

QUICK CROC FACTS

Both crocodile parents stay with their nest of eggs to protect their young from predators.

It's estimated that 200 people are killed each year by Nile crocodiles.

These crocodiles can swim at a speed of 35km/h.

The bite force of this crocodile is five times stronger than a lion's.

The Nile crocodile is the largest crocodile in Africa.

DEAR OLIFANTS FAMILY

I hope you are all well. The cooler winter months are now a distant memory and the bush is starting to show signs of its annual rejuvenation process as we reach summer. Green foliage is starting to push through the dry landscape peppering the bushveld with colour.

Temperatures are rising and we can expect more and more days in the 40s at Olifants. Last year we were blessed with excellent rains in October, so we are hoping the rainy season starts early again to settle the dust a little.

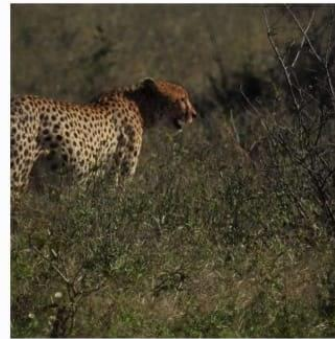
We are on the last stretch of 2022 and rapidly hurtling towards the festive season. I hope you enjoy the October issue of the Newsletter!

“If size mattered, the elephant would be King of the Jungle” – Rickson Gracie



ORGR GAME DRIVE

Yes, the old Pom Pom female is still alive and by the looks of it, not doing too badly either. Both regular prides of lion were seen on the reserve this month and the leopard viewing has been excellent. Five stars for the big cats! The cheetah was seen briefly on a number of occasions over the last few months and we have seen three different packs of Wild dogs on the reserve, including a group of three males from Shingwezi (KNP) which temporarily moved through our region. The general game has been good and elephant numbers have been very high with multiple large herds sighted simultaneously on ORGR. Some migrant birds such as the Whalbergs Eagle and Klaas's Cuckoo have already returned – and the race is now on to hear the first Woodlands Kingfisher!!!!

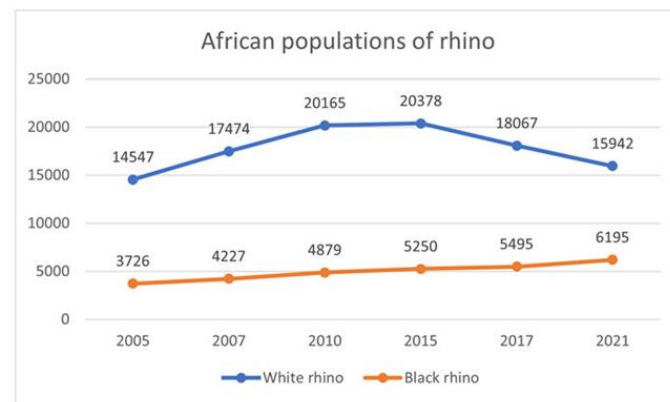


FEATURE ARTICLE: THE STATE OF AFRICA'S RHINO

Rhino Specialist Groups of the IUCN & TRAFFIC have compiled a report containing the most up-to-date and comprehensive analysis of rhino numbers, trends, poaching incidents, conservation measures and trade at a national and international level.



In November 2022, the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES) will be held in Panama. In preparation, the African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and non-governmental trade monitoring organisation TRAFFIC were tasked with compiling a report on the status of the world's rhinoceros species. The resultant report's 90 pages contain the most up-to-date and comprehensive analysis of rhino numbers, trends, poaching incidents, conservation measures and trade at a national and international level.



This article summarises the report's main findings on population numbers and poaching statistics, which are accurate up until the end of 2021.

In Summary:

- There are an estimated 15,942 white rhinos in Africa, 11.8% lower than the 18,067 individuals at the end of 2017. Since 2012, white rhino numbers on the continent have declined by 25.2%.
- Four range states conserve the largest proportion of the continent's white rhinos: South Africa (81.3%), Namibia (7.7%), Kenya (5.5%) and Zimbabwe (2.6%).
- Total black rhino numbers have risen 12.2%, from an estimated 5,495 in 2017 to 6,195 at the end of 2021.
- The four range states that conserve the largest proportion of the continent's black rhinos are Namibia (34.8%), South Africa (33.2%), Kenya (15.1%) and Zimbabwe (9.9%).
- 2,707 poaching incidents were recorded in Africa from 2018 to 2021. 90% of these occurred in South Africa. This represents an overall decline from 3.9% of the continental population in 2018 to 2.3% in 2021. Peak poaching levels of 5.3% were observed in 2015.
- Several countries, including South Africa, recorded a decrease in poaching during the 2020 pandemic but then reported a rise again in 2021. However, the report acknowledges vigorous law enforcement and conservation efforts within several range states.

