



Annual Report 2023

Animals on the reserve

GAME COUNTS

Despite having an increase in figures last year of 500, we have dropped this year by 400 animals, we know this is partly due to losing a lot of the elderly, sick animals in the 4th quarter, with little rain there was not much to eat and even though we only recorded 21 carcasses.

Despite the use of an increased number of licks we were getting to the stage where we were considering buying hay bales. Luckily the rain came eventually in November. The number of babies recorded is considerably less as the animals seem to wait for better conditions with the Wildebeest and Impala only giving birth after Christmas – maybe they knew something we didn't!

MONTH	COUNT
Dec 2022	2648
Jan 2023	2081
Feb 2023	1942
Mar 2023	1687
Apr 2023	1441
May 2023	-
Jun 2023	1342
Jul 2023	1379
Aug 2023	1260
Sep 2023	1360
Oct 2023	1609
Nov 2023	1828
Dec 2023	2152

NEW SPECIES RECORDED FOR THE YEAR INCLUDE:

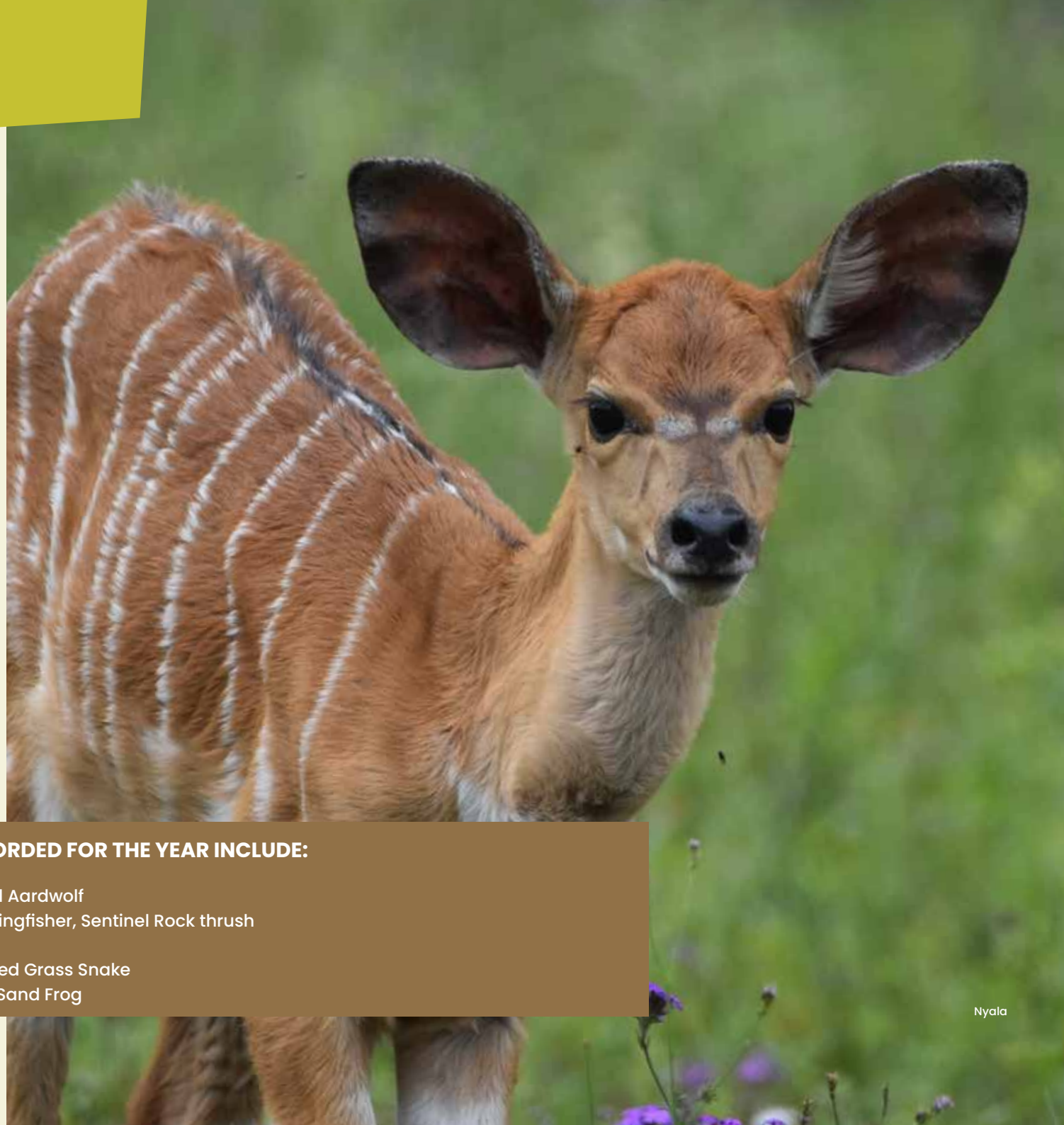
MAMMALS: Buffalo and Aardwolf

BIRDS: Grey-headed Kingfisher, Sentinel Rock thrush

INSECTS: Stink Bug

REPTILES: Short -Snouted Grass Snake

AMPHIBIANS: Tremelo Sand Frog



Animals on the reserve

Species	Dec 2022	Dec 2023	Highest number recorded in a game count this year
Blesbok	88	44	93
Common Reedbuck	13	10	16
Duiker	12	33	40
Eland	124	112	123
Giraffe	38	40	46
Impala	465	360	360
Kudu	561	323	323
Mountain Reedbuck	23	17	33
Nyala	75	50	50
Red Haartbeest	73	57	57
Warthog	344	212	212
Waterbuck	66	66	66
Wildebeest	269	351	351
Zebra	481	551	551
Total	2632	2226	2321

Having done a game count in January we have already put together a list of animals to take off and bring in so as to stay well within our carrying capacity – the take-off will include Zebra, Kudu and Wildebeest bulls.

Top Events

We had 2 exciting events this year with the introduction of 16 Buffalo which we are hoping will eventually make a huge difference to the Grassland – they seem to have decided Ithala is the place for them, hopefully they will move around more during the Winter looking for juicy grass! The other main event was the introduction of the male Rhino called Tugela – A 9-year-old Bull who we hope will like the ladies and give us more babies – females preferably!

Whilst Ian and Olive the Ostrich parents lost all the chicks in early 2023, again they tried and had another 10 chicks, they are currently down to 3!



Buffalo



Leopard



Ostrich

Animals on the reserve

OTHER NEWS...

MONTH

- Jan 2023
- Blue Cranes managed to keep one chick alive on Ithala
 - Leopard captured in Community and taken to Phinda
