

Celtis africana

Sterkfontein Country Estates February/Februarie 2017

Good day to all the country folk!

Hope you all had a fun Valentine's Day – always an excuse to eat lots of chocolates with a glass of bubbly - all just a bit of fun! A six-year old said Valentines is when his daddy buys his mom chocolates to say sorry for not picking up behind himself!

The Celtis is a bit late as I was waiting for our lovely *Habenaria caffra* orchid in the veld to go into full bloom. Year after year we are so glad to see it re-emerge – wild orchids are becoming very rare, so we really treasure ours. I do hope to hear from you if you also encountered one on your property. We will never develop our whole property and we also do not keep the grass very short – the more you cut it, the less likely certain flowers will have time to come into bloom. Of course we do our firebreaks when necessary and we burn our whole veld every 2-3 years, but on the whole we try to preserve our grassland.



Photo 1: *Habenaria caffra* (Photo: Elmarie Krige)

Have a look on our website under Flora – Our Orchids. **ALL** of those photos, except for those of the *Habenaria lithophila*, were taken on our property. Those photos were taken not far from our property near a cave in our area.

An interesting plant flowering at the moment is the *Tephrosia polystachya subsp.* This pretty flower is very small and grows in a spreading fashion. What is interesting is that many species in this genus are poisonous. They have high concentrations of rotenone, which is especially toxic to fish! Some indigenous cultures have been known historically to use the seeds in fishing – as some kind of toxin to capture the fish. Lately several species have been studied in connection with the use of rotenone as an insecticide or pesticide. Looking at this pretty pink flower - who would have guessed that?

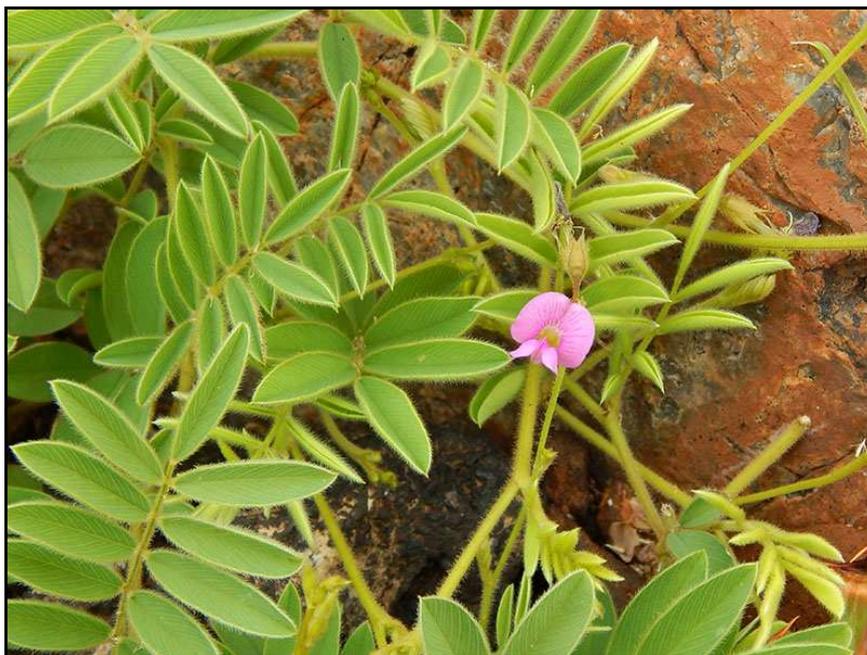


Photo 2: *Tephrosia polystachya subs.* (Photo: Elmarie Krige)

Another plant in flower at the moment is the *Indigofera comosa*. The first part of its name, “indigo-“ refers to the colour indigo. Several species of this plant have been used to produce the dye indigo. In Peru they discovered scraps of indigo dyed fabric, likely dyed with plants from this genus. This predates Egyptian indigo-dyed fabrics by more than 1,500 years!



