

## **View from the Top**

It is a new financial year. Sadly, that means the annual price adjustment takes place. These increases are essentially linked to inflation in the RSA, including all components experienced by the business. As inflation is in check in South Africa, the increases are not excessive. We note here the policy of annual pricing increases only. In exceptional circumstances this may change, yet despite massive cost increases to peanuts in 2019, we did hold prices. There is also a policy of above inflation increases to factory workers to incrementally improve their living standards. Again, this year such increases have been approved, and for 12 straight years no increase was below inflation.

We thank our customers, and trust that you will take a positive view to the increases. Bear in mind that your support actually benefits not only the business, but all the families that depend upon us.

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## **Birding Plant of the Month**

*Combretum zeyheri* (Large-fruited Bushwillow)

Do you live in one of our warmer bushveld areas? If so, you may have hornbills visit your garden! Consider this shrub, where the fruit is savoured by hornbills! There are large numbers in the Kruger National Park, where you will see the many insect users and mammal browsers.

The bushwillow needs full sun, and is suited to smaller gardens, as it (generally) grows to limited size. It enhances a garden (despite being a very common tree in the RSA) due to the large green leaves and well-known 4-sided fruit.

It is definitely one to recommend if you desire an indigenous garden.



**Large-fruited Bushwillow**

## **Nature's Heart**

### **Specials of the Month**

*There will be no specials for the month of March, as we evaluate our product priorities for 2020. We will then recommence monthly specials in April.*

### **Bon Mots**

*The essence of life is not in the great victories and grand failures, but in the simple joys. (Jonathan Lockwood Huie)*

### **Environmental Chirps**

Maxie O'Brien, my late grandmother almost made the magical 100 year old mark, before passing away in 2002. She lived through the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, and survived the Spanish Flu of 1918. At the time, South Africa was fully committed to the great war, and yet it was the Spanish Flu that terrified people and left a lasting imprint on her young teenager's mind. It has been estimated that 50 – 70 million people died of the pandemic.

Here we are 120 years later, and we face another flu pandemic. We have to wonder what our children will tell their grandchildren about the ghastly flu that came from China in 2020.

The common link is known! In 1918 it was an avian flu variant, in 2020 an animal variant from the Huanan Seafood Market. Thus in both cases contracted due to animal – human interaction.

Images from the Huanan Seafood Market depict horrific scenes of live and dead animals on offer for consumption. Whereas the 1918 variant origin is shrouded to some extent, in 2020 we can be sure that animal abuse is the key ingredient in the pandemic.

It seems that we as humans never learn.

Most humans have developed sufficiently to understand that this is a problem to be faced collectively by all mankind, and have avoided a "blame game".

Most humans have not understood that the best solution to the link to animal abuse, is also to be recognised and faced collectively.

This has to be extended beyond wild animals to ALL animals including domesticated animals and pets. The "isolationist" approach by many (most?) conservationists is not helpful. We live with and in proximity to animals. In the same way that civilization was defined as rules to which humans abide in order to facilitate advantageous co-existence with other humans, we need to expand the definition of civilization to include the relationship with other animals. This is far bigger than "conservation". Mankind will have to adapt to a new culture and to new mores.

Perhaps our grandchildren will say that this threat was the day mankind changed and chose a new and better path for the development of civilization.

### **Bird of the Month**

Marabou Stork (*Leptoptilos robustus*)

Here we have a giant! The marabou is widely regarded as having the second largest wingspan on record, and the stand 5 feet tall.

Tragically, not everyone loves these birds. Some tasteless individuals think they are ugly. Some despise their habit of raiding garbage areas. We love them, and despise those who do not properly dispose of their waste.

These are very community-conscious birds, and generally operate in big groups. They are not commonly found in urban gardens, but are regularly seen at the nearest city rubbish dump. We encourage all readers to not attempt to attract them to your birdfeeding area!

Whatever you may think of them on land, this bird has no peer in the air. The grace with which it soars is unrivalled, even among the great eagles and vultures. Every birder should feel inspired.

