



WELCOME TO OUR
Custodian Monthly Newsletter

Wildlife Sudoku Challenge!

Can you complete this puzzle using these wildlife symbols? Each row, column, and block must contain one of each animal. Test your skills and enjoy the fun!

	Lion		
Owl			Snake
		Leaf	

Track the Wild: Can You Identify last Month's Footprint?



Last month's paw print belonged to a cheetah! 🐾 The fastest land animal, these sleek predators can reach speeds of up to 100 km/h in just a few seconds. Keep an eye out for this month's print –good luck with your guesses!



Exotic or Idiotic?

It is not surprising that the recent story of the tiger cub being kept in a backyard in Pietermaritzburg made headline news. It is illegal to keep a tiger in captivity in KZN without the relevant permits. The lack of said permits led to the confiscation of the cub by Ezemvelo and the SPCA.

What is surprising is that there is a growing trade in big cats in other areas of South Africa. After the cub's story became public, photos of breeding farms in the Northwest Province emerged. Some of these photos showed up to 20 tigers squashed together in a single enclosure. Other photos showed tigers being kept as pets in back yards in Gauteng, where it appears owning one is a relatively straightforward process.


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The issues associated with tigers as pets are extensive. Tigers are predators and obligate carnivores. They are designed to subdue and eat large mammals. Adult tigers do not 'tame' down, and they are known to kill people. Their novelty wears off as they become bigger and less manageable.

Often more determined owners will remove their claws and canines to make them less dangerous and sedate them to keep them compliant. And if this doesn't work? Its like going down a rabbit hole - sell them, trade them, send them to a breeding farm, use them for dog fighting, or butcher them for their skin and bones, and sell those on the black market.



In the wild, tigers are endangered and protected. Possessing one in its country of origin often carries a hefty fine and possible prison time. So, why does our country allow the breeding and selling of an endangered species? It boils down to money. R30 000.00 per cat is the rough market value. Somewhere along the line a greased palm has allowed for the trade to flourish in this country while wild tigers are teetering on the brink of extinction in theirs.

To see more, click below
[‘The Witness’ report](#) 

Imagine what sort of impact that money would have poured into the conservation of the species in the wild?



But then that R30 000.00 would not bring the ego boost that comes along with showing off your 'exotic pet' or your new fireside rug. Why would you want to spend that money protecting a wild tiger when you can't show it off to your friends, or recover the cost by selling off its body parts?

What that R30 000.00 doesn't seem to buy is common sense, altruism, thoughtfulness, kindness, compassion, a genuine love for tigers, or a real desire to protect and preserve them. We will leave you to make your minds up about the kind of people who started supporting this travesty in the first place.



True compassion means protecting wildlife, not keeping it captive for personal gain.

The threats tigers face 

September Admissions

Admissions

Birds	27
Raptors	6
Mammals	10
Reptiles	2

It seems as if spring is off to a slow start with bird admissions. A total of 27 birds were admitted, including species such as Black-collared Barbet, Southern Boubou, Fiscal Shrike(1) , Bronze Mannikin, and White-rumped Swift (2). This is on top of the usual admissions of Laughing Doves, Red-eyed Doves, Ring-necked Doves, Hadada Ibis, Cattle Egrets, and Egyptian Geese.

On the other hand, winter breeding birds of prey continue to dominate that section with 3 Spotted Eagle (3) Owls and 2 Wood Owls (4) being admitted.



1



2



3



4



An adult Peregrine Falcon (5) was the one rare and unusual admission for the month. This beautiful falcon had been found next to a road in the Ottos Bluff area. With a badly damaged face, and already emaciated, the falcon was in critical condition on admission, and despite our best efforts did not survive the night.

5



There were quite a few mammal admissions in September, including the more usual admissions of Grey Duikers, Bushbuck (6), Reedbuck, and Scrub Hares (7). Less common were the admissions of a Warthog, which died on admission, a Rock Hyrax (8) found at a truck stop in Estcourt, a Small-spotted Genet which sadly succumbed to insecticide poisoning, and the most unusual, and a first for us – a Tiger cub (9)!



6



7



8



9

While not an indigenous species, FreeMe Wildlife were on hand to help when the authorities confiscated this young animal from members of the public keeping it in their back yard without the relevant permits. The cub was stabilized at FreeMe Wildlife before being transferred into state custody. The cub is currently being held at the Pretoria Zoo pending the outcome of a court case.



10

Two more little tortoises joined the others in our care. Both were Bell's Hinged Tortoises (10), and both retrieved from the illegal pet trade. The tortoises will now remain with us until full health checks have been done, and suitable release sites can be arranged.



September Releases

With the onset of the longer days and warmer temperatures of summer, many of our young birds were ready to be released. Among those released were Laughing Doves, Red-eyed Doves, Hadada Ibis, Sparrows, Egrets, Egyptian Geese, Speckled Pigeons, and a Cape Robin Chat.

Released

Birds	26
Raptors	4
Mammals	2
Reptiles	0



The Giant Kingfisher (11) that had been admitted last month after being rescued from entanglement in fishing line, fortunately made a full recovery from the injuries it had sustained and was returned safely home to its patch of river.

Two of the Spotted Eagle Owls admitted in September, were also released in the same month. One was a healthy fledgling which was returned to its parents, while the other was an adult, returned to its chicks. The adult bird, a brooding female, had been attacked by dogs in a plantation, and had bravely defended her nest. She was very fortunate not to have sustained critical injuries, and we sent her back home with a warning to the owner of the dogs not to allow them to roam free in the plantations.

12



While many dog owners focus on the joy of allowing their dogs to go for a run, we urge all dog owners to be conscious of the fact that dogs remain predators by nature, and little wild creatures are going to be at their mercy should they find them while out on their runs.



