



Sylvester has been successfully relocated from the Karoo National Park to the Addo Elephant National Park's Kuzuko contractual area.
PHOTO: WERNER HILLS

Karoo lion finds a new home

Hopefully Sylvester will like his new home enough not to want to escape

JUST over a week shy of the anniversary of his initial escape from the Karoo National Park, and the lion that went on a second walkabout in March arrived safely at his new home in Addo Elephant National Park on the afternoon of May 27.

The operation to move the lion began in the morning, when he was darted by a SanParks veterinarian in the Karoo boma where he had been kept since his recapture, for his five-hour-long road trip to Kuzuko. Once he was safely inside the boma, the vet reversed the effects of the sedative and he was left to recover drowsily and explore his new surroundings. Although the females were not in the immediate vicinity at the time, it didn't take them too long to find one another and start getting acquainted from their individual sides of the fence.

Nicknamed "Sylvester" in the media, the three-and-a-half-year-old male was successfully relocated from Karoo National Park just outside Beaufort West to Addo Elephant National Park's Kuzuko contractual area, about two hours outside Port Elizabeth. He'll be calling a boma within an existing 200-hectare enclosure (which houses two nearly two-year-old lionesses) home for the next few months. The hope is that over time, the three will bond and form their own pride, led by Sylvester.

The two lionesses have a long and interesting history of their own, having arrived at Kuzuko just over a year ago on May 20, 2015. They became a national news item in December 2014, when park authorities made a desperate plea for visitors to report any sightings of them after their mother died of a suspected snake bite.

They were last seen and photographed by a guest in mid-December of that year, looking thin and withered. Posted on social media, the photographs garnered widespread interest and concern, which saw people travelling to the park specifically to look for them and offering their services in the search. Local and national, print and broadcast media also followed developments closely, appealing to visitors and prospective visitors to report any sightings to the park's conservation staff.

It was believed that in the six weeks or so during which they weren't seen, they were initially cared for by another female, Josie, who later had a litter of her own, whereafter they somehow survived on their own.

Long after park staff had given up hope of finding them alive following aerial searches, ranger patrols, follow-ups on numerous leads and eventually calling off the search, new information arose when a guide alerted rangers that he may have spotted them on January 10 last year. Although sceptical, they still went out and miraculously



It is hoped that Sylvester and the two lionesses already at Addo will bond and form their own pride.
PHOTO: WERNER HILLS

found the cubs, which were severely malnourished and lethargic. News of their survival travelled fast, as good news does, and turned what was a bleak start to the new year into one with renewed hope.

The cubs were placed in a boma where they received immediate medical attention. They spent four months there, before their move to Kuzuko, where they've been thriving ever since.

In the longer term, the three will be released into the park when the fence between Kuzuko and the neighbouring Darlington section of the park is dropped, which will provide them with 60 000 hectares over which to roam. Sylvester's arrival in Addo brings to 19 the number of lions in the park.

Sylvester first escaped from Karoo National Park on June 5 last year, and managed to evade capture for over three weeks. He was then fitted with a combination satellite/VHF collar to find his location should he manage to get out again. This collar alerted authorities on March 28 that the lion had once again left the park's boundary, and it played a big role in tracking him and returning him to the park three days later on March 31.

The decision to relocate the lion was one of several options considered by SanParks, but was ultimately considered to be the most beneficial to the escape artist, as well as SanPark's broader predator-management programme. — Supplied.

North American birds are in trouble

MORE than a third of all North American bird species are at risk of becoming extinct unless significant action is taken, scientists who are part of a tri-nation initiative said recently, adding that ocean and tropical birds are in particular danger.

The study, compiled by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative and the first of its kind to look at the vulnerability of bird populations in Canada, the United States and Mexico, said 37% of all 1154 species on the continent need urgent conservation action.

The governments of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico created the North American Bird Conservation Initiative in 1999.

More than half the species for oceans and tropical forests are on a special watch list because of small and declining populations, limited ranges and severe threats to their habitats. "The outlook for oceanic birds ... is the bleakest of any North American bird group," said the report, which blames invasive predators such as rats and cats on nesting islands as well as overfishing, pollu-

tion and climate change.

Ways to address the problem include removing predators, expanding protected marine areas and reducing the number of plastic products that end up in the ocean and can trap or choke birds, the report said.

Many species in coastal, grassland and arid habitats are declining steeply, in particular long-distance migratory shore birds. The main causes are sea-level rise, coastal development, human activity and oil spills, the report said. — Reuters.

WATSON MOTORS CELEBRATING 7th ANNIVERSARY

Customer service at the heart of firm's success

THABANG MATHEBULA

SEVEN years after they first opened for business, Watson Motors is now an established name in Pietermaritzburg, focused on improving their customer's experience.

Watson Motors first opened its doors in 2009 and, being a new business, was relatively unknown.

But, just a couple of months later, more business started to flow in as happy clients started spreading the word about them.

Owner Paul Watson said good customer service at the heart of the business meant customers used word of mouth to talk about their experiences and more people responded.

Watson said the business also looked at ways to get involved in the community and this is how their community upliftment initiatives started. "Our mission is to provide reliable and cost-efficient service to our customers," he said.

"The secret of a successful business is a good service and honesty to your customers. Clients need to trust you and what you get from that trust is a booming business."

A proud businessman, Watson said he is delighted that his business has reached a milestone of seven years and had grown in leaps and bounds since they first opened their doors.

"In today's world people can't live a day without their vehicles.

"So we know their [customer's] needs and fears. What we do is offer them the right value for their money.

"We offer clients a range of services — when we are done with client's vehicles, even an older model car will still be reliable.

"We have all the latest technology at our workshop as modern cars use different advanced diagnostic machines," he added.

Progress

Watson Motors was registered as an AA quality assured service provider in 2013. "This confirms our commitment to a code of conduct that is fair, based on sound business principles and that protects and upholds the consumer's rights in accordance with the law.

"We also take this opportunity to thank all our customers for their ongoing support and we look forward to their continued support in the future," Watson said.

To find out more, visit Watson Motors' website at www.watsonmotors.co.za or e-mail them at watsonmotors@voda-mail.co.za or contact 033 345 5108.



Watson Motors staff (from left): Edwin Riggien, Paul Watson, Phumzile Dlamini, Charles Riggien, Peter Watson, Bheki Zikhali and Glen Watson.
PHOTO: SAMANTHA WATSON

"The secret of a successful business is a good service and honesty to your customers. Clients need to trust you and what you get from that trust is a booming business."

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