

View from the Top

Nectar robbing is a strategy by some insects and birds to feed on plant nectar without actually following the normal concomitant process of pollination. At present it is not possible to understand precisely why this happens, where the animal has clear feeding benefit (not better than the normal nectar feeding process), and the plant no clearly apparent benefit.

Similarly, it is not clear to us mere mortals why many processes happen, both natural and man-made (whether intentionally or not). Yet sometimes we find out why, as in the advantage to germination of some fynbos after veld fires.

Sometimes (even with our limited understanding) we know that wrong is being done and is to be avoided. In other cases, the great interest is in observation and wonderment. The best observations seem to happen in quiet bird hides. Go ahead – spoil yourself!

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Birding Plant of the Month

Pruimbos (*Osyris compressa*)

Directed main to the eastern coastal regions, this shrub will grow to about 4m and will suit smaller gardens. It is parasitic, but can grow unsupported. The plant produces an interesting fruit that is eaten by our fruit eaters. Yet it also attracts plenty of insects, and thus also the insect eaters. It may be of concern that it will attract monkeys. It grows easily and can take both high and low temperature climes. Consider it if you are interested in louries!



Pruimbos

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

Available until 31st May or while stocks last.

1): Peanut Treats Bulk Box (12)

R160,00

2): Seed Treats Bulk Box (12)

R160,00

3): Large Nectar Feeder

R120,00

4): Decorative Nectar Feeder

R105,00

5): Natalie's Hand Painted
Terracotta Fruit Bowls

R240,00

Bon Mots

"Corrupt seeds bring forth corrupt plants." (Sir Walter Raleigh)

Environmental Chirps

"This above all: to thine own self be true." (Hamlet). Where did Shakespeare get all this wisdom? It definitely did not rub off on the current crop at the Palace of Westminster. Frankly, neither on South African pupils, where the brilliant Education Department plan to "decolonise" Shakespeare from the school syllabus. Then again, they will grow up to be voters, and in our context, who wants a wise voter?

And so for South Africa – election time. This humble rag would never presume to tell readers how to vote! Yet as ever, we do have some thoughts. It is incumbent upon an electorate to vote in consideration of their existing issues, and relates to their day to day situations and concerns. This is obvious and natural, but denies the reality that the effects of our terrestrial journey are felt long after we leave. To vote without consideration of our children is a fatal flaw. The future is predicated upon the present. For some time now, mankind has lived as though there is no tomorrow. It is an act of selfishness, evidenced by pollution, by overpopulation, by an irresponsible pursuit of short term reward, and by an arrogance associated with our behaviour

towards our fellow travellers. Few really consider the impact. Even when human planning is long-term, it is dominated by self-interest. Much is trumpeted about the Chinese 100 year plans, but they relate to economic and political domination rather than a harmonious dispensation for our planet. Sustainability means harmony between the different desired outcomes and will prevent "success" at the expense of the planets environmental demands.

This is about more than our direct descendants. Can we look forward 1000 years? Will we have a thriving wildlife population? Of this we can be sure – if there are no animals, there will be no humans. Perhaps you can vote on a ballot paper to move in a positive direction. Even better, vote with your proverbial feet. Reduce energy requirements. Control reproduction. Manage travel. Reduce (and manage) waste. Be aware.

Try a new wisdom for the 21st century. "This above all: to thine own children be true."

Bird of the Month

Black Collared Barbet (*Lybius torquatus*)

Here we have a truly Southern African bird! It is a great friend to every peddler of good quality suet (as we claim to be!), and gobbles copious quantities with an obvious enjoyment that provides deep satisfaction. Even if you are not into feeding suet, you could offer a slice of fruit (banana, apple, papaya), and create a friend for life.

To me the greatest fact about these birds (apart from the pure beauty), is the manner in which a breeding pair mutually support each other. Of particular interest is how they co-operate to defend nests. Sadly breeding season is over, but it remains an interesting bird to watch!