 - Met with Community to discuss Cheetah and buffalo introductions
- Feb 2023
- First case of Foot & Mouth in Colenso
 - Got the Esri license for free for the Ceres tags
 - We had several Grey crowned cranes on the Rye field doing their dances
- Mar 2023
- Finally received the Adequate fence enclosure certificate
 - Community meeting – they signed off on the introduction of cheetah and buffalo
 - 3 Wild dogs left to go to Pongola to be bonded with 2 females after being in the Boma for 87 days
- May 2023
- Jenny the state vet came to check the Buffalo fences in order for us to get the Buffalo permit
- Jul 2023
- Righardt from the Giraffe Conservation Foundation joined us for a few days to take DNA samples from our giraffe to establish the sub species – report to be produced in 2024
 - We joined the Cheetah Advisory Committee to chat all things Cheetah for the first time
 - We were joined by Panthera who put out 12 trail cameras to try and establish the leopard corridor between Weenan, us, Tugela Game ranch and Zingela – several pictures of leopards including a female with 2 cubs around the Boma area – report to follow
- Aug 2023
- Kobus from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries confirmed he will join us in Quarter 1 in 2024 to do a thorough vegetation survey which we can use for our carrying capacity figures
- Sept 2023
- Potentially 2 secretary birds nesting was spotted
 - So far, we have counted 6 new giraffe babies
 - Aerial Game count completed
 - Buffalo purchased
- Oct 2023
- Panthera came to remove camera traps
 - Olivia Sievert from the Cheetah Advisory Committee joined us to inspect UmPhafa so they can give support to our Cheetah permit
 - 5-year Cheetah management plan completed and sent to permits office
- Nov 2023
- 16 Buffalo delivered 4 males 12 females
 - Inhlanhla loses his Ceres ear tag in the Bush
 - Interns build Owl Boxes
- Dec 2023
- Leopard captured in Community and taken to Dinokeng Reserve near Pretoria
 - Leopardess Chewy was spotted with 2 new cubs
 - Nomabonga lost her Ceres ear tag but recovered from the Bush as was still working



Blue Crane



Secretarybird



Grey-headed Kingfisher

On the reserve

RAINFALL

As you know 2022 was a record year for rain, this year not so much so and with the rains only starting properly in November there were massive worries about the animals and we lost quite a few ill and elderly animals who could not cope with the lack of nourishment. Despite an increased numbers of licks being put out, there were worries and our thoughts went to the potential buying of hay bales.

