



The Villager

April • 2026



WORKERS' DAY APPRECIATION – 1 MAY 2026

Speed Limits, Fines and Shuttle Services

A Guide to Birdwatching

Traditional Homemade Hot Cross Buns



UNI-S

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The Villager focuses on Irene Farm Villages. The magazine is distributed digitally to each resident on the estate. The magazine is co-ordinated and published by Estates in Africa (Pty) Ltd trading as EIA Publishing, on behalf of the Home Owners Association of Irene Farm Villages. The opinions of contributors and personnel of Estates in Africa (Pty) Ltd do not necessarily reflect those of the HOA of Irene Farm Villages.

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Deadline for Advertising in the May 2026 edition:
24 April 2026



Photo by Yunus Tug on Unsplash

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- Inalize Nel

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Dear Residents,

April arrives with a gentle shift in pace – cooler mornings, golden afternoons, and the welcome rhythm of long weekends on the horizon. It's a time to slow down a little, enjoy our surroundings, and appreciate the small moments that make Estate living so special.

Garden Refuse Survey – Feedback



We want to extend our sincere thanks to all residents who took the time to complete the Garden Refuse Survey. Your participation is truly appreciated.

A total of 422 responses were received, with an encouraging 83,6% of respondents in favour of the proposed service. This valuable feedback gives us a clear indication of the level of interest within the Estate.

Please note that this survey was conducted for planning purposes only and does not constitute a commitment at this stage. Further feedback on the next steps will be provided at a later stage.

Communication Survey



Thank you as well to those who have already completed the Communication Survey. Your input is essential in helping us improve how we connect and communicate with our community.

The survey ended on 31 March. Feedback will be provided once the process has been completed.



Anna-Mart Steyn

HOA Ticketing System – We Encourage Your Use

A reminder to all residents that the HOA has a dedicated ticketing system in place for reporting incidents, logging complaints, sharing compliments, or requesting information from Estate Management.

This platform is designed to ensure that all queries and matters are recorded, tracked, and addressed efficiently. We have noticed that it is currently underutilised, and we would

like to encourage all residents to make use of this system as the preferred channel of communication.

By using the ticketing system, you help us respond more effectively and ensure that nothing is overlooked.

The link can be found in the WhatsApp groups, website, and newsletter.



Workers' Day Appreciation

– 1 May 2026

As Workers' Day approaches, we take a moment to recognise and celebrate the individuals who contribute so much to our daily lives within the Estate – our domestic workers, gardeners, and support staff.

During the week of 28 April 2026, the HOA will distribute a small token of appreciation to acknowledge their hard work and dedication.

On behalf of all residents, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for everything they do. Their efforts help maintain the beauty, functionality, and spirit of our community, and they are deeply valued.





Garden of the Month

This month, we are proud to feature the beautifully maintained garden at Stand 2266 on Willow Street. A sincere thank you to the residents for the care and attention that has gone into creating such a visually striking and harmonious outdoor space.

The garden makes excellent use of decorative pots in varying colours, which serve as focal points and add character throughout the landscape. These features are thoughtfully paired with carefully selected plants, allowing the containers' colours to complement the surrounding groundcover and create a cohesive, inviting look.

A variety of stones and textures further enhance the garden's appeal, adding depth and interest while guiding the eye through the space. The layering of materials has been done with great care, contributing to a balanced and well-structured design.

Mature trees provide a lush green backdrop, framing the garden beautifully and allowing the finer details in the foreground to stand out. This combination of structure, colour, and texture results in a garden that is both elegant and welcoming.

Well done to the homeowners for creating a space that not only enhances their property but also contributes to the overall beauty of our community.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Police Emergency	10111
Lyttelton Police Station	012 644 8600
Pierre van Ryneveld Community Policing Forum	079 528 1630
Fire Emergency	10177
Medical Emergency	082 911
Main Gate Guardroom	012 662 3505
Security Duty Manager	082 937 8391
Controller	012 662 3505 Ext 3
Irene Farm Villages:	
Estate Office	012 662 3505
Estate Manager	066 008 8523
Managing Agent: Account Ability	
Tel: 082 780 0059 • Fax: 086 671 9798 • info@aams.co.za	

Young and Old gathered for the Snake Demonstration, enjoying a hands-on experience.

Residents gathered at Post Office Park on Saturday, 21 March for the Snake Demonstration & Educational Talk, where reptile expert Henke Marais presented a live, interactive session. The event drew a strong turnout, with families and residents coming together to observe the demonstration and experience the session firsthand. The setup created an open and accessible environment, allowing attendees to gather around, follow the presentation, and engage with the demonstration as it unfolded.

A highlight of the morning was the opportunity for residents to safely interact with a non-venomous snake under supervision, adding a hands-on element to the experience. The event catered to both adults and children, with many younger residents showing particular interest and curiosity throughout the session.

The gathering reflected the continued participation and support from the Irene Farm Villages community, with residents making the most of the opportunity to come together in a relaxed outdoor setting. Moments like these contribute to the shared experiences that strengthen the sense of community within the estate.