Photo 3: *Indigofera comosa* (Photo: Garfield Krige)

Who knows what qualities our own specie might have with regards to dying! There are so much still to be discovered and researched in the plant world. Several species in this group are used to alleviate pain and others are used as an anti-inflammatory for things like insect or snakebites

and other swellings. The Maasai tribe is known to use parts of one of the species as a toothbrush! **Very** interesting!

Have a look at these very cute photos Garfield took of a baby chameleon! One lunch break as he was walking around the property, he felt something brush against his leg and there was this little cutie! On the website, under Reptiles and Amphibians, (under Fauna) have a look under Flap Neck Chameleons where we have a photo of two Flap Neck chameleons busy mating – that was a lucky shot for Garfield! He seems to be always in the right place at the right time! Remember to click on that photo to enlarge it! There is also other interesting info on the website about them.



Photo 4: "I say fella, put me down!" Baby Flap Neck Chameleon (Photo: Garfield Krige)



Photo 5: "...that's better!" Baby Flap Neck Chameleon (Photo: Garfield Krige)

And as always, my favourite little animal on the Estate, a group photo of Yellow Mongooses! I have taken many videos of them and tons of photos and I just love watching them interact with each other!



Photo 6: Yellow Mongoose family photo (Photo: Elmarie Krige)

Last month we placed photos of a robber fly with its prey. This interesting insect is a member of the *Asilidae* family and is also called assassin flies. They get their name from the aggressive way in which they hunt. They feed mainly on other insects including the common housefly and we like them for that! As a rule they will wait in ambush for its prey and then chase and catch the prey in flight. A bite from this insect is very painful to human beings!

And just for a laugh:

Q: What do you get if you cross a parrot with a woodpecker?

A: A bird that talks in Morse code!

That's it for this month folks. Enjoy the summer weather, the lush veld after the rain and remember to keep smiling!

Dagsê mense van my kontrei!

Ek hoop julle het 'n prettige Valentynsdag gehad – altyd 'n goeie rede om sjokolade en 'n glasieronkelt te geniet né! Dis alles mos maar net vir pret, so hoekom nie? 'n Sesjarige vertel Valentynsdag koop pappa sjokolade vir mamma want dit laat haar oë blink! Nou-ja, daar het julle dit – uit die mond van kinders...!



Photo 7: *Habenaria caffra* (Foto: Elmarie Krige)

Ek is ietwat laat met die stuur van die Celtis – ek wou wag dat meeste van die blommetjies van die pragtige *Habenaria caffra* orgidee in ons veld oopgaan vir 'n mooi foto. Jaar na jaar is ons so bly as die orgidee kopuitsteek – wilde orgideë raak al skaarser in ons land; so vir ons is dit baie kosbaar as ons dit wel op ons plot raakloop. Ek hoop daar is van julle wat sal uitkyk op jul eiendom vir dit!

Ons sal maar altyd 'n groot area van ons plot wild hou sodat daar 'n groeiplekkie vir al die mooi inheemse blomme kan wees. As veldgras aanhoudend kort gesny word sal baie spesies nie kans kry om tot bloei te kom en dus min kans dat mens van die plante gaan raakloop. Natuurlik maak ons brandpaadjies wanneer nodig en ons brand ons hele veld elke 2-3 jaar, maar verder probeer ons die grasland bewaar soos dit is.

Loer gerus bietjie op my webwerf onder Flora – Our Orchids. **AL** hierdie orgideë is afgeneem op ons plot - met die uitsondering van die *Habenaria lithophila* orgidee. Daardie foto's is wel naby ons eiendom by 'n grot in ons area geneem.

Nog 'n interessante plant wat nou blom is die *Tephrosia*

polystachya subsp. Die pragtige blommetjie is heel klein en groei laag en spreidend op die grond. 'n Interessante feit is dat baie van hierdie spesies giftig is. Hul beskik oor 'n hoë konsentraat van rotenoon wat veral toksies is vir visse. Sommige inheemse kulture het histories die swart saadjies gebruik om vis mee te vang! Meer onlangs is die spesies bestudeer vir gebruik in die vervaardiging van insekgif. As mens na die fraai blommetjie kyk kan mens amper nie glo dat hul oor sulke eienskappe beskik nie!



