



Parsons Nature Reserve Newsletter – July 2025 Edition

As July stretches out across the reserve, the bushveld lies cloaked in the quiet beauty of winter. Mornings greet us with a crisp hush, the air sharp and clear, while the golden light of dusk bathes the land in a kind of ancient magic.

This month, our hearts are a little heavier as we remember and honour **Richard Loffel**, a cherished and longtime member of the Parsons community. His deep love for the reserve, wisdom and unwavering dedication to conservation have left an indelible mark on this land and on all of us who knew him.

Over the years **Richard** contributed tirelessly, always guided by a calm insight, a profound respect for nature and a steadfast belief in the importance of preserving this wild place. His thoughtful presence and genuine passion for the bush inspired many, and his legacy lives on in the reserve he helped nurture and protect.

Though he may no longer walk these paths beside us, his spirit is woven into the fabric of Parsons, whispering through the trees, echoing in the call of birds and living on in every wild and beautiful corner of the reserve he held so dear.

In moments like these, the bushveld offers not just solace, but strength. There is something sacred about the way life continues here - quietly, steadily, with purpose. It reminds us that even in loss, there is life; even in grief, there is growth. Nature does not rush healing, but it offers us all the tools we need: grounding, clarity and a renewed sense of connection.

As we move through this season of change, let's take time to truly see the reserve. Not just as a place of beauty, but as a source of energy and resilience. Let's walk its paths with gratitude, draw strength from its rhythms and look toward the future with hope. Because here, surrounded by the untamed wild, we are reminded of what matters most and of the light that always follows darkness.



Leadwood (*Combretum imberbe*)

Wardens Report



RAINFALL

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

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 Eskom meter readers.

ORIENTATIONS

- Contractors x1 team and x1 refresher for one of the guides
- 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

- Dragged tyres/metal-frame
Main Entrance Road x1.
Main access roads
- Filled in potholes on Balule River Road.
- New Viewpoint – thank you to Bossie and Heidi Kruger from PNR90 for allowing us to establish a viewpoint on Game Drive E. It has been aptly named The Ridge.

GENERAL

PARSONS GATE

As part of a continued effort to improve the appearance of the gate area, gabion rock walls have been erected in-house. The first four sections of phase one are complete with phase two also consisting of an additional four sections to be installed soon.



PARSONS GATE

LITTER

Over the past month we have noted a lot more litter – some of it on the main access road but unfortunately also at the stopping spots. Please ensure that guests do not leave cigarette butts or papers behind.

Latest sightings

Winter Wonders of the Wild

This month, the reserve has been alive with stirring encounters and moments of raw, untamed beauty. Each one a reminder of the powerful life force that pulses through Parsons, even in the quiet grip of winter.

The giants among us

Along the mighty banks of the Olifants River, we've witnessed the awe-inspiring presence of powerful **elephant bulls** (*Loxodonta africana*), their massive forms silhouetted against the riparian vegetation as they moved with surprising grace. Across the reserve **breeding herds** meandered through thickets and open areas, their young flanked by protective matriarchs. Living symbols of family, memory and strength. Did you know that elephant herds are led by the oldest female who carries generations of wisdom and guides the group with instinct honed by experience?

Grace in motion

We've also been treated to elegant sightings of **kudu** (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*). Both proud bulls with spiralling horns and watchful cows shepherding their young. These antelope, often called the "ghosts of the bush" for their ability to melt into the vegetation, are surprisingly agile and capable of leaping over 2.5 meters from a standstill.

Riverbank royalty

The Olifants River was a stage this month for some dramatic and sun-drenched performances: enormous **Nile crocodiles** (*Crocodylus niloticus*) basked motionless on the banks, absorbing winter



heat. With their ability to slow their metabolism, these prehistoric predators can go months between meals yet strike with lightning speed when the time comes. Nearby, **hippos** (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) emerged from their watery refuge to sunbathe in open spaces. Less common in summer months, but a welcome winter treat.

