



NEWSLETTER

June 2022 Issue

QUICK FACTS

Ancient Egyptians believed that jackals guided spirits to the netherworld where their souls would be judged.

Warthogs can run up 50km an hour!

Porcupines are rodents (the prickliest rodent of them all) whose Latin name means 'quill pig'.

Giraffes only sleep for about 30 minutes per night - the shortest sleep requirement in the entire animal kingdom – and often only at five-minute

DEAR OLIFANTS FAMILY

I hope you are all well. Winter has arrived in the Lowveld with June bringing in the first sub 10-degree temperatures. The mornings have been incredibly dramatic with mist hanging over the Olifants River Valley and we have been treated to spectacular winter sunsets with impossible colours.

The reserve has been blessed with late rains in May which has kept the vegetation lush and thick, not the vegetation one would expect for a usually dry winter bushveld landscape. The Olifants river still has a decent flow from rainwaters along its catchment area and we have not seen the river continuously flowing so strongly for quite a while.

I hope you enjoy the June issue of the Newsletter!

“I never knew a morning in Africa when I did not wake up happy” – Ernest Hemingway



ORGR GAME DRIVE

Game Viewing at Olifants does not disappoint and recent sightings on the reserve have been excellent. Predator viewing has been very good with lions, leopard, wild dog and cheetah seen regularly. Elephant numbers remain high and we can expect the population to increase along the river during the drier months once the natural pans start to dry out. The general game is also doing very well with most of the local herbivores well represented on ORGR. Darryl Furman had an incredible sighting of a pangolin recently, much to the envy of us all!



CREATURE FEATURE: WARTHOGS

QUICK FACTS

COMMON NAME: Warthog

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Phacochoerus africanus*

TYPE: Mammals

DIET: Herbivore

GROUP NAME: Sounder

AVERAGE LIFE SPAN IN THE WILD:
15 years

SIZE: Height at shoulder: 64-85cm

WEIGHT: 60 -150kg



Warthogs are real characters of the bushveld and the mascot of our local town Hoedspruit. They are robust, intelligent and handsomely ugly.

There are two species of warthog: The common warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*), which has four subspecies. And then there's the desert warthog (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus*), that has two subspecies – one of which went extinct in the 1870s. The common warthog has the widest distribution in Africa, whereas the desert warthog is only found in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia.

The common warthog is found in much of Africa, below the Sahara desert. They are abundant in East Africa and Southern Africa, with their favourite habitat being grassland, savannah and woodlands.

The name 'warthog' comes from their large wart-like protuberances found on its face. Technically they are not warts, but rather they are made of bone and cartilage. The male (boar) has two pairs of these 'warts' and the female (sow) one pair.

Warthogs like to live in abandoned burrows that were dug out by other animals, such as armadillos or porcupines. These burrows are used for a number of reasons, such as for sleeping, where they raise their young, and a safe place to escape from predators. In order to ensure their safety, and when protecting themselves from pursuing predators, they will slide into a burrow backwards, tail first, so that they can use their formidable tusks to defend themselves against unwanted guests. When startled or threatened, warthogs can be surprisingly fast, running at speeds of up to 50 km per hour!

You will notice that their face is quite wide and flat, with a prolonged snout and four impressive tusks. Their eyes sit high on their heads so that they can spot predators, even while grazing. While their eyesight may be quite poor, they have an excellent sense of smell and are able to sniff out food and detect predators. Their hearing is also quite keen.

Warthogs have specially-adapted protective pads on their wrists that allow them to 'kneel' down to feed. Thanks to their short necks and relatively long legs it is far easier for them to kneel while grazing than it would be for other grazers.

Their tusks are used mainly for self-defence and when males battle it out for breeding rights.



Quite often when you see a warthog in the wild it will either be running away with its tail straight up... or grazing. Warthogs spend much of their time grazing for food, with grass as a staple in their diet. However, they are omnivorous, meaning that they will eat both plants and small animals when given the opportunity – their diet can be quite adaptable depending on the availability of resources!