YEAR	RAINFALL	YEAR	RAINFALL
2001	867	2014	534
2002	740	2015	477
2003	319	2016	461
2004	770	2017	707
2005	845	2018	776
2006	733	2019	728.50
2007	564	2020	833
2008	618	2021	852.50
2009	543	2022	1212.25
2013	547	2023	902.75

There are no figures for 2010 – 2012



On the reserve

SECURITY AND POACHING

2022

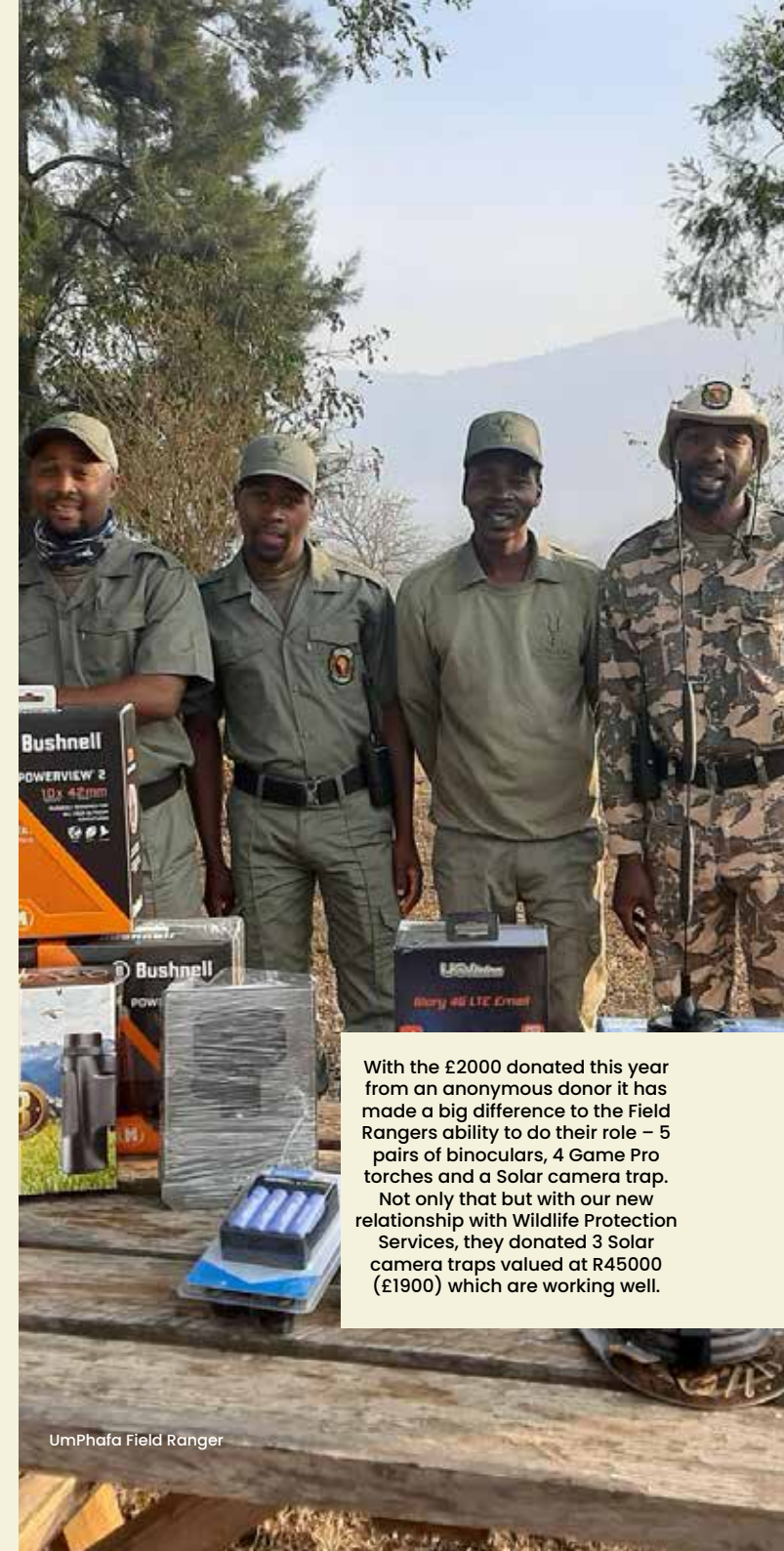
No. of times fence stolen	No. of fence poles stolen	Fence metres stolen	Snares	Poachers in no dogs
6	0	419m	13	39
Poachers in with dogs	Damaged fences by animals	Animals taken	Incursion attempts	Poaching dogs killed
58	74	49	153	14

