

View from the Top

What a superb occasion it was to attend the annual Birdlife South Africa Owl Awards ceremony. I was struck by two thoughts. Firstly, how this year was of a particularly high standard with winners who seemed to all do amazing things, and all thoroughly deserved their respective awards. That certainly included Ekapa Mining, who were instrumental in introducing breeding of Lesser Flamingos in South African (how great is that!). But secondly, I was struck by how really young people are starting to do things that the older generation can only marvel at. The winner of the Owllet Award this year is Rocco da Silva, a nine year old from Cape Town! He loves penguins, and has been organising weekly beach clean-ups to work towards their conservation. It is heart-warming. It is humbling. Imagine what a kid like this will do when he grows up! Yet he was not a "shoe-in" winner, because there were other meritorious youngsters who were also considered for their contributions to conservation. The future looks to be in good hands!
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Birding Plant of the Month

Jacket Plum (Pappea capensis)
This tree is suited to most parts of the country, and will grow at a medium speed. It will typically not exceed 5-6m in height and could well find a place in the smaller garden. It earns a birding reputation for the fruit that appears in autumn, and is devoured by most fruit eaters. Incidentally the fruit is human edible and useful for jams. The tree is attractive in own right, and will enhance the appeal of your garden. Apart from the birds, expect a variety of insects (they in turn will attract insectivorous birds), and the tree will give great shade. A winner!



Jacket Plum

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

Check out our super specials!
Available until 30th August or while stocks last.

- 1): Terracotta Seed Bell Holder
(incl. Bell) R95,00
- 2): Seed Bells (Small / Large)
R25,00 / R42,00
- 3): Bird Grub Suet Bits (800g)
R60,00
- 4): Beaded Mealworm Feeder
R55,00

Bon Mots

"A serious writer may be a hawk or a buzzard or even a popinjay, but a solemn writer is always a bloody owl." (Ernest Hemingway) *A voice of thanks to all the "bloody owls" out there that did something noteworthy and received just reward.*

Environmental Chirps

"Men are driven by two principal impulses, either by love or by fear." (Niccolò Machiavelli).
What is your motivation to be a defender of our environment and to try to change our future for the better? Nature's Heart will put it on record that we are in it for the love of the birds (and love of other creatures too). Our viewpoint is that mankind has made a mess due to greed and selfishness. We now are in the position that long term therapy is necessary, and that this requires two complementary paths: firstly remedial action for correcting of the damage caused, and secondly a change in attitude to undo the greed that precipitated the problem in the first place. Both actions require an approach of common sense. Both require time (and patience). It is a fundamental change in culture. It is an evolutionary approach. Would that we had started such a change years ago (yet we did not). There are 7 billion people on planet earth. This is the "path of love" that understands that it will be a hard road to win them over to that logic. The alternative route to the same end is the "revolutionary" path that derives from fear. That path is the

sensationalist approach so often followed by the various forms of media. It pontificates that "the world is doomed unless...". It fails to view humans as an holistic part of the natural environment. It takes extreme views on every subject of debate including fossil fuels, land use, plastic pollution etc. Sadly, these approaches have actually diluted the potential positive effect that may have emanated from such organised opposition to potentially harmful practices. Sadly, in a straight choice between economic development or environmental conservation, conservationists are going to lose every time. Wherever viable, we need to embrace compromise. As an example, there are technological innovations that improve environmental efficiency. Thus a hybrid car still has an internal combustion engine, but is much better than the old gas guzzler. Indeed, there are many environmental battles that we cannot afford to lose – and those are the battles to focus maximum power upon. We are arguing for a pragmatic approach to protect our natural heritage.

Bird of the Month

Hadedda Ibis (Bostrychia hagedash)
Can there still be people that dislike the hadeda? If anything, the numbers have grown in the RSA due to urban gardening (and also peri-urban land cultivation). That distinctive call makes them instantly recognisable. They are critical to the environment, aerating the earth, cleaning up insects and snails from gardens, and are perhaps the best indicator of a healthy garden environment!
And they are beautiful. Next time one catches the sun in your garden, check out the iridescence. If you are able to get close enough, check out the eyes. And then when the breeding season is in, check out the reddish colour on the beak. You have to love them!
Summary: a bird that is a superb adaptation to our conditions.

