



Parsons Nature Reserve Newsletter – May 2026 Edition

As the cool breath of May drifts gently across the Lowveld, Parsons Nature Reserve awakens in a way that feels almost sacred. The landscape softens beneath golden light, and the air hums with quiet anticipation, every sunrise carrying the promise of something extraordinary waiting to unfold.

There is a raw, untamed beauty here that reaches far beyond what the eye can hold. It settles softly beneath the skin, stirring something deep within the soul long after the moment has passed. The stillness, the distant call of a hyena, and the earthy scent of winter drawing near create a feeling that is impossible to describe, yet impossible to forget.

This is the quiet magic of May in Parsons, a season that slows the heart, awakens the senses, and reminds us with every breath why this wild and beautiful place holds such a profound place in our hearts.

To be part of Parsons Nature Reserve is both an honour and a privilege beyond words. This remarkable wilderness humbles us daily. It strips life back to what truly matters and fills us with a deep sense of gratitude, energy, and love for the natural world. In the stillness of the bushveld there is perspective. In the call of a fish eagle at dawn and the distant call of nightjars at night there is connection. This place is priceless.



May has already brought amazing adventures, changing seasons, and moments that stay with us long after the dust settles on the roads. Yet beyond the wildlife, it is the people who make this reserve truly extraordinary. The shared passion of members, the wonder in the eyes of returning guests, and the collective respect for this untamed landscape continue to shape the spirit of Parsons.

As we move deeper into the dry season, we are reminded that nature never stops teaching us. Every track in the sand tells a story. Every tree stands as a witness to time. Every visit leaves a mark on the soul.

Thank you for being part of this incredible journey with us and for helping protect one of Africa's most treasured wild spaces. We invite you to slow down, breathe deeply, and lose yourself once again in the beauty of Parsons Nature Reserve.



Photo: Heidi Jooste

May Wildlife Sightings

May on Parsons Nature Reserve has once again reminded us that no two game drives are ever the same. Every track in the dust, every flicker of movement in the bush, every sound at night carries its own story. Nature continues to perform her greatest theatre here, where the sky shifts in colour, light drapes itself across the landscape, and the wild pulses with life in every direction.

A breeding herd of **Cape buffalo**, *Syncerus caffer*, moved steadily along the main access road this month. Imposing, patient, and utterly unbothered by our presence, they are one of Africa's great symbols of resilience. Buffalo have an incredible memory for water and danger, and they rarely forget either. There is something humbling about sharing a road with them, as if the bush is quietly reminding us of who truly owns it.



Photos: Vera Bouwer and Dirk Boshoff

The **lionesses**, *Panthera leo*, were seen on the hunt, slipping through the grass with that unmistakable focus that makes your breath catch. Silent power wrapped in elegance. A big male lion was observed mating with a lioness, a raw and fascinating reminder of the rhythms that govern life here. In lion society, every moment is shaped by instinct, timing, and a kind of royal unpredictability that keeps us all watching a little longer than planned.

Processionary caterpillars, belonging to *Thaumetopoeinae*, made a special appearance, moving in their iconic nose to tail lines like tiny marching armies. Small but full of ecological importance, they play their part in the cycle of the bush, even if they look like they are late for a very important meeting.



Photo: Vera Bouwer (Processionary caterpillars) / Angolan free tailed bat

Giraffe, *Giraffa camelopardalis*, drifted through the trees like living sculptures, their long necks bending with surprising grace. **Kudu** families, *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*, were also frequently encountered, alert and elegant, always seeming to know exactly when to freeze and when to vanish.

Hyenas, *Crocuta crocuta*, were both heard and seen around the lodges, their haunting calls echoing through the night like laughter carried on the wind. Often misunderstood, they are intelligent and highly social, playing a crucial role in keeping the bush clean and balanced.

The **African civet**, *Civettictis civetta*, is becoming more active as we move towards winter. A shy and secretive nocturnal wanderer, it moves like a shadow with spots, occasionally revealing itself as if checking whether we are still paying attention.

Angolan free tailed bats, *Mops condylurus*, filled the evening skies, emerging in quick darting streams. Nature's night shift, tirelessly controlling insect populations while most of the bush settles into darkness.

Tawny eagle, *Aquila rapax*, and **African harrier hawk**, *Polyboroides typus*, reminded us to look up more often. One a patient opportunist of open skies, the other an acrobatic hunter capable of astonishing flexibility when searching for food in hidden places.



Photo: Isambane Camp (African harrier hawk)

The **Lilac breasted roller**, *Coracias caudatus*, added its usual burst of colour to the month. A flash of blue, green, and lilac that never fails to steal attention, even from the most focused tracker.

Breeding herds of **elephant**, *Loxodonta africana*, moved through the reserve with quiet authority, while solitary bulls wandered in and out like old philosophers with nowhere urgent to be. Their intelligence and memory continue to shape the landscape in ways we are still learning to understand.

Zebra, *Equus quagga*, striking patterns of black and white, a visual rhythm that feels almost too perfect to be real. **Waterbuck**, *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*, lingered near the mighty Olifants river, calm and watchful, always carrying that faint sense of being slightly too dignified to rush for anything.