Little hunters in action at the Easter Egg Hunt – smiles all around!

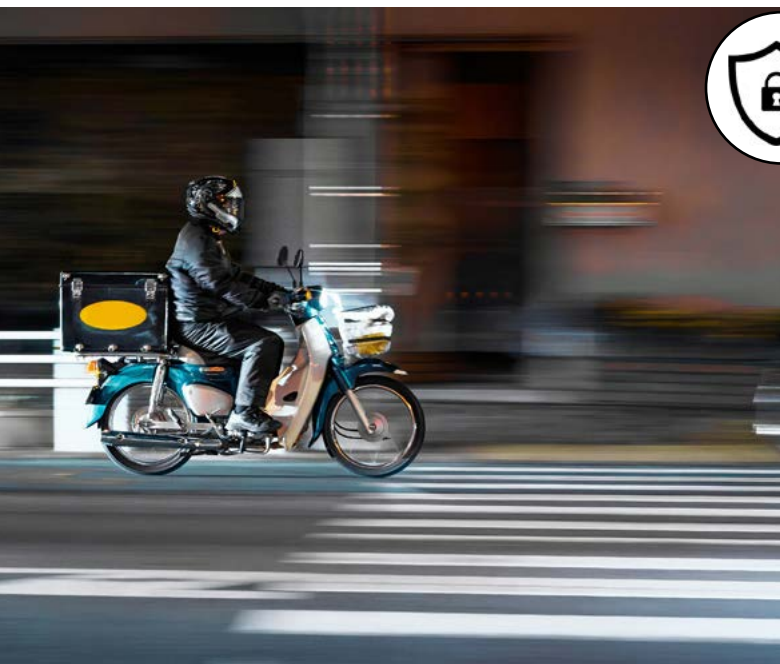
The Easter Hunt remains one of the most anticipated highlights on the Irene Farm Villages social calendar, bringing together families, friends, and neighbours for a morning of shared enjoyment. Set against the backdrop of the Village Green, the event creates a lively, festive atmosphere where children can explore, play, and share in the excitement of the hunt. At the same time, parents and residents gather to connect and enjoy the occasion.

This year's event is made possible by the Irene Farm Villages HOA, with generous and continued support from Peter Varrie of Pam Golding Properties, as well as valued contributions from anonymous sponsors. The Estate extends its sincere appreciation to all who contribute – whether through sponsorship, planning, or participation–

as these collective efforts continue to shape this event into a much-loved tradition within the community.

Beyond the activities themselves, the Easter Hunt serves as a meaningful opportunity to strengthen community spirit. It provides a space for residents to engage with one another in a relaxed and welcoming environment, reinforcing the sense of belonging that defines Irene Farm Villages. The willingness of volunteers to assist with the setup and coordination of activities further reflects the estate's collaborative nature, where residents actively contribute to creating memorable experiences for all.





Ensuring Secure Deliveries in Irene Farm Villages

A common question from homeowners concerns delivery vehicles entering the estate using a single access code and making multiple deliveries within the estate with that same code.

Many of these delivery companies deliver dozens of parcels within the estate each day, so regularly that residents often recognise the drivers who service their homes. To ensure efficiency and prevent congestion at the gates, delivery vehicles are permitted to complete multiple deliveries using a single access code. To maintain safety, estate-owned devices track all delivery vehicles.

The Board would like to reassure residents that security remains a top priority. Our protocols are designed to be both secure and practical, carefully balancing safety with resident convenience. While we employ high-quality security providers, our systems and procedures are continuously implemented to ensure effective and consistent protection across the estate.

Speed Limits, Fines, and Shuttle Services

Safety on our internal roads is a priority for everyone in Irene Farm Villages.

To maintain a safe environment for pedestrians, children, and other vehicles, our HOA Rules and Regulations prescribe a strict speed limit of 40 km/h within the estate. This limit is not optional – it applies to all vehicles driven within the estate's roads, without exception.

According to Rule 4.4.21 of the HOA Rules and Regulations, the speed limit within the estate is 40 km/h, and all motorists must adhere to it.

Owners are responsible for the conduct of their families, tenants, visitors, employees, contractors, and other individuals associated with their stands.

Shuttle services operating within the estate – for example, those used by residents for school runs, airport transfers, or resident and guest transport – are considered service providers arranged by



a resident. The resident who engages the shuttle service is therefore responsible for ensuring that the driver adheres to the 40 km/h speed limit.

Any speeding violation detected from a shuttle service vehicle linked to a resident's stand will result in the applicable fine being levied against that resident's levy account, in accordance with Rule 4.4.21.

These provisions exist to create a safe living environment – particularly where pedestrians, children playing, walkers, and cyclists share our internal roads. Compliance with the 40 km/h speed limit protects all road users.