A rare and regal visitor

In a particularly exciting moment, a solitary **sable antelope** (*Hippotragus niger*) was spotted lingering near the main gate. Known for their glossy black coats and curved horns, sables are elusive and regal creatures and rarely seen in this area. Their presence is always a privilege.

Predators and close calls

In the thick riverside bush, sharp-eyed members witnessed a thrilling encounter: **unidentified lionesses** (*Panthera leo*) on the hunt, locked in silent pursuit of a group of kudus. The tension was palpable, but in this case, the kudu lived to see another sunrise. Predation attempts often fail; in fact, lions succeed in less than 30% of their hunts.



A regal giraffe bull (Thank you, Vera, for showcasing Parsons in all its glory)

Meanwhile, a **female leopard** (*Panthera pardus*) has made several appearances throughout the reserve. Elusive, silent, and breathtakingly beautiful, she reminds us how the bush always holds its secrets just beneath the surface. Leopards are solitary by nature and fiercely territorial, each sighting is a gift.

Shadows of the night

Under cover of darkness, **spotted hyenas** (*Crocuta crocuta*) made their rounds near various lodges and homesteads. Often misunderstood, these intelligent scavengers are also skilled hunters with a social structure as complex as that of primates. Hearing their haunting whoops and eerie laughter on a winter night is a reminder of the mystery that stirs while we sleep.

A dark silhouette of wisdom

Finally, a magnificent old **giraffe bull** (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) was seen browsing the treetops, his coat darker than usual, a trait that often indicates maturity. Giraffes darken with age and this impressive individual stood like a sentinel of time and grace, unbothered by our presence.

As always, the rhythm of the bush rewards the patient, the curious, and the deeply present. Let us continue to walk gently and watch closely, there is always more to be seen and always more to be learned.

Creature of the Night: The Enigmatic African Civet



Silent, elusive and cloaked in shadows, the **African civet** (*Civettictis civetta*) is one of the bush's most mysterious nocturnal wanderers. With its striking black-and-white pelage, banded tail and bold facial markings, this animal looks almost mythical, yet it plays a very real and vital role in our ecosystem.

Mostly active under the cover of darkness, civets roam with purpose using their keen sense of smell to locate fruit, insects, rodents and even carrion. They are omnivorous opportunists and in that lies their quiet contribution to the balance of nature: seed dispersal, insect control and nutrient cycling. Few animals embody the principle of ecological harmony quite like the civet.

What's more, civets carry an ancient energy. Their scent-marking behaviour through the secretion of "civetone" from their perineal glands has influenced human culture for centuries. Once prized in the perfume industry, now protected through ethical conservation efforts.

Despite their adaptability, civets face increasing threats from habitat loss and snares. Every sighting on the reserve is not just a thrill but a testament to the importance of wild, untamed spaces like Parsons where creatures like the civet can continue to thrive in the night's embrace.

So next time you hear a rustle after dusk or catch the glint of eyes in your torch beam, remember: the civet may be near - wild, ancient and vital to the rhythm of the bush.

Annual AGM – Saturday the 9th of August 2025 at 10H00 at RIO DOS ELEPHANTES, Portion 18 - You're invited!





It's that time of year again! We warmly invite you to attend the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Association.

The Committee's aim is to give all Members detailed feedback on the business of the Association over the past year as well as share the vision and plans for the road ahead. This is an important opportunity to engage, ask questions and participate in constructive, respectful discussions - all in the best interest of the Association and our shared reserve.

We truly value your input and encourage everyone to attend and contribute.

After the meeting, we'll enjoy a relaxed braai together, a chance to connect as a community. Please bring along your meat, drinks, camp chairs and join us around the fire.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Proverb: "The earth is a beehive; we all enter by the same door."

– African proverb

Meaning: All life is connected, and nature belongs to everyone. A beautiful fit for conservation messages and the shared stewardship of the land.

With heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes,

Parsons Nature Reserve