Usually, you will see them eating grass and using their snout (and sometimes tusks) to dig up bulbs and roots. Other common food items include eggs, carrion, fruit, berries, insects and mushrooms.

Female warthogs are sociable creatures, and live in matriarchal groups called sounders with one or two adult females and their young. Sounders occupy home ranges but are not territorial. These grounds can get quite noisy as warthogs love to communicate with each other, using a range of vocals from grunts and snorts to squeals and growls!



Young males usually form loose bachelor groups, though when reaching adulthood they will go their separate ways and lead a solitary life.

Female warthogs will have an average of four piglets after a five to six month gestation period. Being very protective mothers, the females will leave the sounder to give birth in a separate burrow. After about 10 days they will be allowed to leave the burrow to start exploring and meeting the rest of the sounder.

The mother will wean them at three months. Usually around two or four piglets will survive to adulthood, and mothers who have lost their own litter have been observed nursing foster piglets, a practise known as allosuckling.

Even though warthogs are not considered endangered, they are still threatened by poaching as they are hunted for their ivory tusks and meat. Warthogs can also be a problem to farmers – for eating their crops and because they carry diseases such as swine fever that can be passed onto domestic animals. And so farmers often persecute warthogs.

Warthogs, like every other pig out there, like to roll in the mud. They do this for very important reasons: to protect them from the harsh rays of the African sun, and against insect bites. Rolling in the mud provides a layer of natural sunscreen and helps cool them down.



RHINO CONSERVATION

FARMED VS WILD RHINO HORN - WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US

As conservationists and rangers work around the clock to protect Africa's rhinos, scientists on the other side of the globe are attempting to unravel different aspects of the trade: including the perspectives and market preferences from actual consumers of rhino horn. Do these consumers prefer the horn of a wild rhino over that of a "farmed" or captive rhino? The answer to this question has a significant bearing on the potential impact of legalising the trade in rhino horn.

Rhino populations in Africa continue their dizzying decline due to poaching. The Kruger National Park – a protected area in South Africa where populations were once thriving – for example, has experienced a 75% decline in population numbers in the past 10 years. Conservation circles are locked in a fierce debate on whether legalising the horn trade would save these iconic animals or be the instrument of their final destruction. The success or failure of a controlled trade strategy will depend on several factors, including how the market develops if legal restrictions are removed. This is a complex question involving everything from economics to sociology, and it is almost impossible to predict accurately.

The history of wildlife trading has shown that wildlife farming can benefit species conservation under certain specific conditions. In particular, the end consumer would need to consider the farmed/sustainably harvested products to be equal in quality and status to wild products and to be a suitable substitute. If consumers who buy rhino products prefer horns from wild rhinos, this would constitute a threat to the remaining population of wild rhinos.

What does the research say?

The two largest rhino-horn markets are in China and Vietnam, and much of the market research conducted in recent years has focussed on consumer surveys in these regions.

The most recent study, published at the end of 2021, identified 345 rhino horn consumers in Vietnam, where the horn is used as a treatment for hangovers and fevers, and as a detoxifying agent. The researchers found that, on average, those surveyed were willing to pay more for horn from wild or semi-wild rhinos due to the belief that these have more potent medicinal properties. Notably, wealthy respondents with a high "need" for rhino horn favoured wild rhino horn, while those with lower incomes and a lower "need" for rhino horn preferred semi-wild horns over wild horns.

A previous study by two of the authors of the above research found that 73% of survey respondents in Vietnam preferred wild horn to horn from farmed animals. One consumer stated, "I am willing to pay more for the wild ones, even double. Even though there was a legal trade rhino horn, I would only buy the wild ones [sic]".