- The number of horns entering illegal trade from 2018 to 2020 was estimated at between 4,593 to 5,186, with over half recovered through law enforcement activities. The 2018 to 2020 figures represent the lowest annual estimate in the past decade. However, this could be partly attributed to the 2020 pandemic.
- In terms of illegal trade volume, the seven countries most affected by the illegal trade in rhino horn from 2018 to 2020 are (in order): South Africa, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Mozambique, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. (Total weight and number of horns seized in each country, as well as seizures where the country was implicated as part of the illegal supply chain.
- Botswana was noted with concern due to the significant decline in the rhino population and unconfirmed reports of high levels of poaching in 2021.
- From 2018 to 2021, there were 1,588 arrests made for crimes involving rhinos across Africa. Although 751 of these cases resulted in prosecution, only 300 resulted in convictions.
- South Africa and Namibia reported a total of 236 white rhinos and eight black rhinos legally trophy hunted from 2018 to 2021.

South Africa

South Africa is home to the majority of white rhinos on the continent; as such, the country's conservation contributions exert considerable influence on continental trends. White rhino populations in South Africa declined from 15,625 at the end of 2017 to 12,968 at the end of 2021, the lowest population since pre-2005. More than half of these are privately owned. While the country's white rhinos accounted for 86.5% of Africa's population in 2017, this has declined to 81.3% in 2021. The country's total black rhinos are estimated to number 2,056 individuals, an increase of ten since 2017. South Africa experienced peak poaching levels in 2014 when 1,215 rhinos were killed, after which poaching incidents gradually declined. 2020 saw a decade low of 394 rhinos killed, which increased to 451 in 2021. As of August 2022, 259 rhinos have been poached throughout the country for the year, most of which were killed in KwaZulu-Natal province. From 2018 to 2020, 1,116 whole horns were seized, representing at least 558 individual rhinos and around 4% of the surviving population in 2021.

Namibia

Namibia reported an increase in black and white rhino populations over the four-year reporting period, from 975 to 1,234 white rhinos and from 1,857 to 2,156 black rhinos at the end of 2021. After South Africa (which reported 90% of all poaching incidents in Africa), Namibia recorded the second highest poaching figures in 2021 – 40 rhino carcasses detected, equating to 8% of approximately 554 rhinos poached across the continent. At least 93 rhinos were poached in 2018, 56 in 2019 and 40 in 2020. A total of 32 seizures yielded an estimated 57 whole horns from 2018 to 2021. Though not included within the report, recent numbers from Namibia indicate a concerning rise in poaching incidents for 2022, which experts suggest is due to a shift in focus by criminal syndicates. By August 2022, 48 rhinos had been poached in Namibia, 11 of which were killed over two weeks in June.

Kenya

Kenya has the third highest number of rhinos in Africa. At the end of 2021, it was home to 15.1% (938) of Africa's black rhinos and 5.5% (873) of the continent's white rhino, including the last two remaining northern white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*). Both black and white rhinos have increased overall since 2017, from 745 black rhinos and 513 white rhinos. Kenya's black rhinos are the eastern black rhino subspecies (*Diceros bicornis michaeli*), making it home to the largest population of the least numerous black rhino

subspecies. There were no known poaching incidents in Kenya in 2020, but six rhinos were poached in 2021. Before that, four carcasses were detected in both 2018 and 2019. Three seizures representing an estimated four whole horns were made from 2018 to 2020.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's rhino populations have increased since 2017, from 367 to 417 white rhinos and from 520 to 616 black rhinos at the end of 2021. Poaching levels peaked in 2019 when 82 carcasses were discovered, followed by 12 in 2020 and four in 2021. Six seizures were made over a three-year period from 2018 to 2020, amounting to an estimated 19 whole horns. The country is in the process of dehorning its entire rhino population.

