

Celtis africana

Sterkfontein Country Estates October/Oktoper 2016

Good day to all the Celtis friends!

Despite the odd cold day, we are having such great weather, one just want to be out and about! Hopefully we will get rain soon!

Usually, as soon as the Harveyas pop out (and boy did we have lots of lovely ones on our property this year!) the Star lilies (*Hypocidaceae*) follow with their bright yellow flowers. If you take a walk in the veld you should also see the little blue Powder Puffs, Monkey's Tails, the white Gerberas that are in full bloom again (just a couple of months after the first flush – how fab is that?), *Gnidias*, *Hermannias*, *Bulbinas*, some *Lactuca inermis*, *Scabiosas*, *Albuscas*, *Kohautias*, *Moraesas*, *Vernonias*, the pretty little blue *Whalenbergias*, Cat's whiskers, to name only a few – how I wish (yes, I know I have said it before!) the plants all had common names, but I am afraid only few do! Of course due to the size of the Celtis I can't put photos of every flowering plant – however most of them have featured in a Celtis at some stage.



***Moraea stricta (M. thomsonii)* Afr. Bloutulp, any time as pretty as any of the Cape's wild flowers!**
(Photo: Garfield Krige)



Star lily (*Hypocidaceae*) (Photo: Elmarie Krige)

Being in a grassland biome, our plants do not flower in endless fields of colour like, for instance, in Namaqualand. But here grass is king and although hidden away amongst the grasses for the most, we do not have to stand back one inch when it comes to the beauty and variety of our own wild flowers!

This is also the time of the year when snakes appear. Nick Rosenberg (SCE 150) sent me a picture of a little brown house snake (not poisonous, keeps rat and mice population under control) he is holding and he also found a little red lip and a juvenile night adder in his garage – and although mildly poisonous, neither of them is deadly to human beings. Thanks Nick! I know they are scary (I also tend to do a Wayde Van Niekerk when I see one!) but they have their place and purpose in nature and help keep other creatures' populations under control. Usually it is us human beings, who upset the balance in nature, so let's keep that in mind and just let them be. Luckily, Nick feels the same way and just released it in a safe area!



Brown House Snake/Bruin Huisslang (Photo: Nick Rosenberg SCE150)

Talking about snakes - just the other afternoon Garfield encountered a juvenile puffie – and small as it was, (only about as thick as his middle finger!) it was as cheeky and as mad as anything - hissing for the first team! They are not known for their bad temper for nothing! See photo in Afrikaans section.

Remember, there are emergency telephone numbers on my website under “Fauna – Sterkfontein Snakes (<http://sterkfonteincountryestates.org.za/fauna/sterkfontein-snakes/>)”. So, should you, or one of your family or staff members gets bitten, you can use it for help on what to do, or the name of the nearest hospital that will be able to assist. Also, if ever get bitten by a snake, do your best to either identify it or to try and take a cell phone picture so the correct antivenin can be administered.

Did you know plants could get cancer? I have often seen this in the aloes in our veld. In animals, (in biology humans fall under the animal kingdom – like it or not Herklaas!) a tumour develops when a cell (or group of cells) loses the built-in controls that regulate its growth, often as a result of mutations. Plants can experience the same phenomenon, (along with cancerous masses) but it tends to be brought on via infection. Fungi, bacteria, viruses, and insect infestation have all been tied to plant cancers. However, unlike in animals, it won’t spread or migrate and stays stuck in one place with minor effects on the plant’s health.



An example of cancerous growth on an aloe (Photo: Elmarie Krige)

And on the subject of cancer, did you know that cancer is not a “modern day illness” as was always thought? I recently read a very interesting article of a recent discovery made by a group of researchers* who hail from Wits University’s Evolutionary Studies Institute and the South African Centre for Excellence in Paleosciences.

These scientists found signs of aggressive cancer tumors in a 1.7 million-year-old foot bone! They suspect this foot bone belonged to an early ancestor of modern-day humans and it was discovered in a cave in the Swartkrans area, which, of course, is close to our Estate!

In the first study (published in The South African Journal of Science) the cancer was identified as an osteosarcoma, an aggressive form of cancer that commonly affects younger individuals in modern humans and, if left untreated, can result to early death. Due to the preservation of this bone, they are not sure whether it belonged to an adult or a child and whether it was the cause of death of this individual. However, apparently it would have affected the individual’s ability to walk or run and would have caused great pain.