Another study conducted using similar methods that approached the question from a slightly different angle found that consumers preferred wild horn over semi-wild and farmed products. However, there was a definite preference for horns harvested in a sustainable, nonlethal manner: "the finding that [those surveyed] strongly prefer horn acquired from nonlethal harvesting has not been reported previously and suggests that horn sourced humanely from living rhinos would attract a premium in the market".





A study that focussed on traditional Chinese-medicine practitioners in Hong Kong found a similar pattern. Though this research did not specifically address the distinction between wild and farmed horn, 50% of the practitioners interviewed expressed a preference for sustainably harvested horn should the trade be legalised. The remaining half suggested that they would not distinguish between sustainably harvested or lethally obtained horn.

A word of caution?

It is important to note that there are inherent limitations in market surveys conducted in a “what if” scenario. It is challenging to expand these responses to predict the ultimate market behaviour should the trade in rhino horn be legalised. This applies to arguments both for and against the legalisation of rhino horn trade and is in large part responsible for the deadlock in making the call one way or another.

Critics of the research into wild/farmed horn consumer preferences suggest that “the wild versus farmed narrative is based on assumptions that over-simplify consumer behaviour and can lead to conclusions that do not recognise the complexity of real wildlife markets”. Hinsley and t’Sas-Rolfe (2020) argue it is challenging to link preferences with real-world behaviour, as other confounding

factors (such as legality or availability) may also play an influential role.

Naturally, the legal trade in rhino horn is both a scientific and ideological conundrum, and subconscious biases could impact scientific methodology and conclusions. Even the terminology used could potentially influence consumers. For example, rhinos in South Africa are generally not “farmed” in the way people might think of feedlot cattle, and most private rhino owners operate a semi-intensive system. Creating a distinction between “farmed”, “wild”, and “semi-wild” was a vital step in the research process.

When preference could kill

It is clear from available science that if given a choice between horns from wild rhino and farmed rhino, many consumers show an evident preference for wild horn. This tendency to associate increased potency or effectiveness with wild-sourced products is seen in traditional medicine involving other wild species such as **tigers**. How this will translate in terms of behaviour is more challenging to predict.

Regardless, these preferences need to be taken seriously. Supposing legal rhino horn enters the market, the wealthiest users may still be willing to pay a premium for wild rhino horn. In that case, a preference for wild horn could drive wild rhino populations to extinction.



REACHING OUT



Ahead of the coming winter months, May was a good one for donations! We handed over the following to the SAME Foundation in Sigagule:



13 new kiddies chairs, 20 new blankets, 20 new (and gently used) jackets for all ages, new beanies & scarves, three packs of surgical gloves, 30 fabric masks for children. We also managed to source and purchase (paid for by Balule Outreach Trust) 80 bottles of flu medicines (which are in short supply countrywide) for children, needed by the Clinic in Sigagule.

Various members have dropped off copious bags of clothing and other items for which we thank them immensely – and the same to those who have assisted with transporting the goods to the reserve from Johannesburg. These are ear-marked for the Maseke Drop-In Centre/Aftercare and will be taken Terry Schultz (ONGR) on his next visit there.

We are continuing to supply food parcels to both Sigagule and Maseke funded by the Balule Outreach Trust.

As always, heartfelt thanks to members and friends who continue to contribute to the Balule Outreach funds. We are incredibly grateful for the dedication shown by so many and cannot stipulate too much how vitally important it is – from a humanitarian and political point of view.



Banking details of the Trust

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.

