



FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT SAWMA Conference 2026



Beyond Numbers: Clarifying the Goals of Wildlife Management and Conservation

30 August – 4 September 2026

Cradle Moon Lakeside Game Lodge, Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng

Hosted by Tshwane University of Technology

The Organising Committee of the SAWMA 2026 Conference invites scientists (researchers, students, lecturers), practitioners and policymakers to attend our annual conference from 30 August to 4 September at the Cradle Moon Lakeside Game Lodge in the beautiful Cradle of Humankind!

Cradle Moon Lakeside Game Lodge (<https://cradlemoon.co.za/>) is the resurrection of the previously Heia Safari Lodge, founded in the 1970's. The lodge, set beneath the Zwartkop Mountain, is a popular destination on the urban edge of Johannesburg and only 11.5 km from Lanseria Airport. The lodge and other portions of land surrounding Lake Heritage are part of the Cradle Moon Conservancy, which is owned and controlled by a small group of landowners. This project involves removing fences between properties and introducing various wildlife. A big attraction at the Cradle Moon Game Lodge is the dam wall on the Crocodile River, which provides the property with a special "water feature".

OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN THEME AND SUB-THEMES

"Beyond Numbers: Clarifying the Goals of Wildlife Management and Conservation" invites a critical re-examination of what success truly means in contemporary conservation. While population counts and growth rates remain important metrics, they provide only a partial lens for understanding wildlife systems embedded in complex ecological, social, cultural, and economic landscapes. This theme highlights the plural values of wildlife, the genetic and demographic processes that underpin resilience in fragmented environments, and the realities of managing species in human-dominated and mixed-use systems. It further recognises that wildlife interventions are not value-neutral, but are shaped by ethical considerations, questions of legitimacy, and competing responsibilities among stakeholders. Ultimately, moving beyond numbers requires integrating scientific rigour with governance, moral reflection, and practical implementation—ensuring that conservation actions are not only ecologically sound, but socially defensible and operationally effective in a rapidly changing world.

Sub-themes:

- Multiple values of wildlife: ecological, social, cultural, and economic
- Conservation genetics, connectivity, and population dynamics in a fragmented world
- Wildlife management in human-dominated and mixed-use systems
- Ethics, responsibility, and legitimacy in wildlife interventions
- Doing the Work: Practical tools, trade-offs, and implementation realities

A full description of the themes can be found [HERE](#)

CALL FOR ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS

Prospective presenters are invited to submit abstracts for potential inclusion in the scientific programme under the above themes.

Format and submission types:

Although the conference will be streamed live for participants who cannot attend in person, the first author or a co-author of the abstract should attend in person.

Full presentations: 15 minutes (12 min + 3 min questions)

Speed presentations: 7 minutes (5 min + 2 min questions)

Keynote presentations will be invited presentations by the scientific committee.

Guidelines:

Abstracts must be submitted for both full and speed presentations. The abstract text (excluding title, authors, and affiliations) must not exceed 250 words. A template for abstracts is available [HERE](#).

The abstract submission portal will open on 2 March 2026, and the submission deadline is 17 April 2026. A link to the submission platform will be posted on the [conference website](#) on 2 March.

Efforts will be made to accommodate the author's preference for a full or a speed presentation; however, the scientific review committee will carefully review each abstract for its scientific merit (considering the scientific method, results, and conclusions/application) and reserves the right to make the final decision. **As such, authors are responsible for ensuring the correctness of their abstracts' grammar and overall scientific quality. Students' supervisors should approve their abstracts before submission.**

Expect feedback on the outcome of your abstract submission by **11 May 2026**. If your abstract is accepted, you will be provided with further information on the operating system requirements for your presentation, instructions on loading your presentation, and more. Microsoft PowerPoint is strongly preferred for oral presentations.

DEDICATED MANAGEMENT / APPLIED SCIENCE DAY

Initiated in 2022, a dedicated day for reserve managers and other "on the ground" personnel has proved very popular in our ongoing commitment to building relationships between land managers and scientists, reserve owners and universities, rangers and NGOs. We intend to continue this year with a day dedicated to management and applied science, featuring topic-specific presentations (within the conference themes) as well as an interactive session to discuss (and potentially resolve) a real-life challenge facing management on the ground.

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

At this stage, no pre-conference workshops have been booked; if any are scheduled, they will likely take place on Sunday afternoon, 30 August, before the welcome function. Keep this in mind when planning your trip and booking your accommodation. More information should follow in due course.

ACCOMMODATION

Cradle Moon Lakeside Game Lodge has 50 chalets in total. The bulk of delegates will stay at Cradle Moon Lodge, but as we expect at least 160 delegates, not all will be able to stay there.

Therefore, a block booking has also been made at Glenburn Lodge (8 km from Cradle Moon Lodge, valid until the end of June) and Riverview Spa (4.5km from Cradle Moon Lodge, valid until the end of April) for potential overflow. However, there are several accommodation options near the venue to accommodate any delegate overflow. A list of accommodation options will be added to the conference website in due course.

