

Celtis africana

Sterkfontein Country Estate Mid-Winter 2018

Good day once again friends of the *Celtis*!

Time really does have wings – I notice its a year ago since my last letter! I have been meaning to do another *Celtis* letter every now and then, but then other things happen and I don't get to it. But people have asked me when am I doing another one and asked Garfield when am I doing another. So, for those of you who enjoy reading it and learning about all the wildlife and plants with me – this is especially for you!

Garfield usually goes for a walk after lunch just to stretch his legs after a long morning behind the desk. On this specific day our spaniel, always running ahead, suddenly startled and jumped out of the way. One's first thought is that it could be a snake, but getting closer he first saw its head through the grass and thought it was a frog. Only when he got very close did he see this weird-looking critter is actually some kind of lizard!

This little oke is part of the *Agama* (lizard) family. Apparently they are not rare or endangered, but I have certainly never seen one before. If our dog didn't warn Garfield of it, I am sure we would never have known of its existence! They live mainly on insects but may also feed on seeds, grass, berries and even eggs of smaller lizards. Luckily Garfield had his cell phone with him, so at least we now know such a creature exists on our Estate!

Most *Agamas* are polygamous and males may hold six or more females in their territory for breeding. What I want to know is what if each of the females has a headache if mister would like to, well... breed?!

We often hear and see sunbirds in our garden. During lunch in summer I was cooling off under the trees at our braai area and kept hearing them. Looking up I happened to see a female busily working at a little nest. This was very exciting as I have often seen her collecting spider's webs on aloes near our window, but have never actually seen a nest. I told Garfield he'd better get his camera ready so we can get a series of pictures on how this unfolds!

And does she work hard! She flies off, sometimes returning much later with material and then works hard weaving and working on the little nest. Sometimes it was so hot that she'd sit with open beak taking a bit of a breather, soon to be dashing off again. She cleverly weaves in all kinds of plant material with spider's web to make it strong and the end-result is a cleverly camouflaged little home.

Garfield was able to take amazing photos every day and I do wish I could include a whole series of it, but then this *Celtis* would be way too big to download. Of course the lazy male does nothing but encourage her from the side, sometimes chasing another male away that looked like it wanted to take over his partner.

After reading up about how long it takes for eggs to hatch, we worked out a date and we were spot on! Usually two eggs are laid but in this case only one hatched. First one just heard the sounds of the little one but eventually the head of the ever-hungry little one appeared at the entrance of the nest. Then again the poor female worked the hardest to feed the little one. The male does help to collect and bring food, but for the most, the poor female works her butt off! We really felt lucky to be able to witness how the story unfolded!

We also knew that the crested barbets had chicks – unfortunately we never found the nest but as we moved about in a certain area near the kitchen, they would get frantic and send out warning calls. Around Easter, we noticed the parents with two chicks popping around for a bite of bread late afternoon when I feed my dogs. It always amazes me when birds are as big as the parents and fully-fledged, they still act like babies and still want to be spoon-fed or should I say beak-fed!

Something **very** interesting, which will be happening this year, is a total lunar eclipse on the 27th of July. This will be the longest eclipse of the century. For those of you who love these sorts of things out here where there are no streetlights, one should be able to experience it much better than in town. However even if it starts early evening, the peak will be during the graveyard shift, so, not for those who love their sleep! Herewith a link to a very interesting website for those interested:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/in/south-africa/johannesburg>

For those of you who love owls as much as I do and who really are serious about doing SOMETHING for the environment, here is a link to a wonderful way of helping nature **and** saving marine life. We often just chuck used plastic bags in the dustbin. Even at the rubbish dump the wind blows bags away causing it to end up in our rivers and eventually in our oceans. There are many photos and videos on the Internet of marine life being killed by swallowing plastic bags or getting entangled in it, suffering a slow and painful death. Instead of just throwing it away, there is an easy way to recycle as well as doing something great for the owl population.

https://krugersdorpnews.co.za/356418/owl-rescue-centre-finds-a-way-to-keep-straws-and-plastic-from-killing-sea-creatures/#.WxFf_AuDo1M.email

It is so easy; the bag is dropped at your home, collected from you again once it is full, so really no work at all for you!

And, as always, just for fun:

A husband calls the maternity ward, as his wife is about to give birth but accidentally gets through to the cricket stadium.

Husband: "How is the situation...?"

