

In your garden

Issue 6 - 12 August 2021



Blue-headed Beauty

Many of you will know the Southern Tree Agama by its easier to remember name of Blue-headed Lizard. They are most often seen low down on the trunk of a tree from where they survey the surrounding area for food items. The camp sites in Kruger National Park are a great place to find them if you aren't lucky enough to have one in your garden.

They grow to a length of around 40 cm which makes them quite a large lizard. During the breeding season the males have their most striking colouration with their bright blue head and "shoulders". Their tails are an orangey-yellow colouration. Outside of the breeding season their colours are not as vibrant. The females do not have the blue colouration. They are more olive-brown with some black markings.

During the day these species can easily be seen but at night, or at a hint of danger, they disappear into a hole or crack in the tree. Southern Tree Agama's eat insects with termites and ants being top of the list.

The Southern Tree Agama is a harmless creature although I would imagine that it would give you a nasty bite if you tried to handle it. Even though this lizard eats ants it has a rather large mouth.



The yellow bee magnet

The Honey Euryops (*Euryops virgineus*) is an attractive plant with its yellow flowers and bright green foliage. Honeybees are attracted to it and maybe that is because of the pleasing honey fragrance that the flowers give off.

This tough plant can tolerate most things such as heat, frost and drought. It does grow best in a sunny position with well-drained soil. It can grow to a height of 2 metres with a similar spread. If this is a bit large for



The cheerful Cape Wagtail

The Cape Wagtail is one bird that is familiar to most South Africans. It gets called a number of different names including Willie Wagtail and Kwikkie. They are cheerful birds and can often be seen patrolling lawns looking for insects. I wonder how many steps they do in a day as they don't seem to stop in any one place for long. And, of course, they regularly bob their tails up and down.

your garden, you can just cut it back to a suitable size. This actually seems to benefit the plant particularly during summer heat. Some authors say that you should spray the leaves with water every so often during the dry season.

During spring, the Honey Euryops is at its best when it is covered with the brilliant yellow flowers that show up well against the green foliage. It does, however, have flowers all year round. This plant makes a particularly impressive display when planted as a hedge. New plants can be grown from seed but do better from cuttings.

It is an indigenous plant that grows in a narrow band in the southern regions of South Africa, from the coast to the mountains. It is normally found growing on the mountain slopes in this region.

They are often seen in pairs that keep in contact with each other with a variety of pleasant whistles. Although they feed mainly on insects that they find on your lawn they will learn to visit a food table if you put out meal worms, suet or mince.

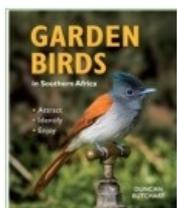
I have noticed that they are quite composed in the presence of cats who seem to enjoy stalking them. When the cat rushes in to try and catch it the Wagtail flies up a metre or two and hovers in an upright position with wings and tail spread wide. They will then land a short distance away and carry on their business of catching insects.

Cape Wagtails breed all year round, but the peak breeding season is summer. They make their nest in any spot that offers them a bit of cover. The parents take turns at sitting on the nest as well as feeding the hungry chicks.

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"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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