

(Orange River). Credit: *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* (2021).
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A team of researchers with the University of Johannesburg's Palaeo-Research Institute has found multiple instances of desert kites in a part of South Africa. In their paper published in the journal *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences*, the group describes their study of ancient hunting "runways" built to corral wild animals.

Prior research has shown that ancient hunter-gatherers living during the Neolithic and Bronze Age built what have come to be described as desert kites—corrals meant to make it easier to kill [wild animals](#). The kites were made by piling stones to form two sets of walls across from one another, and which narrow toward each other as a form of a trap. The walls would eventually converge into a confined pen where it would be easy to kill the animals. Prior study of kites in the Middle East in places such as Israel, Jordan and Syria have shown the walls would typically be nearly a meter wide and up to a meter and a half high. Use of the kites involved chasing the animals into the [kite](#) and pursuing them until they arrived in the confined pen. The animals could then be killed using basic weapons. Kites were used to kill pigs, deer and cattle. In this new effort, the researchers have found several kites near the village of Keimoes in South Africa.

The kites were found in multiple locations by studying the South African landscape using LiDAR equipment from an airplane over the years 2016 to 2019. The researchers also found that the ancient builders had sometimes built several kites close to one another, each aimed at capturing different [animals](#). Their discovery marked the most southern use of kites in sub-Saharan Africa. Close inspection of the kites showed them to have been built much more recently than kites found in the

Middle East—perhaps as recently as 2000 years ago. The researchers also suggest that the structure of the kites and the ways they were used by the ancient people demonstrated a clear understanding of animal behavior, including migratory patterns. They were also convenient—the kites were all built within 2 kilometers of water pans and their elevations allowed for running downhill.

More information: Marlize Lombard et al, The Keimoes kite landscape of the trans-Gariep, South Africa, *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s12520-021-01328-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12520-021-01328-x)

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