Botswana

Botswana did not provide the compilers of the report with information on population breakdowns, poaching data or law enforcement activities for 2021 – the only rhino range state not to do so. Their rhino population has been decimated from 452 white and 50 black rhinos in 2017 to 242 white and 23 black rhinos (a 46% and 54% decline, respectively) in 2021. Poaching incidents began to escalate in 2017 when nine rhinos were killed, followed by 18 in 2018, 31 in 2019 and 55 in 2020. The authors suggest that poaching levels in 2021 were likely similar to those of 2020. Two seizures equating to four whole horns were made from 2018 to 2020.

Mozambique

Mozambique is an important transit country in the illegal trade of horn, supplied by poaching incidents in neighbouring South Africa. 75% of the seizures in the country (where the destination could be identified) were destined for Vietnam. The report did not mention the recent translocation of over 40 white and black rhinos to Zinave National Park from South Africa in 2022.

Final thoughts on the state of Africa's rhinos

The new report by the IUCN and TRAFFIC contains a comprehensive analysis of rhino numbers and poaching statistics across Africa and Asia but also details conservation measures, horn stockpiles, national and international law enforcement efforts, education initiatives and challenges. The exact impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the rhino horn trade is unknown. However, Sabri Zain, TRAFFIC Director of Policy, emphasised that “2020 did represent an abnormal year with low levels of reported illegal activity, law enforcement, and government reporting”. As such, the report strongly urges the continued and consistent monitoring of illegal trade.

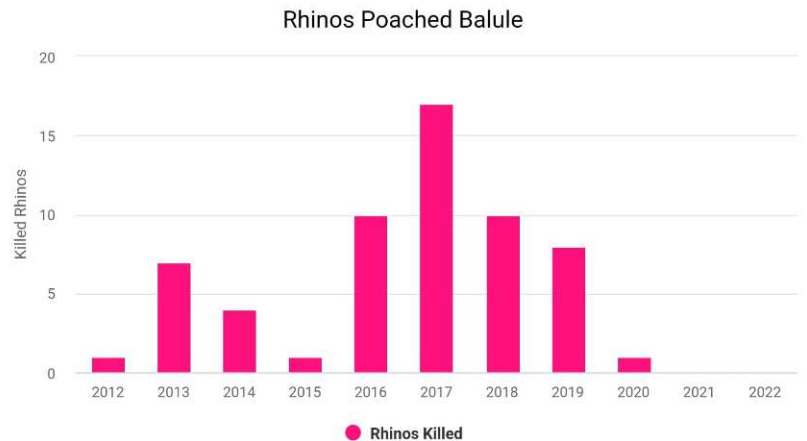


Furthermore, most of the remaining rhinos are found in small populations, with a median reported population size of nine. 94.7% of Africa's rhino populations comprised fewer than 200. As a result, they are particularly vulnerable to stochastic processes such as droughts and disease. While the overall decline in poaching is encouraging, it remains the single greatest threat to Africa's rhino species, and recent increases are a cause for considerable concern.

TWO YEARS WITH NO RHINO LOST ON BALULE

We have reached an incredible milestone on Balule, reaching the two-year mark since we last lost a rhino to the senseless poaching that is plaguing our country. We have moved from the worst-performing game reserve in the open system to the best in a few short years.

Members gathered at Sunset Pains during this special date to celebrate this achievement with the ORGR Team, thank you to you all for the support you have given us in combating poaching on the reserve! Without you it would not be possible!



FIRST MANAGEMENT BURN ON ORGR

On the 19th of September, we successfully completed a 200-ha block burn on the ORGR, the first time we have used fire as a conservation management tool on the reserve. We started the burn early at 06h00, the conditions were perfect with very low winds which resulted in an extremely calm ignition. Two teams slowly moved around the block igniting the veld systematically and by 09h30 we had completed the boundary burn allowing the interior of the block to burn safely.

We have not burned all the blocks we intended due to permit timeframes and weather conditions but should the opportunity arise this year, we shall continue with the plan. We had incredible support from our neighbouring regions and the burn went off without incident.



REACHING OUT

This month brought in a lot of fantastic donations from Bags of Love in Johannesburg, which is one of the supporters of the Balule Outreach Trust (BOT) which will be handed over at the end of October and distributed to the S.A.M.E. Foundation.