Residents are therefore reminded to brief all shuttle operators on the estate's internal speed limit and drivers' obligations when entering, and to familiarise themselves with the estate's Rules and Regulations, which can be accessed here: <https://irenefarmvillages.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/IFV-Rules-Regulations-July-2025.pdf>

As we head into a season of cooler days and well-deserved breaks, we encourage you to take time to unwind, connect with family and friends, and enjoy the peaceful environment we are fortunate to call home.

Wishing you a restful, joyful April – and may you find time to pause and enjoy the beauty of the season around you.

Anna-Mart Steyn
Estate Manager



IRENE FARM VILLAGES HOME OWNERS ASSOCIATION
Summary Operational Income Statement – YTD January 2026
 January 2026 Year to Date YTD Variance
 Actual Budget Actual Budget Value %

Operational Income						
<i>Levy Income</i>	1 504 303	1 504 303	16 483 936	16 483 933	3	0,0%
<i>Other Income</i>	63 060	40 500	721 123	445 500	275 623	61,9%
	1 567 363	1 544 803	17 205 059	16 929 433	275 626	1,6%
Operational Expenditure						
<i>Professional /Administration</i>	98 907	158 986	1 501 768	1 606 446	104 678	6,5%
Accounting and Auditing	50 480	57 117	641 338	628 287	(13 051)	-2,1%
Insurance, Legal and Admin	48 427	101 869	860 430	978 159	117 729	12,0%
<i>General Office</i>	29 669	33 067	324 824	362 147	37 323	10,3%
Office Administration	29 669	33 067	324 824	362 147	37 323	10,3%
<i>Operational Expenses</i>	325 509	331 594	3 494 119	3 843 038	348 919	9,1%
Municipal Charges	47 681	76 123	798 816	822 857	24 041	2,9%
General Operations	18 422	39 271	451 747	431 981	(19 766)	-4,6%
Salaries & Wages	259 405	216 200	2 243 556	2 588 200	344 644	13,3%
<i>Security</i>	560 925	605 259	6 854 504	6 657 849	(196 655)	-3,0%
Security Operations	86 499	108 565	1 395 835	1 194 215	(201 620)	-16,9%
Guarding Services	474 426	496 694	5 371 752	5 463 634	91 882	1,7%
Insurance Claims and Excess	0	0	86 918	0	(86 918)	100,0%
<i>Repairs & Maintenance</i>	283 236	275 123	2 871 895	3 026 353	154 458	5,1%
Repairs & Maintenance	275 953	268 811	2 849 304	2 956 921	107 617	3,6%
Park Maintenance Contract	7 284	6 312	22 591	69 432	46 841	67,5%
	1 298 246	1 404 029	15 047 111	15 495 833	448 722	2,9%
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	269 117	140 774	2 157 948	1 433 600		
<i>Non-Recurring Income</i>	55 695	0	353 252	0	353 252	100,0%
Estate Penalties	2 550	0	66 000	0	66 000	100,0%
Speed Infringements (Net)	46 990	0	229 808	0	229 808	100,0%
Other Revenue	6 155	0	57 444	0	57 444	100,0%
<i>Non-Recurring Expenses</i>	86 179	0	417 665	1 570 000	1 152 335	73,4%
<i>Net Positive/ (Negative)</i>	(30 483)	0	(64 413)	(1 570 000)	(799 083)	
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	238 633	140 774	2 093 534	(136 400)		

Summary Income Statement by Account Ability
 Office Address: Sovereign Drive, Route 21 Corporate Park
 Accounting Office Hours: 8:00 to 13:00 Monday to Friday

Office Tel: 082 780 0059
 Accounts Email: accounts@aams.co.za
 IFV Accounts: Winny Boshoff

APRIL IN THE GARDEN

GARDEN CHORES FOR THIS MONTH

- Overseed lawns that get frost in winter. Aerate compacted lawns every few years using a spike roller or a garden fork. Water in Vermi-pellets.
- Split large clumps of rhizomatous and bulbous clump-forming plants like watsonias, wild garlic, dietes (wild iris) and agapanthus. Divide overcrowded or tired-looking groundcovers and perennials like gaura, perennial lobelia and phlox; replant the younger outer growth in well-prepared soil.
- Clean out water features and paint if required.

ON YOUR TO-DO LIST FOR APRIL

PLANT AND SOW

- Plant easy-to-grow beauties such as calendulas, primulas, poppies, pansies and violas, and Namaqualand daisies.
- Sow vegetables such as broad beans, peas, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, onions, and turnips.
- Harvest root vegetables such as potatoes, beetroot, and carrots. Dry them out over a few days and then store them.
- Now's the time to prepare your beds for sowing sweet peas so you can look forward to filling your home with these fragrant blooms in spring.

NEATEN UP

- Prune hedges into shape.
- Deadhead spent rose blooms to encourage more flowers – and use a preventative spray for downy mildew during cool, damp periods.
- Spike lawn areas with a garden fork where the soil is compacting to allow time for the grass to recover before the cold season begins. Use a spike roller every few years to aerate your lawn if there's extensive compacting.





