



## December 2021 News

Hello Olifants community!

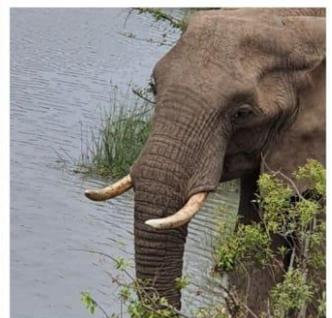
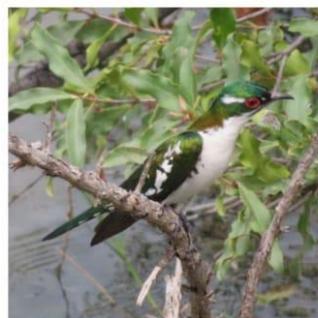
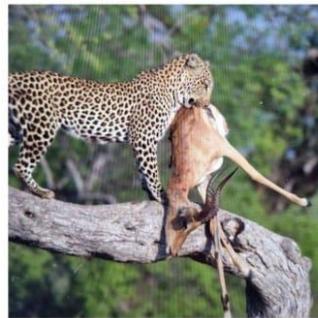
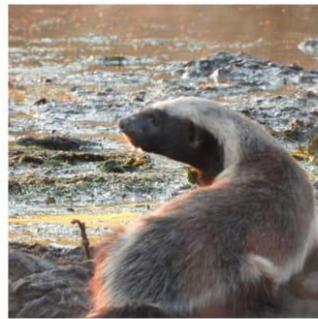
We hope you are all well! And just like that it's December and the festive season is already upon us. The bushveld is in full "Summer Mode" with life bursting at the seams from all corners of the reserve!

We wish you all a fantastic Christmas and New Year's celebration- and safe travels to those who are on the road!

Enjoy the last Newsletter of 2021!

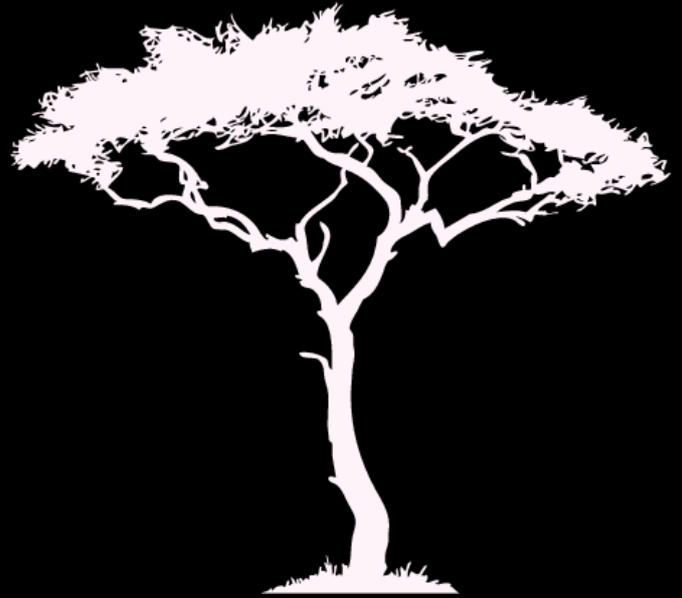
## THE GAME DRIVE

November provided excellent game viewing, with the large pack of over 32 Wild Dogs visiting us on Lisbon. Predator viewing has been good, with multiple kills on the reserve by lion and leopard. Elephant presence has lessened a little from the drier months, but they are still present in good numbers. The general game has been very good, with a lot of the herbivors giving birth to young. Buffaloes have been spotted more frequently on ORGR, which is a good sign of post draught recovery of our ecosystem. Birdlife is at its best with all the migrants back in the area, providing the twitchers with endless entertainment out there!



## Feature Article – Interesting Trees of Kruger

The Greater Kruger is a tree lover's haven. In all the regions, barring the mopane shrub veld, there are extraordinary trees - some 336 species in all. The riverine forests in the north of the park and the granitic foothills of the southwest are home to some of the most magnificent specimens, while some of the baobabs north of the Luvuvhu River may be more than 4 000 years old. Kruger has hardy trees. Species that do well can withstand the vicissitudes of drought, over-browsing and periodic veld fires. Their distribution across Kruger is primarily a consequence of the underlying geology, soil types and amount of rainfall.



Many of Kruger's trees and shrubs have medicinal properties that have been used for hundreds of years by African communities. Traditional healers still make use of many of these plants in treating a variety of physiological and psychological disorders. Here are some of Kruger's most common trees, the animals associated with them and their medicinal qualities and other uses.