Please book your accommodation early to avoid disappointment! The Cradle area is a very popular tourist attraction. Accommodation booking at Cradle Moon Lakeside Game Lodge can be done at any time from 2 March 2026.

CRADLE MOON LAKESIDE GAME LODGE CHALETS:

Accommodation at Cradle Moon Lakeside Lodge is limited to 50 chalets, each sleeping up to 3 people – two sharing a bedroom and one in a single bedroom. Each chalet has two separate bedrooms and a shared bathroom and toilet. Note that the chalets were originally designed for families, and to reach the second bedroom, you must enter through the main bedroom. Keep this in mind if you are sharing with colleagues or friends. They can be viewed at <https://cradlemoon.co.za/accommodation/>

Note that Cradle Moon is NOT a self-catering venue, and No Food or drinks are allowed on site.

All visitors are liable for a R50 conservation fee, which will be added to the conference registration fees.

Bed & Breakfast Tariffs:

OPTION 1 - Only applicable if **you book for 5 nights**, the following rates will apply:

- 1 person per chalet: R1750 per night (breakfast included)
- 2 people per chalet: R1375 per person, per night (breakfast included)
- 3 people per chalet: R1100 per person, per night (breakfast included)

OPTION 2: If you would like to book accommodation for **less than 5 nights**, the following rates will apply:

- 1 person per chalet: R1875 per night (breakfast included)
- 2 people per chalet: R1550 per person, per night (breakfast included)
- 3 people per chalet: R1550 per person, per night (breakfast included)

Booking instructions: Please don't book via Booking.com or any other booking platforms, as we have made a block booking for those dates, and they will be unavailable. **Please email Tanya Pretorius at reservations@cradlemoon.co.za (cc office@sawma.co.za) and/or phone her at 011-919 5000. Please ensure that you mention the SAWMA 2026 Conference in the subject line when booking your stay.**

GLENBURN LODGE (www.glenburn.co.za)

Glenburn Lodge is 8 km from Cradle Moon Lakeside Lodge. We have made a block booking at Glenburn Lodge for the following options:

OPTION 1

Glen Burn Self-catering chalets: (Block booking expires on 1 August)

3 x 2-bedroom chalets (one bedroom with a double bed; second bedroom with two single beds; each bedroom has its own separate bathroom – see layout at <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=VadAvMMMHon>). @ R2960 per unit/ per night.

5 x 3-bedroom chalets (one bedroom with a double bed; second and third bedrooms with two single beds; three bathrooms per unit – See layout at <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=rMCfkNzgVhk>) @ R4440 per unit/night.

Breakfast: R260pp – main restaurant

Booking instructions:

Please do not contact Glenburn Lodge to book a chalet. Bookings should be made via SAWMA. A link to the booking form will soon be added to the [conference website](#)

OPTION 2

Glenburn Bush Willow Tented Camp (on the Glenburn Property) - for those on a tighter budget:

We have tentatively booked the entire tented camp exclusively for SAWMA, but we need a minimum of 30 people to stay to make it worthwhile. **If you are interested in staying in the tented camp area, contact Elma Marais as soon as possible (office@sawma.co.za) so we can determine whether there is sufficient interest. If we don't get enough responses by the end of May, we will reconsider releasing the block booking.**

The tented camp has:

- 4 open-plan tents, each with 6 single beds, and each equipped with a private shower, toilet, and small kitchenette.
- 6 partitioned tents, each with two partitioned bedrooms, each with 2 single beds, and two single beds in the living area. Each tent is equipped with a private shower, toilet, and small kitchenette.

Tariffs and booking:

R1110 per open tent per night

R1270 per partitioned tent per night

Bedding hire with towels (once off) R 110 pp once off

Tea/coffee Station pp in tent per day R 48.00 pp per day

Boma Breakfast (min 30 guests) per day R175.00 pp per day

RIVERVIEW SPA (www.riverviewspa.co.za) - Block booking only valid until the end of April

Riverview Spa is situated within the Conservancy, accessible from the entrance gate to the 26Degrees South Bush Boho Hotel. The road leading to Riverview Spa from the Main Road (M5) is approximately 2 km. Small Sedans can drive on the road with ease (although quite rocky and bumpy).

The following accommodation options and tariffs apply:

Chalet 1: R950 pp single rate)

Chalet 3 & 4: R1050 pp single rate

Chalet 5 & 6: R1120 pp single rate

Chalet 7: R950 pp single rate

(The above chalets are more suitable for one guest, as they are equipped with one bedroom, a queen-size beds and ensuite bathroom.)

Chalet 2: R1020 pp sharing rate / R1120 pp single rate (Suitable for two people sharing a chalet, as there are 2 bedrooms, each room with a queen-size bed and an ensuite shower & private toilet)

Villa House: R3500 per night (3 – 6 people Sharing: 3 Bedrooms, each with a queen-size bed and an ensuite bathroom. This is a private, Self-Catering Unit.

Please book your chalet as soon as possible, as the block booking will be released at the end of April!

