



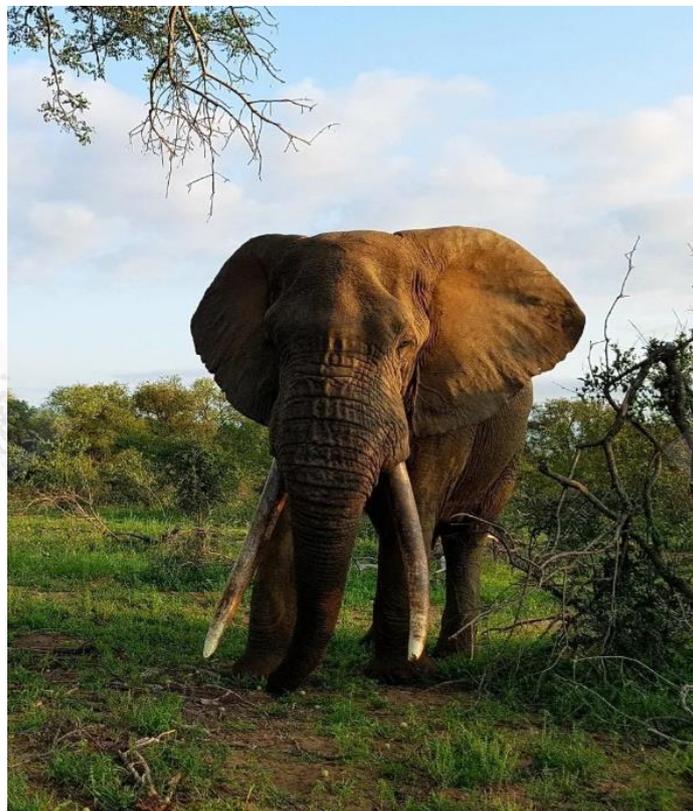
Parsons Nature Reserve Newsletter – December 2025 Edition

As December unfolds, Parsons Nature Reserve is breathing deeply once again. Soaking rains have swept across the landscape, and the bush is bursting into life. Dusty earth transformed into vibrant greens, ephemeral flowers emerging and the air alive with the sounds and scents of renewal. These rains are more than just water from the sky; they are the lifeblood of the reserve. They replenish the soil, create wallows, fill pans and rivers, nourish grazing and browsing species and set in motion the intricate cycles that sustain our precious flora and fauna. The result is a healthier, more resilient bush, one that supports life at every level, from the smallest insects to our iconic wildlife.

As we look back on the year gone by, we are filled with gratitude. Gratitude for the challenges that have taught us resilience, for the successes that have strengthened us, and above all, for the privilege of being part of this priceless journey. Parsons has once again reminded us how humbling nature can be, how small we are in its presence, and yet how deeply energising and life-affirming it is to be connected to it.

The beauty of Parsons lies not only in its sweeping landscapes and extraordinary biodiversity, but also in the care, commitment, and shared vision of its members and its warden and his dedicated team. We are proud that the reserve remains financially sound, providing a stable foundation for a future that looks bright, for the environment, for the bush, for its invaluable flora and fauna, and for the members who steward this land with such passion and respect.

We are truly honoured to be part of this remarkable reserve. Parsons humbles us, fills us with energy, and renews our love for life and nature time and time again. This place is priceless. What a joy it is to walk this journey together, through nature at its finest.



Ezulwini

December Wildlife Sightings / The Bush in Full Voice

December arrived wrapped in heat, rain, and the unmistakable rhythm of abundance. Across Parsons, **breeding herds of African elephant** (*Loxodonta africana*) crisscrossed the reserve from Sangasava to the northern reaches, following pathways written into the land itself. Matriarchs led with quiet wisdom; calves tucked safely among the herd. These giants are true ecosystem engineers, opening clearings, dispersing seeds, and shaping the bush with every deliberate step.

A moment of awe came with the rare visit of the legendary tusker **Ezulwini**. His name, meaning “*From Heaven*,” perfectly reflects his calm, gentle, and curious nature. With a massive home range stretching across vast wilderness, his appearances are few and far between. Each sighting feels deeply personal, a privilege we never take for granted.



Photo courtesy of Vera Bower

As summer storms passed, the night bush stirred with life. **Lesser Bushbabies** (*Galago moholi*) and **Thick-tailed Bushbabies** (*Otolemur crassicaudatus*) were spotted feasting on swarming **termite alates**, released from mature colonies after rain to begin new lives. These nocturnal primates play a vital role in controlling insect populations, their wide eyes reflecting torchlight like tiny stars. Along the river, **Chacma baboons** (*Papio ursinus*) played and foraged, their complex social bonds and intelligence always on full display.

The rains also brought delicate wonders. The breathtaking **African Moon Moth** (*Argema mimosae*) graced the reserve, its giant silk wings glowing pale green with long flowing tails and striking eyespots. Closely related to the North American Luna Moth, its caterpillars feed on marula and other trees, one of summer’s most enchanting transformations.

Elegant **Greater kudu** (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) bulls were seen moving in bachelor herds, finding safety in numbers outside the breeding season, while older bulls wandered alone. Their majestic spiral horns, growing throughout their lives, remain one of the bushveld’s most iconic sights. In a quieter

moment, an **African pygmy dormouse** (*Graphiurus murinus*), affectionately known as the “micro squirrel,” was spotted sneaking around a member’s home. Mostly arboreal but sometimes a nimble rock climber, this omnivore feeds on insects, seeds, fruit, and flowers, proof that even the smallest creatures carry great ecological importance.