To his shock he got the following reply:

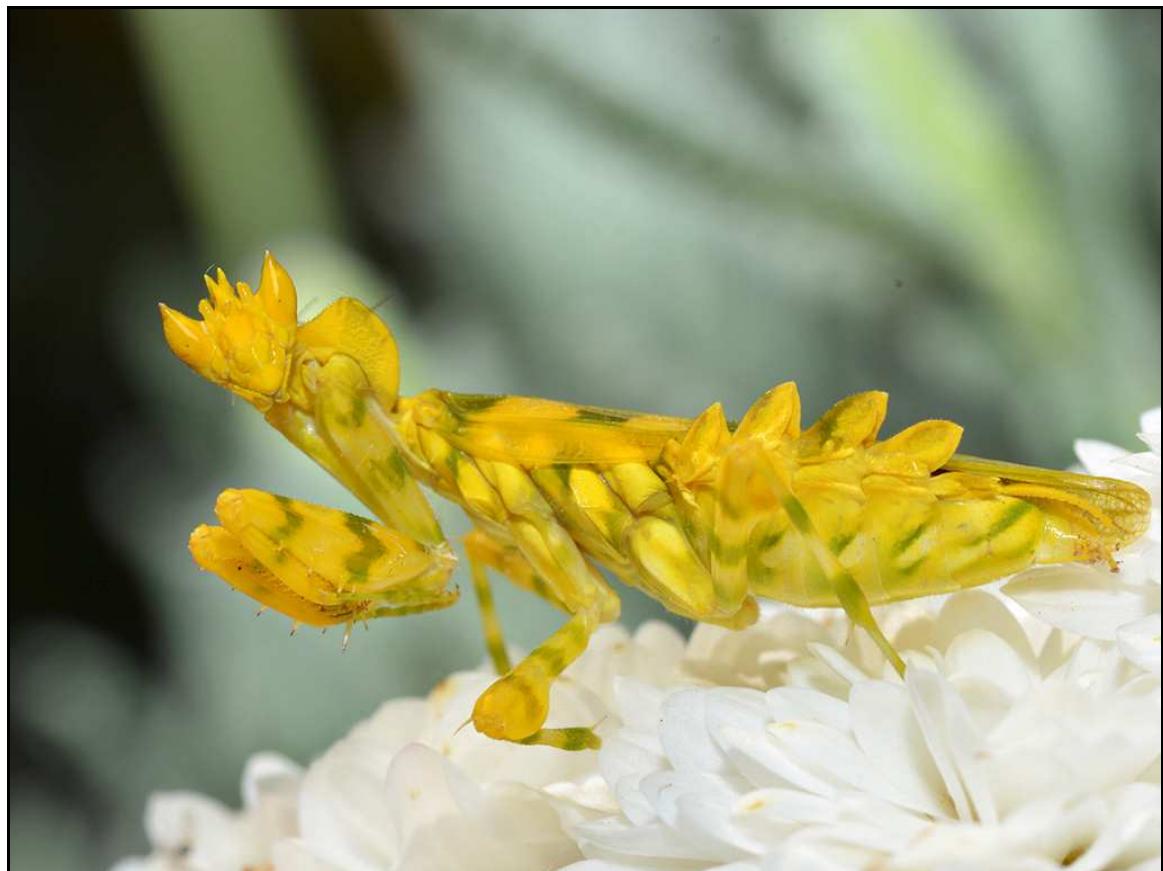
"Its fine – 3 are out and hope to get another 7 out by lunch - last one was a duck!"

The husband fainted.

Do have a look on the website – I added a new page “Veldfires and living in the country” with an interesting contribution by Professor Braam van Wyk. Well folks, that’s it from my side. Hope you found the *Celtis* interesting and until next time its is "ciao for now", as they say!



Ons geniet sy gereelde kuiertjies op ons plot. Steenbokrammetjie (Foto: Garfield Krige)



I saw this little "alien" on a flower and Garfield captured this interesting looking mantis.