### **Mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*)**

#### Characteristics:

A deciduous tree that dominates the North; grows in tree, shrub and intermediate form; unmistakable "butterfly" leaves; mopaneveld becomes golden in winter.

#### Animal associations:

Elephants browse leaves and bark; other animals eat fallen leaves, lots of insects that attract baboons and certain birds.

#### Traditional medicine and other uses:

Wood extracts used to cure venereal disease; good firewood.

### **Knob-thorn acacia (*Acacia nigrescens*)**

#### Characteristics:

A deciduous tree that produces a magnificent creamy-yellow flower that announces the arrival of Spring in the Lowveld; Knob-thorns pronounced on younger trees.

#### Animal associations:

Leaves and pods form the main diet for giraffes, elephants, kudu, impala and steenbok; giraffes and baboons love the flowers; many raptors use the bigger knob-thorns for nesting.

#### Traditional medicinal and other uses:

Used to make furniture, lightning conductors and fighting sticks.

### **Tamboti (*Spirostachys africana*)**

#### Characteristics:

Semi-deciduous to an evergreen that grows up to 18m; dark, rough bark that forms little rectangles on the straight trunk; narrow canopy; often grows in stands in brakwater areas.

#### Animal associations:

Porcupines are very fond of Tamboti bark, especially in winter; leaves are browsed by black rhino, elephants, giraffe, eland, kudu, nyala, impala and bushbuck; fallen fruits are eaten by guineafowl and monkeys.

#### Traditional medicinal and other uses:

Poisonous latex used in fishing - dropped into pools to stun fish to make them easier to catch; never braai

over Tamboti wood as it can cause severe stomach pains; small amounts of the latex are used to treat stomach pains and diarrhoea and dysentery; sought-after wood for furniture.

### **Apple-leaf (*Philenoptera violacea*)**

#### Characteristics:

Deciduous and semi-deciduous, a drought-resistant tree with distinctive green-grey leathery leaves; beautiful lilac flowers in Spring.

#### Animal associations:

Reliable winter-browsing tree for giraffe, elephant, kudu, impala, nyala; eland and Lichtenstein's hartebeest; also known as the "rain tree" because the ground around the tree is often damp - this is the result of falling secretions from aphids.

#### Traditional medicinal and other uses:

Roots are used in a variety of treatments - from curing colds to treating snakebites; wood used for fencing.

### **Marula (*Sclerocarya birrea*)**

#### Characteristics:

Deciduous tree that fruits from November to March; dappled bark makes it easy to identify.

#### Animal associations:

Favoured by wide variety of browsers, especially elephant and kudu, impala, baboons and monkeys; zebra eat fallen fruit.

#### Traditional medicinal and other uses:

Considered a sacred tree used in fertility rites; bark used in the treatment of malaria; potent alcohol can be brewed from fruit which is tasty and rich in Vitamin C.

### **Sycamore fig (*Ficus sycomorus*)**

#### Characteristics:

Semi-deciduous tree with yellowish bark; roots usually exposed; grows up to 35m with spreading crown.

#### Animal associations:

Browsed by a wide range of animals, including elephant, giraffe, kudu, bushbuck, nyala, impala and baboon; fallen fruit are eaten by bushpigs and warthogs.

#### Traditional medicinal and other uses:

Used as the base block for making fire by rubbing wood; mixture of bark and latex used to cure coughs and chest ailments; inner bark makes good rope; fruit is edible.

### **Ebony Jackal-berry (*Diospyros mespiliformis*)**

#### Characteristics:

Semi-deciduous to evergreen riverine tree; grows up to 25m; has dense crown and upright trunk with grey, fissured bark; flowers in early summer; fruits during winter.

#### Animal associations:

Fallen fruit eaten by jackal, kudu, impala and nyala; baboons and monkeys feed on fruit on tree; attracts lots of birds like green pigeons and brown-headed parrots.

#### Traditional medicinal and other uses:

Fruit used to treat internal parasites; extracts of bark and leaves believed to have antibiotic properties; leaves and bark used to disinfect wounds.

### **Silver cluster-leaf (*Terminalia sericea*)**

#### Characteristics:

Deciduous tree with hairy, silvery leaves; rough grey bark; spreading crown.