In an accompanying study, signs of the oldest known tumour discovered, was found on the fossilized remains of a child. These remains were found in Malapa Cave in the

Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site and dates back almost 2 million years! However, this tumour was found to be non-cancerous. I find all of this fascinating and who knows what other wonderful findings are laying in wait to be discovered in our area!

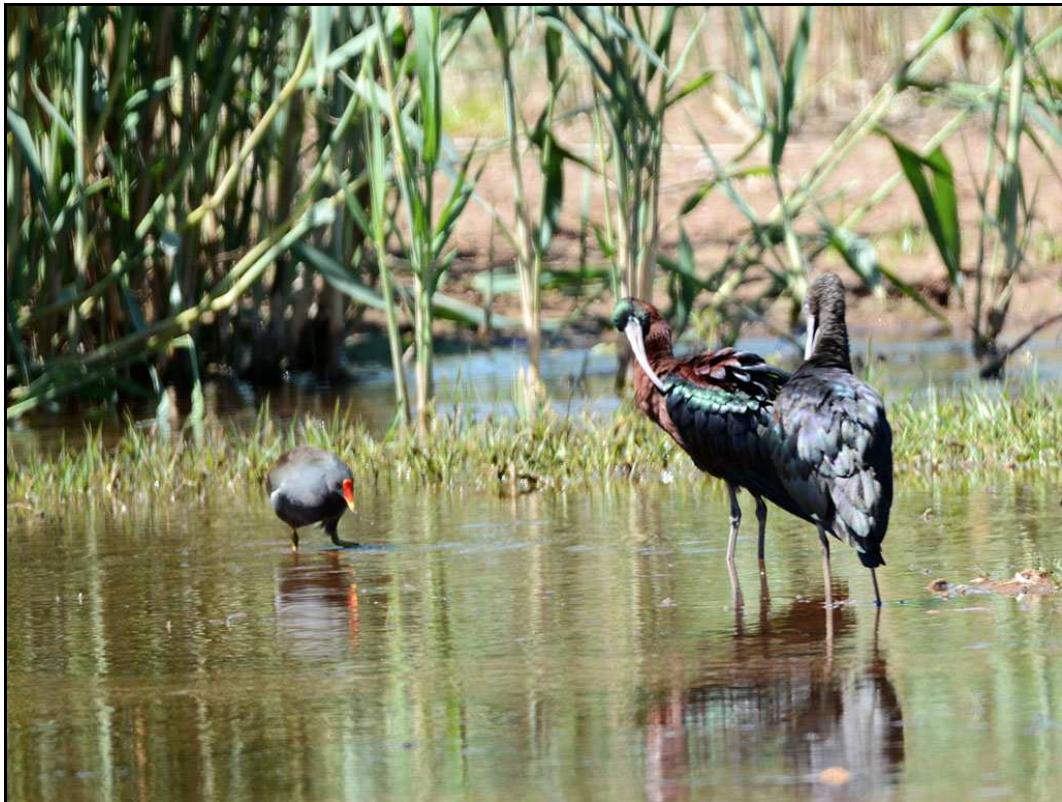
Our gardener (who now also understands a bit about conservation, don't just kill, call us, be careful!) called Garfield the other day to show him the cute little nest of the Black-chested Prinia (see Celtis of April 2014) in a sand olive near his house. This little bird is only between 13-15 cm in size from its beak to the tip of its tail, so imagine the size of its nest! The nest is only about 1 metre above ground and usually found in the upper branches of a shrub or bush. So Garfield carefully took a quick photo with his cell phone (not the best with all the leaves and branches around it), as we did not want to attract the wrong kind of attention to it. See photos in Afrikaans section.

Some other recent sightings:



I'm watching you!!! A Jumping Spider (Family Salticidae), (Afr. Springspinnekop) on the lip of an Arum Lily (Photo: Garfield Krige). More about this cutie next month!

Recently spotted at the vlei area - note that the Glossy Ibis is no the same bird as a Hadeda.



Glossy Ibis (*Plegadus falcinellus*) with a Common Moorhen, Afr. Grootwaterhoender (*Gallinula chloropus*) - recently spotted at the vlei area (Photo: Garfield Krige)



A Flower Crab Spider (*Misumenia sp.*), which has caught a moth. These spiders can change their colours much like a chameleon (Photo: Garfield Krige)

A few funnies:

Life is all about perspective. The tragedy of the Titanic was a miracle to the lobsters in the ship's kitchen!

If practice makes perfect and nobody's perfect then why practice?