MEMBERS UPDATES

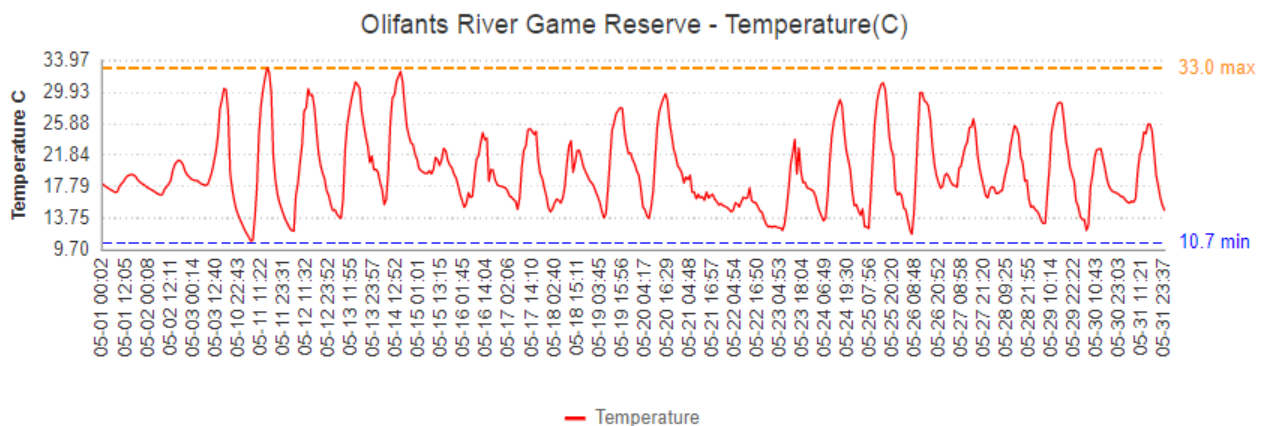
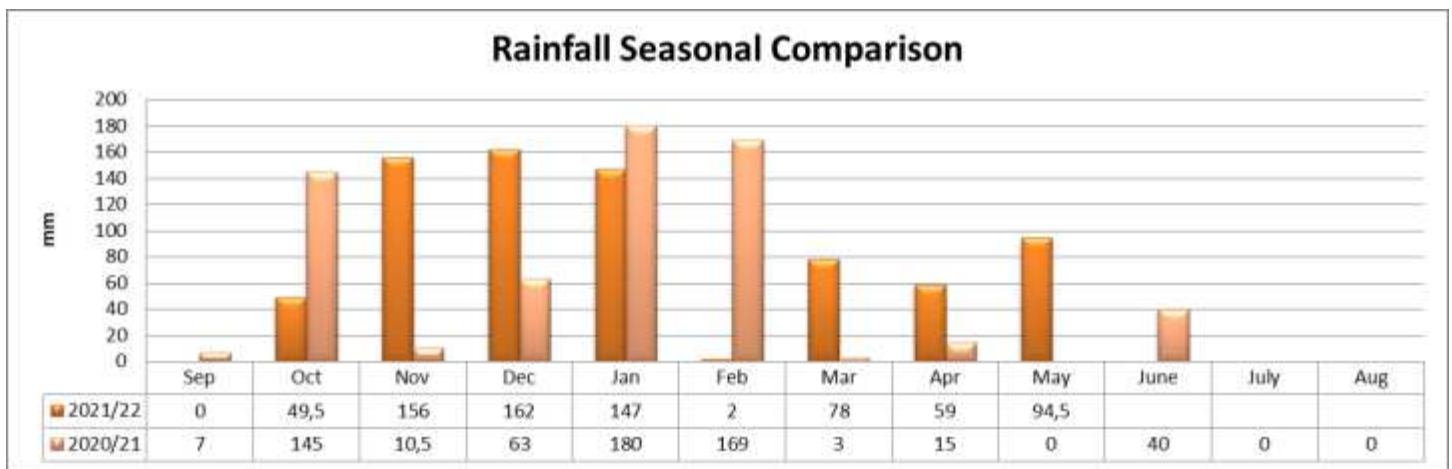
THE WEATHER REPORT

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently in a La Niña state, and forecasts indicate that it will likely remain in this state during the coming seasons. During winter, the presence of ENSO has less of an impact. Thus, the presence of the current La Niña event is not expected to have any significant impact on rainfall in the coming seasons.



