

# ***In your garden***

Issue 2 - 30 June 2021



## **Villain of the peace - the Common Myna**

I think that it is correct to say that more people do not like Common Myna's than those that like them. I, personally, do not like them and try unsuccessfully to discourage them from my garden. I would not do anything to harm them but I chase them away whenever I can.

Common Myna's, previously known as Indian Myna's, do not occur naturally in South Africa. They were introduced many years ago when labourers were shipped in from India. They flourished in Durban and have spread to many parts of South Africa since then.

These birds are bullies at bird feeders although they are mainly attracted to bread. They will continually chase away most other birds until they have had their fill. They tend to visit in pairs, and rival pairs can often be seen having squabbles with each other. While they may normally be seen in pairs, or small flocks, during the day, they gather in their hundreds to roost in a chosen tree overnight. I feel sorry for the unfortunate people they live next to one of these trees as the din, and mess, is horrific.



## **African Monarch butterfly**

The African Monarch is one of the most well-known species of butterflies in the world. It is found throughout Africa, Asia and Australia. It goes under a few different names with "Plain Tiger" being widely used outside of Africa. The African Monarch occurs throughout South Africa.

They are most common in late summer or autumn but some are on the wing all year round. They have a wingspan of 5 to 7 cm. The colours may vary from area to area but they are always a combination of orange, white and black. One good way to identify them is by their droopy



## **Starting with bird feeders**

If you want to attract more birds to your garden then a bird feeder is the quick and easy way to do it. Bird feeders come in many shapes and sizes and are fairly cheap. The most common type of feeder is one that you place seed in and the birds feed through openings at the bottom. I recommend this type of feeder as a starting point but my recommendation does come with one warning. Once the birds have found your feeder, they can go through plenty of seed in a day.

When buying seed for a feeder you should buy it from a hardware store, or

antennae.

The African Monarch has a slow, almost lazy, way of flying and this is a good indicator that it is distasteful to predators. Butterflies that fly in a faster, somewhat haphazard way are trying to make it difficult for predators to catch them.

Although African Monarchs are likely to visit any garden they will be more common in those gardens that include their host plants. These include plants such as various species of *Asclepias*, *Ceropegia* and *Huemia*. *Cynanchum obtusifolium* is another host plant. Interestingly they also use some of the carrion flowers, such as *Stapelia* or *Orbea*, as hosts.

\* \* \*

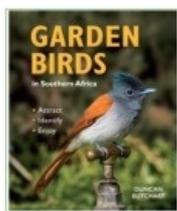
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larger pet shop, and preferably buy a bag of 10 kg. This is far more cost effective. The most expensive bags of seed are those found in supermarkets and I strongly recommend that you do not buy there.

So where do you place your new feeder? There are a few points to consider. It should be placed where you can easily see it, you should be able to access it easily to top up the seed and there should be suitable perches for the birds to land on nearby. Seed feeders can be placed close to your house, as the birds will quickly overcome their shyness in order to get a free meal.

People often wonder if any birds will find their feeder and you will soon find out that they do find it rather quickly. You must just understand what type of birds occur in your area and what type of food they eat. There are seed-eating birds across South Africa, which is why I suggest you start with one of these seed feeders. The style shown above is commonly available and is a good choice, although it tends to suit smaller birds such as weavers, sparrows and finches.



### Subscriber Competition

As a subscriber to this newsletter, you are in line to win a copy of "Garden Birds in South Africa" by Duncan Butchart.

This excellent book describes around 100 birds that are likely to appear in gardens in South Africa. The book describes how you can set up a bird friendly garden to attract different species. 50 species of plants are described including trees, aloes, proteas and much more. The main part of the book covers 101 species of birds. This section not only helps to identify them but also how to attract them. Other chapters detail subjects such as feeding birds, providing nesting sites and migration.

This competition will close when the newsletter has 1,000 subscribers so why not encourage your friends and family to subscribe! Unfortunately, this competition is only available to subscribers in South Africa. Delivery will be done to the winner's nearest branch of Postnet.

## Send me your garden bird list

Do you keep a garden bird list, and you live in a housing complex or estate? I would like to start building up a database of garden birds for as many complexes and estates as possible. As I start getting information then I will make it available to anyone who is interested. So, if you have a garden bird list then I would like to ask if you would be kind enough to send me a copy, and to send any updates as new birds are added to your list. In future issues I will be inviting readers to send in a short article about the birds in their gardens. It is your chance to brag about the birds that visit you and how you attract them.

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