

Celtis Africana

Sterkfontein Country Estate

Winter 2022

Good day folks!

I have been rapped over the knuckles, so to speak, for not doing a new Celtis. Well, here we go! We had such amazing sightings over the past months, so yes, I suppose it is time to share with you all!

Twice now we have seen a Burchell's Coucal (*Centropus burchellii*) but we have just not been able to take a photo of it. The first time I heard it's call, I thought to myself it just couldn't be it! But then suddenly it landed on one of the shrubs in our garden. This caused huge consternation amongst all the lapwings and finches and sparrows that just had their late afternoon snack. This bird literally eats almost anything – from lizards, to small snakes, insects, small mammals and birds - no wonder it caused such uproar!

As I grabbed my cell phone to at least get some sort of photo, Garfield arrived by car, causing it to take off. Talk about bad timing!

A couple of days later early one morning, Garfield saw it as he opened the office doors and yet again he was not able to take a photo. I am quite sure it resides near the vlei, as that is it's preferred habitat.

Another afternoon we had guests over when the lady, who is an avid birder, noticed a fairly large bird landing in one of the acacias having caught something. She was sure it was a Lanner Falcon (*Falco biarmicus*). We quickly fetched binoculars and she positively identified it as a young Lanner Falcon. Of course once again, we did not manage to take a photo. By the time Garfield ran upstairs, ran back downstairs, got the focus in, it had devoured it's prey and took off. Garfield have also seen it a couple of times high up on our water tank, but I guess one have to walk around with a camera around your neck all the time if one really wants to capture all the happenings on our Estate!

However one bird I **did** manage to take photos of is the African Cuckoo Hawk (*Aviceda cuculoides*). Our lapwings raise a couple of chicks on our property every year and late one morning I heard them going bonkers. I thought it might be one of the mongooses trying to grab a chick for lunch. I went outside and they were just behind the garden, screeching (you cannot call it anything else!) and running around the little chicks. I did not see anything but then notice they kept looking upwards and then I saw it. This huge bird in one of the acacias!

I thought I will take a chance and ran inside for my camera - just maybe it will still be there when I get back. I knew it was not one of our snake eagles, but I could not identify it. Well I did manage to get some lovely photos and it turned out to be an African Cuckoo Hawk. That was exciting! I have never seen one before, let alone on

the Estate! We have some wonderful birds of prey in the area and I do love them, they are just so regal!



African Cuckoo Hawk (*Aviceda cuculoides*) (Photo: Elmarie Krige)



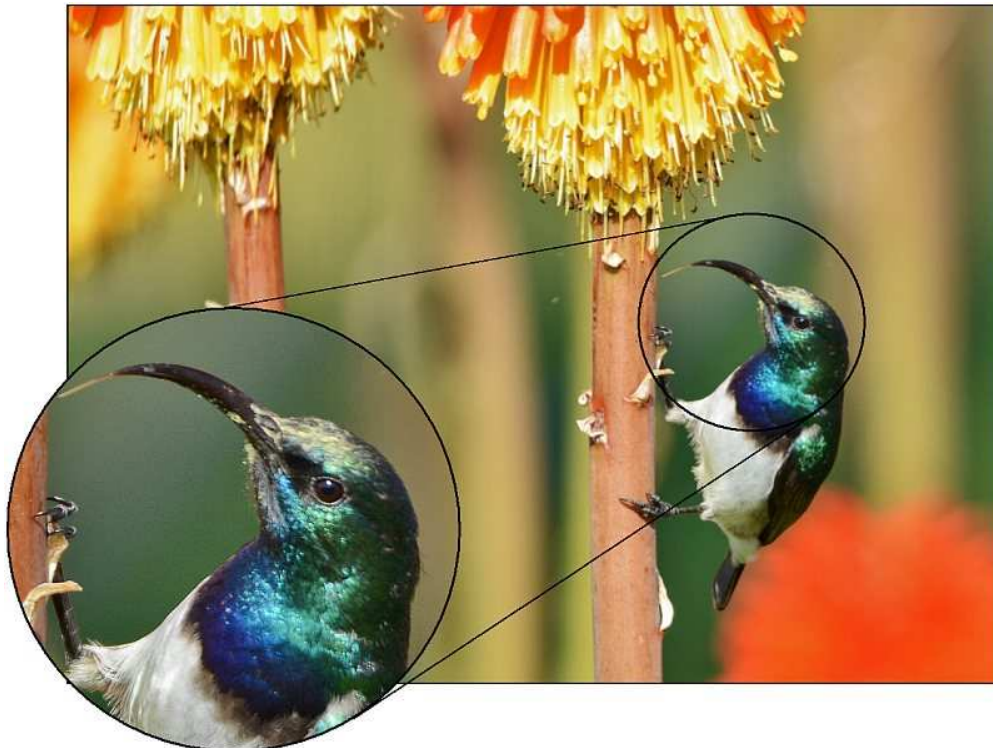
African Cuckoo Hawk (*Aviceda cuculoides*) (Photo: Elmarie Krige)

