

## ***Celtis africana***

Sterkfontein Country Estates November 2016

Good day Celtis friends!

Another month has gone by and we are speeding towards the festive season and before we know it, it is 2017! The weather is lovely and despite some hail, we are happy for every drop of rain we get – the veld certainly is celebrating with lots of plants flowering at the moment.



**Left:** Nature's own garden with a Poison Bulb (*Boophone disticha*) (Afr. Seeroogblom) in front and Vernonia (Afr. Perskwasbossie) at the back (Photo: Elmarie Krige) and **Right:** Contribution by Corné Els of Zwartkrans (Z34). Read all about this amazing plant in the Celtis of November 2015!

In the September issue we had some photos of a Crowned Lapwing's eggs. Those hatched and were promptly killed the same night! However, the mama laid a new batch of eggs a few days later and we waited with anticipation for the new brood to arrive. On Sunday morning (23 October), the eggs hatched one by one – first one and a while later the next. We checked throughout the day (to hysterical cries and dive-bomb attacks from the parents!) and thought the third was never going to hatch. However, it did – probably late afternoon or early evening, as the next day the proud mama walked about with her little ones.

The moment they start moving about, they blend in almost completely with the surrounding veld and it is not easy to spot them! Of course they are very vulnerable



to all kinds of predators, so we quickly took photos and dashed away as we did not want to attract unnecessary attention. Lapwings do a good job in controlling all kinds of insects.

Over the years we have witnessed similar little “scenes” and yet, every time it amazes and excites me – nature certainly is wonderful! Have a look at the lovely photos. See more in the Afrikaans section.



**First chick hatching - looks like it's wearing a helmet! (Photo: Garfield Krige)**



**First two "fluff balls" - drying out in the sun after having hatched (Photo: Garfield Krige)**

Last month I featured a photo of a jumping spider. I am not arachnophobic, but I also won't keep one as a pet! However, this one looks actually quite cute in a weird kind of a way! Come on Herklaas, just look at those bright, shiny eyes! They don't seem to

scare easily and the fact that they jump towards you is what scares most people. However this is more out of curiosity and for most people a bite from this spider is non-toxic, but some people may show an allergic reaction to its bite and must seek medical help.



**Jumping Spider (Afr. Springspinnekop) (Photo: Garfield Krige)**

The jumping spider is one of the few types of spiders that have excellent vision. With four pairs of eyes (three pairs of secondary eyes that are fixed and then a large principal pair that is moveable), one can understand that! They also have well-developed lungs and a tracheal system both used in their breathing (called bimodal breathing). They can jump great distances and will track prey for quite a distance and use the element of surprise to jump their prey, are able to bite quickly and inject their poison into its prey. They also use their silk as a type of parachute to jump down to prey.

Have a look at the photo of a trapdoor spider's entrance (photo in the Afrikaans section). Just by chance Garfield saw it, as usually the "door" is closed and very difficult to see. The door, which is hinged on the one side with silk is made of soil, plant material and silk, is very well camouflaged when closed.

The Trapdoor Spider is a common name for any of several large, hairy, harmless tropical spiders that nest underground. They live underground for most of their lives and are usually nocturnal. When oncoming prey disturbs the "trip lines" the spider lies out around its trapdoor, it alerts the spider that a meal is on its way! The spider detects the prey by vibrations and, when close enough, the spider leaps out to make the capture.



One of the trapdoor spider's enemies is a certain kind of wasp. If a wasp finds the burrow and the door is open, it will quickly enter and sting the spider. The spider can try to save itself from a wasp, by holding on to the door with its fangs. The wasp usually wins, because it cuts the lid of the burrow with its sharp fangs. Once it has stung the spider, it will lay an egg (one per spider) on its body. When the egg hatches, the larva devours the spider alive!

It is "snake-season" and photos of snakes keep coming in. DO get to know our snakes (on the website Herklaas - <http://sterkfonteincountryestates.org.za/> under Fauna – Sterkfontein Snakes!) so you know which are harmful to humans and remember, they have a function in nature! I always say everything connects in some way or another and exists to keep balance in nature.

This little night adder created a bit of consternation in the Zwartkrans area.