2023

No. of times fence stolen	No. of fence poles stolen	Fence metres stolen	Snares	Poachers in no dogs
9	0	105m	0	41
Poachers in with dogs	Damaged fences by animals	Animals taken	Incursion attempts	Poaching dogs killed
25	191	19	28	6

2023 saw the losses of fence in Quarter 1 & 4 only – maybe people shopping for Xmas as it all seems to be around that time! Anthony has worked out the cost of the lost fence including the cost of repairing holes by animals and poachers which amounts to approx R7040 (£300). At an average rate of R1000 per animal lost we have confirmed to have lost R19000 (£800) in animals but this could be much higher as we can only confirm if we see blood but many times animals can be taken and put in bags for easy removal! Following on from the big shooting of dogs in December 2022 the year has seen a decrease in dogs being used, only having shot 6 this year also impacts the poachers ability to hunt for the animals. However 3 spears, a hat and several pairs of gloves and pliers have been left behind by the poachers. The animals have continued to damage and make holes in the fence which takes up a lot of time for the Rangers to fix. In December

2023 saw a different approach taken by poachers to making large holes in the fence and then putting molasses out side the fence to entice the animals out – we think we were lucky and discovered these sites before we lost any animals!



With the £2000 donated this year from an anonymous donor it has made a big difference to the Field Rangers ability to do their role – 5 pairs of binoculars, 4 Game Pro torches and a Solar camera trap. Not only that but with our new relationship with Wildlife Protection Services, they donated 3 Solar camera traps valued at R45000 (£1900) which are working well.

UmPhafa Field Ranger

On the reserve

OTHER NEWS

MONTH

- Jan 2023
- The Mahindra was sold as it kept needing repairs due to the heavy work driving on our roads – it was not solid enough for the job we needed it for!
- Feb 2023
- Tropical Cyclone Freddy damaged the Rangers tent on Ithala and a tree fell down on the roof of the Rangers bathroom
- Apr 2023
- Wildlife Protection Services donated 3 Solar camera traps
- May 2023
- New vehicle purchased for the Field Rangers – an old landrover capable of getting up and down the terrain and reaching all areas of the Reserve
- Jul 2023
- Transnet Pipeline Security group came to do a demo on the use of their thermal drone which they use to check for poachers along their oil pipeline. We have an arrangement where they will help with poaching incidents along the N3 or even inside the Reserve if required.
- Aug 2023
- Solar camera trap taken by poachers despite being attached to tree – Douglas from maintenance designed and built metal cages for all our camera traps which are now chained to trees making them more difficult to remove
 - Work started on dismantling the old N3 Ranger outpost damaged by the Tropical Cyclone Freddy in February
- Oct 2023
- Firearm training by Anthony and Mark started ready for the actual training and practicals being done later in the month which consisted of 3 theory papers and 2 practicals. Also training on Buffalo and birds
 - 2 x New Rangers started Thabani and Nkosinathi and Zwelisha left
- Dec 2023
- N3 outpost almost completed but able to be used over Xmas



New Landrover



Game Count



Donations

Interns

We hosted 53 Interns at Sully this year which included groups from Writtle, Suffolk and East Coast university. We recruited a new Student Intern Luhan who we made permanent once Cameron left half way through the year.

Feedback on the program has been good this year and some Interns have been lucky enough to see the Rhino dehorning, experienced game capture which included a flip in a helicopter, spent the day with Rigardt collecting giraffe DNA samples and the release of the Buffalo which were all highlights. They have done a variety of maintenance including licks, road repair, painting fence poles, building owl boxes, Alien plant clearing, bush encroachment as well as many more.



Interns

MAINTENANCE

MONTH

- Jan 2023
- 60m Gabbion built along Roosboom boundary fence
 - Put up a fence between Furniss land and Community to establish boundaries
 - Renovated Marks water storage reservoir
- Feb 2023
- Completed repairs on rebuilt fire trailer and tanker
 - Retaining walls built at Marks workshop / trench dug at Elworthy for flow of water away from properties
 - Herbicide cage built Marks side to ensure herbicides locked away at all times
 - Padfoot roller received
- Mar 2023
- With tropical cyclone Freddy hitting us lots of road, fence and tree removals required
 - Drunk driver hit R103 fenceline
- Apr 2023
- Tiled 2 bedrooms at Sully House
 - Completed Sully House garage with bamboo
- May 2023
- Perimeter burns started
- Jun 2023
- Herbicide room built at Elworthy
 - Finished Perimeter burns
 - Changed pipe to wetlands area on Ryefield to increase flow of water pumped from river
 - TLB damaged going for repairs – the trailer hit a bridge wrecking the arm – TLB in for repairs 2024
- Jul 2023
- Burnt Mdekanes with Rebecca!
 - Replaced fence N3 corner a prime poaching spot
 - Built 6 gabbions across the Reservoir to aid in reducing erosion
 - Bushcamp Improvements done
 - Staff kitchen had a make over with paint and tiles to protect walls in cooking and sink area and knocked through to next room to give more space
 - Reserve Clean up done for a few days