#### Animal associations:

Generally low nutritional value but browsers love young leaves; elephant and giraffe sometimes eat the wood; wildebeest known to eat fallen leaves

Traditional medicinal and other uses:

Roots used to cure diarrhoea and treat pneumonia; extracts of bark used to cure poisoning and treat diabetes.

**Leadwood bushwillow (*Combretum imberbe*)**

Characteristics:

Deciduous tree with extremely hard wood; recognisable by pale grey bark and location along drainage lines; four-winged pods in autumn.

Animal associations:

Leaves eaten by elephant, kudu, giraffe, and impala.

Traditional medicinal and other uses:

Revered as a mystical tree in indigenous folklore; leaves and flowers used to relieve coughs; good firewood.

**Weeping Boer-bean(*Schotia brachypetala*)**

Characteristics:

Semi-deciduous to evergreen; up to 25m tall; dense clusters of bright red flowers from the start of Spring to early Summer.

Animal associations

Baboons, kudu, giraffe and black rhino eat leaves; baboons also drink nectar from the flowers, which also attract lots of birds and insects.

Traditional medicine and other uses:

A "morning after" tree - extracts of bark used for treating hangovers and heartburn.



## Security Update

We are in the middle of the peak of criminal activities in the areas and have managed to keep the reserve free from incursions so far. We are actively conducting K9 searches at all BNR access gates at random to



show presence and look for any firearm or wild animal products entering or exiting the reserve. We also have various other “Silly Season” protocols in place to protect our corner of Paradise as best we can.

Recently the ORGR Reaction Team was asked to assist in a Crime Intelligence-run operation with the SAPS Tactical Reaction Team and Farm Watch to

intercept a vehicle being driven by a criminal who was on his way into our area to poach rhinos in Balule. This operation was intel-driven and we successfully managed to apprehend five known poachers with a rifle and a stolen vehicle on the R530. It was an honour for us to be called in to assist with this operation and our relationships with important stakeholders in the law enforcement game is paying off. We managed to remove these poachers from the equations before they even set foot into a game reserve to kill rhinos for their horns.

Our APU team was recently also involved in a snare removal sweep in the buffer zone below the mines in a military-controlled property along the Selati River. A total of 139 cable and wire snares were removed and two meat poacher camps were destroyed. These cable snares indiscriminately kill any animal that has the misfortune of coming across them and has caused the death of several wild dogs recently. Meat poaching is on the rise in the area and poses a threat to our wildlife.

## Conservation

### WHAT IS THE GKNP AND HOW IS IT STRUCTURED?

*By Vince Ryan (Chairman of ORGR and Vice-Chair of Balule Nature Reserve)*

The governments of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique want to promote ecosystem integrity, biodiversity, conservation and socio-economic development across their international borders. To give effect to this, the three countries concluded a treaty for the establishment of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP).



The largest wildlife area in South Africa - and a world heritage site - the Kruger National Park (KNP), is controlled by South African National Parks (SANParks). They are the appointed National Implementation Agency to oversee and coordinate the activities of the GLTP agreement. In line with this, SANParks decided to increase the landscape of the KNP to further the interests of conservation. To give effect to this, the western boundary of the KNP was the obvious choice. SANParks formed the Greater Kruger National Park (GKNP), which encompasses the KNP and the qualifying Private Nature Reserves (PNRs) West of the KNP. This decision offered landowners of the PNRs a great opportunity to participate in a wildlife landscape that was open to the KNP.

What is the purpose of the Balule Nature Reserve Association (BNR)? BNR is a Private Nature Reserve (PNR) with the purpose of advancing and sustaining the principles of wildlife conservation, through operating and managing the landscape as a Protected Area (PA) as contemplated in the National Environmental Management of Protected Areas Act (NEMPA). BNR is 50810 ha in extent, comprising 10 regions ranging between 3029 and 8727 ha in extent (see attached map). It has a constitution which governs the general committee managing the association.



To uphold and support this purpose, large tracts of land are required to ensure the sustainability of the purpose, i.e. wildlife conservation. The areas under consideration will need to protect their perimeter borders for the safety of the wildlife, utilising effective fencing. However, game movement within the perimeter has to be unrestricted (no fences permitted). To achieve this, landowners are welcome to apply for membership of the BNR association. Membership is conditional, in that their land should be at least 2000 ha; is contiguous with other members of BNR; they agree to it being incorporated into the PNR; and that it meets the requirements/principles applied to wildlife conservation which are more fully described in the PNR's constitutions. SANPARKS and KNP compiled an agreement, which is known as the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area Co-operative Agreement (GLTFCA). In order to participate in the GKNP, the PNRs have to subscribe to the protocols and legislative requirements of the GLTFCA. One of the major requirements of the GLTFCA is the appointed Management Authority (MA). The MA is responsible to manage the members, and the landscape, of their PNR on behalf of, and in accordance with the GLTFCA. The MA reports to the JMC to ensure compliance for their PNR. In addition to the above, and included in the constitutions, are the legal, financial, secretarial and administrative functions which need to be adhered to.