Almal geniet 'n happy mieliepap soggens (Foto Elmarie Krige)



Bird's Nest fungi (*Nidulariaceae*). Very aptly named, don't you think? (Photo: Garfield Krige)



Voëltjenes fungi (*Nidulariaceae*). Piepklein in vergelyking met my vinger né! Lyk kompleet soos 'n voëltjenes vol eiers! (Foto: Garfield Krige)



[More Birds Nest fungi photos](#)

[Nog Voëtjenes fungie foto's](#)

(Photos: Garfield Krige)

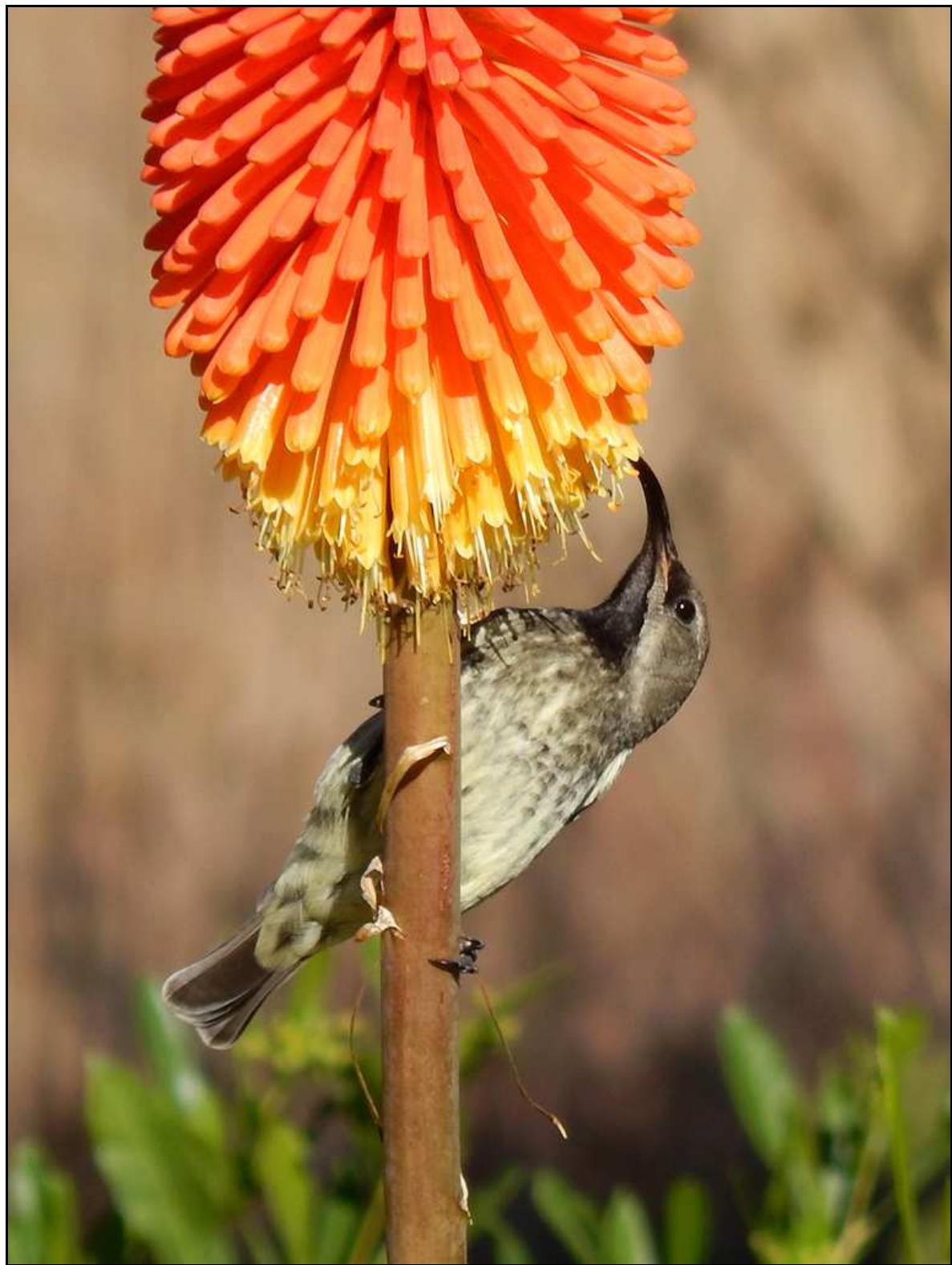




A seldom seen visitor to our Estate, the Eastern Ground Agama (*Agama aculeata distantii*) (Photo: Garfield Krige)



Kyk net daai gevreetjie - dis mos pure padda! Oostelike Grond Agama (*Agama aculeata distantii*) (Foto: Garfield Krige)



Mmmm... lekker nektar! Wyfie Swart-suikerbekkie (Foto: Elmarie Krige)