For the clinic at Sigagule, there are six baby “kits” for new arrivals and a lot of brand new and gently worn baby and toddler clothes plus a big supply of first aid items.

We also received 25kg of wool and cottons, crochet hooks and knitting needles, plus a mini sew-craft device and craft/crochet booklets. We also received an over-locker (kindly donated by a supporter in Joburg) and a sewing machine (thanks to a generous ORGR member) for the ladies in the sewing group which is affiliated with the new skills centre. This valuable “hand-up” is going to positively impact many lives as the aim is to provide the young ladies and household heads with skills to enable them to earn a living and “pay it forward” to family members and other communities.



Closer to home, the BOT was able to provide financial assistance to our front-of-house lady Lindiwe, to have an eye test and purchase her much-needed spectacles. Lindiwe was absolutely delighted with this kind gesture and is deeply appreciative!

We are very happy to report that BOT received a favourable portion of the funds raised at our inaugural cycling event in July this year – and always, a very big thank you to all those who continue to support the BOT with donations.

Banking details of the BALULE OUTREACH 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

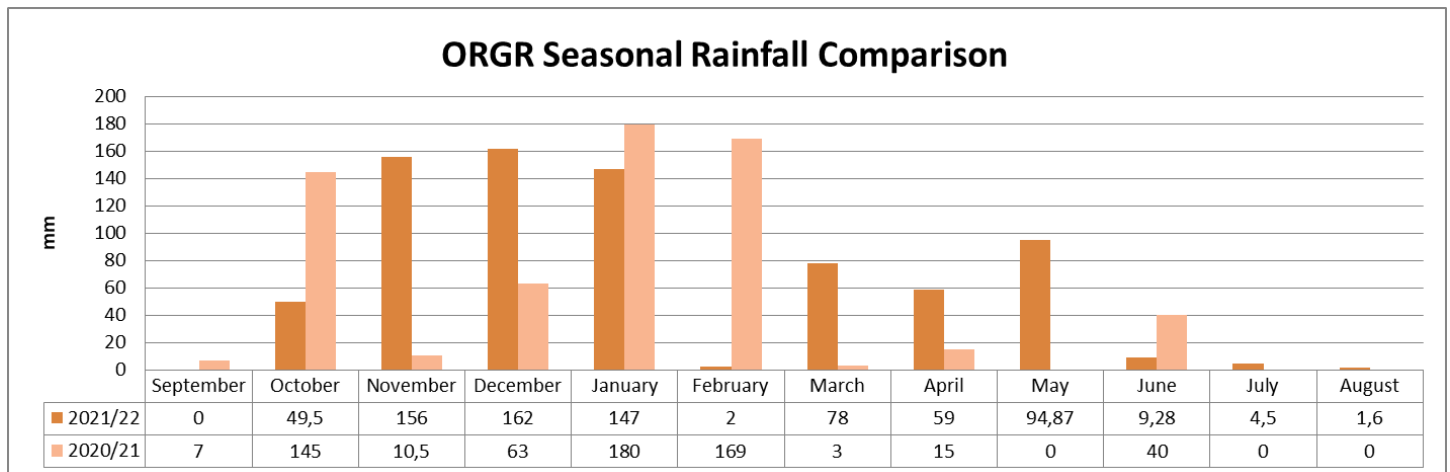
THE WEATHER REPORT

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 remainder of 2022 and early 2023. The presence of a La Niña event usually has its strongest impact on rainfall during the mid-summer months. Therefore, its evaluation into the start of the summer months is important to take note of.



The multi-model rainfall forecast indicates above-normal rainfall for most parts of the country for all predicted seasons. Minimum temperatures are still expected to be above normal countrywide, however, maximum temperatures are expected to be below normal over large parts of the country during early- (Nov-Dec-Jan) and mid-summer (Dec-Jan-Feb).