To accommodate this process, the Associated Private Nature Reserves (APNR) was formed, now known as a Joint Operational Committee (JOC). The JOC is an association of members (PNRs) who have successfully qualified, and conformed to all the requirements for participation in the open landscape (the GKNP). The acceptable size of these PNRs tracts of land is a minimum of 14500 ha. The JOC represents its members (PNRs) by reporting to the Joint Management Committee (JMC), which in turn is responsible to the KNP and SANParks, which is collectively responsible to ensure the terms of the GLTFCA and the GLTP agreements are enforced.

Each member of the JOC has signed the JMC agreements (GLTFCA) which in turn binds them legally to uphold the strict conditions of these agreements, the main one being the GLTFCA. Non-compliance to the agreements, and/or the acceptable principles laid down by the JMC, will have serious consequences for the offending PNR.

This explains why ORGR must, at all times, ensure that we, as a GKNP reserve, conform to our land management plan and the legalities of the GLTFCA.

When we invest in a reserve such as ORGR, we undertake more responsibility than we might actually realise. As landowners, we all have to subscribe to the sustainability of the GKNP.

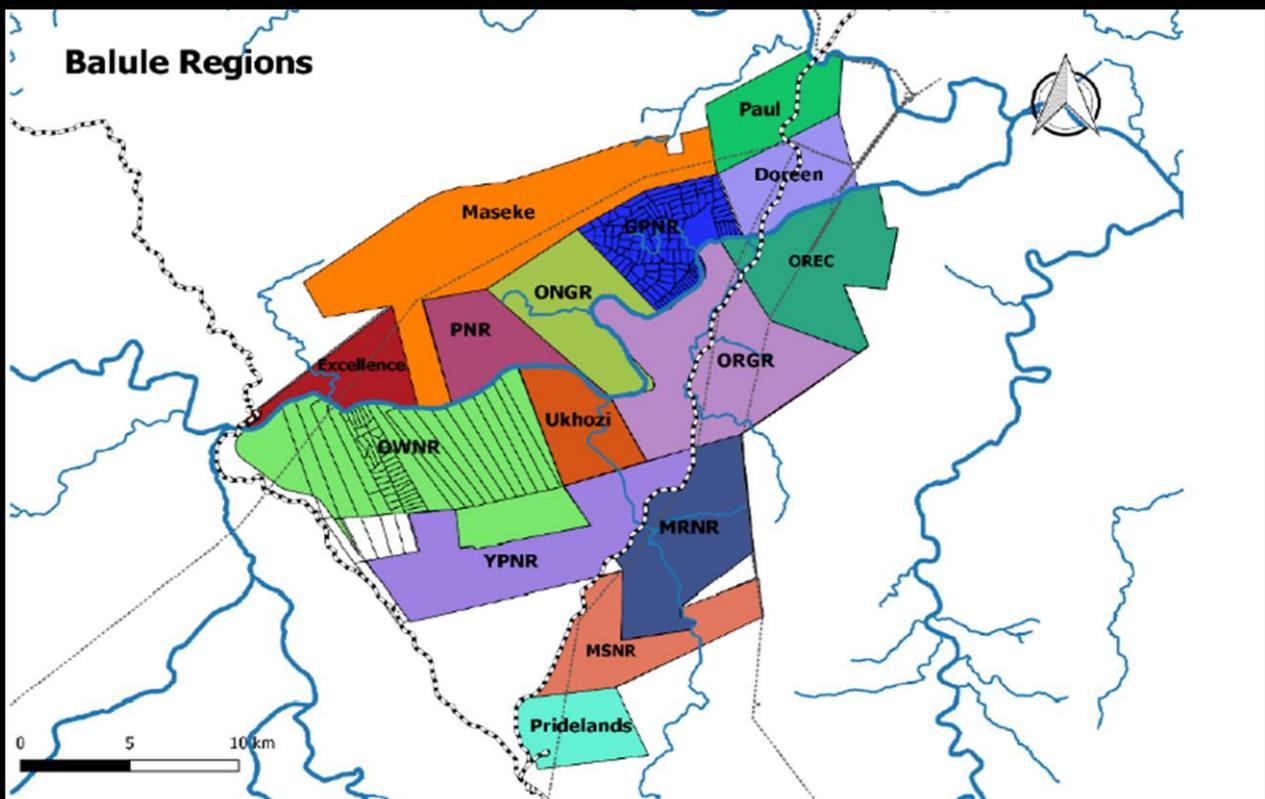
I hope you find this article interesting and informative. It is essential that we remember what our duties are as custodians of this prime wildlife area:

*“To protect and maintain our landscape in its most natural form possible; and to balance this with great member satisfaction and experience”.*

See you out and about in the bush sometime!

Vince Ryan

Chairman



## REACHING OUT

The season of giving is now upon us and we thank those who have taken the time to donate cash and gifts for the staff Christmas party! It promises to be a bumper occasion thanks to the generosity of our ORGR family.



More grateful thanks goes to everyone who donated first aid items to the Clinic at Sigagule and for the clothing they received from us for the many children in their care.

This month we have received a digital thermometer, scores of alcohol swabs and a pair of crutches for the clinic, as well as beautifully crocheted blankets & beanies for their winter stocks next year.



If you would like to join the ORGR Outreach WhatsApp group, please contact Susan Harwood on 0832282546.

The Balule Outreach Trust Bank Account details are:

First National Bank (FNB), Bryanston, South Africa  
Account number: 6233 678 7877 Clearing Code: 250-017  
Swift number: FIRNZAJJXXX

Please reference EFT payments with your name/unit number

# MEMBERS UPDATE



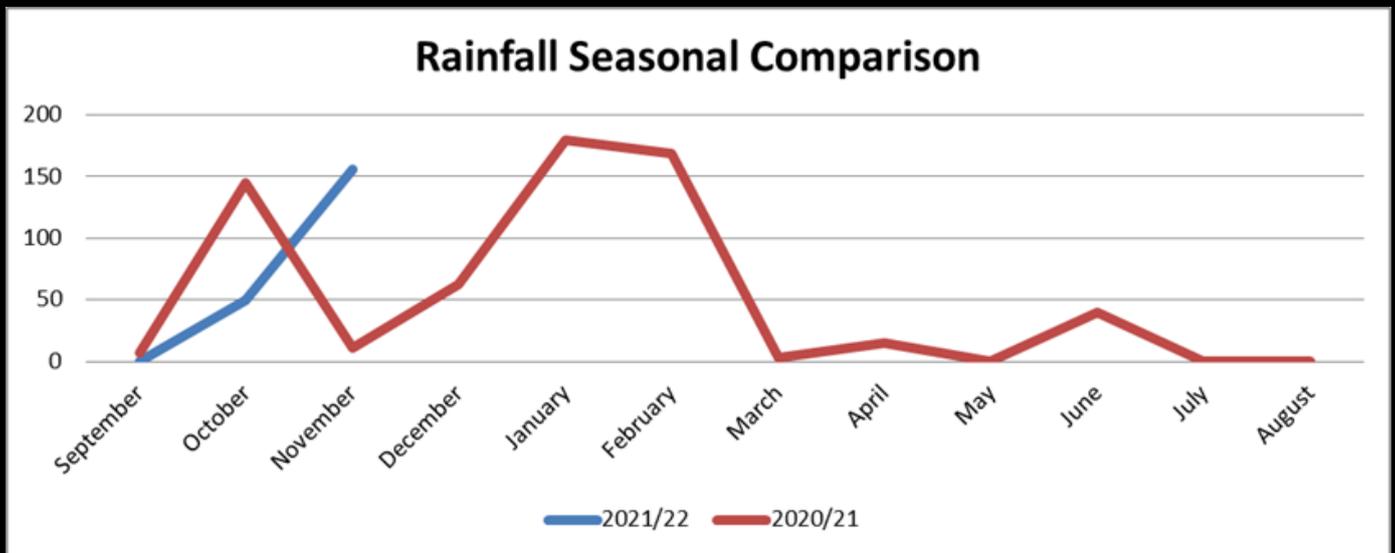
## THE WEATHER REPORT

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently in a La Niña state and the forecasts indicate that it will most likely remain in a La Niña state through early- and mid-summer. As we move towards the mid-summer season, ENSO starts playing an important role in our summer rainfall. As such, the presence of a La Niña during early- and mid-summer is expected to be favourable for above-normal rainfall for the summer rainfall areas in that period.