Female Amethyst Sunbird hard at work building its nest (Photo: Garfield Krige)



Dit mag slordig lyk, maar so is dit goed gekamoefleer. Wyfie Swartsuikerbekkie hard aan die nesbou
(Foto: Garfield Krige)



"There you go little one, a nice titbit for you" (Photo: Garfield Krige)



"Ma! Ek kan nie lekker bykom nie!" (Foto: Garfield Krige)



"Daddy, that was not enough!" (Photo: Garfield Krige)



"Ag nee pa, pa moet beter mik!" (Foto: Garfield Krige)



**A mother's work is never done! Female removing poop from the nest. 'n Skoon huis kom altyd eerste!
Wyfietjie verwijder kuikenbollie (Foto: Garfield Krige)**

Gegroet vriende van die *Celtis*!

Ek sien dis sowaar 'n hele jaar gelede wat ek laas met julle gesels het! Ek wou al lankal weer 'n *Celtis* doen, maar dan gebeur ander dinge en kom ek nie daarby uit nie. Maar daar is tog van julle wat vra wanneer stuur ek weer een uit en sommiges het al vir Garfield ook gevra wanneer doen ek weer een. So, vir die van julle wat dit net so geniet om saam met my te lees en leer oor plante en diere hier rond – hierdie een is spesiaal weer vir julle!

Garfield hou daarvan om bietjie bene te rek gedurende sy middagete na 'n lang oggend agter die lessenaar. Een spesifieke dag spring ons spanjoel wat altyd vooruit hardloop, skielik heel verskrik uit die pad. Mens se eerste gedagte is dat dit 'n slang kan wees, maar by nadere inspeksie is dit toe hierdie eienaardige kreatuurtjie. Toe hy eers net die kop tussen die gras sien dag hy dis 'n padda. Eers toe hy die hele diertjie van nabig sien, kom hy agter dis al die tyd 'n tipe akkedissie.

Nou die outjie is van die *Agama* (akkedis) familie en glo nie skaars nie, maar ek moet erken ek het nog nooit voorheen een raakgeloop nie. As ons hond nie so wakker was nie, sou ons sekerlik nooit van die akkedissie se bestaan geweet het nie – dit was regtig goed gekamoefleer. Die akkedissie lewe hoofsaaklik van insekte maar hou ook van 'n happie gras, saadjies, bessies en selfs eiertjies van ander, kleiner tipe akkedissies. Gelukkig het Garfield sy selfoon byderhand gehad, nou het ons minstens bewys van die outjie se bestaan!

Meeste *Agama* spesies is veelwywig en die mannetjies kan soveel as ses wyfies aanhou in hul territoriale gebied vir aanteeldoeleindes. Wat my vraag is: wat as elke liewe wyfie skielik kopseer het as meneer besluit vanaand is **die** aand?

Ons hoor en sien gereeld die Swartsuikerbekkies in ons tuin, maar een warm somersdag koel ek af onder die bome by ons braaplek. Toe ek per toeval opkyk sien ek 'n wyfie waar sy hard aan die nesbou is! Man was ek nou opgewonde! Ek het gereeld 'n wyfie gesien spinnerakke kom aftrek by 'n aalwyn reg voor ons een venster, maar was nog nooit gelukkig genoeg om 'n nessie te sien nie. Nou kon ons die hele storie dophou en ek het dadelik vir Garfield opgekommandeer om met sy kamera 'n dag-tot-dag rekord te hou van die storie.

Jinne en werk sy nou hard! En dit was so warm en sy het heeldag heen en weer gevlieg met boumateriaal en dan woel en werskaf sy by die nessie. Blare en plantmateriaal word baie slim vasgeweef met spinnerakke vir 'n lekker sterk, goed-gekamoefleerde huisie. Die mannetjie doen niks behalwe om haar aan te moedig en so dan en wan grootmeneer te speel as 'n ander mannetjie by sy wyfie wil kom aanlê. Soms was sy so moeg en warm dat sy eers 'n rukkie met 'n oop bekkie gaan sit het om asem te skep. Dis natuurlik onmoontlik om al die pragtige foto's in die *Celtis* te sit – dit sou ure neem om af te laai, maar ai ek wens so ek kon!

