whatsUp!

WATERBERG NATURE CONSERVANCY

July 2026 Newsletter
Issued: 08 July 2026

As we move through the middle of 2026, the Waterberg Nature Conservancy remains strong thanks to our community's ongoing dedication and support. With June here, there are new chances to connect, get involved, and celebrate the Waterberg's wild beauty together.

We are delighted to share updates on ongoing conservation projects, highlight upcoming events, and invite you to take part in initiatives that strengthen our collective impact - please help spread the word!

If you'd like to contribute an article for consideration in the whatsUp! Newsletter, we'd love to hear from you. Submissions can be sent directly to Bronwyn Maree.

We also invite suggestions for guest speakers at our general meetings.

Bronwyn Maree
secretary@waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za

Waterberg Nature Conservancy Welcomes New Members!!

We're delighted to extend a warm welcome to all the new members. Your passion and commitment to conservation and collective efforts to protect biodiversity in the Waterberg is valued.
Together, we look forward to sharing knowledge, building networks, and creating lasting impact.

Ciska Smith
Vania Guereni
Louis Marx
Brian and Linda Ingram
Lucia & André Fourie

The Waterberg Nature Conservancy unites people committed to protecting our region's unique biodiversity. Membership connects you to conservation projects, research initiatives, and environmental education.

Together, we build networks, share knowledge, and safeguard the Waterberg's natural heritage.

Invite others to join and help make a lasting impact!



email: secretary@waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za
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Clive Walker turns 90!!

Clive Walker, a pioneering conservationist, well-known wildlife author and artist, celebrated his **90th birthday on 15 June 2026**. His lifelong commitment and dedication resulted in the foundation of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) in 1973, Lapalala Wilderness (together with Dale Parker) in 1981, the co-founding of the Lapalala Wilderness School in 1985, the establishment of the Waterberg Nature Conservancy in 1989, and declaration of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve (together with Annemie de Klerk) in 2001.

In June 2026, the Waterberg community and conservation organisations honoured Walker's 90th birthday through numerous heartfelt messages, recognizing his decades of sacrifice and vision. The celebrations culminated in a lunch-time function attended by close family and friends – and even a lady who had been on one of Clive's walking trails in 1973! Clive was surprised by a canvas showcasing some of his favourite memories (through photographs and his art), with touching messages handwritten from guests, a stunning Ardmore rhino sculpture from EWT and a handmade pink elephant, a Trojan Horse, filled with Clive's drink of choice – Guinness (thanks to the Dieltjens)!

We are fortunate to have in our midst this visionary leader, beacon of inspiration, and truly remarkable figure whose life's work has ensured that the Waterberg stands as a model of conservation, education, and community-driven environmental stewardship.





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Wildlife Ethics & Spatial Politics in the Waterberg Biosphere

Private lands play an increasingly important role in biodiversity conservation and natural resource access across Southern Africa. This study draws on interviews and participatory mapping conducted with private landowners and managers in the Waterberg Biosphere to examine how they navigate decisions about community access to natural resources, and the social, ethical, and spatial factors that influence those decisions. Interviews were accompanied by participatory mapping exercises in which participants identified patterns of wildlife movement, natural resource availability, community access, and areas where concerns about wildlife crime or social conflict intersect with land management objectives. These discussions illustrate how questions of trust, stewardship, and perceived risk are embedded within complex socio-ecological landscapes, suggesting that decisions surrounding resource access are often influenced by ethical responsibilities and long-term land management goals, going beyond purely financial considerations.

Author:
Kristie Gill
K.Gill@uga.edu





Elephant Tree Felling Research: An Unusual Experiment

Elephants are “ecosystem engineers” that reshape savannas by felling trees. In high-density areas like parts of Kruger, this reduces tall mature trees that raptors and vultures rely on for nesting. Studying tree-felling is difficult because it’s rare and hard to quantify. For my MSc research at Southern African Wildlife College, I combined witness surveys, crowdsourced videos, and fieldwork with Adventures with Elephants near Bela-Bela to understand the mechanics behind it.

With researcher Sean Hensman, I built a model “tree” apparatus to measure push height and force. The results showed elephants use leverage intelligently — as resistance increased, they raised their push height and switched techniques. We also captured the first direct measurement of elephant pushing power: up to 1.3 tons. This data is guiding a new low-cost, long-lasting tree protection method designed for these specific felling techniques.

I’m now looking for reserves willing to run limited field tests.

