



Parsons Nature Reserve Newsletter – October 2025 Edition

As members of Parsons Nature Reserve, we are deeply honoured to belong to this remarkable wilderness. Each day here reminds us that we are part of something ancient and rare. Now, as October unfolds, we find ourselves nearing the end of the long dry season. The air holds both dust and promise, for this is the month of hope and change, the bush poised between scarcity and renewal.

Out here, time follows a rhythm all its own. Hours may pass in stillness, and then suddenly, the bush stirs, birds fall silent, impalas tense, and from the shadows a leopard glides into view. Patience is not wasted here; it is the doorway into the wild's deeper secrets.

Predators know this well. Lions lie motionless, not from idleness, but from wisdom, waiting for the wind to shift, for the moment to turn. Long before clocks, smart phones and deadlines, humans too lived by this rhythm, silent at waterholes, listening, watching. That instinct still hums within us, awakened when we slow down.

In the bush, patience is alive and alert, the call of a francolin, the hush of weavers, the twitch of a tail. These are the threads of a story the land is telling, if only we pause to hear it.

And that is the gift of Parsons Nature Reserve: it pulls us into its timeless rhythm. Rivers reshape with floods, termite mounds rise over decades, leadwoods endure for centuries. Life here unfolds when it is ready, not by our clock, but by its own.

All we can do is be present, patient, and ready when the magic arrives.



Photo courtesy of Vera Bower



October Wildlife Sightings

October in the wild brought with it an orchestra of life, drama, and beauty across Parsons, a reminder of the raw magic that pulses through this untamed landscape.

Along the banks of the iconic **Olifants River**, magnificent herds of **African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*)** gathered to drink, bathe, and socialise. Watching these gentle giants, Africa's largest land mammals, reminds us how privileged we are to share space with such ancient, intelligent beings. Bull elephants have also been seen moving among some of the lodges, their presence both humbling and awe-inspiring. Breeding herds, with playful calves at their mothers' sides, graced multiple corners of the reserve, living proof of nature's continuity.

The **dominant male lion (*Panthera leo*)** from the Broken Tooth Pride was seen strutting his powerful frame, a golden monarch surveying his realm. In contrast, a **spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*)** was spotted with a deep neck wound, yet carried on undeterred, embodying the extraordinary resilience that defines wild creatures.

A tale that tugged at our hearts was that of a **wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*)**, Africa's most endangered large carnivore, who survived a snare with only three legs, continuing to hunt and roam with courage. Sadly, the story ended in tragedy when it fell prey to a pride of lions, a stark reminder that in nature, survival and loss are intertwined, and even predators are not free from peril.



Photo courtesy of Keith from Raptor Retreat

Another rare and dramatic moment unfolded when a **bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*)** gave birth, only for a large **chacma baboon (*Papio ursinus*)** to seize the newborn. Though unsettling, this behaviour reflects the omnivorous nature of baboons, who, like humans, occasionally supplement their diet with meat.



One of the most exciting sightings this month was a **female leopard (*Panthera pardus*)** with her two cubs caught on camera, an incredibly special moment, as leopards are solitary by nature and seldom seen in multiples. Later in the month, another magnificent male leopard was seen quenching his thirst at No. 58, a vision of stealth and strength beneath the African sky.

In a more intimate scene of the smaller wild world, two **spotted bush snakes (*Philothamnus semivariatus*)** were discovered mating in one of our members' pot plants, a delicate reminder that even the smallest corners of the reserve pulse with life and purpose.



Photo courtesy of Emma Marsay (Sneaky little devils)

At Raptor Waterhole, **giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis*)** bent their long necks to drink, their towering forms mirrored in the still water. Across Parsons, giraffes moved gracefully in small groups, their silhouettes like living watchtowers guarding the peace of the bush.

As always, the reserve dazzled with **zebra (*Equus quagga*)**, **kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*)**, **bushbuck**, **steenbok (*Raphicerus campestris*)**, and an array of birdlife, each one a vital thread in this rich ecological tapestry.

October has reminded us once more that the wild is not a place of chaos, but of balance, a place where beauty and hardship coexist, and where every sunrise on Parsons Nature Reserve brings new stories worth telling.



Photos courtesy of Vera Bower

Wardens Report



RAINFALL

4.3mm rain recorded for the month. Total for the season (July 2025 to June 2026) –7.8mm.