If Apple made a car, would it have Windows?

Friends, that's all for this month. Enjoy the good weather - take a walk on your property and see what is there. Who knows, just maybe you stumble over the bones of a previously undiscovered "Mr Ples"! Think about that – instant fame! And if not, at least you can enjoy the lovely flowers on your property!

"If we pollute the air, water and soil that keep us alive and well, and destroy the biodiversity that allows natural systems to function, no amount of money will save us." David Suzuki (Canadian academic, science broadcaster and environmental activist)

Goeie dag vriende!

Met die lekker weer wil-wil mens dink somer is hier, maar dan kry mens skielik 'n koue dag en weet mens weer, die reën moet eers kom voor die nuwe seisoen regtig aanbreek.

Net na die Harveyas begin blom (en **het** ons nou 'n lieflike oes van hulle op ons plot gehad hierdie jaar!), volg die vrolike geel van die ster lelies (*Hypocidaceae*). In die veld is ook die klein blou poeirkwassies, bobbejaansterre; die wit Gerberas blom sommer 'n tweede keer in net 'n paar maande (hoe bakgat is dit nie?!), die *Gnidias*, *Hermannias*, *Moraeas*, *Lactuca inermis*, *Scabiosas*, *Bulbines*, *Albucas*, *Kohautias*, *Vernonias*, die klein blou *Whalenbergias*, Kat-se-snor, net om maar 'n paar op te noem! Ai, ek wens tog so almal het gewone name gehad maar ongelukkig het hul nie! Natuurlik kan ek ook nie foto's van elkeen plaas nie, want dan sal die Celtis weer te groot wees vir aflaai! Maar meeste het wel een of ander tyd in 'n Celtis verskyn.



***Wahlenbergia undulata*, Eng. Pale Bluebell (Foto: Elmarie Krige)**



Bobbejaanstert (*Xerophyta retinervis*) Eng. Monkey's Tail (Foto: Elmarie Krige)

Omdat ons in 'n grasland boom woon, blom ons plante nou nie in kleurryke plate soos bv Namakwaland nie, maar in prag en verskeidenheid dink ek nie hoef ons een tree terug te staan nie. Onthou, gras is koning in so 'n boom, so ons blomme is bietjie meer weggesteek, maar hulle is daar!

Nou is natuurlik ook die tyd wat die slange uitbroei en te voorskyn kom! Ek kry juis nou die dag 'n foto van Nick Rosenberg (SCE150), waar hy 'n klein bruin huisslangetjie vashou. Dankie vir die foto Nick! Die slangetjie hou die muis- en rot-populasie in toom en is nie giftig nie. Hy het glo sommer 'n rooilippie en 'n jong nagaddertjie ook raakgeloop. Nie een van hulle, hoewel matig giftig, is dodelik vir die mens nie en doen eintlik goeie werk om ander gediertes se populasies in toom te hou. In die natuur werk alles saam; dis gewoonlik die mens wat dinge versteur en wanbalanse skep, so ek weet hulle is maar grillerig (ekself doen ook maar 'n Wayde Van Niekerk as ek een sien!) maar gun hul maar hul plekkie in die natuur, wat!

Van slange gepraat – net nou die dag kom Garfield 'n poffie teë – sommer nog 'n baba en maar so dik soos sy middelvinger. Maar is die kêrel kwaai! Dit sis vir die eerste span – klein soos dit is! Hulle is mos maar bekend vir hul beneuktheid!



Jong pofaddertjie in die voetpaadjie. (Foto: Garfield Krige)

Mense onthou tog maar daar is noodnommers op die webwerf onder "Fauna – Sterkfontein Snakes" (<http://sterkfonteincountryestates.org.za/fauna/sterkfontein-snakes>). Dis altyd goed om te weet waar om aan te klop vir hulp in noodgevalle. Onthou ook as een van julle, of van jul werkers gebyt word, probeer om die slang te identifiseer of 'n foto te neem (komaan ouens, alle selfone het kameras deesdae,

selfs die “cheapies”!) net om dit makliker vir hospitaalpersoneel te maak om die regte teengif toe te dien.

Nou ‘n ander interessante iets – het julle geweet kanker kom ook onder plante voor? Ons het dit al meermale, veral op die aalwyne, op ons Estate gesien – sien foto in Engelse gedeelte.

