

In your garden

Issue 3 - 29 July 2021



An unwelcome intruder

I don't suppose anyone likes finding a snake in their house. This Spotted Bush Snake was trying to find a way to get into our house through a bedroom window. I chased him off the window sill but, an hour or so later, I found it in our lounge! Why was it so keen to get inside our house? I can only imagine it was keen to hunt the geckoes who insisted on sharing our house.

The Spotted Bush Snake is common in the eastern and southern parts of South Africa. It is harmless but will bite if provoked. They are active during the day and spend much of their time in trees or shrubs. They can also often be seen sunning themselves on walls, garden gates and other places. They feed off lizards and frogs with geckoes being a particular favourite.

Unfortunately, many people kill them unnecessarily fearing that they may be a boomslang or mamba. They do, however, usually have quite a distinctive colouration. They tend to be bright green on top with numerous black spots. Their underparts are a cream colour. They grow to a length of around 80 cm or so.



The beautiful Bush Lily

The Bush Lily, or Clivia, is one of South Africa's most attractive indigenous plants. In fact, it is only found in South Africa. They are well known for their beautiful orange flowers, and they are now cultivated in many other countries around the world.

The Bush Lily has flat dark green leaves. They are best described as strap-like and overlap each other. The flowers are borne on a long stalk that grows from the base of the plant. The flowers tend to appear in autumn through to spring although this varies from area to area. In Gauteng the nurseries tend to be well-stocked with



Cute but naughty

Love them or hate them, monkeys are regular visitors to gardens and houses in some areas. To me they are fascinating creatures. They used to share my garden, in Durban, for many years. During the breeding season the youngsters would get up to endless mischief with each other and they were really fun to watch. A troop of Vervet Monkeys used to pass through our yard twice a day irritating our dogs and our neighbours.

As much as I liked them, we could never leave our backdoor or the kitchen's windows open. They used to get through the smallest gaps and

plants that are already in flower during June and July.

These plants are a bit fussy about their growing conditions. They must be planted in a shady spot, and they will not cope with too much sun. The best spot for them is underneath a leafy tree. They will also do well in a container. The Bush Lily is slow growing and does not like to be moved around too much. Rather find a good spot for them and then plant them there directly from the nursery. Do not overwater them.

Bush Lilies are sometimes targeted by garden pests such as snails. If you notice that something is eating the flowers, then check your plants at night with a torch. If snails are the culprit, then they can be easily removed by hand. Molerats may eat the bulbs of this plant.

The flowers attract a variety of insects such as bees and butterflies. One final point is that these plants are poisonous and can pose a health hazard if you happened to eat enough of them.

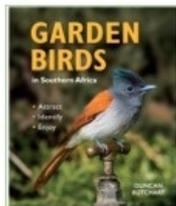
make off with whatever they could find. This was a problem especially in the oppressive heat during Durban's summer when all you want is to try get a breeze flowing through the house.

So how do you stop monkeys from visiting your house? The first rule is to never ever encourage them by putting out food for them. This encourages them to your property and builds up their confidence in dealing with us humans. Please don't try and shoot them with pellet guns or cattles. It is so sad to see injured monkeys as a result of them being shot or hit with some projectile. The best bet is to keep kitchen windows and doors closed during the day. I found that they only ever tried to use our kitchen door and windows. Never any of the other doors or windows. If you really are having problems with a troop of monkeys, then it is best to contact one of the wildlife or monkey rescue groups and ask their advice.

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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