September 2026 waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za

whatsUp!

BUSH TELEGRAPH

WATERBERG NATURE CONSERVANCY



GENERAL INFORMATION

New Members always welcome.
Please pass the word on.
For more information see the secretary's contact details below.

If you have an article you would like to offer for consideration in whatsUp! Bush Telegraph we would appreciate hearing from you.

Please send any recommendations for speakers for our general meetings to Bronwyn Maree

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2026
14:00
AT BOMA NG KERK, VAALWATER

NOT TO BE MISSED
ENTRANCE FREE FOR MEMBERS
GUESTS WELCOME (R75 pp)

Contact info:
Bronwyn Maree: secretary@waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za; 0823649281
Visit our Facebook page: Waterberg Nature Conservancy
Creative design by Margerie Aucamp

Protecting Hanover's *Aloe marlothii*



In July this year, we noticed that many of our large ***Aloe marlothii*** were looking unhealthy, with some appearing to be dying. **Closer investigation** revealed that the plants were infested with a **pest known as white scale**, which feeds on plant sap and can severely weaken or even kill plants if left untreated.

Many of these **magnificent succulents** exceed **5 meters in height** and could be more than a century old, making them one of **Hanover Nature Reserve's most remarkable botanical features**.



In an effort to protect the population, we have begun treating affected plants with different organic pest-control products. This also provides an opportunity to compare treatment methods and identify effective options while minimising impacts on beneficial insects and the wider ecosystem.

So far, **Bioneem** appears to be producing the best results, with **some treated plants showing signs of recovery** and even producing new leaf growth.

We have also partnered with the Waterberg Research Support Centre to investigate whether similar infestations are occurring elsewhere in the Waterberg region. We would like to **appeal to landowners and conservation organisations in the area to report any sightings of white scale** affecting *Aloe marlothii* , helping us build a better understanding of this emerging threat and **work together towards protecting these remarkable plants**.

Caroline Kruger
Research & Student Co-ordinator
Hanover Nature Reserve, GAP Africa Projects

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Vaalwater Gets a Little Cleaner – One Bag at a Time!

On **Saturday, 29 August 2026,** a group of community-minded residents decided that instead of simply talking about keeping Vaalwater clean, they were going to **roll up their sleeves and do something about it**!

Led by **Marnus van der Vyver and Elsofé Stephens**, volunteers from all walks of life gathered for the first "**Let's Clean Up Vaalwater**" initiative. Armed with gloves, black bags and plenty of enthusiasm, the group took to the streets to tackle litter and rubbish around town. The area that was covered was mainly Kirkman Street, Jacobus Bekker Ave, Davidson Street, and the section from Puma Garage till the Pharmacy.

And the results? **A trailer full of rubbish bags**! What started as a simple idea quickly turned into a very visible reminder of just how much can be achieved when a community works together.

But this initiative is about much more than simply picking up rubbish. The goal is to continue working together to make Vaalwater look good again and take pride in our town. Future projects could include things like helping repair and tidy up roads, gardening and beautifying public areas, and taking on other projects that will make a visible difference to our community.

Of course, one clean-up day won't solve everything – but it is a fantastic start. The initiative will now take place **monthly**, giving the community a regular opportunity to work together and make a difference.

A **big thank you** also goes out to all the businesses and individuals who supported the day by sponsoring **water, gloves, litter-picking sticks, oranges, cooldrinks and other much-needed supplies**. Your generosity helped make the day possible and showed exactly what can happen when our community gets behind a good cause. **Every contribution, big or small, was appreciated!**

Anyone who would like to join the next clean-up is more than welcome on the 12th of September at 9am meeting infront of Laerskool Vaalwater to tackle new sections! Bring your gloves, bring some bags, bring a friend, and most importantly, bring your willingness to help.

Our town. Our responsibility. Our Vaalwater.