13

We got to finally say farewell to the two Thick-tailed Bushbabies we had raised in care. The two young males, at the age they would normally form bachelor groups with other young males in the wild, were released at Zimbali Eco Estate where there is a small population of Thick-tailed Bushbabies in residence.



Outreach and Engagement

We joined up with Snare Aware in September at one of their snare sweeps and training sessions at Bonamanzi Game Reserve near Hluhluwe. Snare Aware are a voluntary organization doing incredible work at combating the increasing snaring activities taking place in reserves and green belts across KZN.

Our Raptor Specialist spoke on the value of vultures and their conservation to delegates from Deloitte's attending a congress at Cathkin Peak. The talk took place at the vulture hide at Bergview Estate, which local manager, Roy, giving a historical perspective of how the hide came about, and how it is currently managed.



The 12-month Biodiversity Program at Siyabonga Helping Hands care centres is steaming ahead. The environmental educators tackled topics such as 'South Africa's Living Wealth' and 'Trees' with their respective eco club kids during September. The topic on trees coincided with the planting of trees to celebrate Arbour Week, and the kids were as enthusiastic as ever about outdoor activities.



FreeMe FreeYou Outreach



Owl Box Project



14

The Owl Box Project continues to see a successful season for owls.

The Hartmann owl box (14) has been occupied again this year, and the Spotted Eagle Owl pair are currently raising two very healthy-looking chicks. Prey delivery to the box has also been interesting to watch, with the strangest snack being a rather large snake brought in for the chicks. This proved to be an intimidating meal for them to handle.

Qambathi Mountain Lodge recently facilitated the release of two rehabilitated Barn Owls on their property in the Kamberg. A Barn Owl box (15) was installed within view of the release enclosure to encourage the owls to make use of it as a nest next year.

15



MORE THAN OWL HOMES – WE PROVIDE
COZY BOXES FOR BATS AND BEES!



Upcoming Events

HARCOURTS AND DVH PRESENT

@VictoriaCountryClub
1 Nov 19-12

GET YOUR PADEL ON
Proceeds go to
FREEME wildlife

FLOATING TROPHY

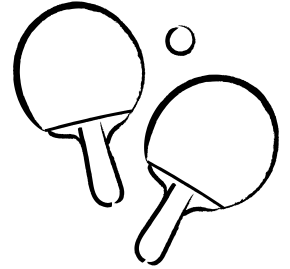
Dress up to match the beneficiary.
Best dressed prize.
Prizes for the first 3 teams.

R500 p/team
book with Emma
083 7884620

Harcourts

Harcourts – Paddleball Competition – 1st Nov

Harcourts is hosting a Paddleball Competition at Victoria Country Club on the 1st of November from 9am. Cost is R500 per team, with FreeMe Wildlife being the charity supported on the day. For more information, please contact



Emma on 083 788 4620.

**JOIN US FOR THE FIRST
MIDLANDS BUSINESS
NETWORKING EVENT**

06 NOV 2024

This elegant evening will give local businesses an opportunity to network in style while giving back to charity.

**BUFFET
AUCTION**
(Win a 2 hour lunch date with senior figure heads in politics)

**NETWORKING ACTIVITIES
SPEECHES BY THE Hon MAYOR & DEPUTY
SPOT PRIZES**

COST: R450 pp (Includes Buffet, Cash Bar)
TIME: 17:30 - 21:00
DRESS: Smart (Black-tie)
VENUE: Fern Hill Hotel

FERN HILL HOTEL

Midlands Business Networking Event – 6 Nov

Join us for an elegant evening of networking, a buffet, and exciting activities. Enjoy speeches from the Hon Mayor and Deputy, and participate in an auction for a chance to win a 2-hour lunch date with senior figures in politics, along with spot prizes!



<https://hallypark.co.za/mbn/>

COME AND SUPPORT US, AND HELP CHANGE LIVES!

Bearded Vultures Annual Golf Day at Howick Golf Club.



All proceeds to FreeMe KZN



Golf Day – 15th Nov

The annual Harvard House vs Bearded Vultures golf day is coming up on the 15th of November and is happening right here in Howick at the Howick Golf Club. This event is always fun for participants and spectators alike, and it gives local businesses the opportunity to advertise what they do. For anyone wanting to get involved, please contact Clare : clarem@hhgroup.co.za or 033 330 2164



September Champions

Some very exciting events took place in September, and we owe the organizers a big thank you. Rob from Leaf Technologies for being the force behind the golf day held at Victoria Country Club, Tania for being the force behind the golf day held at Simbithi Eco Estate, Shannonne for being the force behind the Nature of Art art auction at Hebron Haven Hotel, and Josh for being the force behind the Ride for a Cause Funduro held at Mount Park Guest farm. You all did a wonderful job with your respective events, and we are so grateful to have the care and support of people like you behind our cause.



Added to these events, we also need to thank Dirk from Outdoor Educators for making FreeMe Wildlife one of the stops for contestants taking place in the Amazing Adventure Race. Each team (of four) stopped in at FreeMe Wildlife for a photo, to drop of a donation, and to receive the clue for their next stop in the race.

Thank you, Dirk, for the support. We really appreciate it.

We would also like to introduce Bruce Luck from Tree Fellas. Bruce is a conservationist at heart, an Ezemvelo Honorary Officer, and has stepped up to help FreeMe Wildlife with dropping off donations, and any other small transport needs we may have.



Pack Leader Pet Products once again stepped forward with another wonderful donation of animal food products we use at FreeMe Wildlife. Thank you, Pack Leader, for being such a great supporter of our work.

WE LOVE WHAT YOU
DO, AND HOW YOU
DO IT ...



We are delighted to welcome Pia Sanchez and Shannon Watkins, who both joined up as Custodians in September.