The multi-model rainfall forecast indicates mostly above-normal rainfall for most parts of the country throughout the mid-summer through to the early-autumn season. Mostly above-normal minimum temperatures are expected across the country throughout the summer seasons. Mostly below-normal maximum temperatures are expected over the country throughout summer apart from the central interior where above-normal maximum temperatures are expected.

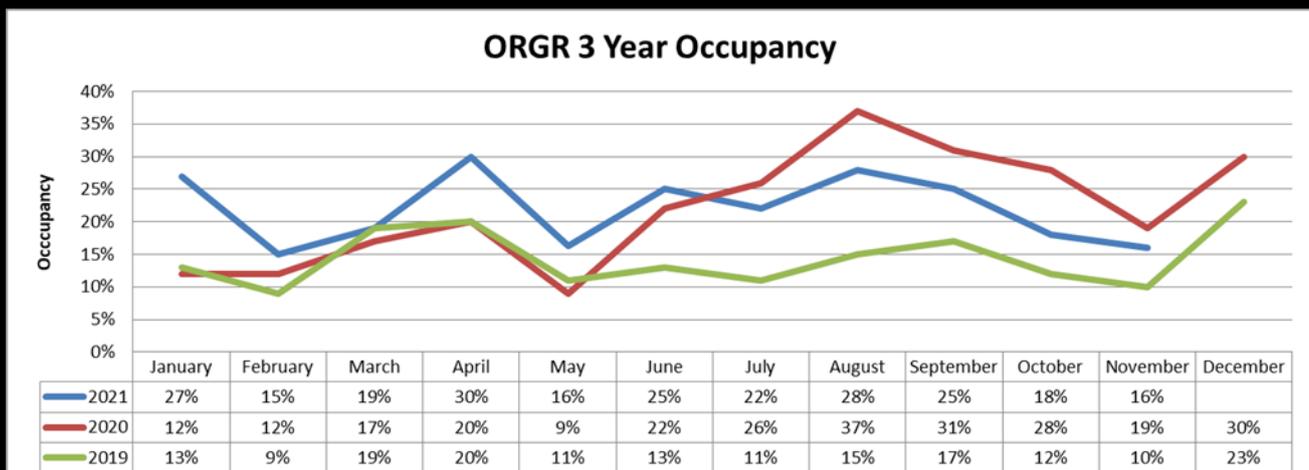
We have received 156mm of rain in November with a season total of 205,5mm so far.

### Rainfall 2020/2021 compared to the previous season



## OCCUPANCY

November saw 16% of the units occupied on average during the month with a peak of 22 units in residence and a low of 8 units in residence. It looks like we are settling into an occupancy level somewhere between Covid peak and pre-Covid. We expect quite a busy December for Christmas and New Year Celebrations. Below is a three-year comparison of what occupancies have done on the reserve.



## November Night Sky In a nutshell...

### Moon

Date	Time	Phase
04/12	09h43	New Moon
11/12	03h35	First Quarter
19/12	06h35	Full Moon
27/12	04h24	Last Quarter

### Moon – Earth Relations

Perigee: 356 794 km on the 04/12 at 12h03

Apogee: 406 320 km on the 18/12 at 04h14

### Planet Visibility

Venus is located in Sagittarius and is visible after sunset

Mars is located near Scorpius and visible in the morning sky towards the end of the month

Jupiter is located in Aquarius and is visible in the evening sky

Saturn is located in Capricornus and is visible in the evening sky

Mercury is only visible in the last week of the month near Sagittarius, after sunset

### Meteor Showers

Three meteor showers are active in December, the December Phoenicids (active 3rd December – 9th December, peaking on the 6th), the Puppis-Velids (active 5th December – 7th January, peaking on the 29th) and the Geminids. The Geminids are active from the 4th to the 16th of December, peaking early morning on the 14th. Observations of the Geminids, which are one of the strongest meteor showers, can be done from 23:30 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. on the night of the 13th/14th, and the radiant is located towards the Gemini constellation in a NNE direction. Observing prospects for the Puppis-Velids are good and they are best viewed between 22:30 p.m. and 03:30 a.m. looking towards the constellations of Puppis and Vela

### **New ORGR Black Rhino Gin**

It's here – and our new gin is delicious! A tribute to the rare and majestic pachyderm that is synonymous with South African wildlife and conservation, Black Rhino Gin is flavoured with renosterbos (rhino bush) and buchu. Herbaceous and with a slightly sweet after-taste, this is a perfect gin for a new-style G&T. Surprising, quirky and very unique, this is a drink that truly captures what it is to be South African in every sip.