Night Adder (Afr. Nagadder) Photo by a Zwartkrans resident



Nick Rosenberg (SCE154), who took both these photos, also had a visit by these "beauties". Left: Red Lipped Snake (Afr. Rooilipslang) and Right: Wolf Snake (Afr. Wolfslang)

**Just for fun:**

An old snake goes to the doctor: “Doctor, I need something for my eyes, I can’t see very well nowadays.” The doctor fixes him up with some glasses and tells him to return two weeks later for a check-up. After two weeks the snake returns in a very depressed state. “What is wrong – did the glasses not help you?” The glasses are fine doctor, but I discovered I have been living with a hosepipe for two years!”

What do you do when you find a snake in your bed?  
Sleep in the cupboard!

From my side it is all for this month. Don’t work too hard – the long summer holidays are on our doorstep – at least for the lucky ones!

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Goeie dag Celtis vriende!

Nou-ja, nog ‘n maand is verby en nou jaag die tyd feesseisoen toe en voor ons weet is dit 2017! Ons het lieflike weer met af en toe ‘n buitjie reën (heelwat meer ‘seblief Grootbaas daarbo!) en ten spyte van ‘n bietjie hael as toegif, is die veld alte bly met plante wat oraloor blom!



*Convolvulus sagittatus* (Foto: Elmarie Krige)





Wildeangelier (Eng. Wild Pink) (*Dianthus mooiensis*) (Foto: Elmarie Krige)



Kyk hoe mooi is ons wilde-ertjie bossie (*Sphenostylis angustifolia*) (E. Wild Sweetpea) (Foto: Elmarie Krige)





***Polygala uncinata* Wikldeviooltjie (Eng. Wild Violet) (Foto: Elmarie Krige)**

In September het ons foto's van die kroonkiewieteiers geplaas. Dit het uitgebroei en die arme kuikens is dieselfde aand nog opgevreet. Maar min gepla, het die wyfie 'n paar dae later weer drie eiers gelê en het ons die nes met groot afwagting fyn dopgehou. Nou die Sondag (23 Oktober) het die eerste twee met lang tussenposes uitgebroei. Ons het kort-kort vinnig gaan loer (koes-koes vir lugaanvalle deur die histories-krysende ouers!) en ons dag die derde een is dalk maar 'n windeier. Tog het dit wel uitgebroei, vermoedelik laatmiddag of vroegeand, want die volgende dag het die ma ewe trots rondgestap met die kuikens in aantou.

As die kuikens eers uitgebroei, is hul swak. Maar hul kleure is so na aan die omgewing se veld en klip dat mens bitter mooi moet kyk om hul raak te sien. Hul is baie kwesbaar op die stadium, so ons het sommer net vinnig foto's gaan neem elke keer – ons wou nie te veel aandag trek van enige vyande nie.

Jaar na jaar sien ons dieselfde storiëtjie afspeel, maar elke liewe keer vul dit my met opgewondenheid en verwondering! Kiewiete doen goeie werk met beheer van allerhande insekte. Kyk maar die oulike foto's in die Engelse gedeelte. En hieronder is die opvolg storie van 'n dag later!



"Wag vir my Mamma!"



"Loop ek dan te vinnig vir jou, my kleintjie?"



"Kom rus gou so 'n bietjie hier onder my..."



"Is dit nou beter?" (Foto's: Garfield Krige)

Verlede maand was daar ook 'n foto van die springspinnekop. Kyk, ek ly nie aan aragnofobie nie, maar ek verstaan ook nou nie hoe hou mens die agtpotige goeters aan as troeteldiere nie! Maar die enetjie lyk eintlik half oulik op 'n anderster manier! Kom nou, Herklaas, die enetjie lyk dan so slim met sy blink ogies, man!

Die feit dat hulle maklik na jou spring sou jy 'n hand naby bring, is wat mense laat skrik en hul as aggressief ervaar – maar dis maar nuuskierigheid wat! Die spinnekoppie se byt is nie giftig nie, maar kan in sekere mense 'n allergiese reaksie veroorsaak en dan moet mens maar 'n salfie of 'n ding aansmeer of in erge gevalle 'n dokter raadpleeg.

