

# WILDSIDE

## UMHLANGA

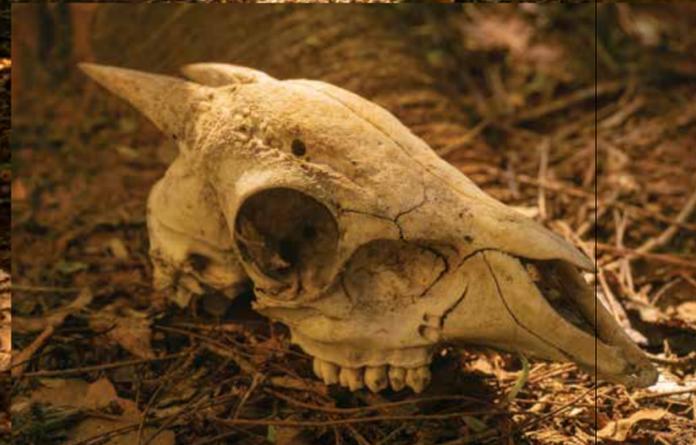
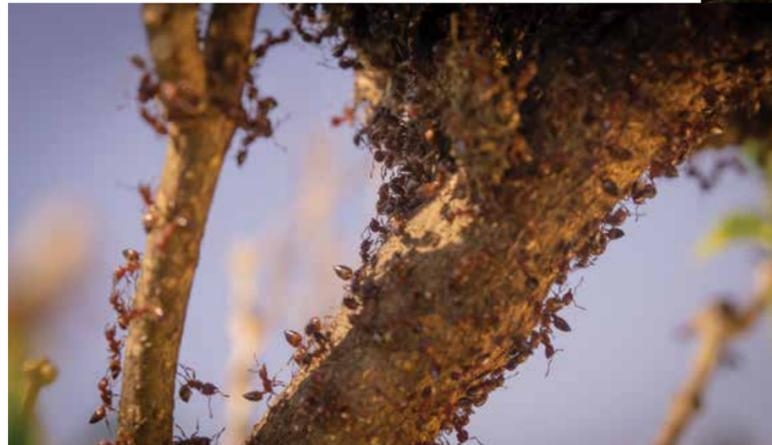
TEXT: NICHOLAS CARROLL IMAGES: KIRSTEN OLIVER

*The M4 coastal forest we often refer to in The Chronicle is actually part of Ridgeside and work has been underway for a number of years to clear it of alien invasive species (AIS's). Fenced off during the rehabilitation period, this thin strip of ancient forest is home to an incredible diversity in fauna and flora.*



We never instantly hear the birds or insects when we step off the pavement and into the forest: It takes some time for our brains to stop the multiple conversations it has with itself. So it is only when someone says “this is where we usually spot the green mamba” do we stop talking to ourselves and can instantly hear everything; like the rustle of three different types of leaves in the morning breeze; a variety of birds we cannot name and insects doing different things to create sound. The most common way they do this is through stridulation - rubbing of body parts together very rapidly. Some also eject liquid out of orifices with such force that the chemicals are instantly vapourised in the air with a loud popping sound.

The sight of sea shells on the forest floor is a reminder of how close we are to the Umhlanga shoreline. This increase in noticeability is no doubt prompted by the announcement that we share the space with mamba's. Or was it just one mamba? Giant snail shells are plentiful and irresistible - who knows when someone might still be home. Most are abandoned and beautiful to the touch. This ability to ‘see’ with our hands is another strange ability that comes from spending time with nature.



**WE NEVER INSTANTLY  
HEAR THE BIRDS OR  
INSECTS WHEN WE STEP  
OFF THE PAVEMENT AND  
INTO THE FOREST**



NATURE MAKES YOU BEHAVE BETTER

Red duiker tracks dent the soft sand on the forest edge. Distinguishable by an ultra fine ridge splitting the spoor into two halves. On rainy days, water fills the dents with “cappuccino” brown water. The duiker are everywhere and, although not preyed upon by larger species, appear to be as shy as the mambas. They eat fallen leaves from the forest canopy and, as their species name *Cephalophus Natalensis* suggests, are found in KZN coastal forests.

**AFTER TWO HOURS IN THE FOREST, THE SOUND OF NATURE IS CRYSTAL CLEAR AND MUCH MORE AGREEABLE THAN SOME OF THE SO-CALLED MUSIC THAT IS Poured INTO OUR EARS BY RADIO STATIONS.**

Scientific evidence proves repeatedly that environments like these are good for us. Further evidence shows that our overworked brains become fatigued and a trip to the forest is one sure way to improve its performance.