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ACHIEVABLE FINANCIAL GOALS FOR 2026

As South Africans move into 2026, many new year's resolutions continue to focus on health and wellness, but financial wellbeing is quickly catching up. Recent studies reveal that an increasing number of people are committing to saving more and managing their money wisely.

This shift reflects a growing awareness that financial health is just as important as physical health when navigating today's economic pressures. Gavin Letley of Direct Axis says that while successive interest rate reductions have provided consumers with some relief, food price inflation remains high. The costs of electricity, housing, services and rates have contributed to an inflation rate that remains above the Reserve Bank's 3% target, and economic growth remains constrained.

Letley adds that one of the main reasons people abandon their resolutions is that they set unachievable goals. When it becomes clear that they can't achieve these, they lose motivation. "It is far more effective to set feasible targets because the satisfaction of reaching them encourages you to continue," he states.

He suggests the following practical steps to get started:



- **Draw up a budget:** Although budgeting may seem daunting, it is one of the most important steps in taking control of your finances. It shows where your income goes each month and in breaking down your earnings and expenses, it also helps you identify unnecessary costs and create room for savings. Simply draw a line down the centre of a page, listing your income on the left and all expenses on the right. Alternatively, there are online budgeting tools that provide a step-by-step guide.

- **Improve your credit score:** Your credit score helps banks, retailers, landlords and others assess your financial reliability. A poor score can limit your access to credit and other financial products and services or result in you receiving higher interest rates on loans. Most people can improve their credit score by at least 20 points by simply reducing the number of credit facilities they hold, and paying accounts on time. A stronger score may unlock more financial products and can help you save on interest.

- **Increase your financial knowledge:** Taking control of your financial future starts with informed decision-making. Fortunately, there is an abundance of credible online content produced by authorised advisors and financial institutions. Given the amount of information available, start by identifying topics you want to understand better and explore content from a few reputable sources. Compare perspectives to ensure the information is accurate, practical and relevant to your needs. Letley concludes that these three simple steps will give a solid foundation to start building a healthier financial future.



Information provided by Meropa Communications on behalf of Direct Axis

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THE BUSH IS CALLING...



It is the perfect time to take a break, reconnect with nature, and enjoy some well-deserved downtime. If you're looking for an easy escape without the hassle of long travel, why not visit one of these beautiful bush lodges? Just a short drive or flight from home, these destinations offer unforgettable wildlife experiences, fresh air, and plenty of fun for kids and the whole family.

South Africans are truly privileged to have some of the world's most spectacular bushveld right on their doorstep. From the malaria-free Pilanesberg to private concessions bordering the Kruger National Park and the untamed beauty of Makalali, each lodge offers a unique way to enjoy the bush. Whether it's early morning game drives, relaxed afternoons by the pool, or sundowners overlooking vast landscapes, these lodges deliver both adventure and tranquillity.

Each property caters to different travel styles – from family-friendly comfort to intimate tented luxury, community-rooted stays, and full-service lodges ideal for groups or conferences.

Ivory Tree Game Lodge

A classic Pilanesberg retreat, Ivory Tree Game Lodge combines sweeping valley views with family-friendly facilities. With a large swimming pool, spa, and versatile conference spaces, it's ideal for couples, families, and groups seeking a comfortable bush escape close to Johannesburg. Located within a Big Five reserve, the lodge offers daily game drives alongside relaxing wellness experiences.



Shepherd's Tree Game Lodge

Set within its own private concession in Pilanesberg, Shepherd's Tree Game Lodge offers a more secluded and exclusive experience. Guests can enjoy expansive bush views, elegant suites, and a tranquil spa. It's a perfect choice for those looking for privacy, luxury, and peaceful moments between game drives.



Nkuhlu Tented Camp

For a more authentic safari feel, Nkuhlu Tented Camp provides an unfenced, riverside experience in Kruger National Park. Raised canvas suites overlook the Sabie River, offering a close connection to nature without sacrificing comfort. Ideal for adults or families with older teens, this camp is perfect for those seeking a true bush immersion.



Nkambeni Tented Camp

Located on the western boundary of the Kruger National Park, Nkambeni Tented Camp began as a community initiative and has grown into a welcoming Big Five destination. With spacious tents on private decks, guided drives within a private concession, and a strong focus on local employment, it's a meaningful and memorable safari choice.



Buffalo Rock Safari Camp

Situated within the Nkambeni concession, Buffalo Rock Safari Camp offers an intimate and luxurious unfenced experience. Wildlife roams freely through the camp, creating a thrilling yet peaceful atmosphere. Guided drives and bush walks make the most of the area's rich game density.



Skukuza Safari Lodge

Located in the heart of Skukuza Rest Camp, Skukuza Safari Lodge is ideal for travellers seeking convenience and accessibility. With 128 rooms and family-friendly facilities, it serves as a gateway to Kruger's incredible biodiversity, offering easy access to main routes, expert guides, and comfortable amenities.



