

View From The Top

The three news items that struck a chord this past month were the assassination attempt by Russian agents in the UK, the death of the last white northern rhino, and the Australian cricket team shenanigans.

The common thread is human arrogance. One of the greatest blessings of our natural heritage is that it keeps us humble. One cannot contemplate the magnificence of our flora and fauna without a healthy dose of marvel. It is part of the grounding we owe to our children.

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Birding Plant of the Month

Cheesewood (*Pittosporum viridiflorum*)

The cheesewood is popular on the highveld because it usually has a beautiful round shape (typically 8 to 10m), has pretty flowers, a pleasant scent, and a berry yield. It is known to attract both insects and berry eating birds. For the "lazy" gardener it is ideal because the leaves do not drop, and the roots do not create problems, yet it provides good shade. It is also resilient in surviving both dry conditions and frost.

So, an "easy" plant, with plenty of positives that will appeal in medium and larger gardens.



Cape Cheesewood

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

- 1): Suet Pop (300g/600g)
Buy 4 and get one free!!
R120,00/R200,00
- 2): 100 x 100g Suet Mini Balls
Bulk Pack / 50 x 200g Suet
Ball Bulk Pack
R850,00 / R840,00
- 3): Nectar Mix Bulk Bags
R60,00
- 4): Suet Bits 3kg
R180,00

Bon Mots

*If only I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and find rest.
(Psalm 55:6)*

Environmental Chirps

The Pilanesberg Regression

My first trip to Pilanesberg National Park was in 1981. Very few years have passed since then without at least one annual visit, and as a rule we would enter the park at least twice a year probably averaging six full days of game viewing.

In short we (the entire family) love Pilanesberg. This March we were back for the first trip after a six months absence.

What a disappointment!
Through the last 20 years there has been a gradual decline in the quality of the facilities, and the general maintenance of the park. Since we are blessed to own good 4x4 vehicles (and since we are not "whingers" by nature), we have dutifully not complained, been willing to accept increasingly rough conditions on the road, and in facilities such as toilets and a deteriorating Pilanesberg Centre.

But this was the worst ever in terms of facilities and general

conditions – including entrance gates, roads, picnic facilities etc. Simultaneously, we noted perhaps the highest percentage ever of foreign tourists, and as every person who frequents the park knows, there has always been an abundance of foreign visitors. The place was a national disgrace. Despite the patent lack of care and attention, fees are substantially up. It is not obvious what is happening, but the park management need to pull up their proverbial socks.

Bird of the Month

Helmeted guineafowl
(*Numida meleagris*)

The Helmeted guineafowl reminds me so much of my Irish forebears. We breed like crazy, but we are a lot of fun. And just as the Irish are distinctive in Europe, this bird is definitive in Africa; after all, how many guineafowl curios are you not able to see in South Africa.

If you live near some open spaces (even in the city), you are likely to have a family as an occasional visitor. They dominate the garden and clean it of every bug imaginable in no time whatsoever. Many think that this bird is somehow particularly stupid. But I have an old uncle in the Nylsvlei, who tells me that he is unable to put out seed – irrespective his best defences, the guineafowl figure out how to access the feeder, or turn out the seed to feed on the ground. Just like the Irish – survivors to the last...