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

- PNR 63, 38 owners and Kurhula Management x2
- 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 - Access Road Elephant Alley to Gate x2 and Internal Access to No59.
- Filled in potholes on Granite and Elephant Alley.

GENERAL

NON-PROFIT COMPANY

- Addfin. has assisted Parsons to re-register as a nonprofit company under the name of PNRPOA, Parsons Nature Reserve Property Owners Association.

GATE

- Preparation work for new buildings has commenced.

TRANSGRESSION

- An incident of a game viewer trespassing onto private property was reported. A meeting was held and a fine of R1000 imposed.

Avenza Maps is available as an App for phones and does not require satellite linkage to show where you are. If more info required, please contact Joe on 082 828 3801.



The Honey Badger: Africa's Small but Mighty Legend



On safari, few sightings get guests buzzing with excitement quite like the **honey badger (*Mellivora capensis*)**. It may not be as tall as a giraffe or as powerful as a lion, but the honey badger has something else entirely, an unstoppable spirit that makes it one of the most fascinating animals you can encounter.

At first glance, its black coat with a silvery-white “cape” might not seem all that intimidating. But the honey badger is legendary for good reason. With thick, loose skin and sharp claws, it can twist and fight even when pinned by a predator. Lions, leopards, and hyenas all know better than to underestimate this feisty little warrior.

But here's the thing: the honey badger is not only fearless, it's clever. It raids beehives for honey and larvae, digs up rodents with surgical precision, and even takes on venomous snakes. Watching one on the move is like seeing determination in motion, relentless, calculating, and surprisingly resourceful.

A Story from Parsons Nature Reserve

One morning drive, long before the sun had warmed the grass, we followed a commotion near a thicket. We expected lions or hyenas on a kill. Instead, we found a single honey badger facing off against two hyenas over the remains of an impala lamb.

It seemed impossible, yet the badger charged, growled, and darted with such ferocity that the hyenas backed off, utterly bewildered. For a while, the little gladiator held its ground, standing nose-to-nose with animals many times its size. Eventually, the hyenas surrendered, slinking into the shadows, while the honey badger claimed its hard-won meal.

Moments like this stay with you forever. It was a reminder that in the wild, strength isn't always about size, it's about courage, resilience, and spirit.

Why We Love Them

Honey badgers may not be the “Big Five,” but they're unforgettable. They play an important role in keeping balance in the ecosystem, feeding on everything from snakes to insects. More than that, they embody the wild itself: untamed, unbreakable, and brimming with character.

So, if you're lucky enough to spot one on Parsons, take a moment to watch. You're looking at one of Africa's true icons, proof that even the smallest creatures can cast the longest shadows.

The Praying Mantis: Nature's Patient Predator



In the heart of the Parsons Nature Reserve, we often celebrate the giants, the lions, elephants, leopards, that dominate the landscape. Yet, sometimes, the most remarkable encounters are with the smallest of creatures. Among them, one stands out for its poise, patience, and almost otherworldly aura: the **Praying Mantis (*Mantodea*)**.

This remarkable insect carries its name from the posture it so often assumes, forelegs folded as though in prayer. But don't be fooled by its saintly stance. The mantis is one of nature's most skilled hunters, a master of camouflage and stillness, waiting with infinite patience for the perfect moment to strike.

Its triangular head can swivel nearly 180 degrees, giving it a field of vision that seems unnerving, as if it can look straight into your soul. Two large compound eyes dominate its face, supported by three smaller simple eyes, creating one of the sharpest visions in the insect world. The moment prey wanders too close, an unsuspecting fly, moth, or even another mantis, the forelegs unfold with lightning speed, spiked limbs securing the victim in a deadly embrace.

The praying mantis represents patience, focus, and the artistry of predation. It embodies the quiet power of nature, reminding us that every creature, no matter its size, has a vital role in the web of life. Watching one hunt is to witness millions of years of evolution distilled into a single, breath taking moment.

Next time you find yourself in the bush, slow down. Look not only for lions on the prowl, but also to the branches and grasses nearby. There you may find a praying mantis, still as a statue, waiting for its chance. And when it moves, you will never forget it.

Proverb: "When the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind." – African proverb

Meaning:

True strength comes from within, from deep foundations, whether in character, community, or tradition. Challenges and storms may come, but if your roots (values, relationships, resilience) run deep, you remain grounded and unshaken.

With heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes,

Parsons Nature Reserve