By diere (in biologie word die mens onder die diereryk ingedeel – ag Herklaas, dit *is* nou maar so!) ontwikkel ‘n kankergroeisel wanneer ‘n sel, of selle hul ingeboude vermoë om groei te reguleer, verloor – meestal as gevolg van een of ander mutasie. By plante gebeur dieselfde, maar in hul geval is dit meestal as gevolg van een of ander infeksie. Fungi, bakterieë, virusse asook insekbesmetting kan almal redes vir kanker by plante wees. Kortlik, in plante kan dit nie sulke dodelike gevolge hê soos by die mens en dit kan nie versprei nie, maar is gewoonlik plekgebonden en het minimale negatiewe uitwerking op die plant self.

Op die onderwerp van kanker – het julle geweet dis nie ‘n “nuwe” siektetoestand soos mens verkeerdelik tot sover gedink het nie? Ek het onlangs ‘n baie interessante artikel gelees oor bevindings van ‘n groep navorsers* afkomstig van Wits Universiteit se Evolutionary Studies Institute en die South African Centre for Excellence in Paleosciences .

Hierdie wetenskaplikes het tekens van aggressiewe kanker in ‘n 1.7 miljoen-jaar-oue voetbeen gekry! Die ontdekking is in ‘n grot in die Swartkrans area (wat natuurlik naby ons Estate is) gevind. Hulle vermoed die voetbeen behoort aan ‘n baie vroeë voorouer van die moderne mens.

In die eerste studie (wat gepubliseer was in The South African Journal of Science) is die kanker geïdentifiseer as osteosarkoma – ‘n aggressiewe vorm van kanker wat, indien nie behandel, tot ‘n vroeë dood van ‘n individu kan lei. As gevolg van hoe die been bewaar gebly het, was dit moeilik om te bewys dat dit aan ‘n grootmens of kind behoort het en ook asof dit wel tot die dood van die individu gelei het. Dit sou egter gepaard gegaan het met erge pyn en sou ook die individu se loop en hardloop aksies bemoeilik het.

Met ‘n gepaardgaande studie op die gefossileerde oorblyfsels van ‘n kind is die heel oudste bewyse van ‘n gewas sover bekend gevind – hierdie is egter bevind as nie-kwaadaardig nie. Die fossiel is in Malapa Grot in die Wieg van die Mensdom Wêrelderfenisgebied gevind en dateer amper 2 miljoen jaar terug! Hierdie is baie fassinerend vir my en om te dink hier is dalk nog ‘n magdom wonderlike dinge in ons area wat net lê en wag om ontdek te word – dis baie spesiaal!

Ons tuinjong (wie ook nou al so bietjie verstaan van bewaring, moenie net doodmaak nie, roep ons, wees versigtig!) roep Garfield die ander dag om hom die oulikste klein nessie van ‘n Swartbandlangstertjie (sien Celtis van April 2014) te kom kyk in die Sandolien naby sy huis. Die outjie is maar sowat 13-15 cm van bek tot stertpunt so dink nou hoe klein is die ou nessie! Die nessie word ook maar net sowat

'n meter van die grond af in die regop takke van gewoonlik in 'n lae struik of bossie gebou. Garfield het maar vinnig 'n selffoonfoto geneem - nou nie die beste nie, want daar is blare en takke oral in die pad! Maar met die wat die nessie so laag is, wou ons nou ook nie die verkeerde tipe aandag na die nessie trek nie.



Swartbandlangstertjie (*Prinia flavicans*) Eng. Black-chested Prinia (Foto: Elmarie Krige)



Swartbandlangstertjie (*Prinia flavicans*) Eng. Black-chested Prinia - nie-broei kleure (Foto: Garfield Krige)



Swartbandlangsterjie se pieklein nessie in 'n sandolien se takke (Foto: Garfield Krige)

Nog ander interessante dinge wat ons onlangs gesien het:



'n Heuningby wat stuifmeel uit 'n varkoor lelie versamel (kyk hoe wit en dik sit dit op sy agterbeen) (Foto: Garfield Krige)



Rooimeerkat (Eng. Yellow Mongoose). Hoewel geslagte eners lyk, is hierdie duidelik n' wyfie wat begin dragtig is (let op die effense magie). Let ook op die groot tepel wat tussen die hare onder uitsteek (Foto: Elmarie Krige)