With winter arriving and the red-hot pokers in full bloom, we see lots of sunbirds coming for a shot of its nectar every so often. One morning I saw no less than five at the same bunch of pokers and it was some Amethyst Sunbirds (*Chalcomitra*

amethystina) as well as a couple of White-bellied Sunbirds (*Cinnyris talatala*)! I asked Garfield to come and take some photos when he had a chance as, let's face it, he has the right camera with all the best lenses to take the best possible shots, and so he did! It was not easy to get a good shot of the male Amethyst sunbird - most were in the shadows but he got great shots of the female! I just wish I could add a lot more photos but the Celtis would just be too big!



White-bellied Sunbird (*Cinnyris talatala*) (Photo: Garfield Krige)



White-bellied Sunbird (*Cinnyris talatala*). The inserted photo clearly shows the bird's tongue! (Photo: Garfield Krige)



Amethyst Sunbird on a succulent (*Chalcomitra amethystina*) (Photo: Garfield Krige)

One morning my gardener called me and showed me this lovely little Red-lipped snake (*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*), belly thick from something it ate. It is mainly active at night, but I suppose it caught something and just hung around – too full to really move. The poor thing was trying to go through a hole in the wall and it just wasn't going to happen with that full belly! It was quite funny so once again, Garfield was called for a few photos.

An interesting fact is that it is also known as the Herald snake. This is because the presence of this snake was first announced in the Herald newspaper in the Eastern Cape!

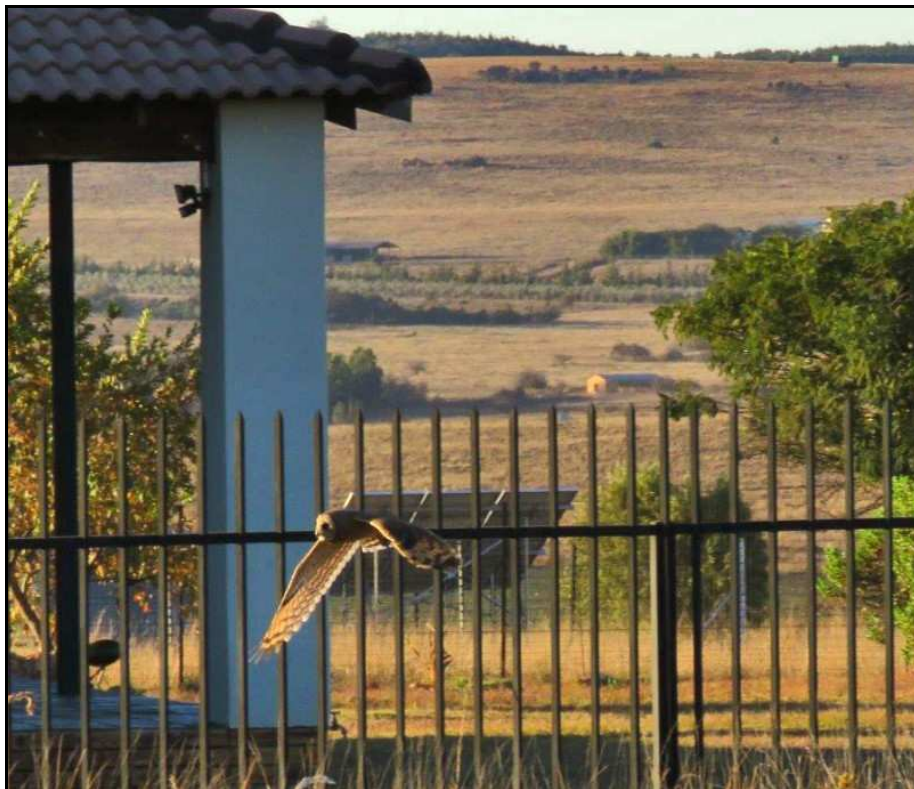


Red-lipped snake - check out that full belly! (*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*) (Photo: Garfield Krige)

Jenny Johnson (SCE 124) one of the regular contributors of photos for the Celtis also sent me a lovely photo of a male Steenbok right at her kitchen door. How lucky was she to capture it! Jenny, next time invite it in for some tea so it can really pose for us!