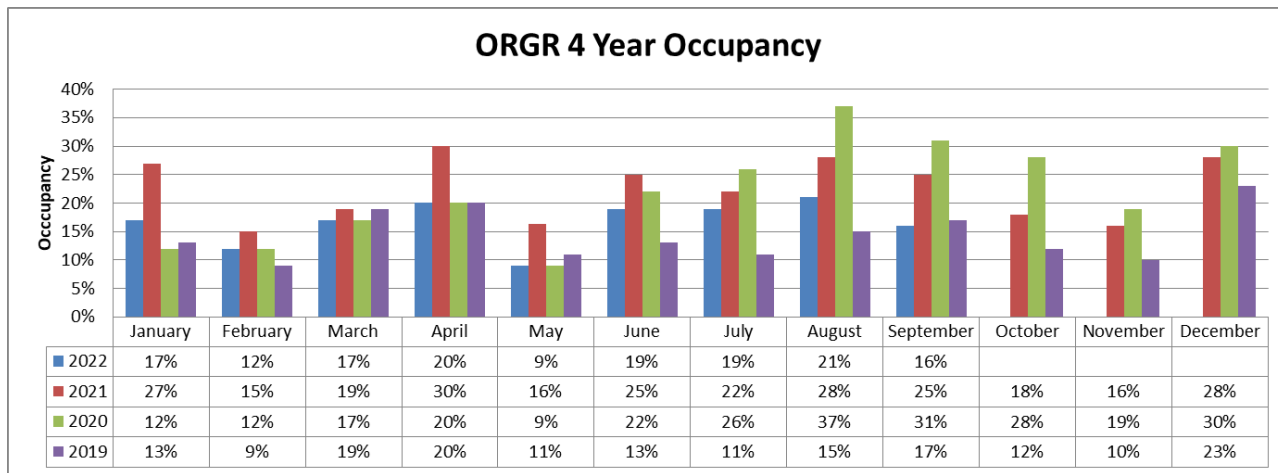
Summer has arrived and we are already experiencing temperatures in the 40's on the reserve. We ended the rainfall season at the end of August with 763,75mm of rain and have already received 8.9mm of rain in late September.



August 2022 Summary				September 2022 Summary			
	High	Low	Average		High	Low	Average
Temperature	38.4 °C	6.0 °C	20.1 °C	Temperature	38.0 °C	7.2 °C	23.2 °C
Dew Point	17.2 °C	-4.7 °C	9.0 °C	Dew Point	19.3 °C	-0.2 °C	10.7 °C
Humidity	96 %	9 %	54 %	Humidity	95 %	10 %	51 %
Precipitation	1.6mm	--	--	Precipitation	8.9 mm	--	--
Wind Speed	26.9 km/h	0.0 km/h	5.3 km/h	Wind Speed	23.7 km/h	0.0 km/h	5.8 km/h
Wind Gust	38.0 km/h	--	7.9 km/h	Wind Gust	37.0 km/h	--	8.5 km/h
Wind Direction	--	--	SSW	Wind Direction	--	--	SSW
Pressure	1,021.23 hPa	995.53 hPa	--	Pressure	1,020.15 hPa	997.60 hPa	--

OCCUPANCIES

August averaged out at 21% occupancy with the busiest day seeing 30 units in residence and the quietest day seeing 11 units in residence. September saw an occupancy of 16% with the busiest day seeing 18 units in residence at the beginning of the month.



OUR NIGHT SKY IN OCTOBER

In a nutshell...

Moon

Date	Time	Phase
03/10	02h14	First Quarter
09/10	22h54	Full Moon
17/10	19h15	Last Quarter
25/10	12h48	New Moon

Sun and Moon

The First Quarter Moon falls on the 3rd of October at 02h14 and the Full Moon occurs on the 9th of October at 22h54. The Last Quarter Moon falls on the 17th of October at 19h15 and the New Moon occurs on the 25th of October at 12h48.

On the 4th of October at 18h33, the Moon will be at perigee (closest approach from Earth) at a distance of about 369 325 km. It will be at apogee (furthest from Earth) at a distance of about 404 308 km on the 17th of October at 12h19.

Planet Visibility

Saturn, Jupiter and Mars are visible after sunset and can be observed even in the early morning skies. Saturn can be observed near the stars of the constellation Capricornus and will be near the Moon on the 5th of October. Jupiter can be observed near the stars of the constellation Pisces and will be near the Moon on the 8th of October. Mars is located near the stars of the constellation Taurus and will be near the Moon on the 15th of October. Mercury, the smallest planet in our solar system, is visible in the morning sky and can be observed near the stars of the constellation Virgo. Mercury reaches its highest altitude on the 6th of October and is at its greatest elongation on the 8th of October, which means that it is well positioned for observation.

