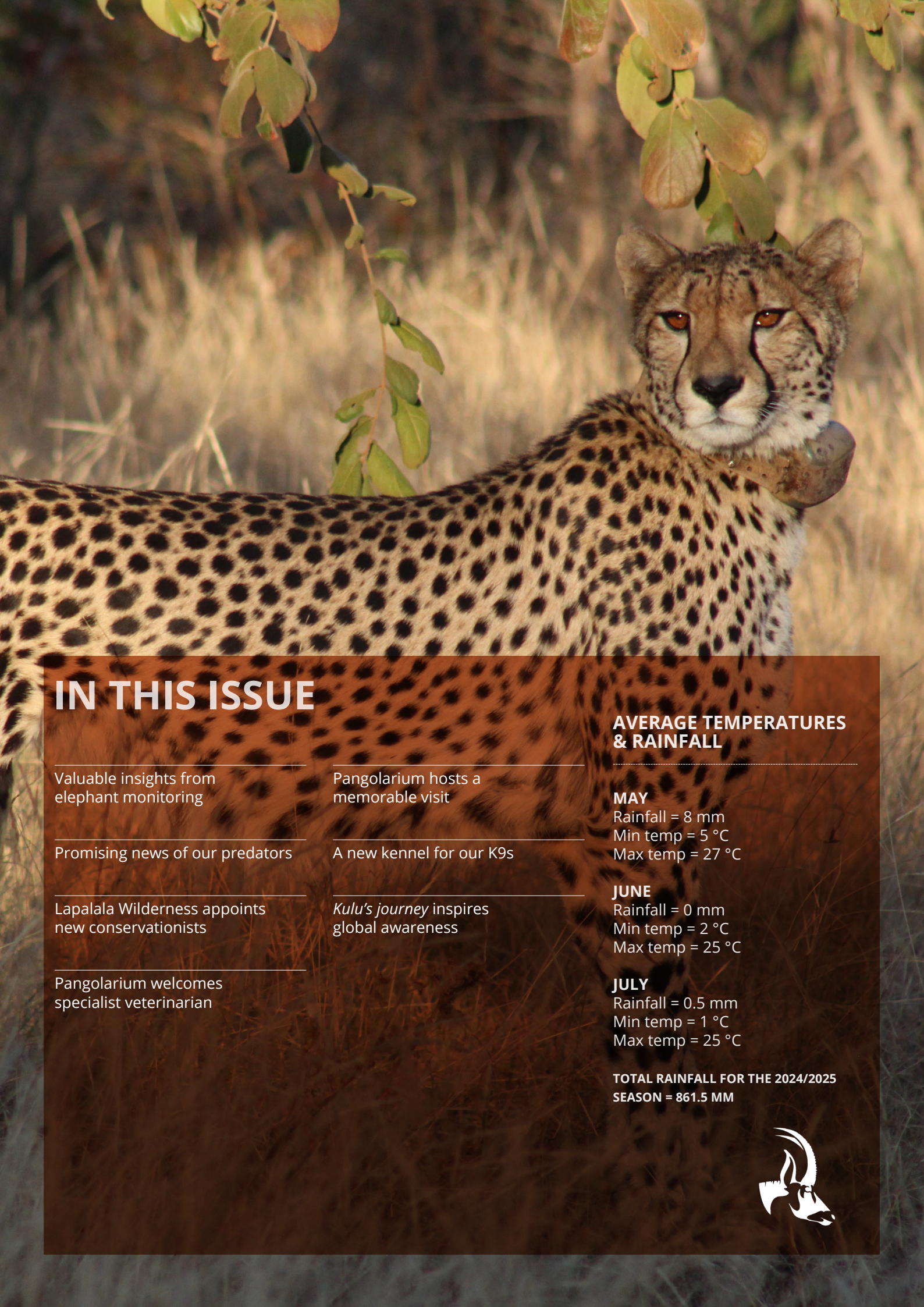




THE
**LAPALALA
RESERVE
REPORT**

NEWS SNIPPETS FROM
AROUND THE RESERVE

VOLUME 2 2025
MAY - AUGUST 2025



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AVERAGE TEMPERATURES & RAINFALL

MAY

Rainfall = 8 mm
Min temp = 5 °C
Max temp = 27 °C

JUNE

Rainfall = 0 mm
Min temp = 2 °C
Max temp = 25 °C

JULY

Rainfall = 0.5 mm
Min temp = 1 °C
Max temp = 25 °C

**TOTAL RAINFALL FOR THE 2024/2025
SEASON = 861.5 MM**



VALUABLE INSIGHTS FROM ELEPHANT MONITORING

Insights from Hannah's research will enable the reserve to make informed decisions about the elephant population.

Lapalala Wilderness intern, Hannah Boehner, is concluding her research into the two elephant herds on the reserve. The information gives us a unique insight into the characteristics of individual elephant, their behaviour, and complex social dynamics.

Hannah monitored the elephant herds to collect baseline data and develop an ID kit for each elephant. This gives our biodiversity team an overview of elephant numbers, age class distribution and sex ratios. Additionally, she worked on identifying the potential matriarchs of both herds.