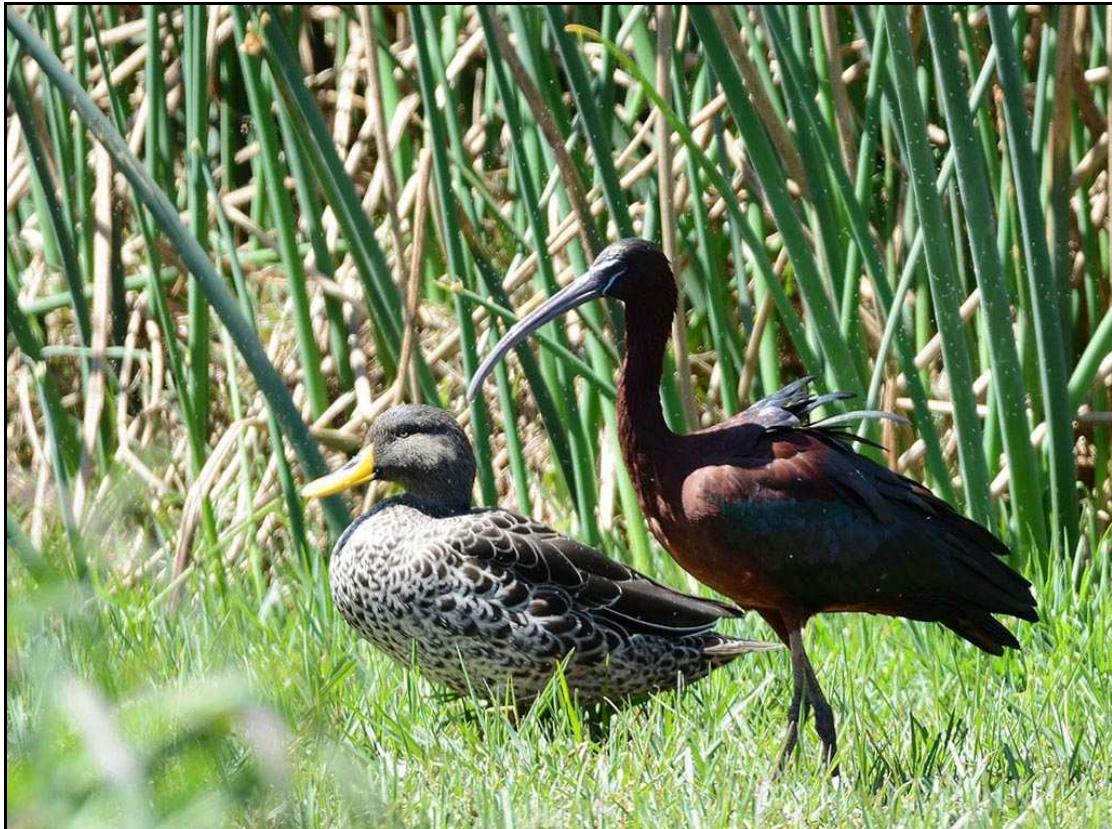


Inkblom (*Cycnium adonense*), Eng. Ink Plant (Foto: Garfield Krige)

Onlangs by ons vlei opgemerk - let wel, die Glansibis is nie dieselfde as die Hadeda nie.



Glansibis (*Plegadus falcinellus*) (Foto, Garfield Krige)



Glansibis (*Plegadus falcinellus*), saam met 'n Geelbekeend (*Anas undulata*), Eng. Yellow-billed Duck (Foto: Garfield Krige)

So 'n paar kortetjies net vir die snaaksigheid:

Sommige mense hou nie van baarde nie, maar jy moet dit kans gee; dit groei op 'n mens!

Hoe verhoed jy dat 'n haan jou wakker kraai op 'n Sondagoggend?
Maak hoenderbredie die Saterdagaand.

Hoekom krap mens jouself?

Want jy is die enigste een wat weet waar dit jeuk!

Vriende, dis nou genoeg van my kant af vir hierdie maand. Geniet die lekker weer en stap bietjie rond in jou omgewing. Net dalkies struikel jy oor die voorheen onontdekte beendere van 'n "Mr Ples"! Dink nou net – kitsroem vir jou! En al gebeur dit nou nie, dan kan jy minstens die mooi plante van ons omgewing geniet!

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



Sources and references: Popular Science/Meyerowitz;
Nature World News

* **Authors/Researchers from Wits:** Edward J. Odes, Patrick S Randolph-Quinney, Maryna Steyn, Zach Throckmorton, Jacqueline S. Smilg, Bernard Zipfel, Tanya Augustine, Frikkie De Beer, Jakobus W. Hoffman, Ryan D. Franklin, Lee R. Berger