

View from the Top

We at Nature's Heart ascribe to the theory of "Holism", and therefore are consistently reticent to identify and analyse ecological systems in part or in isolation. Even where such analysis is used, it should only be identified as necessary to establish models that more extensively simulate a complete ecosystem. The result is always predictable – selective use of data for self-serving reasons. This is also known as hypocrisy. The same nations who are terrified of rising oceans and ice-pack loss are quite happy to not radically oppose plastic pollution, or even to support whale hunting. So here is the rub – 90% of all ocean plastic pollution comes from 10 rivers: the Yangtze, Indus, Yellow, Hai He, Ganges, Pearl, Amur; Mekong, Nile and the Niger. Every associated country is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol. The real evidence is simple – they do not actually care about the environment. Let us call them out – HYPOCRITS.

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Birding Plant of the Month

White Stinkwood (*Celtis africana*)

The tree this month starts with a confession – both stinkwoods that we planted were put in place because we needed summer shade, and the tree had a reputation for rapid growth. It turned out that they were perfect – rapidly attained 5 – 6m, and were beautiful additions to the garden. The birding advantages were only seen later, in that a large number of birds used the trees, either simply to roost, or to eat berries, or to eat insects that frequented the trees. The biggest user would undoubtedly be dark-capped bulbuls. They may be common, but we love them. The bulbuls alone are sufficient reason to plant a white stinkwood!



White Stinkwood

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

The months of November and December will not have any specials due to production supply being constrained for many product lines. Furthermore, and as a result, Nature's Heart is operating on a notice period for orders from the factory of up to one week. We will resume with specials once this present situation improves.

Bon Mots

And a special quote for the USA elections: "People demand freedom of speech as a compensation for the freedom of thought which they seldom use." (Søren Kierkegaard)

Environmental Chirps

We move in circles where we often come into contact with artists, and wildlife artists in particular. As a sidenote, it should be added that this includes wildlife photographers, and whereas these are obviously skilled artists, they are not the object of this piece. (Notwithstanding the superb skill of South African wildlife photographers – even the amateurs are awesome!)

Rather, we concentrate on graphic art and sculpture. This discussion is informed by the reality of the struggles of our artists. We have a friend who specialises in bronzes (mammals rather than birds), and observe how extremely difficult it is to make an honest living. The work is of high quality, (it all seems to be these days), and the process is very time consuming. That is subject to a terrible multiplier when considering the costs of casting. The result is substantial cost, and a low number of sales for these artworks. Frankly, it is not any easier for the artist working in oil on canvas, or perhaps pastel. It is a certainty that they all are living very frugally.

The bottom line is that many give up, and for those who remain, it is a labour of love. In evaluating the necessity for the wildlife artists of South Africa, it does strike me that they do reflect a societal movement that has been accelerating in this the 21st century. The artists are custodians of the historic environmental shifts that are taking place in our mindsets.

Just as previous artistic generations captured the renaissance, or the industrial era, or even the cold war, the artists of today capture the vignettes of our own time.

I conclude that they are critical to conservation and environmentalism in general. If one takes this view, then it becomes crucial to support them in their work. That support may take many different avenues, but in the end, artists need financial support. Sadly, great art is always a product of great and momentous periods in time. For a short while, the Netherlands enjoyed a "Golden Age" where their merchantmen ruled the seas, and the streets were awash with cash. Not surprisingly, that period produced Rembrandt and Vermeer, and many other great masters (and masterpieces).

We can honestly say that we are not living in the golden age of conservation, and little or no support can be expected from official channels. It will be over to well-meaning friends of conservation to assist our artists. Our plea – please do so.

Bird of the Month

Dark-capped Bulbul (*Pycnonotus tricolor*)

We get blasé when we think of bulbuls – dime a dozen! Thus we miss out on one of the most spectacularly beautiful common birds in our gardens. Colouration, eyes, feathers, and lovely crest and head. Use an appropriate set of binoculars to observe them at really close range. Then spend some time watching all their characteristic actions and activities. These birds actually teach one a great deal about avian mannerisms in general. They are inquisitive, chattery, aggressive and territorial, yet reliable and predictable, whilst being extremely efficient foragers and hunters. The good news is that they love Elaine's Bird Grub, and are always easy to attract to your garden.