A young Steenbok male (Photo Jenny Johnson)



Another lovely contribution of an owl in flight by Jenny Johnson

I also received some video footages of a Steenbok from Ryan Ebeddes - him and his wife are newbies on the Estate and really love seeing the bits of wildlife in our area. One video was taken whilst he was driving on Malmani, and the other of a Steenbok at night caught on their security cameras. I remember when we just moved to the Estate how many of them were around, we'd see them all the time. Unfortunately their numbers seems to have dwindled, which is very sad, so I am so happy whenever I hear of a sighting.

Time for something just for a laugh, and seeing as it is rugby season, how about some rugby jokes!

How many American rugby fans does it take to change a light bulb? Both of them!

What's the difference between a teabag and the English rugby team? A teabag stays in the cup longer!

The rugby player goes for physio and complains: When I touch my arm it is painful, when I touch my leg it is painful, when I touch my foot it is painful! Physiotherapist: No wonder - you broke your hand!

Yes folks, I have to say goodbye till a next time. Stay warm; the winter is not over by a long shot!

Hallo daar almal!

Ek is so paar keer oor die vingers geraps en gevra nou wanneer is daar weer 'n nuwe Celtis. Nou so gesê, so gedaan! Ek is telkens verras as ek skielik iets nuuts op ons Estate opmerk, so ja, ek deel dit met graagte met julle.

Ons het nou al twee keer die Gewone Vleiloerie (*Centropus Burchellii*) hier gesien, maar was net nie vinnig genoeg om dit af te neem nie. Die eerste keer toe ek die roep gehoor het, dag ek dit kan mos nie wees nie en net toe kom land dit op een van die struik in die tuin! Natuurlik tot groot konsternasie van die kiewiete, vinke, mossies en al die ander voëls wat pas 'n middaghappy kom neem het. Hierdie voël eet omtrent enigiets; van insekte en slangetjies, tot klein soogdiertjies, voëltjies en ook eiers. Nou geen wonder die spulletjie het so tekere gegaan nie – dis mos 'n vyand in die midde!

Natuurlik net toe ek my selfoon gryp om gou 'n foto te probeer kry, kom Garfield in die oprit aangery en daar trek ta, seker terug vlei se kant toe want dis waar hul graag bly. 'n Ander oggend vroeg toe Garfield die kantoordeure oopmaak, sit meneer in 'n boom sommer naby die huis maar ag, weereens vlieg hy weg voor mens 'n kamera kan gryp.

Een middag het ons kuiergaste gehad toe die vrou ons aandag vestig op 'n voël met prooi wat in een van ons akasias sit. Sy meen toe dis 'n edelvalk (*Falco biarmicus*) en met 'n verkyker byderhand kon sy bevestig dis wel een. Nou by die tyd wat Garfield die trappe op is om sy kamera te kry, weer afgehardloop het en die lens net mooi ingestel het, was die ou klaar gevreet en vlieg toe weg. Garfield het hom 'n paar keer op ons watertoring ook opgemerk, heerlijk hoog, besig om die wêreld te bekyk vir moontlike prooi. Lyk my mens sal omtrent heeldag met 'n kamera om die nek moet rondstap vir in geval mens iets interessants raaksien!

Een voël wat ek **wel** gelukkig genoeg was om af te neem was die Koekoekvalk (*Aviceda cuculoides*). Ons het al jare lank 'n broeipaar kroonkiewiete wat elke jaar 'n paar eiers uitbroei. Een oggend hoor ek hul skril geskree en dag dis dalk een van die meerkatte wat 'n babakiewiet vir middagete wil kom steel en hardloop toe nader. Die spulletjie is toe reg agter ons tuin aan't lawaai en hul probeer net die kleintjies beskerm, maar ek sien g'n spoor van iets nie.