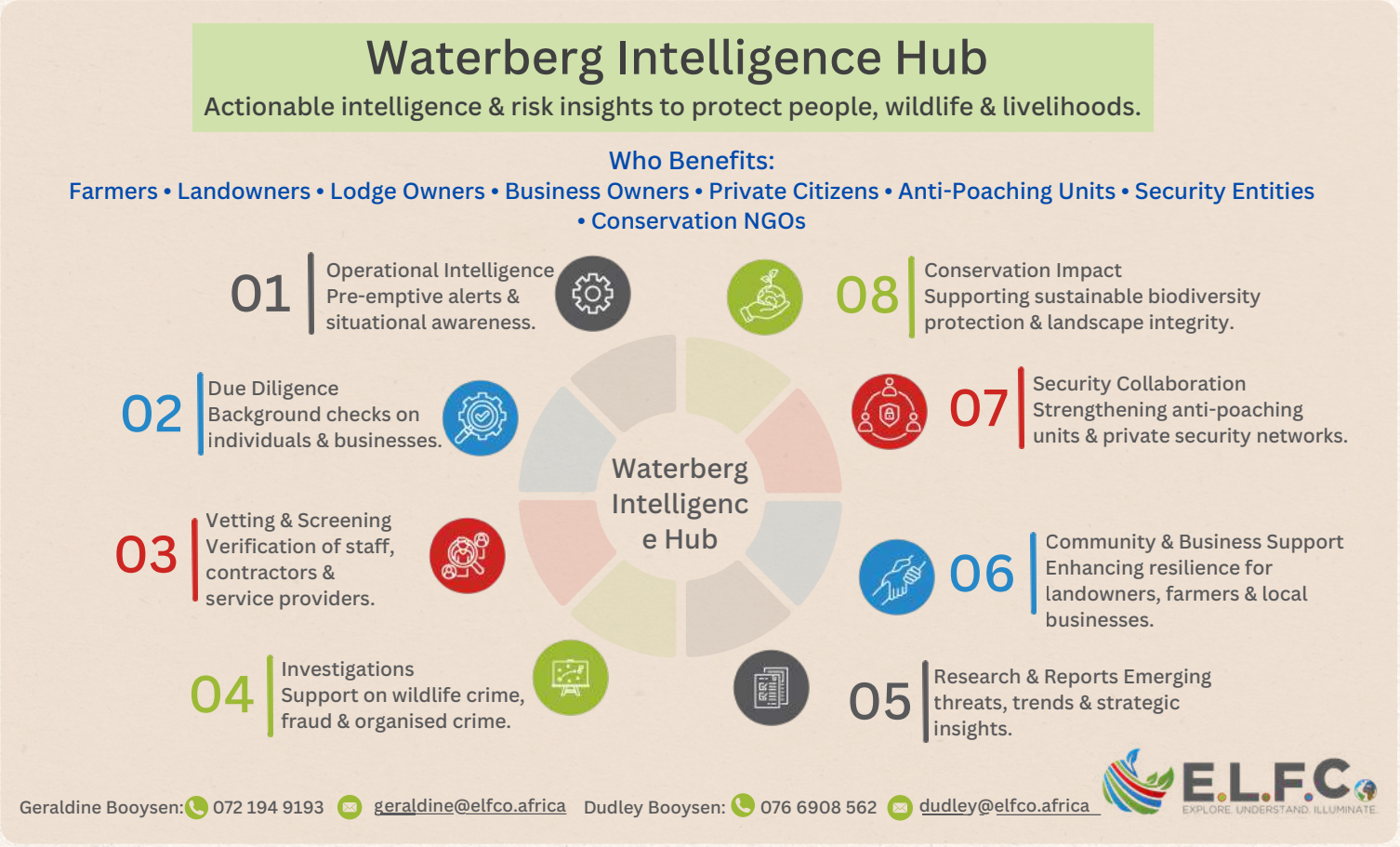


Author: Margerie Aucamp

For more info contact: Marnus van der Vyver 083 287 4069

Waterberg Intelligence Hub

"The Waterberg, an untapped region of data and information:
The benefits of having an intelligent community"



Dudley Booysen: British Military veteran and Intelligence specialist
Geraldine Booysen: Risk Analyst with Criminoly and psychology background.
We harness these expertise as husband and wife for collaboration and actionable intelligence for safer communities

Geraldine Booysen (COO)
geraldine@elfco.africa
Come hear more about it at the next WNC General meeting

Waterberg Research Conference 2027

27–29 January 2027 | Shekinah Resort, Mabula Private Game Reserve, Bela-Bela, Limpopo

Join us for the **2nd Waterberg Research Conference**, themed **“Foundations for a Resilient Waterberg.”**

The theme of the conference reflects the need to strengthen scientific foundations that support resilient ecosystems, sustainable landscapes, and adaptive conservation practices across the Waterberg. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and **evidence-based discussions**, participants will explore solutions that are relevant, impactful and feed into the **ongoing development of the Waterberg Research Framework.**

The conference will bring together **research institutions, conservation organisations, landowners, government departments, development agencies, environmental practitioners, communities, funders and other stakeholders** to share knowledge, strengthen collaboration and develop practical solutions for a resilient Waterberg.

More than a traditional academic conference, this will be a **collaborative working forum** focused on turning research into action, building strategic partnerships and developing priority projects for implementation and investment.

We are deeply honored to announce our Opening Address speaker as Prof. J. du P. Bothma, the pioneer of Game Farm Management.

Registrations for the Waterberg Research Conference 2027 are NOW OPEN!!

Don’t miss out on the EARLY BIRD registrations that have been extended till 12 September 2026

Regular registrations will remain open until 8 January 2027.
Abstract submissions are also open until 25 September 2026.

Be part of shaping the future of the Waterberg

—

Connect, Collaborate and Contribute.

Visit www.waterbergresearch.org.za for more information or contact Marilize Greyling at info@waterbergresearch.org.za



Come hear more about it at the next WNC General meeting

Spider Cities: Where Nobody Lives Alone

Imagine sharing your home with a few hundred neighbours—and never having to worry about rent. For **African social *Stegodyphus* spiders**, this is everyday life.