May has been a reminder, once again, that the wild is never predictable, never repeated, never rehearsed. It simply unfolds. Each sighting a fleeting gift. Each drive a new chapter. And every moment, whether dramatic or quietly ordinary, a part of something far greater than ourselves.

Wardens Report



Photo: Brendan Marsay

RAINFALL

- 0mm rain recorded for the month in 0 rainfall events. Total for the season (July 2025 to June 2026) –1158mm. Predictions for the 2026-27 rainfall seasons is that we can expect a dry year with El Niño making its appearance.

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 on the R40.
- Escorted Eskom technicians installing electronic meters enabling readings to be done remotely. The same meters can then be converted to pre-paid at a later stage if the owner wishes to.

ORIENTATIONS

- PNR Members - No 28 x2
- Guide No36 x1
- Contractors - No 4 and 12
- 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

Thank you for everyone's patience while the bulldozer was busy and to Riaan for supervision on the external access road.

- Bulldozer used to camber all the main internal access roads and then certain critical spots – (lower end of PlatKlip, first portion of Balule River and entrance roads to No's 30, 24/25/26 and 38/39.)



- The bulldozed roads were then graded and dragged using PNR equipment together with Riaan's tractor and driver. Thank you, Riaan.
- Graded –Elephant Alley, Tsakane and Game Drive A (East).
- Dragged tyres and/or frame – main external access roads weekly.

GATE HOUSE

The project has progressed quite well with perimeter lathe fence on two sides and plumbing completed. Brendan assisted with moving the solar system to the new buildings – thank you.

FIRE BREAKS

With a very dry season approaching and our high grass load please put measures in place for your property.

Insurance companies recommend the following fire prevention measures:

- Ensure that a sufficient number of operational fire extinguishers are available on site.
- Maintain at least two fire beaters in accessible locations.
- Clear all dead grass within a 1-metre perimeter around buildings.
- Slash grass to ankle height for an additional 5 metres beyond the cleared perimeter.
- Remove all dead wood within this 5-metre zone.
- Ensure that no trees or branches are in contact with any thatched roofing.

ESKOM POLES

On about a third of the poles on Parsons an area of 1m has been cleared around each pole and a further 1m the grass has been slashed to ankle height.

FLOOD DAMAGED ROADS

The only road currently inaccessible due to heavy underground seepage is the lower end of Tawny Eagle and Roller Road on Game Drive D.

Whispers in the Web





As the last amber light fades behind the knob thorns and the fire begins to crackle beneath the African night sky, another world quietly awakens in Parsons Nature Reserve. Between bark crevices, beneath fallen leaves, and suspended in silver strands between trees, spiders emerge to continue a story that began more than 300 million years ago, long before dinosaurs walked the planet.

Parsons is home to an astonishing variety of spiders. Golden Orb Web Spiders hang like living jewellery in the morning light, while Baboon Spiders retreat silently into velvet lined burrows beneath the sand. Huntsman spiders move like shadows across tree trunks and Wolf Spiders patrol the earth without webs, relying instead on speed and precision to hunt.

Though often misunderstood, spiders are among the bushveld's greatest custodians. They regulate insect populations naturally, feeding on mosquitoes, flies, moths, and countless agricultural pests. Without them, the balance of the ecosystem would quickly begin to unravel.

A fascinating feature about spiders is their ancient breathing system known as book lungs. These delicate organs are made up of thin layered folds, much like the pages of a book, allowing oxygen to pass into the bloodstream with remarkable efficiency. It is an evolutionary design so ancient and effective that it has remained largely unchanged for millions of years.

The spiders found in Parsons Nature Reserve belong predominantly to what arachnologists refer to as the **Old-World** group, meaning they originate from Africa, Asia, and Europe. Species such as the Baboon Spider evolved in harsher, predator rich environments and rely more on speed, strength, and potent venom for defence. In contrast, many **New-World** spiders from the Americas developed specialised defensive hairs that they can flick at predators instead of immediately relying on aggression or venom. These differences, shaped by millions of years of evolution on separate continents, offer a fascinating glimpse into how geography influenced the survival strategies of spiders across the world.

There are endless wonders hidden within these eight-legged creatures. Some spiders can sense vibrations through tiny sensory hairs on their legs from several metres away. Others travel through the air by releasing silk into the wind, a behaviour known as ballooning. Even their silk continues to astonish scientists, stronger than steel of the same thickness and still impossible for humans to fully replicate.

Sit quietly enough one evening and you may notice a web sparkling silver in the lantern light or catch the gentle movement of a huntsman disappearing into the darkness. In those moments, fear often gives way to wonder, because spiders are far more than creatures of the night. They are ancient architects, silent hunters, and living threads woven deeply into the soul of the wild.

On Wisdom

"Wisdom is like fire; people take it from others."

Meaning: Wisdom is shared knowledge. No one can claim all wisdom for themselves; it grows when passed on.

With heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes,

Parsons Nature Reserve