

View from the Top

Winter has come! Yet this is a great time of year if you love aloes – aloe flowering season has arrived. We are blessed with 155 species. What is more, sunbirds love aloes! My source says we have 21 species of sunbird in Southern Africa, of which 14 are commonly found in South Africa. There is no region in South Africa where at least one species will not be found (naturally the coastal regions are spoilt). The photographer in you should be anxiously awaiting that special shot of the sunbird at the aloe bloom! At the same time the gardener in you should be keenly observing the neighbourhood gardens to see if there is a special plant that your garden needs to emulate.

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Birding Plant of the Month

Cork bush (*Mundulea sericea*)

If the month theme is going to be sunbirds, you can do no wrong by investing in this shrub! Firstly, it will not overpower your garden (perhaps 3m high). It is very well suited to the smaller garden. Secondly, it will develop beautiful light purple flowers during summer months. It is particularly easy to grow in our highveld region, but will do very well in bushveld, and should be suited to most of the cities in South Africa. It is quite hardy, and requires little watering.

Our main reason for listing it is those nectar bearing flowers (attracting birds and bees), but actually it has much broader purpose as a haven for insects. The foliage cover is moderate, and it therefore also provides a feeling of safety for your garden birds. A winner in all senses!



Cork Bush

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

Available until 28th June or while stocks last.

1): Mega Pops (600g) Bulk (x5)

R200,00

2): Suet Pops (300g) Bulk (x5)

R120,00

3): Grub-in-a-Tub Feeder (incl 1 Tub)

R140,00

4): Natalie's Hand Painted Terracotta Fruit Bowls

R240,00

Bon Mots

"It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it."
(Dan Quayle)

Environmental Chirps

The "Bon Mot" for this month deliberately quoted the innocuous intellectual lightweight who served as USA Vice President from 1989 to 1993. The only thing one can say in his favour is that he lacked the aggression of our political overlords, to go with their fatuousness.

We in South Africa have no room for criticism of USA politicians, considering the talent available in our corridors of power.

And so, we find Barbara Creecy appointed as Environment Minister. The immediate though (after a moment of surprise), was "we lucked out", considering the options. Whoever was appointed could scarcely have been worse for South African birdlife than the predecessor Edna Molewa, who had (in concert with the Gupta stooge Mosebenzi Zwane) conspired to mine the sensitive Drakensburg region at Wakkerstroom for coal.

In the "plus" column, Barbara Creecy kept her nose clean as Finance MEC for Gauteng. She appears to have functioned as a competent administrator, not implicated in the general ANC looting of the last decade, and is generally respected (and dare we say) even liked by persons across the political divide.

The reality though is that Barbara Creecy is a career politician and certainly does not have the requisite background to make statements of any authority in her new portfolio. The deepest fear is that she will descend into either being the regurgitator of prepared positions, or the purveyor of "green" slogans, and simply concentrate on running a clean ship once again. Naturally this is better than many fellow ministers will achieve, but it will not really take us forward.

My observation is that we have a person of greater intelligence than we could have dared to expect. Perhaps she will learn quickly, and have a real impact to the benefit of our natural heritage. My hopes go with her.

In retrospect, my gratitude is palpable. After all, could you imagine Bathabile Dlamini as Minister of the Environment?

Bird of the Month

Tawny Flanked Prinia (*Prinia subflava*)

Just one look at the beak of this little fellow and you know that the meal-of-preference is one of the many little insects that are found in the reeds and smaller shrubs that they frequent. These are "hyper-active" birds that never seem to sit still – to many a photographers deep irritation. They are found throughout eastern South Africa, and their high pitched twittering is often heard long before they are seen. Thankfully they are very common, although not so often recorded in gardens, seemingly preferring areas near good water.

We believe that the Tawny Flanked Prinia also drink aloe nectar at this time of the year! Having never seen this before, Nature's Heart offer a prize to the best photograph submitted based on this happening! (See Nature's Heart facebook page for details).