Na ons opgelees het hoe lank dit neem vir eiers om uit te broei, kon ons taamlik seker voorspel wanneer die eiertjies sou uitbroei ons was wraggies reg! Gewoonlik word so twee eiertjies gelê maar in die geval het net een uitgebroei. Eers het mens net die gepiep

van binne die nessie gehoor maar later het die altyd-honger kleintjie by die openinkie gewag vir die volgende happie. Die mannetjie help so bietjie kosgee, maar dis maar weer meestal die arme wyfietjie wat malgaan om kos te bring. Ons was so gelukkig dat ons die hele storie kon beleef van nesbou tot die kuikentjie daar is.

Ons het geweet die kuifkophoutkappers het ook gebroei die afgelope somer. Ons kon nooit uitvind waar die nessie was nie maar sodra ons in 'n sekere area beweeg naby die kombuis het hulle rondgewip in bome en waarskuwingsroepe gegee. Paasnaweek se kant het die ouerpaar met twee uitgegroeide lummels kom brood soek laatmiddag as ek my honde voer. Dis altyd vir my vreksnaaks om te sien hoe baba-rig die uitgegroeide kuikens nog is. Hulle is heeltemal in staat om self brood op te pik maar nee, hulle wil nog deur die ma en pa met die bek gevoer word!

Op 27 Julie gebeur iets *baie* interessants – dit sal 'n algehele maansverduistering wees en hierdie jaar sal dit die langste een hierdie eeu wees. Ons wat gelukkig genoeg is om ver van stadsligte te woon, behoort dit goed te kan sien. Alhoewel dit al vroegaand begin, sal die volle verduistering gedurende die tyd wat spoke rondloop wees. So die van julle wat liewer snoesig in die bed wil wees, julle sal maar moet uitmis! Vir die van julle wat tog bietjie meer wil uitvind, hier is 'n interessante skakel:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/in/south-africa/johannesburg>

Die van julle wat ook gek is oor uile, hier is nou **regtig** 'n manier om 'n verskil te maak. Nie net vir die omgewing en ook ons seelewé nie, maar ook om iets positiefs by te dra om uile 'n lekker broeiplekkie te gee. Almal van ons gooi gebruikte plastieksakke een of ander tyd weg. Ongelukkig is dit so dat wind hope plastieksakke wegwaai - selfs van vullishope af en so eindig dit meestal in ons riviere en uiteindelik in die see. Daar is vele voorbeelde op die Internet van die skade wat plastiek aan ons seelewé doen. Dit word ingesluk of van die seelewé raak verstrelg in dit en sterf so 'n stadige en pynlike dood. Kyk na hierdie skakel vir 'n maklike manier om van gebruikte plastieksakke ontslae te raak – en help sommer die uil-populasie ook!

https://krugersdorpnews.co.za/356418/owl-rescue-centre-finds-a-way-to-keep-straws-and-plastic-from-killing-sea-creatures/#.WxFf_AuDo1M.email

Dis regtig vrek maklik, koop 'n sak, dit word afgelewer en sodra dit vol is weer weggeneem, so regtig geen moeite vir ons nie!

En, soos altyd, iets net vir die grap:

'n Man kom aan op die plaas waar hy net 'n opgeskote seun by die stal aantref. "Is jou pa hier," vra die man.

"Nee oom, my pa is dorp toe."

"Is jou broer Koos hier?" vra die man weer.

"Nee oom, hy is in die koshuis en kom net elke tweede naweek huis toe. Maar kan ek oom dalk help met iets?"

"Jou broer Koos het my dogter swanger gemaak!"

“Dan sal oom maar met my pa moet praat. Ek weet hy vra R3 000,00 as ander mense sy bul wil gebruik om hul koeie te dek en ek weet hy vra R2 000,00 as iemand sy stoetram wil gebruik om hul ooie te dek. Maar ek het geen idee hoeveel hy gaan vra vir die werk wat Koos gedoen het nie!”

Dalk so effens stout - maar wat, ons het mos nodig om gereeld te lag! Kyk bietjie op die webwerf – daar is ‘n nuwe bladsy getiteld “Veldfires and Living in the Country” met ‘n interessante bydrae deur Professor Braam Van Wyk. Van my kant is dit nou al en hoop ek julle het die *Celtis* geniet!

Sources/Bronne: Roberts Voëlgids – Hugh Chittenden; Wikipedia
SANBI Atlas and Red List of the Reptiles of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland – Michael F. Bates, William R. Branch, Aaron M. Bauer, Marius Burger, Johan Marais, Graham J. Alexander & Marienne S. De Villiers

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