These remarkable spiders live together in large silk nests, cooperating to catch prey, raise young, defend their home and maintain their webs. But they are not the only residents. As nests grow, they accumulate leaves, dust and prey remains, creating miniature ecosystems inhabited by **beetles, ants, moths, pseudoscorpions, other spiders and diverse microbes.**

Yet sometimes, the entire spider city is abandoned. Spiders may move together to a new nest, while mated females can “balloon” away and start a new nest for her and her offspring.

What triggers this decision remains a mystery.

For his doctoral research, **Leungo Mukoka**, at **University of Pretoria**, under **Tharina Bird (Ditsong National Museum of Natural History, Pretoria)**, is investigating how the microbiome and arthropod communities within these nests change as they age—and whether these changes could influence when spiders decide it is time to move house.

The research team is looking for a **healthy population of *Stegodyphus* spiders with MANY nearby nests** that can be **monitored for at least two years**.

Your property could help uncover what makes a spider city thrive—and what finally makes its residents pack up and leave.



For more info and if you know of *Stegodyphus* on your property please contact:
Tharina Bird: tharina@ditsong.org.za or
Margerie Aucamp: margerie@waterbergresearch.org.za

Nature Field Guides – IN ACTION NATURE WALKS

An exciting new adventure for **Waterberg Academy** has been the launch of the **Nature Field Guide course**.

Three learners and I have had the opportunity to take part in this incredible programme, which **equips us with the knowledge and practical skills needed to interpret the natural environment** and create meaningful guided experiences.

Participants are assessed against **CATHSSETA Unit Standards 8440** and **8478** as part of the **NQF Level 2 Nature Site Guide skills programme**.

Through **immersive video lessons**, **field-based learning** and **practice guided walks**, the course has been both challenging and incredibly rewarding. It has been wonderful to see our **confidence**, **knowledge** and **guiding skills grow throughout the year**.



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STAY INFORMED – PART 1

Knowing the laws of our country helps us understand our rights and responsibilities, make informed decisions, protect ourselves and others, and contribute positively to society. Here are some of the key laws or spatial planning tools which are important to us as Waterbergers. We will continue to share these over the next few editions!

- The Limpopo Biodiversity Sector Plan of 2023: is a provincial biodiversity planning tool that helps identify **which areas of Limpopo are most important for conserving biodiversity** and provides guidance on how land and natural resources should be managed in those areas.

- Waterberg Bioregional Plan of 2015: is a biodiversity and land-use planning tool for the **Waterberg District of Limpopo, South Africa.** It identifies areas that are particularly important for biodiversity and provides guidance on how land should be used and managed so that development can take place without unnecessarily damaging important ecosystems.

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1997: The **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996** is the **highest law in South Africa**. It sets out the basic rules for how the country is governed and explains the **rights and responsibilities of everyone in South Africa.**

- UNESCO Waterberg Biosphere Zonation System: refers to the way the **Waterberg Biosphere Reserve** is divided into different management zones to balance **conservation, sustainable development and human activities.**

- National Protected Area Expansion Strategy of 2002: commonly known as **NPAES** is a South African conservation planning strategy that aims to ensure that **enough of the country's important ecosystems and biodiversity are included in protected areas.**

- Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act 13 of 2005: is a South African law that provides a framework for **cooperation and coordination between the different spheres of government**. The Act helps national, provincial and local government work together so that they can coordinate their responsibilities and provide better services to communities.

For more info contact Bronwyn Maree: 0823649281;
secretary@waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za

FROM OUTSIDE THE WATERBERG
Himalayan pangolin emerges as distinct species, 189 years after first described



- *A new genomic and morphological study has revalidated Manis aurita, a pangolin species first described in Nepal in 1836 and then forgotten for some 189 years.*
- *The species, given the common name the Himalayan pangolin, was among what researchers long assumed was a single, widespread species, the Chinese pangolin.*
- *Confirming the species has immediate implications, including prospects of better protection and more nuanced approaches to conservation.*

KATHMANDU — The animal Brian Houghton Hodgson saw looked almost like a pangolin, but it didn't tick all the boxes. It had amor-like scales from head to tail, just as the French zoologist Georges Cuvier had earlier described. But it also had ears and far more scales across its trunk than any recorded species.

The year was 1836. For the 35-year-old British diplomat and pioneering naturalist, who was confined to Nepal's Kathmandu Valley, this demanded an investigation: Was it a new species, or just an outlier?

Convinced he had come across an undescribed species, he gave the animal a name built entirely on those ears, *Manis auritus*: The Latin auritus translates to "with large ears." But he hedged it with a backup name, Plurisquamis, "the many-scaled," in case the ears turned out later to be an unremarkable feature.

Nearly two centuries later, his question finally has a plausible answer. A team of scientists spanning Asia, the Americas and Europe has spent five years building the case that the pangolin Hodgson described in 1836 is in fact a separate species, distinct from the Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyl*) it had long been lumped together with the seven other recorded species.
Their recently published findings also establish its name, now called the Himalayan pangolin

The source and to read the full article, follow link below.
https://news.mongabay.com/2026/04/in-nepal-controversial-dam-threatens-endangered-pangolins-study/
Image courtesy of Narayan Koju.

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