Die springspinnekop beskik oor uitsonderlike visie en met 4 paar oë kan mens dit goed glo! Drie paar is sekondêre oë en kan nie beweeg, maar die groot, primêre paar kan beweeg. Die spinnekop het ook goed ontwikkelde longe en beskik oor 'n trageale sisteem en gebruik albei om asem te haal. En dit, liewe Herklaas, is wat die slim mense bi-modale asemhaling noem. Die springspinnekop kan ver spring en sal prooi 'n lang ent volg en dan skielik verras en bespring. Hulle gebruik ook hul lang sydrade as 'n tipe valskeerm om by prooi uit te kom. Springspinnekoppe kan vinnig byt en hul prooi vol gif spuit en sodoende gou buite aksie stel.



Nog 'n gediertjie wat interessant is, is die valdeurspinnekop. Per toeval was hierdie een se “deur” oop en het Garfield dit raakgesien en kon oulike foto’s neem. Gewoonlik is die deurtjie toe en so goed gekamouflieer en dus baie moeilik om raak te sien. Die deurtjie, met ‘n “skarnier” van sydraad aan die een kant, is gemaak van plant- en grondmateriaal en sy.

Valdeurspinnekop is die gewone naam vir heelwat groterige, harige (en totaal onskadelike!) spinnekoppe wat ondergronds nesmaak. Hulle is gewoonlik saans aktief en woon feitlik slegs ondergronds. Sodra iets hul striklyne wat hul buite die ingang stel, versteur, dan weet mnr spinnekop: nou is ‘n happie op pad! Vibrasies van die naderende prooi help hom gereed maak en sodra die arme niksvermoedende happie naby genoeg is, spring ta uit en gryp dit!

Een van hierdie spinnekop spesies se vyande is ‘n sekere soort wespe (perdeby). As die perdeby die nes vind (en indien die deurtjie oop is), sal dit vinnig ingaan en die spinnekop steek. Die spinnekop kan probeer wegkom deur sy valdeurtjie aan die binnekant met slagande toe te hou, maar as die wespe weet van die nes, wen hy gewoonlik! Die valdeurtjie word met skerp tande “ooggesny” en sodra die spinnekop gestek is, lê die wespe ‘n eier (een per spinnekop) op die spinnekop se lyf. Sodra die eier uitbroei, vreet die larwe die arme spinnekop lewendig op. Soos die gesegde lui: die een se dood is die ander se brood né!

Mense, dis “slangseisoen” en foto’s kom van oraloor. Doen juisself tog ‘n guns en gaan leer op die webwerf watter slange is regtig gevaarlik vir mense (ai, Herklaas, dis mos <http://sterkfonteincountrystates.org.za/> man – dan kyk jy onder Sterkfontein Snakes wat onder Fauna is!). Al gril jy vir seilende, sissende goeters, hulle het ‘n doel en alles werk op een of ander manier saam om 'n balans in die natuur te hou.



**Nog 'n slang in die gras (of is dit nou 'n slang op die grasperk?). 'n Mooi foto van 'n Nagadder (Eng. Night Adder), let op die kenmerkende "V" op sy kop vir maklike identifikasiedoeleindes. (Foto: Garfield Krige)**



### Sommer vir die grap:

Onnie: “Jannie, as ek vir jou twee hasies gee, en nog twee hasies en nog twee, hoeveel sal jy hê?”

Jannie: Sewe, meneer.

Onnie: “Nee, luister mooi. As ek vir jou twee hasies gee, en nog twee en nog twee, hoeveel hasies sal jy hê?”

Jannie: “Sewe.”

Onnie: “Kom ek stel dit anders. As ek vir jou twee appels gee, en nog twee en nog twee, hoeveel appels sal jy hê?”

Jannie: “Ses, meneer.”

Onnie: “Moi so. Nou as ek vir jou twee hasies gee en nog twee en nog twee, hoeveel hasies sal jy hê?”

Jannie: Sewe!

Onnie: “Hoe op aarde kom jy by sewe uit?”

Jannie: “Want ek **het** al ‘n hasie by die huis!”

Vriende dis tyd om te groet tot volgende maand. Moenie juisself oorwerk nie – vir die gelukkiges is daar ‘n lekker lang vakansie op pad, so vasbyt!

**Bronne/Sources:** Wild about Johannesburg, Duncan Butchert; Spidersworld.com; Eerste Veldgids tot Insekte van Suider Afrika, Alan Weaving

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

