

View from the Top

Just last month, we were calling for Barbara Creecy to step forward and be counted, having previously expressed some hope in her "new" broom and "Gupta clean" credentials. It is with great satisfaction that we report that the minister has indeed put her best foot forward and upheld the appeal against mining in the zone above the wetlands fed by the Blesbokspruit. This has averted the potential for a disaster. Sadly, her reasons were more due to adverse effects on agriculture than potential for polluting those critical wetlands. All the same, a win is a win, and we applaud the minister in overturning the previously granted permission. The critical consideration remains the debate between positive effects of industrial development versus environmental impact. It is very important to be objective and consider the desperate plight and lack of social development in so many communities in South Africa. The point is that mining a wetland feeder zone will virtually never end well.

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Birding Plant of the Month

Euryops chrysanthemoides (Daisy Bush)

Do you feed sunflower seed to your birds? If so you will understand how much they are loved. Sunflowers are very beautiful, yet they seem to be more popular in mass cultivation than in urban gardens. A different idea is to plant a related indigenous plant where the seed finds equal favour with the birds. Many believe the daisy bush is just a weed! In reality it is a beautiful South African flower that will attract butterflies and other insects. The idea is that one could let the (seed bearing) flowers wither and then expect small seed eaters to have a feast as they would do for the much larger sunflower plants. It needs plenty of sun, and will do well throughout South Africa, except in areas of substantial frost. Try one as a pot plant!



Daisy Bush

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

Suet Pop Month!

1): Suet Pop 300g

R25-00

2): Suet Pop Mega 600g

R45-00

3): Suet Pop 300g Bulk Pack

R575-00

4): Suet Pop Mega Bulk Pack

R510-00

Bon Mots

"If I were a tree, I would have no reason to love a human."

— Maggie Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys*

Environmental Chirps

We have recently had a slightly unpleasant experience relating to our "best" birding tree – a blue thorn (acacia) greatly loved by the weavers. Our neighbour, (not a bird lover, and indeed, based upon garden choice, not an indigenous plant lover), complained bitterly after the recent winds, of leaves blowing into her swimming pool from that tree. This was a surprise because anyone who knows a blue thorn, knows that leaf mess is actually very limited. Furthermore, the tree is only 5m high, and is cut back well clear of the boundary wall. In the interests of neighbourliness, we dutifully cut it back further to 1m from the wall. The complaints have persisted, and we have decided that our birds demand that we concede no more!

We inevitably decided to study our legal rights in this respect. This short discourse is presented because it is certain that so many other bird lovers face similar issues. In short, neighbours are in their right to demand removal of vegetation protruding over the boundary wall. Where this is not removed, they may remove the branches themselves, and expect the tree owner to cover disposal costs. Outside of an obvious obligation upon both parties to be reasonable, that is where the rights of a neighbour to the removal of vegetation ends (provided that no material harm is being caused).

What really tickled me was the defining legal precedent in South Africa (*Vogel vs. Crewe and another* (2003(4) SA 509(T)), where the good judge actually applied environmental principles(!). He listed the benefits of the pleasure, the shade, and even the oxygen produced by a tree, as opposed to the limited inconvenience to a neighbour. He also noted that "in the light of our increasing awareness of the importance of protecting our environment, perhaps we need to become more tolerant of the inevitable problems caused by the shrinking size of properties and the greater proximity of neighbours and neighbours' trees" (ie. we ought to think twice before cutting down a tree). Gold star for Judge de Vos of the Transvaal Division. No comment on our gardener dropping a branch on the neighbour's electric fence...

Bird of the Month

Bateleur (*Terathopus ecaudatus*)

I snapped this juvenile on an impala carcass in the Kruger National Park. The picture speaks a thousand words! It ranks as a mid-sized eagle at 2,5kg mass. The special feature is the defining short tail, which probably results in the less stable glide pattern (sometimes described as "tumbling"). The bateleur is equally at home taking carrion or live prey. The dead infant impala may have been scavenged – our only clue was the presence of two tawny eagles in a nearby tree. The bird is very resilient with vast territory. However, the largest threat comes from man in the form of poisoning. The injudicious use of pesticides, and the criminal approach that some have of poisoning carcasses is leading to a once-abundant species now being listed as vulnerable. In addition, they mature very slowly, with mating probably only commencing at 6 years of age. We should support only those farming businesses that farm on a sustainable basis, we will impact on the threat to our birds of prey.