Building Gabbions



Water break



Sully House

Interns

MONTH

- More gabbions built
 - Wild Fire put in by Community and another from a lightening strike on Ithala
 - Gas cylinder cage constructed – a legal requirement for the storage of gas
 - Renovated an old trailer for Intern use
- Aug 2023
- Put in a new access gate at the foot and mouth trough at Elworthy for larger vehicles
 - Started to clear Accacia Karoo from around Elworthy
 - Built new Solar houses ready for installtion of inverters and batteries
 - Started to dismantle N3 outpost
 - Relocated 100m of fenceline back away from Tugela river as was eroding badly
- Sept 2023
- Foundations completed for N3 Ranger outpost
 - Started on new buffalo fence on the perimeter of Tugela Steel fence to stop the buffalo's fighting through the fence
 - Clearing of Accacia Karoo continued
 - Wild fire put in by Community
 - Another drunk driver crashed into R103 fence
 - Cleared and repaired Boma ready for Wild Dogs that never arrived
 - Completed new solar houses and built stands for solar panels
- Oct 2023
- Sprayed fenceline as weeds affecting electrics
 - Wild fire put in by Community
 - Clearing of Accacia Karoo around Elworthy continued
 - Another car crashed into fence but did little damage this was due to rain on the R103
 - Built buffalo offloading ramp
- Nov 2023
- Block Burns
 - Took Sully borehole pump out as no water in well (140m of it) daily trips to fill up water tanks at Sully from Elworthy from now on
 - Work continued on N3 outpost
- Dec 2023
- N3 outpost 95% completed

Spraying aliens



Game capture



Block burns



Community

MONTH

- Jan 2023
- Recruited 6 ladies from Community to be Alien Plant Destroyers for 3 months
 - Met with the neighbouring Indunas to talk Buffalo and Cheetah
 - Riots in Roosboom as no electric or water for days
- Feb 2023
- Colenso had first Foot and Mouth case
- Mar 2023
- Community signed off on introducing Cheetah and Buffalo
- Jun 2023
- 2 tanker loads of water to Roosboom Community as again no water
- Aug 2023
- Gave Mdekane water as river very low
- Sept 2023
- A student from Michaelhouse school joined us to do 16 hrs Community work and spent it clearing the R103 of rubbish collecting 16 bags and 6 bakkie loads to be destroyed
 - KZN University joined us again for a week to do soil surveys. In total 35 students and teachers.
- Oct 2023
- Luhan as part of his practical went to ML Sultan school to educate 350 children on recycling
- Nov 2023
- Amanda contacted Unisa to discuss potential opportunities for the students to come to UmPhafa to do practicals
 - Recruited 6 Ladies for Lantana again
 - Riots again in Roosboom no water or electrics road closed.
- Dec 2023
- Mdekane finished off her numbers at an all time record low having sold her bull and some of her goats

Alien plant destroyers



Water to the community



Rubbish collecting

Training and Projects

MONTH

- Mar 2023
- Anthony & Amanda received training on the new GIS platform
 - Work for the Water user licence completed
 - Received Adequate fence enclosure certificate
- April 2023
- Started the Bio-diversity Protected Area process
- May 2023
- Started getting quotes for the installation of Solar
 - Training done on how to drive the Field Ranger vehicle
- Jun 2023
- Buffalo permit received
 - Application for Protected Area status approved
 - Zoom chat with the Rotary club – A Q & A session
- Jul 2023
- Cameron left and Luhan made permanent
 - Becks joined us for a week
- Aug 2023
- Kobus from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries approved our request to do a vegetation survey in Q1 2024
- Oct 2023
- Intensive Ranger Firearm training and interactions with Buffalo
 - New Field Rangers x 2 and 1 left
- Nov 2023
- Original owner of Elworthy's son came for a visit
 - Penny our neighbour discussed possibilities of doing horse safaries for Interns on UmPhafa
 - Started to get quotes for our compliance certificates for gas and electric
- Dec 2023
- Work started on the renewal of the lease to the neighbour for Furnisses land
 - Recruited a new Student Intern to start January – Tiffany
 - Over the year 4 disciplinaries done no suspensions



Fire arms training