

View From The Top

First and foremost, we have to thank God for the recent rains. Most importantly, Cape Town has had some rain. The situation is still poor in parts of the country though, and we need to redouble our water management efforts. Which brings me to an observation. Have you ever noticed how much joy rain brings to your garden birds? They have baths and water points, but given a new option they far prefer the water that collected on a rock or a paved area – and they seem to just have fun! If one installs a rock garden, an idea is to create areas where water would accumulate if only just to pleasure your wild birds.

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Birding Plant of the Month

"Groengrasriet" (*Restio festuciformis*)

Want to do something for your garden birds? Choose a good indigenous grass that bears the seeds that seed eating birds love. Let a clump grow completely wild in a corner of your garden. We have been doing it for years! The choice of grass is a bit more tricky and depends on your local conditions. A good idea for your garden may be one of the *Restio* genus (actually a grass-like plant). (Speak to your local nursery). We feature the Green Grass Reed, because it is pretty and very good for weavers. Plus, they seem to be available at local nurseries...



Green Grass Reed

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

- 1): Nectar Feeder No 1 / 2
R110,00 / R120,00
- 2): Nectar Mix Bulk Bags
R60,00
- 3): Suet Bits 3kg
R180,00
- 4): Bird Seed House
R200,00
- 5): Bench Feeder
R150,00

Bon Mots

A flower is a weed seen through joyful eyes.

(Jonathan Lockwood Huie)

Environmental Chirps

Check out the Birdlife South Africa Facebook page. You will be very excited to find news of a new IBA called Moutonshoek Protected Environment. Impressive work! Congratulations to BSA and partners on this development. It is on the West Coast, it looks beautiful, and I for one cannot wait to see it.

Also kudos to BSA for the successful (thus far) fight against mining Wakkerstroom. Sadly, this is one fight that is not over, and we need to lend collective shoulders to defend the entire area.

What amazes me is that the effort to mine Wakkerstroom for coal continues. It seems that ESKOM and coal mining are closely related, and considering how badly both have been compromised in recent times, and how much corruption has already been exposed, one would expect that these usual suspects would be lying low. Not so. With collusive potential from the equally compromised DMR we can only hold our breath.

They will fight tooth and nail for their nefarious ends!

Bird of the Month

Fiscal Shrike

(*Lanius collaris*)

The Fiscal Shrike has always been a favourite of our family. Through the years we have raised a number of orphans, and successfully released them (be sure they are orphans before you remove them!) Great characters, great energy, and fierce loyalty. This is as close you get to the raptor-next-door; just look at that beak...

This little one has moved in and made a home very close to the feeder, and simply loves Elaine's BirdGrub (suet), seen here on one of the terracotta feeder range.

Naturally the bird is most famous for "hanging" prey on acacia thorns. Most sources believe this is to store food. Perhaps. My own observation is that the bird uses the thorn to assist in ripping the food to support eating. I also rarely saw them returning for a second round of eating.

Back to our resident. The second happiest, most active and joyful bird in our garden – second only to the Cape Robin-chat. The shrike deserves to be bird of the month.