Makalali Game Lodge

Makalali Game Lodge offers two distinct experiences: the Main Lodge, with its classic bush luxury, and the River Lodge, featuring private suites along the Makhutswi River. Set within a vast private reserve west of Kruger, both lodges provide high-end accommodation, secluded settings, and exceptional game viewing across 26,000 hectares. It's perfect for guests wanting a more exclusive, boutique safari experience.

Whether you're planning a family getaway, a romantic retreat, or a peaceful break in nature, these bush lodges offer something for everyone. With incredible wildlife, comfortable accommodation, and experiences that bring you closer to nature, your next adventure is closer than you think.

*Sources: Travel News Weekly

MORE ROOTS, LESS RESTLESSNESS:

Why South Africans Are Coming Home to Local Property Investment



For years, offshore investing was often framed as the smart move: diversify, earn in harder currency and spread risk beyond South Africa's borders. Many South Africans still take that approach and in the right circumstances it makes sense. But as we move into 2026, more investors are reappraising what "security" really looks like and local property is increasingly part of the answer.

The shift is not just emotional. It is visible in the numbers. BetterBond's latest data shows home loan applications are 16% higher year on year, and 23.5% up from the low point in Q3 2023. With the prime lending rate now 10.25% after the latest cut, and 150 basis points lower than it was at the start of September last year, affordability has started to loosen in a way the market can feel.

A renewed trust in the local market

South Africa's housing market has not been immune to pressure, but it has remained remarkably functional through a difficult rate cycle. Official data from Statistics South Africa's Residential Property Price Index shows

national property price inflation at 6.6% year on year (as at June 2025), with notable regional differences such as the Western Cape at 10.2% and Gauteng at 3.1%.

At the same time, transaction activity and buyer appetite are responding to easing conditions. One of the clearest signals is that access to home ownership is improving again. BetterBond reports that average deposits required for first-time buyers are down 20% year on year, which matters because deposits can be the biggest barrier between "ready to buy" and "able to buy".

Investing where you can stay close to your assets

Property is an investment you live with, even when you do not live in it. That is why proximity counts. Owning locally makes it easier to check on an asset, stay on top of maintenance and appoint reputable professionals, from managing agents to attorneys.

It also reduces decision fatigue and "buyer's remorse". Investors can assess neighbourhood trends with more confidence, understand municipal realities, compare local rental demand and lean on relationships with



experienced agents. In a world where uncertainty is global, many people are placing a higher value on clarity and control.

A desire to build something lasting at home

Beyond financial gains, local property investment speaks to legacy. Buying a home or investment unit in South Africa is a way to secure the future for one's family, create generational stability and build wealth in a tangible, meaningful way.

Families want to leave behind assets that anchor future generations. A property rooted in the same country where memories are made and milestones are celebrated becomes part of a family's story. Local real estate provides the opportunity to grow wealth while strengthening the foundation on which that story is built.

The past few years reshaped how people think about home. Proximity to loved ones, community connections, lifestyle choices and quality of life matter more than ever. These priorities are influencing investment decisions too.

The rental market remains an important pillar for investors looking for monthly cashflow. The PayProp Rental Index reports average rent at R9 286 in Q3 2025, with 4.9% year-on-year growth.

For investors, this reinforces a key point: local property can provide a blend of potential capital growth and rental income, particularly when the asset is well located, appropriately priced and professionally managed.

A grounded path to long-term security

Offshore investments still have their place, but local property offers something more rooted and enduring. It provides reliable returns, a clear understanding of market forces and the comfort of owning an asset in the country you call home.



If you are considering buying locally, focus on the basics that drive outcomes over time: location quality, affordability, rental demand, total cost of ownership and the strength of the professional team supporting the transaction. The goal is not to chase certainty in faraway places. For many investors, it is to build it steadily, right here.

Information provided by Just Property



Photo by Klara Kulikova on Unsplash

Please email your answer along with your full name, your cell number, estate name and your stand number, detailing 'Restaurant Competition' in the subject line, to (Click on the link below): competitions@eiapublishing.co.za and like our Facebook page to enter the competition. The winner will be notified by email.

Restaurant Competition

Answer the question below and stand a chance to win a restaurant voucher worth R500.00 from The Baron:

On which date will estate management and Bradden 'Hiking' Stevens guide a birding walk in Irene Village?



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

1. Vouchers cannot be exchanged for cash.
2. Portions of the monetary value of the voucher cannot be refunded as 'change'.
3. Bookings need to be made in advance with the restaurant detailed on the voucher.
4. Service charges/gratuities are not included, regardless of any balance left over after the meal.
5. Vouchers will be numbered. Please provide your voucher number when you make your reservation.
6. The competition is open to readers over the age of 18.
7. Indemnity: The publishers and other associated parties are not responsible for the fulfilment of the service from the restaurant once the prize has been awarded.

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KINDLY NOTE: ALL SMALLS ADVERTISEMENTS NEED TO BE RESUBMITTED EVERY MONTH.

Smalls

GARDENER

Henry, is available for garden work in Irene Farm Villages. Should any residents require his services, please call him on 079 377 9997.