Contact:
Ronan Carvill, **MSc student, Southern African Wildlife College** — **ronancarvill@gmail.com**







2ND WATERBERG RESEARCH CONFERENCE
SAVE THE DATE!!

The countdown has begun for the **2nd Waterberg Research Conference**, an event shaping up to be one of the most important gatherings for anyone invested in the future of the Waterberg region.

Taking place from **27–29 January 2027** at **Shekinah Lodge**, situated within the beautiful Mabula Game Reserve, the conference will bring together landowners, reserve managers, researchers, conservation practitioners, policymakers, and interested members of the public under the theme: "Foundations for a Resilient Waterberg."

This timely and highly relevant theme reflects the need for collaborative thinking and practical solutions to the challenges facing the region. Unlike traditional conferences where information flows in one direction, the Waterberg Research Conference is designed as a platform for engagement, discussion, and shared learning.

The programme will focus on real questions and real challenges affecting the Waterberg, with presenters and delegates actively participating in conversations aimed at improving the management, sustainability, and resilience of the region. It is an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to learn from one another, exchange ideas, and collectively identify solutions that will benefit the Waterberg for generations to come.

In essence, this conference is about the Waterberg coming together for the Waterberg.

Registration will open in July 2026, and interested delegates are encouraged to secure their place early.

Individuals and organisations wishing to contribute, sponsor, present, exhibit, or become involved in any aspect of the conference are invited to get in touch.



For more information, please contact:
Marilize Greyling (**Executive Director**: **WRSC**)
Email: **info@waterbergresearch.org.za**
WhatsApp: **079 457 8644**



Join us in shaping a resilient future for one of South Africa's most remarkable landscapes.







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JUNE – THE MONTH OF WORLD CROCODILE AWARENESS

Crocodiles are ancient survivors that have existed on Earth for around 240 million years. Today there are 13 different species, including the Nile crocodile, the Cuban crocodile, and the saltwater crocodile. The saltwater crocodile is the largest of them all and the largest living reptile on the planet — males can grow over seven metres long and weigh up to 1,000 kilograms. At the other end of the scale, the dwarf crocodile is the smallest species, living in the rainforests and mangroves of West and Central Africa and rarely reaching more than two metres. One of their most impressive features is their teeth: saltwater crocodiles replace their teeth every three to six months throughout their lives. Despite their tough reputation, crocodile mothers are surprisingly protective. They guard their eggs and will rush to their babies' aid when they hear a distress call. In Australia, conservation and farming efforts mean there are now 135,000 saltwater crocodiles kept on wildlife farms, compared to just 100,000 living in the wild.

Crocodiles belong in the wild, not on farms
Crocodiles are one of the world's most endangered animal groups.
In the wild, habitat loss is one of the major threats to crocodile survival. Forests, rivers, and wetlands are being converted for farming, urban development, and infrastructure. So, crocodiles are being left without space to live, feed, and mate.
In some places, despite protections, crocodiles are hunted for their valuable skins and meat — and for use in traditional medicine. In areas of human-crocodile conflict, crocodiles are killed out of revenge or to reduce their perceived threat to local communities.
Most significantly, though, crocodiles are taken from the wild and bred in captivity on wildlife farms, where they endure malnourishment, disease, and stress-induced behaviours. Some of these farms are tourist attractions. In others, crocodiles are slaughtered so their skins can be used to create goods for the luxury fashion industry.

Source : **World Animal Protection ~ info@worldanimalprotection.org**
Image : **Robin Taylor**