"It was so rewarding to experience the progress of this project," explained Hannah.

"I spent several hours in the field each week, closely observing the elephant and gathering valuable information. This allowed me to develop a deep understanding of the individual elephant within the Lapalala Wilderness population.

"We moved from a point of complete uncertainty – we were not even sure of the exact number of elephant – to a stage where I could confidently identify individuals and recognise distinct personality traits within the herds."

Hannah's research also analysed elephant feeding behaviour to identify their general feeding preferences. She investigated the relationship between their feeding location and food choice, revealing that there is, indeed, a link between the two.

It was a significant milestone for Lapalala Wilderness to introduce this keystone species in 2018. Elephant had been absent from the area for over 100 years. African elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*) are considered to be a keystone species due to their feeding habits, movements and interactions with their habitat, which can significantly alter the landscape. In a fenced game reserve, such as Lapalala Wilderness, elephant have a significant impact on vegetation. They are critical for maintaining ecosystem health and biodiversity, so it is important to manage them accordingly.



Keystone species, like elephant, play a vital role in shaping the ecosystem as they influence the presence and behaviour of multiple other species.

PROMISING NEWS OF OUR PREDATORS

By Wihan Pretorius

This sub-adult cub of CF4 was photographed shortly before dispersing in the Roan Plains area.

Lapalala Wilderness provides pristine habitat for a range of predators that keep us on our toes. As a reflection of our successful monitoring programme, we are pleased to share some of their exciting news.

Our pack of wild dog continues to give us front-row seats to this fascinating species. We recently fitted a new collar on an additional member of the pack: a female yearling now known as WDMF24. Our initial plan to collar the alpha male was thwarted as both dogs looked the same from the air! The extra collar gives us even greater insight into the movement, hunting patterns and denning behaviour of this group, which is important for their monitoring and protection. Alongside this, we have stepped up our habituation work, carefully conducting more call-ups to help the pack become accustomed to human presence. These efforts are always done with extreme care, ensuring the dogs remain relaxed and not stressed. It has been amazing to see them grow increasingly confident and curious.

In another exciting development, we believe the alpha female is close to denning. Behavioural changes, frequent returns to one area, and decreased travel distances all point to a potential den site. While we are cautious not to disturb her during this critical time, we are optimistic that we could be welcoming a new generation of pups very soon.

Not to be outdone by the dogs, our lion population has been boosted by the arrival of four cubs to LF7 and LF8. The Uitsoek region is bursting with renewed energy (and adorable chaos) as the cubs make themselves at home on Lapalala. These cubs are amongst the third generation of lion to be born on the reserve: LF7 and LF8 were both born on Lapalala as offspring of LF4.

And finally, the cheetah cubs from CF4, CF6 and CF8 are all sufficiently independent to have reached the milestone of dispersal from their mothers. They have treated us to many highlights over the past few months as we watched them grow from wobbly little stalkers to confident, skilled hunters.



The wild dog pack feeds on a habituation call-up at Buffalo Pool.



This female cheetah (CF8) was spotted close to Lions Camp in June.

LAPALALA WILDERNESS APPOINTS NEW CONSERVATIONISTS

By Bridgitte Phillips

Lapalala Wilderness is thrilled to announce the appointment of two highly experienced conservationists, who will add tremendous depth to our current management team. Charli Pretorius joins us as the new Conservation and Biodiversity Manager, while Winston Pretorius steps into the role of Operations Manager of the Wilderness Protection Unit.

With a master's degree in Conservation Ecology from Stellenbosch University, Charli brings a wealth of experience and passion to her role at Lapalala. Her previous positions at andBeyond Phinda Private Game Reserve and Munywana Conservancy have equipped her with extensive skills in ecological monitoring, data management, and translocation planning. She has wide experience of leading and managing research projects and ecological databases, often in collaboration with external researchers. Her commitment to adaptive management and strategy will be invaluable as she drives our conservation efforts at Lapalala.

Winston Pretorius holds a master's degree in Zoology from the University of Venda. His experience at andBeyond Phinda Private Game Reserve and Munywana Conservancy honed his skills in wildlife management, security operations, and K9 handling. Winston's dedication to conservation, law enforcement and area integrity has been demonstrated through his work in managing rhino databases, conducting patrols, and implementing security protocols. His ability to balance practical fieldwork with administrative duties makes him an ideal fit for this role.

Both Charli and Winston have been actively involved in numerous conservation initiatives, including translocating and reintroducing wildlife such as rhino, cheetah, lion, elephant and pangolin. We warmly welcome them to our team at Lapalala Wilderness.



Lapalala Wilderness warmly welcomes Winston Pretorius (left) and Charli Pretorius to our team.

AFRICAN PANGOLIN WORKING GROUP PANGOLARIUM

VOLUME 2 2025

SPONSORED BY LEPOGO LODGES

PANGOLARIUM WELCOMES SPECIALIST VETERINARIAN

By the African Pangolin Working Group (APWG)

We look forward to working alongside Dr Kelsey Skinner as we host and integrate the work of the APWG on Lapalala Wilderness.