The new Gin comes in at R350 per bottle or R2000 per case of six bottles (a substantially lower price than our previous gins).

A portion of each bottle sold goes to our Anti - Poaching strategic approach and R10 per bottle goes to The Boucher Legacy, so it's truly a pleasure with a purpose! Stocks are limited, so best to contact the office as soon as possible to place your order! Cheers!

### Some easy to identify bright stars

Rigel: blue supergiant in Orion

Betelgeuse: red supergiant in Orion

Procyon: yellowish white star in Canis Minor

Sirius: brightest star in the night sky, located in Canis Major

Antares: red supergiant in Scorpius

Arcturus: red giant in Boötes

Spica: brightest bluish-white star in Virgo

Canopus: yellowish-white star in Carina

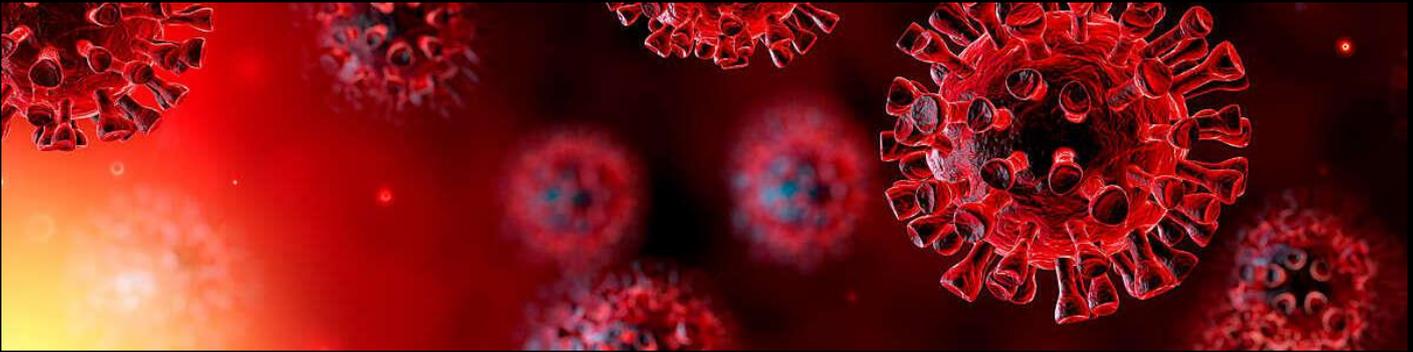
Altair: a white star, brightest in Aquila

Regulus: blue-white star and the brightest star in Leo

The Pointers: Alpha and Beta Centauri



## Covid 19 Update



Unfortunately the 4<sup>th</sup> wave of Covid is spreading through the country like wildfire and with many people travelling this December the virus is likely to spread to all corners of the country. We therefore remind members of the following protocols to follow during this time:

- Masks are mandatory in public places at ORGR so please ensure you wear yours when interacting with members, staff and contractors.
- Office visits are to be kept to a minimum as this space is very busy, with people from all over the country visiting. Please keep entry to one vehicle at the office at a time as far as possible to avoid overcrowding.

Please ensure you advise the office immediately if you have been in contact with someone with Covid or you have a positive test result. Those members who are positive cases on the reserve will need to follow quarantine guidelines and the office is able to assist you with logistics. The ORGR Quarantine Protocols are as follows should you be a positive case of Covid-19 on the reserve:

- You will be required to quarantine in your unit for the mandatory 14 day period or until all members in the unit have negative test results.
- No staff or contractor contact, including housekeeping and labour services.

The office can assist you with any logistics you require.

Should you experience symptoms and are planning to come down to reserve, it is advised that you do not travel until you have a negative test result.

The Clubhouse and Picnic site will remain open for members to use at their discretion. Should you use these facilities please sanitize the surfaces to the best of your ability. We understand the frustration related to COVID. However, we are obliged, and have a responsibility, to keep both our staff and the members safe.

### **Festive Season Office Hours**

A brief reminder that the ORGR Office will be closed on Christmas Day and the 1st of January 2022. Please ensure you have everything you need from the office before closure. The Management team will be on standby for any emergencies.

### **Members Information Whats App Group**

A New What's App group will be created in the new year for members only. This group will be in place to give regular and quick updates to our community. Only Admins will be able to post so it will not be a chat or sightings group. The email updates are good but in these modern times, the best way to get through to people is with Mobile Apps. It's quick, efficient and clean.