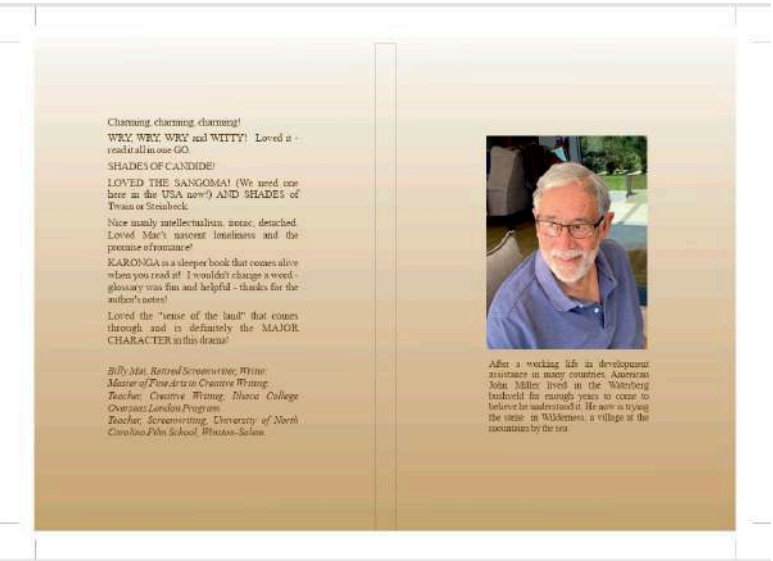


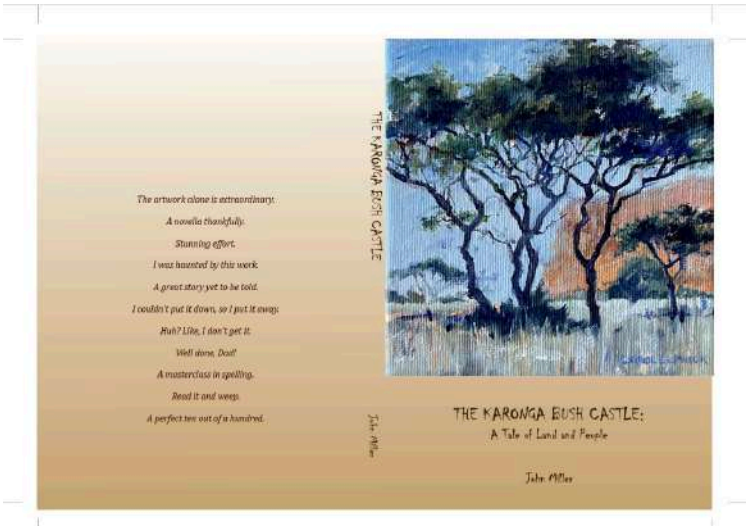
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New Waterberg Novella

WNC member John Miller has self-published his first work of fiction, _The Karonga Bush Castle: A Tale of Land and People_ — a satirical novella set in the Waterberg. Featuring paintings by Clive Walker and with editing support from Richard Wadley, the book explores land and people in our region with wit and insight. Copies are available directly from John for R230 plus courier from Postnet, and it's also listed on Amazon US.

For orders or more info, contact **John** at **john@johnmiller.co.za**





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Investing in Future Conservation Champions: Support the 2026 World Endangered Species Celebration

For more than a decade, Lapalala Wilderness School has hosted an annual conservation awareness event that inspires Waterberg youth to become advocates for wildlife and environmental protection. What began as a World Rhino Day celebration has grown into a major educational platform where Grade 10 learners create posters and deliver persuasive speeches on rhino poaching. Hundreds of learners have built research, communication and leadership skills while deepening their understanding of conservation.

In 2026 the event expands to the **World Endangered Species Celebration**, running **18-20 September**, around 128 Grade 10 learners will research one endangered animal or plant and propose practical, sustainable solutions. Lapalala Wilderness School is seeking donations and sponsorships for learner attendance, study materials, vouchers and laptops for winners. Help us turn knowledge into action and grow the next generation of conservation leaders.

