

OBITUARY

Daan Buijs

1960–2024

Daniel Buijs passed away unexpectedly on 2 June 2024. Daan, as he was referred to, was a long-standing member of SAWMA (since the early eighties), and worked for the past 20 years for the North West Province's Directorate of Biodiversity Management, where he was a scientist, focusing on large mammals, specifically herbivores.

Daan was born on the 17th of June 1960 in the Netherlands, and soon immigrated to South Africa. He grew up in Johannesburg, in the then Transvaal, and matriculated in 1978 from Linden High School. After school he went on to do a B.Sc. and Honours degree at the University of Pretoria, completing the latter in 1983. He later did his M.Sc. thesis at the Mammal Research Institute (UP) on the ecology of eland in the SA Lombard Nature Reserve in the North West Province – a province he would later become intricately involved in. While a researcher, he also assisted with lecturing duties for the University. During 1987, he was employed as a researcher by the Rhino and Elephant Foundation, and he conducted a national survey on the extent of privately owned white rhinoceros-owning properties across the country. This was a time of plenty for the species, when the species was being translocated far and wide and poaching was not as rife as it has been of late.

He did his national service in the SA defence force in 1988 and was fortunate to work with an environmental section, and even got to do ecological surveys, including in biodiverse and interesting areas such as the Madimbo corridor along the Limpopo River – a privilege not many army personnel ever got to experience!

He was later (in 1990) a researcher in the Department of Agricultural Development, focusing on game production in the Eastern Cape. In 1992, he continued this work, but in the Range and Forage Institute of the newly formed Agricultural Research Council.

Between 1998 and 2000, he was an independent researcher and contracted by WWF-SA to do yet another survey on white rhinoceros properties across the country.

From 2000 to 2004 he joined a provincial government Department, specifically the Gauteng Pro-

vincial Government. He was employed there as a scientist focusing on the role of a regional ecologist. He worked in the Cradle of Humankind area, as well as the Dinokeng Game Reserve, and wrote management plans for several other provincial reserves.

In the middle of 2004 he moved to the North West Province, along with his then wife, Ms Hermien Roux, who was also inclined to a conservation pedigree. There, he was the Assistant Director in the subdirectorate of Biodiversity Scientific Support, though he later relinquished this managerial role in favour of being a full-time scientist until the present, where he worked under Mr Willem Boshoff.

Over the years and in his professional life, he has authored a few scientific publications, been a member of numerous forums and task teams and has presented at several SAWMA conferences.

Of late, he has been involved in a task team examining the historical distribution of large mammals, with a view to improve translocation protocols, especially in the context of extra-limital species, which did not endear him to the ranching fraternity – but these have been necessary discussions. He was involved in processes of approving the latest iterations of the elephant management plans for Madikwe and Pilanesberg, and he was also involved in the managing of a small herd of elephant near Zeerust in a highly challenging community-owned reserve. Given his experience in surveying rhinoceros populations, he coordinated the submission of North West Province's rhino population statistics to the National Rhino Management Group – a province which has experienced unprecedented growth in these species, aside from a semi-extensive captive facility.

Most recently, he kept himself quietly busy with documenting the mammal diversity of the Marico Biosphere Reserve near his home in Zeerust. As his role in the Department was to assess permit applications for exports and the like, he became an avid opponent of facilities that had nefarious welfare standards and was highly outspoken on any sub-standard facilities. So much so, that this would be part and parcel of the need for animal well-being to be considered in biodiversity legislation.



He was an avid supporter of the Lions rugby team, and enjoyed fishing, birdwatching, game viewing and walking his dogs!

He is survived by his two sisters and two brothers, Hilde, Nelly, and Machiel and Hans, respectively, as well as his nephew Reuben who shared his passion for fishing. He loved visiting the Pilanesberg with his family and the lofty hilltops of the reserve will be a silent reminder to them of all

he had a passion for, and what he strove to achieve in his work.

He contributed greatly to wildlife management in the country, and he will be sorely missed by all who had the privilege of working with him.

R. John Power

Department of Economic Development,
Environment, Conservation & Tourism (DEDECT)
North West Provincial Government