To make a booking, contact Marietha at info@riverviewspa.co.za (CC office@sawma.co.za);

Cell: 083 419 6807

A list of alternative accommodation options will be provided on the [conference website](#) in due course.

REGISTRATION

The registration portal has not yet opened because we are still finalising expenses to determine the fees. Sponsorships will also play a role. The registration will open by mid-March.

Please visit the [conference website](#) for regular updates.

TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

As the venue is closest to Lanseria Airport, please book your incoming flights to Lanseria Airport if possible. The distance between Lanseria Airport and the Cradle Moon Lakeside Game Lodge is only about 12 km. **Each delegate will be responsible to arrange their own transport.** There are various transportation options available in Gauteng, but a list of transport options will be added in due course on the [Conference Website](#)

Uber and Bolt may be an option for transport between the airport and the lodge during daytime hours; however, it is advisable that delegates staying at other venues pre-arrange their transport to and from Cradle Moon Lodge using the options provided to ensure they are picked up and dropped off on time.

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

Sunday, 30 August:

Arrival and Registration at Cradle Moon Lakeside Game Lodge
Possible workshops (15h00 – 17h00)
17h30: WELCOME FUNCTION at the Restaurant terrace area

Monday, 31 August

Welcome Address
Keynote presentation
Presentations (wedding function venue)
LUNCH (Terrace area, restaurant)
Presentations (wedding function venue)
(Tea breaks will be at the Lake Heritage Chapel)
DINNER at “Current” Lakeside restaurant.

Tuesday, 1 September (Management / Applied Science Day):

Keynote presentation
Presentations (wedding function venue)
LUNCH (Terrace area, restaurant)
Presentations (wedding function venue)
(Tea breaks will be at the Lake Heritage Chapel)
Managers Workshop (wedding function venue)

DINNER (Terrace area, restaurant)
Student Quiz night! (wedding function venue)

Wednesday, 2 September:

Keynote presentation
Presentations (wedding function venue)
LUNCH (Terrace area, restaurant)
Presentations (wedding function venue)
(Tea breaks will be at the Lake Heritage Chapel)
DINNER (Terrace area, restaurant)

Thursday, 3 September:

Keynote presentation
Presentations (wedding function venue)
LUNCH (Terrace area, restaurant)
Presentations (wedding function venue)
(Tea breaks will be at the Lake Heritage Chapel)
GALA DINNER AND AWARDS FUNCTION
(Terrace area, restaurant or Wedding function venue)

Friday, 4 September:

BREAKFAST AND DEPARTURE
Possible excursions to be announced.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRADLE OF HUMANKIND WORLD HERITAGE SITE

The Cradle of Humankind is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its rich fossil finds that provide crucial insights into human evolution. It houses the largest known concentration of human ancestral remains in the world. The site includes a complex system of limestone caves, which have preserved numerous fossils over millions of years. The sites of importance are the Sterkfontein and Swartkrans caves (<https://sterkfonteincaves.wits.ac.za/caves/>) and the Maropeng Visitor Centre (www.maropeng.co.za)

Post-conference excursions have not been planned yet, but they may be considered based on delegates' expressed interest.

CALL FOR SPONSORS

As an association, SAWMA recognises the need to invest in our collective conservation future. SAWMA offers a free annual membership to all registered full-time students. We also aim to offer the lowest possible registration rates to students, who will become our future scientists and decision-makers, so that as many as possible can benefit from attending the events. We can proudly say that our annual conferences offer an ideal opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge, build confidence in scientific presentations, and network with peers, managers, and academics. It also creates opportunities for future employment and research projects.

However, as with all investments, our emphasis on student opportunities and involvement comes at a cost to the association, and we rely on financial support from businesses and organisations.

We firmly believe that your support represents an investment in the future of conservation and wildlife management in Africa, and we would be honoured if you would accept our invitation to be an integral part of the conference by providing it. Please contact the SAWMA secretariat, Elma Marais (office@sawma.co.za), to find out more about our conference support options. The call for sponsors document can be downloaded [HERE](#)

LOCAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE

The scientific organising committee, headed by Kelly Marnewick and Juan Scheun of Tshwane University of Technology, consists of the following members: Kailen Padayachee (KaiNav Conservation Foundation & Tshwane University of Technology), Declan Hofmeyr (Conservation Catalysts Africa), Jeanetta Selier (SANBI), Paulette Bloomer (University of Pretoria), Tshepiso Majelantle (University of Botswana), Ben Allen (Ecosure Pty Ltd, Australia), and Nkabeng Marupeng (SANParks).

Should you have further enquiries, please contact:

Elma Marais (SAWMA): E-mail address: office@sawma.co.za

Follow the conference website at <https://sawma.co.za/conference/> for regular updates.

IMPORTANT DATES

Submission portal for abstracts opens	2 March 2026
Early Bird Registration Opens	16 March 2026 (valid until 23H59 on 15 June 2026)
Booking of accommodation:	2 March 2026
Submission Deadline:	17 April 2026 (until 23h59)
Review Feedback Distributed:	11 May 2026
Standard Registration Opens:	16 July 2026
Registration Closes:	20 August 2026