Photo courtesy of Brendan Marsay

High above, **White-backed vultures** (*Gyps africanus*) perched on a dead knob thorn, ever watchful. With vulture numbers declining dramatically across Africa due to poisoning, we are incredibly fortunate that Parsons remains a haven for these essential scavengers, nature’s clean-up crew. On the ground, the tracks and burrow of a **Springhare** (*Pedetes capensis*) were discovered. The largest hopping rodent in southern Africa, it moves with kangaroo-like bounds, reaching speeds of up to 8.5 km/h and impressive leaps to evade predators. Despite its name, it is neither hare nor rabbit, but a unique rodent all its own, keep your eyes peeled for this unusual sighting.

Our **resident lion pride** (*Panthera leo*) was also seen, a powerful reminder of the wild balance that still thrives here. The bush hosted a rich mix of herbivores, including **Impala** (*Aepyceros melampus*), **Waterbuck** (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*), **Nyala** (*Tragelaphus angasii*), and the ever-regal **Giraffe** (*Giraffa giraffa*), quietly watching over the reserve.

Summer birding on Parsons is simply exceptional. The hot, wet season brings lush vegetation and an explosion of colour as birds enter peak breeding plumage. **Weavers, widowbirds, and whydahs** shimmer in brilliant hues, while the unmistakable call of the **Woodland Kingfisher** (*Halcyon senegalensis*) rings through the bush. Riverine areas come alive with **kingfishers, bee-eaters, jacanas, Goliath Herons** (*Ardea goliath*), and the elusive **Pel’s Fishing-Owl** (*Scotopelia peli*). Even woodland gems like the **Gorgeous Bush-Shrike** (*Telophorus viridis*) remind us just how rich this landscape is.

There were countless other sightings, big and small, winged and furred, far too many to mention. That’s the magic of Parsons in December: overflowing with life, rhythm, and wonder. You’ve got to love the diversity of this wild place.

Wardens Report



Magical Parsons

RAINFALL

229,3mm rain recorded for the month in 9 rainfall events. Total for the season (July 2025 to June 2026) –417,8mm.

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.

ORIENTATIONS

- Mpala x1 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 Internal Access Road – External Access Road and half of Elephant Alley x1
- Dragged tyres/metal-frame.
 - All main Internal Access roads and Elephant Alley to Main Gate x2.
- Installed five wooden lodge signs on Parsons Link and Parsons East roads.

GENERAL

NON-PROFIT COMPANY

- Vehicle assets are being transferred to PNRPOA

BUILDING / CONSTRUCTION

- **Gate:** Staff accommodation - foundations established and prefabricated buildings erected.



- Established four additional foundations for gabions.

TRESSPASSING

- We have had a few incidents of trespassing onto private property over the past month. A map showing the approved game drive route was sent to all members pre-AGM. The map works on the AVENZA map app and gives your current position without needing to be linked to any network or satellite.
- Please observe NO ENTRY signs unless the owner of that property invited you. If you are unsure about a particular road, please contact Joe or Dirk direct, they can also assist with setting up AVENZA on your cell phone.

NEW YEAR

Prosperous new year's wishes to all members and their families. Safe traveling to those that have gone away during this time.

The Silent Judge of Parsons' Skies: The Martial Eagle



As the sun heats up the earth over **Parsons Nature Reserve**, a broad shadow may glide silently across the bush. This is the **Martial Eagle**, Africa's largest eagle and one of the most powerful predators in the Greater Kruger ecosystem.

With a wingspan stretching over two metres and eyesight up to **eight times sharper than a human's**, the Martial Eagle can spot prey from several kilometres away. From dizzying heights, it dives at incredible speed, striking guinea fowl, large snakes, monitor lizards, mongooses, and even young antelope. Few hunters shape the landscape so quietly.



By targeting the weak and vulnerable, Martial Eagles act as **natural regulators**, helping keep prey populations healthy and balanced. Ecologists consider them an **indicator species**, where Martial Eagles survive, the ecosystem below is usually thriving.

These eagles live life slowly. A breeding pair may raise only **one chick every two years**, using enormous stick nests built high in leadwood or knob thorn trees, some reused for decades. This slow reproduction makes them especially vulnerable, even within protected areas.

Across southern Africa, the Martial Eagle is steeped in folklore. Among local communities, it was believed to be a **guardian of travellers** and a symbol of strength and clear judgment. Elders warned against lying beneath its watchful gaze, the eagle, they said, could see the truth.

Today, the Martial Eagle is listed as **Vulnerable**, facing threats from habitat loss and human pressures beyond reserve boundaries. When one is seen on Parsons, it is more than a rare sighting, it is a sign that this landscape remains wild, balanced, and worth protecting.

So, if you are fortunate enough to spot one perched high or circling silently above, pause for a moment. You are witnessing one of the true custodians of Parsons Nature Reserve, **the silent judge of the skies**.



Photo courtesy of Joe Pearson

On Responsibility

"They who learns, teaches."

The land teaches us constantly, through animal movement, changing seasons, and subtle signs. To learn from nature is also to share that knowledge, ensuring that understanding becomes protection, not privilege.

With heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes,

Parsons Nature Reserve

