

View From The Top

"Deck the halls with joints of Meleagris". Did you know that the first person in England to eat turkey for Christmas was King Henry VIII? It was definitely the last meal for that bird, and possibly for one or other of the many spouses.

Domestication of poultry happened more than 7000 years ago, and it remains 2nd only to pork as a source of human meat. Yet, every year we read reports of abuse of chickens and other poultry. Whatever our views on the eating of meat, the animals have a right to be brought into the world in an ethical manner, to live and be raised in suitable circumstances, and to die in a quick and humane manner.

We cannot enjoy our Christmas lunches without being sure of that position.

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Birding Plant of the Month

Impala Lily (*Adenium multiflorum*)
Okay objectors! This is not truly a "birding" plant, or even really one for plenty of insects. Being Christmas, we get some latitude. It is a great plant, and the very epitome of our Lowveld treasure. The plant represents hope with splendid flowers in the driest of biomes, and is also known as a desert rose. We have had at least one flowering plant for many years, and they really are so easy to grow – even in Highveld conditions.

But she is a deadly girl! The impala lily is toxic, and was previously used for bushman arrow poison!



Impala Lily

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

Nature's Heart will close for orders between 18h00 on Wednesday 12th December, and 08h00 on Monday 7th January.

We will be available for queries on 082-553 5761 or by email george@naturesheart.co.za

Our special offer will run from 1 December 2018 to 12 December 2018.

During this period, and until stocks last, all items offered for sale will be discounted at 10% except courier charges.

Nature's Heart takes the opportunity to wish you a Blessed Christmas, and a Prosperous New Year.

Bon Mots

(For all our ladies who make Christmas and the holidays happen...)

If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman. (Margaret Thatcher)

Environmental Chirps

Jair Bolsonaro has just become President Elect of Brazil. Already plenty has been written about his potential for creating an environmental catastrophe in the Amazon region.

I did a little internet research, and found that much of the negative criticism comes from opponents and the "liberal press" who hate him intensely. In reality, it seems to me that we have a very good example of "fake news". I truly pray that that is the case, and am that way persuaded simply because I do not believe that any politician with any level of reasonable intellect could possibly be sufficiently stupid as to further damage the Amazon.

A few quick facts:

- The Amazon produces 20% of world oxygen
- It has one third of all bird species on the planet

- 30% of the world's mammal species are found there
- More than 1000 amphibians (15%)
- At least 1 million species of insect identified
- Up to 80000 plant species
- 20% of all fresh water flowing into the sea

There are countless additional factoids.

Suffice to say that all of us on planet earth have a collective interest in the Amazon region being kept in pristine condition. Logging (both legal and illegal) is the single biggest threat, but to that has to be added mining and agricultural competition.

Bolsonaro takes over in one month, and we wait with bated breath.

Bird of the Month

Southern red bishop (*Euplectes orix*)

I confess to not spending a great deal of time behind a fishing rod. Even watching others patiently plying their trade seems tedious. Yet thankfully the nearby reeds are always full of a far more interesting target – our radiant red bishops! These beauties are available in numbers at our marshes and dams, and tend to share territory with various other weavers – but in season they steal the spotlight! They eat mainly seed and insects, and are therefore partial to the intrepid birder who is providing mixed seed and Elaine's Birdgrub. We are blessed by the occasional visit even though our garden is quite a way from the nearest marshes. A caution – it is a bit tougher to identify the females if a brightly coloured male is not in the vicinity. A hint – get to know them at Strubens Dam, Pretoria; it is in town and there are plenty of red bishops nesting at present. Oh – bring a camera...