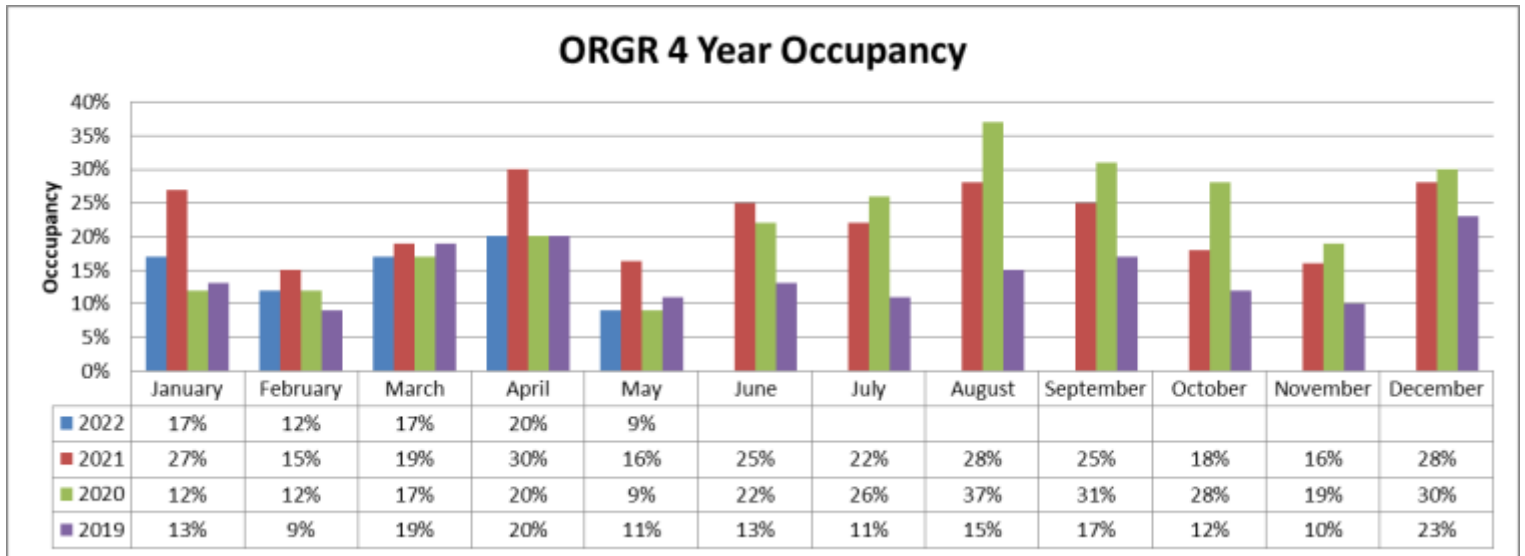
The multi-model rainfall forecast indicates below-normal rainfall for the south-western half of the country and notably above-normal rainfall over parts of Kwa-Zulu-Natal throughout the winter season. Both maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be above-normal for most of the country.

We have installed a new weather station on the reserve located at Geoff Bench. This weather station continuously measures and records all aspects of the weather, giving us access to very usable data. We have had some excellent late rains this season with 59mm falling in April and a whopping 94,5mm falling in May. The May rainfall is the highest recorded in this month for the last 20 years I have recorded off. This rainfall has brought our seasonal total up to 748mm, the highest seasonal total since 2012 when we received 848mm.



OCCUPANCIES

April averaged out at 20% occupancy with the busiest day seeing 35 units in residence and the quietest day seeing 6 units in residence. May is our quietest month of the year and we averaged out at 9% occupancy with the busiest day seeing 29 units in residence at the beginning of the month.



OUR NIGHT SKY IN APRIL

In a nutshell...

Moon

Date	Time	Phase
07/06	16h48	First Quarter
14/06	13h51	Full Moon
21/06	05h10	Last Quarter
29/06	04h52	New Moon

Sun and Moon

The First Quarter falls on the 7th of June at 16h48 and the Full Moon occurs on the 14th of June at 13h51. The Last Quarter falls on the 21st of June at 05h10 and the New Moon occurs on the 29th of June at 04h52.

