

In your garden

Issue 3 - 24 July 2021



The Dark-capped Bulbul is still a Toppie

This common bird goes by a number of names including Toppie and Black-eyed Bulbul. Unfortunately, with the internationalisation (is that a word?) of our birds it is now called the Dark-capped Bulbul. This bird is very common in the eastern half of South Africa with its range extending to Port Elizabeth. Residents of the south-western region of the country will be more familiar with the Cape Bulbul.

These bulbuls are common visitors to gardens where there are trees and bushes. They are not shy, and you will often hear their cheerful calls, normally given from an exposed perch in a shrub or tree. Sometimes they make an exciting twittering call which could be because they have discovered an owl, bird of prey or snake hidden amongst the foliage of a tree or shrub. This call tends to attract other birds who get just as excited. Although they may be seen in small flocks they are most commonly encountered in pairs. The sexes have similar plumage.

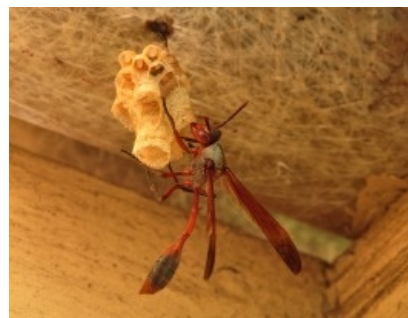
This bird absolutely loves fruit and it easy to encourage them to a bird feeder where fruit is on offer. Make sure that the feeder is not too far from vegetation. Pawpaws and apples are a favourite, but they will eat most soft fruits. They also feed on insects, spiders, berries, and nectar. Some gardeners who grow fruit trees may find that these birds are a bit of a pest as they may damage the fruit.

Dark-capped Bulbuls don't make the grandest of nests. In fact, it is decidedly flimsy. It is not hidden amongst the vegetation but rather placed amongst exposed branches, not too high off the ground. The normal clutch size is either two or three eggs. The female tends to the eggs and chicks while the male brings her food. Both parents feed the chicks.



Looking for a high?

If you are looking for a high then this plant isn't what you are looking for! It



Paper Wasps

There are many different types of wasps found in South Africa but one

may be called the Wild Dagga plant but that is more or less where the comparison ends. This plant is not as popular as the actual Dagga plant but then, real gardeners wouldn't be growing that one. Would they?

Apparently, the Wild Dagga plant does have mild narcotic properties, but it has traditionally used for treating numerous ailments. The scientific name for it, *Leonotis leonurus*, gives rise to its other common name of Lion's Ear. Apparently "leon" means lion in Greek and "otis" refers to ear.

This plant is extremely widespread across South Africa and looks rather scruffy in the wild, but it does make a good garden plant. Books on South African plants will tell you that this plant reaches two metres in height but mine are around three metres. I like to cut them back to around a metre high in April or May.

The clumps of orange flowers are not only attractive to us humans, but insects and sunbirds love them too. In summer they attract numerous bees and I often see White-bellied and Amethyst Sunbirds feeding on the pollen from the tubular flowers. My resident pair of Prinias spend a lot of time amongst the foliage, presumably looking for insects.

I think that the Wild Dagga is a good choice if you are looking for an indigenous plant to fill a disused area of your garden.

type that many people are familiar with is the Paper Wasp. Why are they called "paper wasps" you may ask? The answer is to be found in their paper-like nests that they make. These nests feature a number of cells, or compartments, and are normally hung from a spot under a roof.

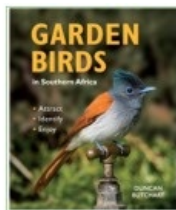
A new nest is started by a single female who is already fertilised. She builds a few cells and lays one egg in each. The wasps that emerge from the cells are all female who are sterile. Their job is to expand the nest and to tend to the next generation of larvae. Eventually, after several broods of sterile females, the initial female will lay eggs that develop into fertile males and females. The unfortunate males die after mating while the females find a safe spot where they can remain dormant until the next summer.

These wasps do not bother about you unless you bother them! If you knock a nest by accident, or on purpose, they are going to come after you! Unlike bees they can sting you multiple times. Their stings are painful, and so it is best not to disturb these little creatures. It is understandable that you may want to get rid of a nest that is very close to your house. What you need to do is knock the nest down with a broom or stick. Before doing this, I spray some insect spray in the general area of the nest and stay at a distance until the wasps have moved off. Only then do I knock down the nest.

Advertise in this newsletter

"In your garden" is looking for advertisers. This newsletter is aimed at South African gardeners, particularly those that are interested in indigenous plants as well as the birds, butterflies and more that their gardens attract. If you are interested, then please contact us at: steven@natureinyourgarden.co.za.

I look forward to hearing from you.



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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