DOMESTIC WORKER

Gina is a hardworking, dependable, and trustworthy domestic worker seeking employment on Mondays and Wednesdays within the estate. She has been working for me for the past six months. If you're looking for a dedicated and capable domestic worker, please WhatsApp me at Heike (083 399 3239), and I will return your call, or you can reach out to Gina directly at 072 083 4229.

My housekeeper, **Elizabeth Randa**, a Zimbabwean, is looking for chores to fill a few weekdays. She comes highly recommended by myself, Memela Makiwane Stand 3086. She is punctual and meticulous. If interested, please contact Elizabeth directly on 074 376 6232.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

GENERAL SERVICES

DESIGNER WATER: Alkaline water pH10. 330ml R240 x 24; 500ml R264 x 24; 750ml R192 x 12; 1ltr R192 x 12; 5ltr R200 x 4; 10ltr R80 x 1. Please call 082 662 4084.

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HOME SERVICES:

"LET'S FIX IT" HANDYMAN:

Contact Wayne @ 082 785 3446.

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DO GAS: SANS 10087 applies to all domestic gas installations. Non-compliance negatively affects your safety and home insurance. Contact DoGAS for a free assessment to ensure your compliance. Tel +27 65 724 5178 / contact.dogas@gmail.com

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A GUIDE TO BIRDWATCHING

BY BRADDEN "HIKING" STEVENS

According to the International Ornithological Congress, 11,250 species of birds are present on Earth today, with numbers fluctuating as new species are discovered and others go extinct (www.worldbirdnames.org).

With these figures, it's no wonder that birding is so popular! They are present in almost all environments, from pristine wetlands to forests, deserts, grasslands, open oceans, suburban gardens, savannahs, and city centres. Birds have been an integral part of human existence for thousands of years and will continue to do so!

They inspire civilizations, as can be seen in ancient Egyptian culture, where they were seen as intermediaries between people and the divine, and in the modern era, where birds are represented on the flags (especially eagles) of many countries and/or on their coats of arms. Here they symbolise the concepts of power, freedom, and national heritage.

Bird watching has fundamentally shaped how we now view the natural world.

In 1835, a young naturalist, Charles Darwin, aboard the HMS Beagle, spent five weeks in the Galapagos, which helped shape his theory of evolution by natural selection.

It was here that Darwin noticed a number of Finch species



African swamphen, seen while hiking within the Rietvlei Nature Reserve

across the islands, which at first glance all looked very similar, except for differences in the shape and size of their beaks.

He theorizes that these Finches came from the mainland and have a common ancestor. Ornithologist John Gould later identified each species and confirmed that they are in fact related. He believed that beak sizes and shapes are formed via natural variability and strengthened by food availability.



Red-billed Quelea are common but often overlooked. These were seen on a fence in a semi-urban setting.

For example, if a certain island is dominated by trees that bear hard nuts, individual birds born by chance (natural variability) with heavier set bills have an advantage, in that they are better equipped to crack the nuts and feed. These individuals will inevitably thrive, passing these genes onto the next generation, while those without the advantageous genes will perish.

Over time, driven by climatic events, only those birds with the best adaptations to feeding on that particular island survive and become a distinct species.

Researchers, Peter and Rosemary Grant, continue to build on Darwin's work, confirming that rapid environmental changes, such as droughts, drive dramatic evolution in beak size!

The benefits of bird watching

People across the world, from all walks of life, enjoy birding for many reasons:

Reconnecting with nature, while getting some gentle exercise, improves and maintains cognitive abilities. Bird watching teaches one to make better use of one's sight and hearing (Identifying birds by call alone is very rewarding. Bird watching makes one more aware of one's surroundings and increases social cohesion in a safe, structured environment. Many birding clubs organize guided birding outings, allowing members to engage with like-minded individuals, learn more, and explore areas which maybe previously unknown to them.



Secretary bird, an endangered iconic species! Seen within Rietvlei Nature Reserve.

What do I need to start?

I advise starting small. Realistically, all you need is a Field guide to birds of Southern Africa to help identify species. Birding applications can be advantageous because they often include additional information, such as bird calls.

A small notebook to jot down observations (additional features, whether male/female, adult/juvenile; can also be recorded), and making voice notes can be convenient. You will also need a comfortable pair of shoes and adequate water.

While birding from a vehicle allows birders to cover more ground and often leads to more species observed in a day, I much prefer being on foot. Hiking at a sedate pace allows birders to become more in tune with their surroundings (without the noise of vehicles), access more remote areas, and, in my experience, often leads to sightings of more elusive species.

A pair of binoculars is an added bonus. Most guides (me included) recommend 8x42 binoculars [8x refers to the magnification, and 42 is the objective lens diameter (the diameter of the front lenses is 42mm)] for birding. These are generally recommended for birdlife/wildlife enthusiasts as they are portable and stable (increased magnification decreases image stability and makes tracking fast-moving objects more challenging), and the 42mm size gathers enough light for high-quality images in low-light conditions, such as in thickets and at dawn/dusk.