Veterinarian, Dr Kelsey Skinner, arrived in May to take up a specialist role in the pangolarium on Lapalala Wilderness.

Her arrival is an important step in the management of pangolin that have been rescued from the illegal wildlife trade. Pangolin are regarded as the world's most trafficked mammal, with all eight species (across Africa and Asia) under threat.

Dr Kelsey will oversee the veterinary care, treatment and rewilding of pangolin brought to the new, purpose-built facility. She will also contribute to education initiatives and awareness campaigns to share the plight of this extraordinary mammal. Dr Kelsey has specialist experience in the veterinary care of pangolin, having worked with the species in

South Africa and Vietnam. She has personally worked with Temminck's, Sunda and Chinese pangolins, in addition to remote consulting on the care of Indian, white-bellied and Philippine pangolin.

Dr Kelsey serves as an executive director on the APWG board and a member of the IUCN Pangolin Specialist Group (PSG). The PSG provides a platform for pangolin experts to share scientific information and formulate action plans that unite global conservation efforts. As the appointed veterinary focal point for the PSG, Dr Kelsey is responsible for coordinating the efforts of veterinarians in caring for pangolin, globally.

We still have much to learn about this elusive animal, so the pangolarium is poised to be a key resource for conservationists.

PANGOLARIUM HOSTS A MEMORABLE VISIT

The APWG was recently honoured to host a visit and tour of the pangolarium by a group of special supporters.

It was inspiring to spend time with legendary conservationist, Clive Walker. As the founder of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), co-founder of Lapalala Wilderness and patron of the Lapalala Wilderness School, Clive is no stranger to the Lapalala community. He was joined by Robert Schnieder (former board member of the EWT) and Bronwyn Maree from the Lapalala Wilderness School. We were thrilled to spend a few hours with our guests, reminiscing over our long history with Lapalala Wilderness and sharing conservation stories.



It was an honour for the APWG to host (f.l.t.r.) Nicci Wright (APWG co-chair); Clive Walker; Alexis Kriel (APWG co-chair); Robert Schnieder and Bronwen Maree.

A NEW KENNEL FOR OUR K9S

By Michael Gardiner

Our K9s will soon move into their new kennel enclosure at East Gate barracks.

Our working dogs will soon be accommodated in a brand-new kennel enclosure at the East Gate barracks. The K9 members of our anti-poaching unit play an integral role in the success of our area integrity team. So, it is important to us that their accommodation is suitable for their needs.

Our infrastructure department used standard bricks in the construction of the covered sleeping area.

The accommodation has an insulated roof and built-in ventilation for those hot summer days and nights. A concrete floor slopes away in front to allow wastewater to drain along the filtered drainage line. The mesh enclosure has been constructed with expanded steel to guard against the possibility of unwanted guests (particularly of the slithering kind). A second, external fence will enclose a grassed area to allow for comfortable, outdoor napping.

KULU'S JOURNEY INSPIRES GLOBAL AWARENESS

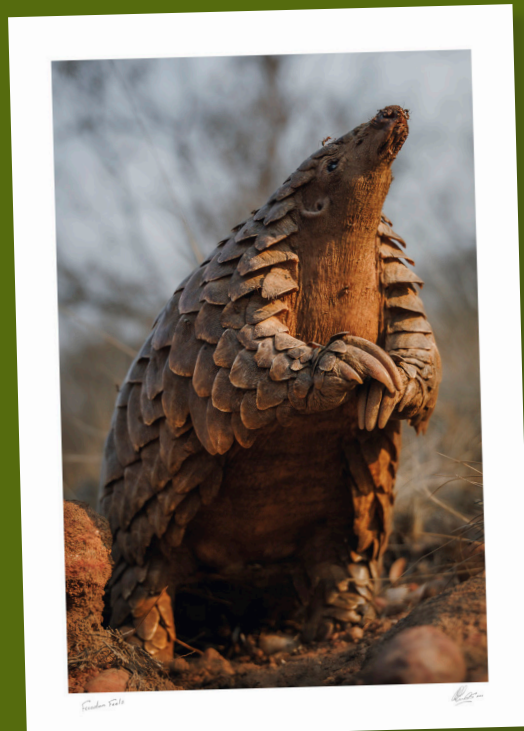
By the African Pangolin Working Group (APWG)

The Netflix documentary, *Pangolin: Kulu's Journey*, continues to capture the hearts of a global audience. Kulu has become a beacon of hope for all pangolin as his story shines a spotlight on the vulnerability of the species.

A series of beautiful photographic prints of Kulu is now available to purchase, as part of the effort to raise both awareness and funds for pangolin conservation. The photographs were captured by Gareth Thomas during the time that he spent rewilding Kulu on Lapalala. We're incredibly grateful to Gareth for his commitment to pangolin conservation, and for making these prints available to everyone who loves Kulu.

The images are printed at Silvertone International, are signed by Gareth, and come with a letter of authenticity. Images are available in a variety of print sizes and can be shipped worldwide. Funds raised from the profit of each purchase go directly towards our pangolin conservation efforts.

A series of beautiful photographic prints of Kulu is now available to order.



Visit africanpangolin.org/shop/ to explore the collection and place an online order.