## CAMPFIRE TALES – ONCE UPON A LAND CRUISER...

*By Graham Hickson from Unit 4*

This happened some years ago when I was still fit and flighty.

We probably have one of the oldest Landcruisers on Olifants, and certainly, as the members upgrade to the more modern, ours appears more and more as a veteran. And that she truly is. I think she is a 1976 model and apart from a short excursion to get new tyres, has spent most of her life on the gravel and dirt roads of Olifants. And let me remind the more recent members that the roads weren't always as good as they are now.

Possessing an older vehicle does come with certain responsibilities. Maintenance is always top of the agenda, so every morning, before the early morning game drive I wander up to the parking area to do a quick once-over under the bonnet. So with brake fluid bottle in hand, my rear end up in the air and my head buried under the bonnet, I set to work. It was while I was in this compromising position that I became aware of a rather loud rasping sound. It was like someone trying to saw through a Leadwood branch with every other saw tooth removed. I jerked my head up, hitting the metal above me, swung my head around, to find myself staring at a rather large leopard which was casually giving me a baleful glare as it minced on past.

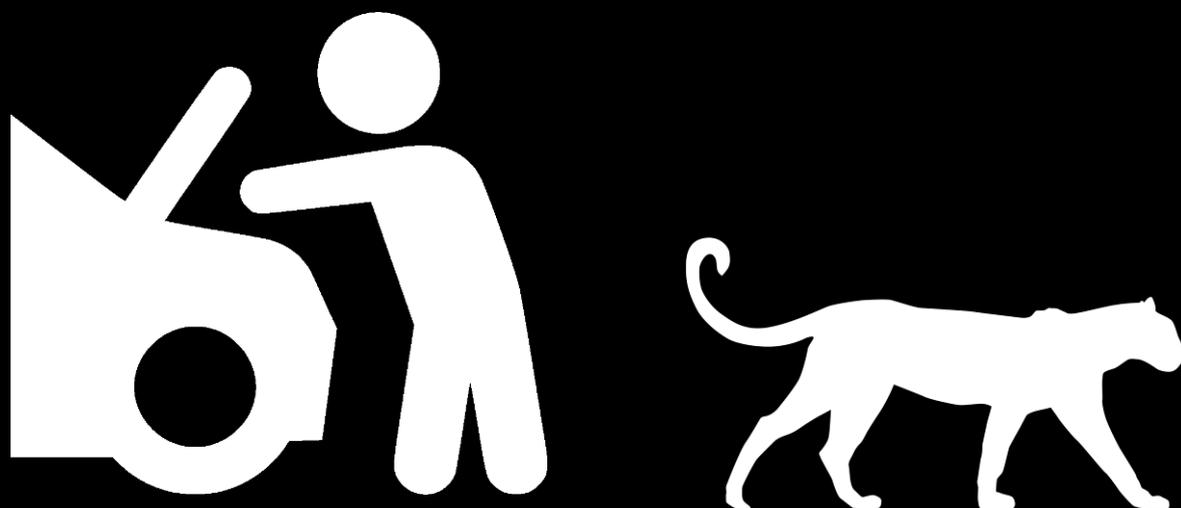
Sandy (who was packing breakfast in the kitchen) turned to me and said, "What is wrong with you, bringing that bottle of oil into the kitchen and why on earth are you so pale?"

Honestly - that is the next thing I could remember. How I got from the garage area to the kitchen is a mystery. There was even a bunch of stairs involved!

Later when sharing this with Mario, he explained that it's when you don't hear them that you should worry. The fact that the Leopard chose to announce himself was his way of warning me to watch out!!

Okay, so I have dramatized slightly - it never gave me the baleful look. In fact, it didn't even look my way, which I find even more disconcerting. It just sauntered passed as if I never existed.

Honest Truth!



## Final Word

*"The thorns of the tree *Ziziphus mucronata* (Buffalo thorn) are spaced along the length of every branch in pairs. One of the pair points robustly outward and forward while the other curves back and inwards in the opposite direction. The Nguni African legend says the thorns tell us something about ourselves - that we must look ahead to the future...but we must never forget where we have come from." -Ian McCallum (Ecological Intelligence Published by Africa Geographic Books)*

Well, that's all for now, folks! We wish you all a very happy festive season! Have fun, stay safe and we will catch up next year!!

Warm regards

Nick, the management team & staff