Conclusion

Wildlife gardens, estate parks, wild areas, and bird feeders already attract a wide diversity. Start bird watching today! A variety of birdlife can be seen right here within Irene Farm Villages.

Nearby reserves such as the Rietvlei Nature Reserve, Bishops Bird Park, and, a bit further out, the Marievale Bird Sanctuary are all excellent options waiting to be explored!

For more birding tips and an enjoyable morning out, the reader is invited to join us (estate management, fellow guide/great birder Alistair, and me) on a gentle birding walk on Saturday, 18th April 2026. We meet at the post boxes in Irene Farm Village at 07:00.

Happy birding all,
hope to see you there!

TRADITIONAL HOMEMADE HOT CROSS BUNS

RECIPE BY ABIGAIL DONNELLY

Hot cross buns are a cherished treat, lovingly baked with warm spices and sweet dried fruits that fill the kitchen with a comforting aroma. Why not make your own traditional hot cross buns this Easter with this delicious recipe, and fill your home with the irresistible scent and warmth of freshly baked goodness?

Ingredients

480g flour
2 x 10g instant yeast sachets
10g brown sugar
½ tsp cinnamon
½ tsp nutmeg
Salt, a pinch
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
1 lemon, zested
1 ¼ cups of milk
3 tbsp butter
2 free-range eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
135g sultanas and raisins

For the flour paste:

125g flour
5 tbsp water

For the glaze:

65ml golden syrup
65ml boiling water



Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

To make the hot cross buns

- Combine the flour, yeast, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, lemon zest and dried fruit in a large mixing bowl.
- Place the milk and butter in a saucepan and heat gently until the butter has melted. Lightly whisk the eggs and vanilla together and add to the dry ingredients, along with the milk-and-butter mixture.
- Gently mix the dough using your hands or a wooden spoon until the mixture comes together.
- Turn the dough out onto a clean surface and knead for 10 minutes.
- Place in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with clingfilm and place in a warm spot for

1½ hours until doubled in size.

- After the dough has risen, knock it down to its original size and then roll into 12 evenly shaped buns.
- Place the buns on a greased baking tray and cover with clingfilm, leaving enough room for the buns to rise. Allow the buns to rise for another 30 minutes.

To make the flour paste

- Mix the flour and water together to form a smooth paste, place it in a Ziploc sandwich bag and cut off one of the corners to make a piping bag.
- Pipe a cross onto each bun and bake for 15 minutes, or until the buns are golden and cooked through. Glaze the buns while they are still hot.

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WHY KIDS NEED BOREDOM EVEN IF IT DRIVES PARENTS MAD

BY NICOLA KILLOPS

In a community like Silver Lakes, where children have access to sports facilities, cycling paths, swimming pools, extra-murals and endless digital entertainment, boredom can feel unnecessary. We live in an environment designed to offer stimulation. When a child announces boredom, the instinct is to fix it quickly.

Suggest something.
Organise a playdate.
Hand over a device.

But boredom is not a problem. It is a developmental tool.

UNSTRUCTURED TIME BUILDS CREATIVE THINKING

When children are not being directed

or entertained, their brains shift into a reflective state. This is where imagination expands. It is where ideas connect and original thinking begins.

In structured activities, the rules are clear. In boredom, the rules must be created.

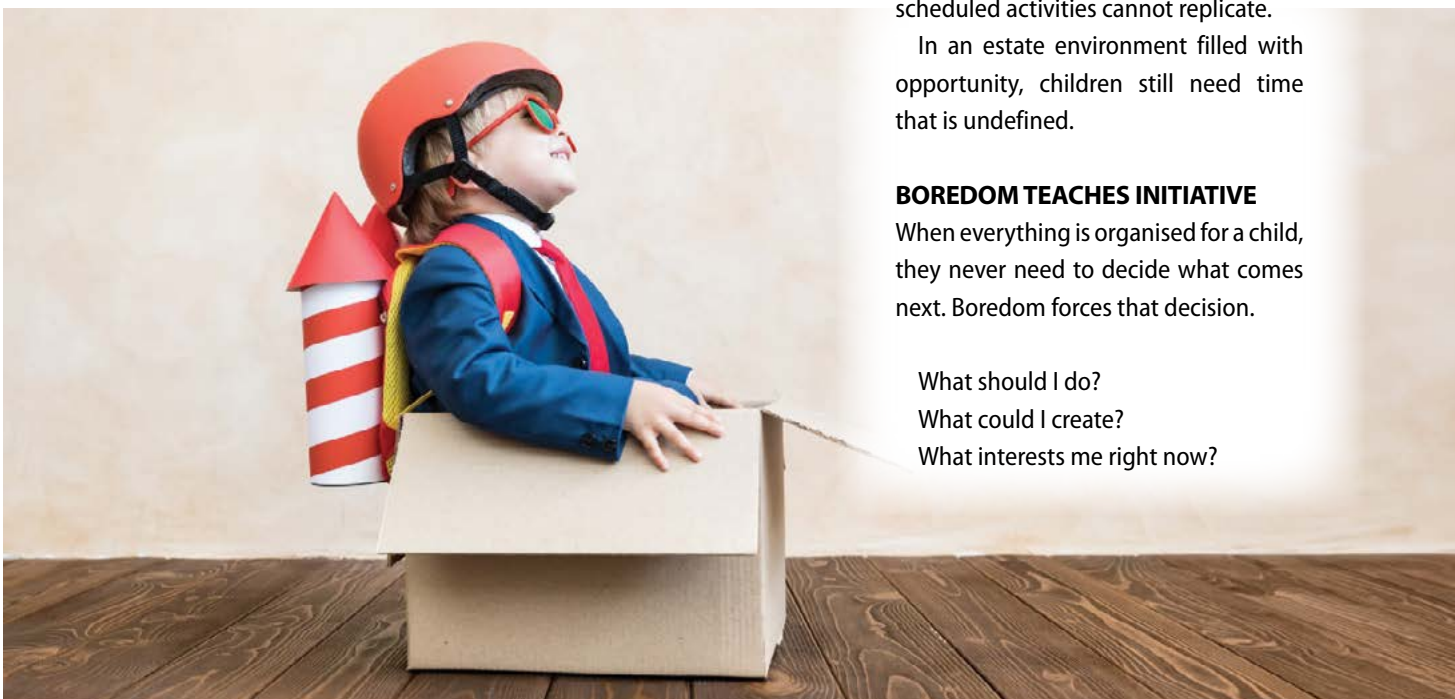
That shift matters. It encourages children to invent games, build worlds, design projects and follow curiosity. It strengthens creativity in a way that scheduled activities cannot replicate.

