



## Parsons Nature Reserve Newsletter – September 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 September 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 this place: 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



## September Wildlife Sightings

September gifted us moments that reminded us of both the fragility and the raw power of life in Parsons Nature Reserve.

Along the banks of the iconic Olifants River, a massive **Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*)** basked in the golden light, an ancient reptile, unchanged for millions of years, and a reminder of Africa's primeval heartbeat.

In the thickets, a young **leopard cub (*Panthera pardus pardus*)** was seen stalking and sneaking, already practicing the art of survival while keeping a wary eye on larger predators. On another occasion, the regal "Question Mark," our dominant male leopard, patrolled his kingdom with the quiet confidence of a ruler, while a graceful female leopard lay draped over her **impala (*Aepyceros melampus*)** kill, the princess of predators, draped in dappled camouflage.

Life's tender side was revealed in the poignant sight of an old **vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*)**, carrying the body of her dead infant, likely a miscarriage. Even here, where survival is a daily battle, grief has a place.



Photo courtesy of Brendan Marsay (Blood Moon)

Not all was sombre. The skies dazzled with a striking pair of **Scarlet-chested sunbirds (*Chalcomitra senegalensis*)**, their iridescent feathers flashing like rubies as they darted among the towering **jackalberry trees (*Diospyros mespiliformis*)** along the river.

Power and patience ruled the savanna as a mighty pride of **lions (*Panthera leo*)** brought down prey near Raptors Retreat, their cooperative might a testament to strength in unity. Meanwhile, herds of **giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*)** crisscrossed the reserve, their towering silhouettes like gentle sentinels keeping watch.



Breeding herds of **elephants (*Loxodonta africana*)** were seen across the reserve, reminding us how blessed we are to share space with Earth's great megafauna, their presence shaping the very landscape they roam.



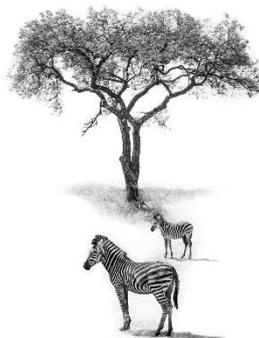
Photos courtesy of Vera Bower

The secret lives of the nocturnal world were revealed when a camera trap captured a pair of fearless **honey badgers (*Mellivora capensis*)**, prowling the night with their trademark boldness, true warriors of the bush, small in stature but unyielding in spirit.

The nights offered their own magic. A total lunar eclipse cast a **Blood Moon** over Parsons, an awe-inspiring spectacle linking the rhythms of earth and sky.

And always, in the background, the timeless grazers and browsers; **zebra (*Equus quagga*)**, **kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*)**, **bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*)**, and **steenbok (*Raphicerus campestris*)**, brought balance to the ecosystem, each one a thread in the fabric of the wild.

September has been a month of wonder, loss, power, and beauty, each sighting a reminder of why we cherish this wilderness so deeply.



## 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

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