Photo 8: *Tephrosia polystachya subsp.* (Foto: Elmarie Krige)

'n Ander plant wat nou blom is die *Indigofera comosa*. Die eerste gedeelte van die plantnaam dui op die kleur indigo. Heelwat spesies in hierdie genus is gebruik om die indigo kleurstof mee te vervaardig. In Peru byvoorbeeld, is ou stukke materiaal gevind wat heel moontlik met van hierdie plantkleursel gekleur is. Toetse het gewys dit dateer verder terug as van die Egiptiese indigo-gekleurde lap – met meer as 1,500 jaar! Wie weet oor wat se kwaliteite ons spesie beskik wat betref kleurstowwe. Daar is nog soveel om te ontdek en na te vors in die plantewêreld!

Heelwat van die spesies in die groep word ook gebruik om pyn mee te verlig en andere weer beskik oor anti-inflammatoriese eienskappe wat gebruik word vir dinge soos insek- of slangbyt en ander swelsels. Die Maasai stam gebruik weer gedeeltes van die een van die spesies as tandeborsels. Dis **so** interessant!



Photo 9: *Indigofera comosa* (Foto: Garfield Krige)

Kyk net bietjie die ougat foto's van 'n baba verkleurmannetjie wat Garfield geneem het! Een middag gedurende sy middage te stap hy in die veld en voel iets skuur teen sy been en toe hy afkyk sit die ou dingetjie daar – ewe kordaat!

Op die webwerf onder Reptiles and Amphibians (onder Fauna) is daar 'n foto van twee wat paar! Hy was darem regtig op die regte plek op die regte tyd destyds om dit te kon kry – onthou om op daardie foto te klik om 'n vergroting te sien. Daar is ook allerhande inligting oor die verkleurmannetjie.



Photo 10: "Ek het duimgegooi, toe kry ek 'n *lift!*" Baba verkleurmannetjie op my duim (Foto: Garfield Krige)



Photo 11: Baba verkleurmannetjie (Foto: Garfeld Krige)

Natuurlik kan ek nie help om 'n foto van die rooimeerkatte in te sluit nie. Ek is maar net mal oor hulle en het al heelwat video's en hope foto's van hulle geneem. Ek kan my altyd verkyk aan hul dinge!



Photo 12: "Ouboet, wat sien jy?" Rooimeerkatte (Foto Elmarie Krige)

Verlede maand was daar foto's van die rowervlieg in die Celtis. Hierdie interessante insek is deel van die *Asilidae* familie. Die naam rowervlieg kom van die aggresiewe manier waarop hulle jagmaak op prooi. Hulle sal hul prooi hinderlaagsgewys inwag en dan aggressief jaag en in die lug vang. Hulle voed hoofsaaklik op ander insekte, insluitende die gewone huisvlieg en ons hou sommer van hulle daaroor! Maar pasop – 'n byt van hierdie insek is baie, baie pynlik!

[Net vir die grap:](#)

Sannie gee vir haar ouma 'n lekkertjie. Ouma sit dit dadelik in haar mond en vertel vir Sannie hoe heerlik dit smaak.

"O," sê Sannie, "ek is bly ouma hou daarvan, toe ek dit netnou vir Wagter gegee het, het hy dit dadelik uitgespoeg!"

En laastens, 'n paar mooi, kleurvolle foto's van sampioene wat ons na die baie reën geneem het.



Photos 13 - 15: (Foto 13: Garfield Krige, Foto's 14 & 15 Elmarie Krige)

Dis al vir hierdie maand vriende, geniet die somerweer, ons mooi groen veld en moenie vergeet om te glimlag nie!

Totsiens, goodbye, adios, ciao, yia sas en do svidaniya!



Bronne/References: Wild flowers of the Highveld – Braam van Wyk and Sasa Malan
Wild Flowers of the Magaliesburg – Kevin Gill and Andry Engelbrecht
Field guide to insects of South Africa – Picker, Weaving, Griffiths