In an estate environment filled with opportunity, children still need time that is undefined.

BOREDOM TEACHES INITIATIVE

When everything is organised for a child, they never need to decide what comes next. Boredom forces that decision.

What should I do?
What could I create?
What interests me right now?



In answering those questions, children practise planning, organising and problem-solving. They gather materials. They start and abandon ideas. They negotiate with siblings.

They learn to manage time without constant instruction.

These are executive functional skills. They are foundational for academic success and independence later in life.

LEARNING TO TOLERATE DISCOMFORT

Boredom is mildly uncomfortable. That discomfort is useful.

When there is no immediate stimulation, children must tolerate restlessness. They must wait. They must sit with the feeling of not knowing what to do.

In a world built around instant access and quick distraction, the ability to endure small amounts of discomfort builds resilience. It supports attention span. It reduces reliance on constant entertainment. It strengthens emotional regulation.

A child who can manage boredom can manage frustration more effectively too.

INDEPENDENCE BUILDS CONFIDENCE

There is also quiet confidence that grows when children solve boredom themselves.

When a child realises they can generate interest without help, they begin to trust their own thinking. That confidence transfers into schoolwork, social situations and creative tasks.

In estates where children often have rich schedules and abundant options, the goal is not fewer opportunities. It is space between them.

WHAT BOREDOM IS NOT

This is not about neglect. It is not about removing stimulation or ignoring a child for long stretches. Persistent isolation is different from healthy unstructured times.



We are talking about ordinary boredom. A quiet afternoon. A slow school holiday morning. A weekend without a packed timetable.

Short periods of unstructured time are not harmful. They are productive.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO ALLOW IT

If you want to experiment with giving boredom more space, start small.

Create a simple materials drawer or box with open-ended items. Paper, cardboard, art supplies, building blocks, garden tools, old magazines. Avoid items with instructions. Let imagination lead.

When your child says they are bored, pause before solving it. Ask what ideas they have. Give them time to think.

Avoid defaulting immediately to screens. Technology has its place, but instant entertainment removes the opportunity for self-directed problem-solving.

Make use of the estate itself. Encourage wandering in the garden, cycling, building forts, sketching under a tree or inventing games in shared green spaces. Safe environments are ideal for unstructured exploration.

A SMALL SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

In high-performing communities, it is easy to equate busy with productivity. Yet constant activity does not automatically build independence.

Boredom does something quieter and more powerful. It teaches children how to generate interest, tolerate discomfort and trust their own ideas.

The next time you hear "I'm bored," resist the urge to rush in.

Give it a moment.

What looks like nothing happening may be the start of something important.

Gauteng the Secret's Out! Mambos is Changing the Home Game



Homeware

Guess what?

The Western Cape's favourite home-living secret has officially landed in Gauteng, and it's a total game-changer. Mambos Storage and Home has opened up massive, unpretentious "discovery" stores in Castlegate, Newmarket, Byls Bridge, and Kyalami Hills, and you need to see them for yourself.

Why is everyone obsessed?

Because Mambos gets it. They know we want our homes to look modern and stylish without spending a fortune. From the ultimate pantry-organisation kits to trendy décor and even heavy-duty gear for your guesthouse or cafe, they've got it all.

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It's 16 branches of "where has this been all my life?" nifty solutions. No more choosing between "boring" and "expensive." Check out their store locator online and go find your local Mambos. Your house (and your wallet) will thank you!



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