The Moon will be at perigee (closest approach to Earth) at a distance of about 357 432 km on the 15th of June at 01h23. The Moon will be at apogee (furthest from Earth) at a distance of about 406 580 km at 08h08.

The winter solstice will occur on the 21st of June at 11h13.

Planet Visibility

Mercury is visible in the morning sky near the stars of the constellation Taurus
 Venus is visible in the morning sky near the stars of the constellation Taurus
 Mars is visible in the morning sky near the stars of the constellation Pisces
 Jupiter is visible in the morning sky near the stars of the constellation Pisces
 Saturn is visible in the morning sky and is located near Capricornus

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

INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

We are upgrading some of our infrastructures at the clubhouse this month starting with a resurfacing of the swimming pool. The old Marbalite coating has started to break up and requires repair. The swimming pool will be resurfaced with glass-reinforced polyester (Fiberglass). Work will begin on the 6th of June and will take approximately 2 weeks to complete to ensure the new surface is properly cured. We will also be adding a row of

concrete seating at the clubhouse firepit so more people can enjoy the warmth of the fire.



The old staff room next to the workshop has been upgraded to an APU office to give the team their own works space and to be able to store their equipment.

We have put in a new vantage point at Hide Dam with beautiful vistas of the water and surrounds. This new spot is out of view from the actual structure and the other popular areas around the water. The parking point directly opposite the Hide will in the future be rehabilitated to its natural state making the new parking the primary viewing spot. The access to this viewpoint is from the Jackal Drive side of the Dam.



SECURITY UPDATE

We are proud to announce that Baule has gone over 600 days without losing a Rhino to poaching, an incredible Milestone that was a mere fantasy a few years ago. The ORGR team has played an important part in this success with the backing of our incredible Olifants Family. We remain on the cutting edge of the industry keeping up with the technological trends and continuing to develop our K9 capabilities. We have a new puppy arriving in June who will join Tiya as our tracking hounds, bringing our pack back up to two assets. Our team represented Balule recently in another snare removal exercise in the Military section called Savong located along the



banks of the Selati River. This area is heavily utilized by meat poachers whose snares indiscriminately kill or cruelly maim any animal that has the misfortune of coming across them. This area is the main cause of the snare injuries we find on animals in Balule so we have a vested interest in assisting remove snares in these buffer zones. The operation was a huge success with teams from Balule, Klasserie, SAPS, SANDF, LEDET and the mines all taking part.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

We have two new staff members who have recently joined the Olifants herd. Please welcome Walter and Dirk. Walter has joined us in the capacity of Technical Services Supervisor and will be joining Errol's team. He is a young, dynamic individual, bringing with him an incredible skill set to the team.

Dirk has joined our APU team as a Field Ranger Scout. Dirk has had experience in the industry, spending the last three years with Klaserie Game Reserve in their Anti-Poaching Unit and now forms part of Callan's team. Welcome to the family gentlemen, we are happy to have you both on board!



DIGITAL MAPS

Many of our members already use digital maps on their mobile devices when visiting the reserve and they are a great tool to be able to navigate the with real-time location displayed. For those members who would like to get these maps, you are welcome to download an app called Avenza which is available for both Android and iPhone users. There is an ORGR and ONGR map that can be imported to be used by members. These are in the same format as the hard copy versions we already have, so they are familiar and user-friendly. You are welcome to give me a shout for more details or assistance in setting up.



THE FINAL WORD

We hope you enjoyed the read and we will see you on the reserve soon!

Regards

Nick and the Olifants Team!

"There is something about safari life that makes you forget all your sorrows and feel as if you had drunk half a bottle of champagne bubbling over with heartfelt gratitude for being alive."

"KAREN BLIXEN"

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Night Sky – SAAO

Rhino Farmed story – Africa Geographic

