

View from the Top

For most of us, New Year is a time of hope, a time for new target setting and objectives, a time to renew commitments and to reconsider our processes and our mindsets. 2020 is no different, but this year a little more sombre as we understand the devastation of the fires in Australia. Millions of land bound animals have died. Millions of birds have died. Those that survived the fires will now struggle to find food and shelter. We can take no comfort from the fact that the problems are 11000km away. Indeed, we have had similar (albeit more contained) problems of our own in recent years. It is a global problem that is likely to increase in menace. Our humble experience is that a concerted effort by committed people does make a difference for rehabilitation. We saw heroes standing up in South Africa. We can already see heroes standing up in Australia. We humbly salute the heroes. george@naturesheart.co.za.

Birding Plant of the Month

Vachellia karroo (Sweet Thorn)

Do you love bushbabies? Do you want to attract bushbabies? (Actually, quite possible in the suburban highveld, and other populated areas). In that event you need acacias, and there is none more common than the sweet thorn. The tree carries striking yellow flowers that are seen throughout the bushveld in the summer season. It is considered a superb tree for insects and birds. It is very likely that it will attract nesting birds. The tree is tough and resilient, and occurs naturally in hotter climes, often where water is restricted. It will do very well in most highveld medium sized properties. A word of caution – remember the thorns!



Sweet Thorn

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

Check out our super specials!
Available until 31st January or
while stocks last.

1): Terracotta Seed Bell Holder
(incl. Bell) R95,00

2): Mega Pops (600g) Bulk (x5)
R200,00

3): Suet Pops (300g) Bulk (x5)
R120,00

4): Grub-in-a-Tub Feeder (incl 1
Tub) R140,00

Bon Mots

"Those who lose dreaming are
lost." - Aboriginal proverb
(Australian)

Environmental Chirps

This December we visited the Karoo National Park (for the first time), and the Mokala National Park (for the third time). In both cases our expectations were exceeded – in the former case by both Park Management and the magnificence of the desolate landscape and the creatures found there, and in the latter by the quality of mammal and bird sightings without requiring long game drives.

The DNA of Nature's Heart is to encourage people to love the animals they find in their suburban garden. Yet we would be amiss to not encourage everyone to step outside to these wonderful wilderness areas, and experience something new and different. In particular the Karoo seemed to be filled with larks and other LBJs that tested our identification abilities. There are many others that we do recognise easily but do not often get a chance to see – for example we saw blue cranes and secretary birds. We felt that a "minor" tragedy was to discover the percentage of foreigners at these parks. Obviously, we welcome the tourists. Yet there should have been many more local people. It did birth the thought that the costs are quite high, and that many South Africans will find them

to be unaffordable. If we expect every South African to be an equal partner in conservation (we do!), with equal responsibility towards protecting our natural heritage, then we should be contemplating means to make real experiences of our wild areas more accessible.

This is obviously easy to verbalise, but very much more difficult to achieve. We do not offer a solution. A special problem is the cost of transport considering that many parks are quite remote, and our public transport is essentially non-existent.

I understand that efforts are in place to immerse some children into great bush experiences. We should also think about adults and families.

Bird of the Month

Cape White Eye (*Zosterops virens*)

Almost all our customers initially purchase their nectar feeders with the intention of attracting sunbirds into the garden. We applaud the objective. Very soon they become equally enamoured by the many other birds that love the nectar and frequent the feeder. There are a large variety of such birds. Yet who can deny that one of the most special little birds that will regularly come to "whet their whistle" is the Cape White Eye. One special specimen entertained us over Christmas at our daughter's feeder, so often, and to such an extent that we decided to award him "bird-of-the-month" ahead of all the malachite sunbirds that are always seen drinking. This is a real honour, because we love malachites...



**Nature's Heart has re-opened
for business!**