Toe sien ek die ouers bly opkyk-opkyk en sowaar daar sit hierdie groot voël in een van die akasias. Ek kon nie mooi sien wat dit is nie, en dog ek sal maar inhol vir my kamera, dalk is hy nog daar as ek terugkom. Ek kon toe sowaar 'n paar mooi foto's inkry en dis toe al die tyd een van die Koekoekvalke. Ek was hoogs in my noppies want ek het nog nooit voorheen een gesien nie, wat nog te sê op ons Estate! Dis verbasend hoeveel soorte roofvoëls is al hier opgemerk en ek lief dit, vir my is hulle die koninklikes van die lug.



Koekoekvalk (*Aviceda cuculoides*) (Foto: Elmarie Krige)

Met winter se koms het ons vuurpyle begin blom en mens sien sommer kort-kort suikerbekkies wat elke nou en dan bietjie nektar kom drink. Een oggend sien ek nie minder as vyf van die outjies tegelyk by die een bos vuurpyle. Dis toe sommer 'n Swart Suikerbekkie paar (*Chalcomitra amethystina*) sowel as Witpenssuikerbekkies (*Cinnyris talatala*) wat hulself kom help aan 'n soetigheidjie. Ek het Garfield nadergehark vir foto's want, laat ek maar eerlik wees, hy het die beter kamera met al die nodige lense en goeters, so kyk die pragtige foto's! Ek wens net ek kon sommer 'n hele paar van die foto's plaas, maar dan sal die Celtis net te groot wees.



Witpenssuikerbekkie (*Cinnyris talatala*) (Foto: Garfield Krige)



Wyfie Swart Suikerbekkie op 'n vetplant (*Chalcomitra amethystina*) (Foto: Garfield Krige)



Swart Suikerbekmannetjie op 'n vetplant (*Chalcomitra amethystina*) (Foto: Garfield Krige)



Dis hoe mens dit done - koponderstebo! Swartsuikerbekwyfie (foto: Garfield Krige)

Een oggend roep die tuinier my en daar is toe hierdie pragtige rooilippie (*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*) met 'n pens dik gevreet aan iets. Dis hoofsaaklik aktief

snags, maar het natuurlik iets te vrete gekry en maar rondgehang in die hoop om met tyd weg te kom. Hoe meer die ou deur 'n gat in die tuinmuur probeer gaan, hoe meer stop daai dik lyf hom. Dit was eintlik vreksnaaks. 'n Interessante feit is dat die slangetjie ook algemeen bekend is as die Herald slang. Dis nadat dit die eerste keer aangemeld was in die Herald, 'n koerant in die Oos Kaap. Garfield is weer opgeroep vir kameradiens en kon 'n paar mooi foto's kry.



'n Dikgevrete Rooilip Slang (*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*) (Foto: Garfield Krige)

Een van die getroue Celtis bydraers is Jenny Johnson en sy het my 'n oulike foto van 'n Steenbokrammetjie gestuur. Die outjie was sommer reg by haar kombuis en sy kon hom mooi afneem. Ek dink sy moet hom volgende keer bietjie innooi vir tee en 'n paar goeie foto's vir ons neem!



'n Jong Steenbokrammetjie (Foto: Jenny Johnson)

Ek het ook twee kort video's van Ryan Ebeddes van Steenbokkies gekry - hy en sy vrou Glenice, is nuwe inwoners en geniet die bietjie wildlewe hier rond alte veel. Die een video is baie vroeg in die oggend op Malmani geneem en die ander een op hul plot deur hul veiligheidskameras. Ek is altyd opgewonde as ek foto's van die outjies kry. As ek terugdink hoe volop hulle was toe ons hier ingetrek het - mens het hul sommer paar maal per dag gesien. Ongelukkig het hul getalle baie afgeneem en ek is altyd bly om te sien daar is wel nog van hulle hier rond.

Dis weer tyd vir so ietsie om voor te lag. Siende dit rugby seisoen is, hoekom nie ietsie daaroor nie!

Wat is die kortste rugbygrap?
WP.

Hoe maak mens vissmeer?
Jy sit 15 Bulle in 'n Haaihok!

Hoe kry mens 'n sjampanjeprop terug in die bottel?
Vra enige Sharks ondersteuner!

Vir my is dit tyd om te groet tot 'n volgende keer. Bly warm mense, die winter is nog lank nie verby nie!

