



## WINTER TRACKS

### THE NEWEST PAWS ON OUR PATH: MEET THE JULY INTAKES

This July we're thrilled to welcome our newest students to the pack! With bright eyes, open notebooks, and boots ready for the bush, the July intakes have officially begun their journey. We can already feel the energy they're bringing to the farm: fresh questions, curious minds, and that unmistakable spark of wonder that makes every trail new again.

These students are beginning their journey into the conservation and hospitality industries. The programme starts with core training in First Aid and Fire Fighting, equipping them with practical skills that are vital to both fields, and setting a solid foundation for the learning and field experience to come.

Welcome to the family. We can't wait to see the tracks you leave.





## TWINKLING LIGHTS AND ICY NIGHTS

The cold outside didn't stand a chance against the warmth inside, as our annual Student Winter Formal brought the magic of a Winter Wonderland to Sondela Academy this month.

The Winter Formal 2026 was a night full of music, laughter, and dancing that lasted until the very last song. Students, staff and many of our wonderful outside colleagues showed up in their best, hit the dance floor together, and turned the cold evening into something warm and unforgettable. Between group photos, slow dances, and singing along with friends, it was less about the theme and more about the people, the connections, the memories, and the joy of celebrating. And of course there were the signature speeches from management!



The prize winners also deserve a moment of appreciation!

The best dressed went to: Paige

The best couple: Lucinda & Naas

The best vibe: Natasha Muller & Marisa de Wet

A big thank you to the student committee, staff and the night's MC, Chris, who brought the Winter Wonderland to life with decor, delicious food, music, and all the little details that made the night special. Thank you, also, to the TRIO Events team who enjoyed the night with us. To everyone who came, danced, and made it sparkle — thank you for making our Winter Formal 2026 one to remember. Here's to more moments like this as we head into the rest of year.





## KYKNET BUIE EXPO ✨

The bush was buzzing on the weekend of 24-26 July, at the legendary KykNET Buite Ekspo, held right here on our doorstep.

Known as the largest outdoor expo of its kind in South Africa, the Buite Ekspo brought together exhibitors, thousands of guests, and the very best of the outdoor and hospitality industry.

Beyond the stalls, the expo was about people. We connected with industry partners, future students, past guests, and families looking for their next bush getaway. It's a reminder that hospitality isn't just about beds and breakfasts, it's about creating experiences that people take home with them.

Thank you to everyone who came to Sondela for another incredible weekend, and to our students who helped represent Sondela with such pride.

If we missed you at the expo — come visit us at Sondela. The fire is always warm, and the bush is always calling.







## SCHOOL VISITS



These past few weeks, our Sondela Academy students took their passion for conservation and hospitality beyond the reserve and into high schools. We've travelled all over northern SA!



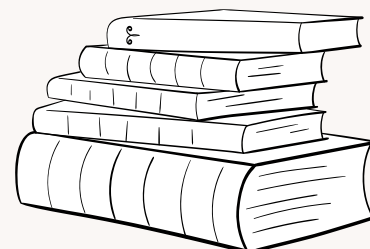
The students didn't just talk, they brought the bush with them. For many Grade 10-12 learners, it was the first time they had considered conservation and hospitality as a real, viable career path right here in Limpopo.



At Sondela, we believe that the conservation and hospitality industry starts with education. The response was incredible, lots of questions, lots of laughter, and a few future students in the making.



A huge thank you to the schools who welcomed us, the educators who made it possible, and our Sondela students who represented the academy with such heart and professionalism.







With newfound skills and hands-on experience, our students are now better prepared to handle snake encounters safely and professionally in the field. Congratulations to each of our successful candidates! We're proud to see you embracing the wild, one scale at a time!

## STUDENT OF THE MONTH

This past month was filled with many busy moments...

Even when things got crazy, this student never cracked under the pressure. We are proud to present this month's Student of the Month Award:

☆ The Chill Pill Award ☆

To: Christiaan Breytenbach

Congratulations on keeping cool!



## SLITHERING SUCCESS

It was time to trade textbooks for scales as our 3rd Year Conservation students took on the thrilling Snake Handling Course, presented by The African Bite Snake Institute.

After mastering the theory and successfully passing their assessments, the students stepped into the practical arena, where they came face-to-face with some of South Africa's most fascinating venomous snakes.

From the striking Cape Cobra and the well-camouflaged Puff Adder, to the formidable Mozambique Spitting Cobra, each encounter challenged their knowledge, confidence, and respect for these incredible reptiles.

