced calls of **Southern Ground Hornbills** (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*), also captured on trail cam, echoed the ancient rhythms of the bush, a reminder that these endangered custodians of the savanna still thrive here.

August has once again shown us that every creature, from the smallest antelope to the largest predator, is a vital thread in the tapestry of life. With each sighting, we are humbled and grateful witnesses to the wild's eternal story.



Photo courtesy of Vera Bower (The "Big Girl")

Wardens Report



RAINFALL

0.0mm rain recorded for the month. Total for the season (July 2025 to June 2026) –0mm.

SECURITY/SAFETY

- 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.
- Escorted EWT vulture monitor.



ORIENTATIONS

- x1 for a new guide.
- 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. Only a handful of members have done so to date.

ROADS

- Graded portions of Tsakane and Platklip roads
- Dragged tyres/metal-frame:
Main Access Road Nyoka Kop to Gate, Tsakane, Platklip, Parsons Link, Parsons West, Parsons East, and Balule River Road on two occasions.
- Filled in potholes on Parsons East and at Sopies Hoogte.
- Packed rocks on verges of the External Access Road and a portion of the Internal Access Road at strategic spots to stop the road from being widened excessively.

GENERAL

LIGHT POLLUTION

At this time of the year with trees not having many leaves, buildings have become quite prominent during the day. The same thing happens at night when all the lights become highly visible detracting from the bush experience.

Members are reminded that as part of our “dark sky” policy all external light fittings must be installed against a wall not higher than 1 800 mm above ground floor finished floor level, and that all external light fittings must be of a design that directs the light downwards, without the source of the light being visible.



PARSONS GATE (Photo courtesy of Kersey Lawrence)

The Humble Scrub Hare – Africa’s Overlooked Survivor



Step into the Parsons night and you may glimpse a pair of glowing eyes, frozen in the torchlight, before a blur of fur vanishes into the grass. This is the **Scrub Hare (*Lepus saxatilis*)**, one of the bushveld’s most overlooked yet remarkable residents.

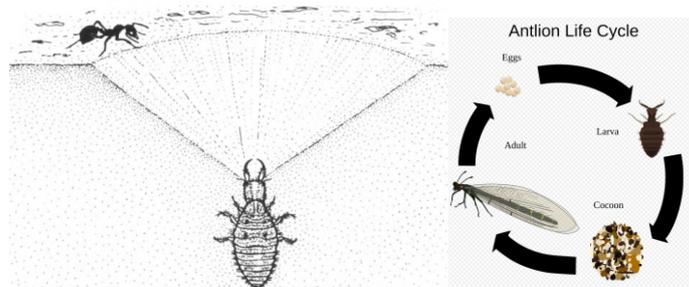
By day it hides, pressed flat against the earth, blending perfectly with the grass and scrub. But once darkness falls, the hare becomes a silent grazer, nibbling on tender grasses and herbs. In doing so, it quietly helps to maintain the balance of the ecosystem. Stimulating regrowth, recycling nutrients, and feeding predators from owls to jackals.

What makes the Scrub Hare extraordinary is not just its role in the food web, but its survival strategy. With ears like satellite dishes, it detects the faintest rustle of danger. When threatened, it can explode into motion, zigzagging at speeds of up to **70 km/h**, a burst of athleticism few animals can match. And despite being heavily preyed upon, this little survivor ensures its lineage with **multiple litters a year**, each leveret born fully furred and ready for the wild.

And yet, the Scrub Hare rarely features in safari stories or conservation campaigns. Overshadowed by lions and elephants, it is often dismissed as “common.” But common does not mean unimportant. Without hares, predators would go hungry, and grasslands would change.

Next time you see one bolt across the track under the stars, pause for a moment. The Scrub Hare is more than just a fleeting shadow of the night, it is a quiet hero of the African wilderness

In the Grip of Sand: The Secret Life of the Antlion



In the heart of the Parsons Nature Reserve, beneath the feet of elephants and the shadow of knob thorn trees, lives a creature as deadly as it is overlooked—the **Antlion**.



Often mistaken for a mere insect, the antlion larva is a master predator that builds perfectly engineered conical sand traps. Hidden at the bottom, it lies in wait, still, silent, and lethal. Ants and small insects that stumble in find themselves slipping on loose sand, only to be seized by powerful, hollow mandibles. The victim is drained, and the husk tossed aside. It is nature's most elegant execution. This larval stage can last years, depending on the rhythm of rain and prey. When the time is right, it spins a sandy cocoon and undergoes a transformation, emerging as a delicate, damselfly-like adult that lives only a few short weeks to mate and die.

But the antlion's role is far from minor. By controlling insect populations, aerating the soil, and feeding small predators like birds and lizards, it fills a **vital niche** in the bush's complex web of life. Without it, the balance begins to tilt.

So next time you walk the dry paths of the savannah, look closer. A small pit in the sand might just be the lair of one of Africa's most skilled and important hunters.



Born in dust. Balanced by nature. Feared in miniature.

The antlion reminds us: even the smallest players shape the wild.



Congratulations to Our New Committee Members



A big congratulations to the newly nominated committee members! We're grateful for your willingness to step forward and play such an important role in guiding our association. Your energy, ideas, and commitment mean so much to our community.

In the year ahead, we look forward to your fresh ideas, teamwork, and commitment as we continue working together to protect, grow, and strengthen our community. Your leadership will help shape the path forward, and we're excited for what we can achieve together.

Proverb: "When the music changes, so does the dance."– African proverb

Meaning:

Life is full of shifts and transitions. Wisdom lies in adaptability — knowing when to change your approach, perspective, or actions to stay in harmony with the rhythm of circumstances. It speaks to resilience, flexibility, and the power of flowing with change rather than resisting it.

With heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes,

Parsons Nature Reserve