Author:
Johannes Monyeki
johannes@lwschool.org



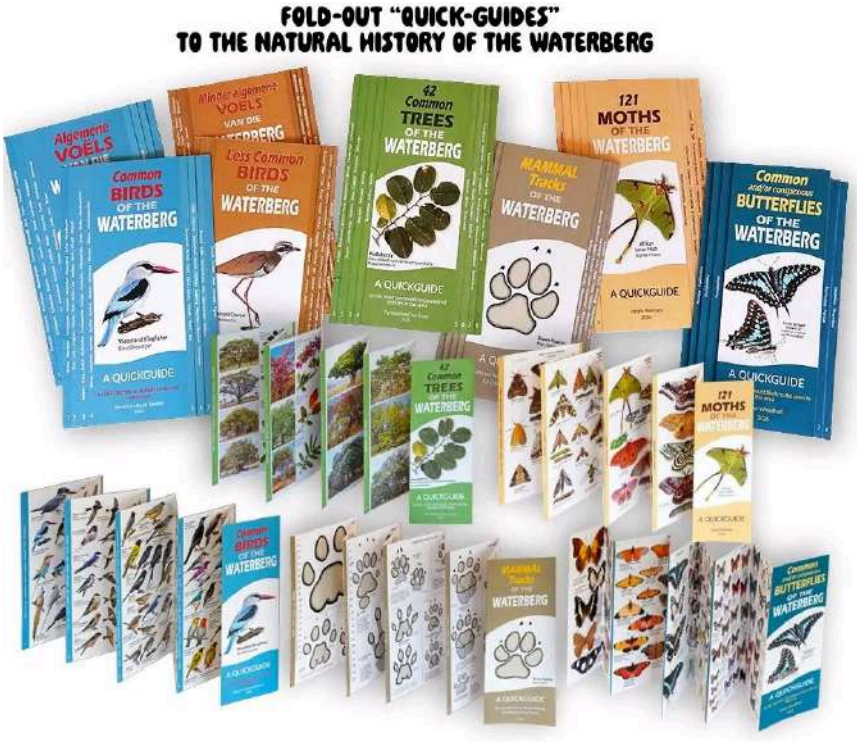






New Waterberg Field Guides Now Available

Fresh pullout guides for the Waterberg have just arrived! Pick up your copy at **Black Mamba** in **Vaalwater**, or email **waterbergflora@gmail.com** for bulk orders.



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The Lion King Revue Showcase 2026

Join us under the African sky for _The Lion King Revue Showcase 2026, presented by **Waterberg Academy**. From **16–18 September at 18:00**, our talented learners will bring this timeless story to life with music, dance and drama.
Evening performances are on Wednesday and Thursday, with a special Gala Evening on Friday featuring table seating, a 3-course meal and wine tasting.

It's a celebration of talent, creativity and the spirit of "Deep Roots, Bold Wings."

For general enquiries: **http://www.waterbergacademy.co.za** | **enquiries@waterbergacademy.co.za** | **081 045 0310**

For Gala table bookings: **cleroux@waterbergacademy.co.za**



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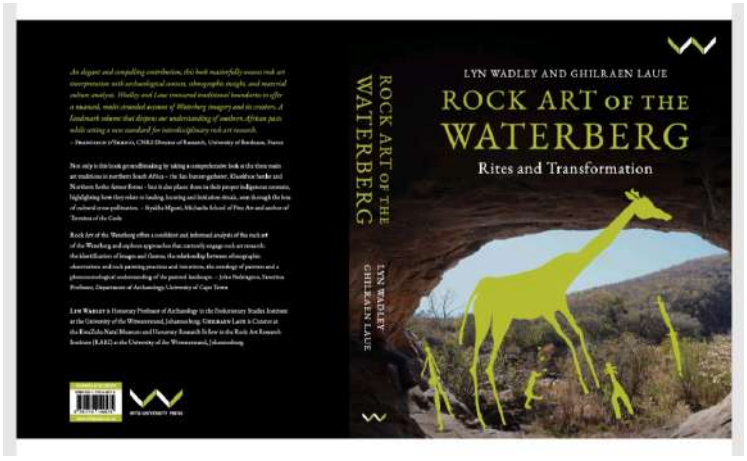
CALLING THE RAIN WITH WATERBERG ROCK ART

Bushmen summoned rain by playing one-stringed violins and capturing imaginary rain-animals; these beliefs are immortalised in paint on Waterberg rocks.

Lyn Wadley is a Wits University archaeologist, specialising in the excavation of Stone Age sites. Recently she recorded 130 Waterberg rock art sites with Ghilraen Laue and these paintings are described in the book: Rock Art of the Waterberg. Lyn has written many papers, won prestigious awards, and is a Fellow of the British Academy and the Royal Society of South Africa.

Contact:
Lyn Wadley
lyn.wadley@wits.ac.za





SAVE THE DATE!!

Join us as we come together for conservation!

30 July 2026, 14:00pm in **Vaalwater** for the Waterberg Nature Conservancy Third General Meeting. It's an important opportunity to connect, share updates, and plan for the future of our conservancy.

More information on how you can participate and became a member, please contact:
Bronwyn Maree
secretary@waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za



THANK YOU, WATERBERG COMMUNITY!!

This newsletter exists because of you — our members, volunteers, landowners, and partners who care deeply for this landscape. Your dedication and support keep conservation alive across the Waterberg.

Have a story, photo, or event to share for the next edition? We'd love to hear from you:
Contact **Bronwyn Maree** at
secretary@waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za

Until the next edition, keep exploring, keep protecting, and enjoy the wild beauty right on your doorstep.

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