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

ROAD WORKS UPDATES

We have done some significant work on the road network and have resurfaced sections of a number of main roads on the reserve and repaired humps and drains throughout. The grader has also been busy with most of the roads graded in September. We have concreted the steep section at the Palmloop crossing close to Rhino Pan under the four powerlines, which has made this crossing a lot easier to use. The teams are still working on various sections of roads on the reserve in preparation for the rainy season.



ORGR CLASSIFIEDS



Game Viewer for Sale.

2019 Nissan NP300 converted Game-Viewer; +-7200km; 9 x Rear Seats (Ripstop Canvas); Full Canopy (Ripstop Canvas); Overhead LED Lights; Elasticated Storage Pockets (Back Seats); Drinks Holders; 3 x 3-Pin Plug Points (1 in Driver Cabin / 2 in Rear); 6 x USB Charge Points (2 in Driver Cabin / 4 in Rear); 2 x Easy Access Doors; 2 x Additional Reverse Lights (Mounted at Rear); Nudge Bar with Fold-down Table; Camil Suspension (Front and Rear); 2-Way Radio; Tail Light Guards; Hi-Lift Jack; Tow Bar; Storage/Dust Cover; Full Service History (Maruleng Auto-Hoedspruit); Excellent condition; **R425,000** (onco). Contact Douglas Smart Cell: +27 (0)83 268 6139.

STAFF PROFILE OF THE MONTH

This month we meet Vhelaphi Chuma, who is fairly new to the Olifants herd, joining us permanently in March 2022 as a relief driver and workshop assistant. Vhelaphi takes over from Ronald, Paulo and Nkosinathi during their days off. He started working with us in 2019 as a temporary labourer and his uncle Colett is employed with us as a Corporal in our APU.

Vhelaphi was born in 1988 and grew up in Giyani, Limpopo alongside two sisters and two brothers. After school, he studied Art, Heath and Safety, First Aid and truck driving. His first job had him join the construction industry in Sunninghill as an assistant and he later moved to Midrand as a driver for a logistics company. Vhelaphi is currently single but has a son aged 13. His hobbies are watching TV, playing sports and listening to music (R&B and Electronic House). Give Vhelaphi a shoutout next time you see him around the reserve!



THE FINAL WORD

A LOOK AT THE FREE SPIRITS OF THE BUSHVELD!

1. Modesty is for prudes!

Baboons couldn't give a *flying fig* give when it comes to body image. Lady baboons sport flaming red oestrous swellings that look like exploding whoopee cushions and male baboons prance around with their nether regions flapping in the breeze. Genitals are out and no one is getting any side-eye about it!

2. They go with the flow!

Baboons are all about bold moves. They wake up with the sun, poop copiously, then head off in whatever direction they please. They cross miles of scrub desert in the searing heat in search of tasty leaves, delicious palm fruit and the opportunity to surreptitiously mount a strange sir or lady in an exciting new setting. They sleep on the face of a different cliff every night, whichever is closest when the sun starts getting low in the sky.



3. They never ever pass up a party!

When baboons discover something new, like the corrugated sheet metal roof that you built to protect your tent from the rain, they don't hesitate to check it out. Baboons can take a sheet of metal nailed to four sticks and turn it into an all-night roof-deck rager, even if the downstairs neighbours are being total wangs and trying to sleep.

4. They don't let kids cramp their style.

Baboons bring the whole family when they travel. Newborns pull their own weight from the minute they exit the womb, clinging to mom's stomach while she forages. A few months later, a baby baboon is able to ride on mom's back wherever she goes, entwining his tail with hers for balance.

5. They make very day an adventure.

Sometimes there's a drought, or the leader male is being a total slave driver and won't give anyone time off; or they're "a little short of cash" because they went a little too ape-crazy at the roof party last week. However, they don't have to traipse all the way to the ends of the earth to have a good time! They simply grab a palm fruit, climb to the top of their favourite acacia tree and just chill. Sometimes the most exotic observations happen right under one's nose...!

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

Warm regards

Nick and the Olifants Team!

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Night Sky – SAAO
Rhino story – Africa Geographic