

# Enviro-News: Village on Sea

## SPRING 2021



### Introduction

The Spring flowers on our estate have been the most outstanding for years. Our main road, Bitou Drive, has been beautifully and appropriately edged in a host of bright yellow Bitou bushes. (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*).

In this quarterly issue we highlight several biological features as well as touch on the challenges presented by living in a real eco-estate

### Bat puzzle

Having grown up with a considerable population of bats either feeding on insects at dusk or dawn (crepuscular) and resting in huge flocks, especially in caves. But in my decade at VoS, I have spotted only a single bat – and that despite the presence of huge caves. Also, often in the late afternoon noisy flocks of swallows and swifts swarm at high altitude. While this may suggest food is available, there is growing evidence that insects have declined in recent times, attributable to light pollution and use of poisons.

### Predator/prey

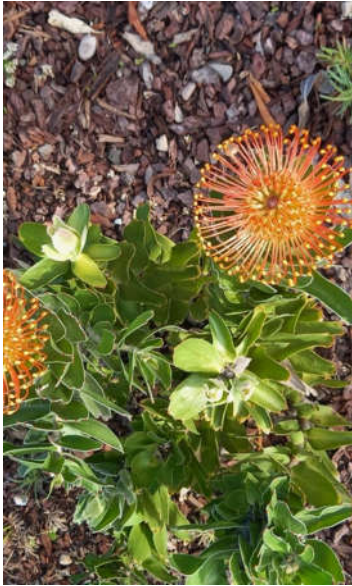
One useful indicator of a natural functioning ecosystem revolves around predator-prey relationships. Over time these may change. For example, our guinea fowl produce about 20 chicks each season, but few of them survive predation by the caracal, the buzzard, the eagle owl or the mongooses.

### Seasonal migrants.

Each year certain visiting species signal a change in season. Look out for the orange breasted bush shrike. A striking but secretive bird, best located by its call.



Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike.mp3

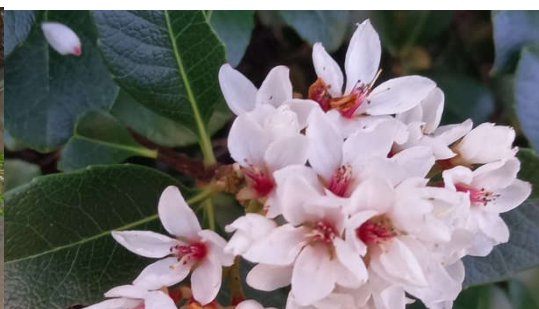
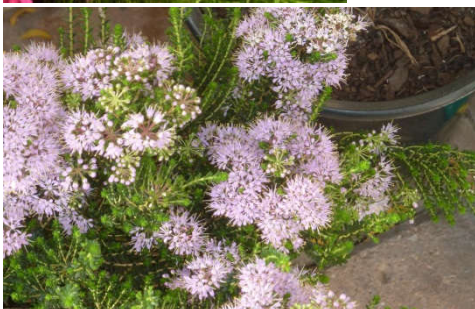
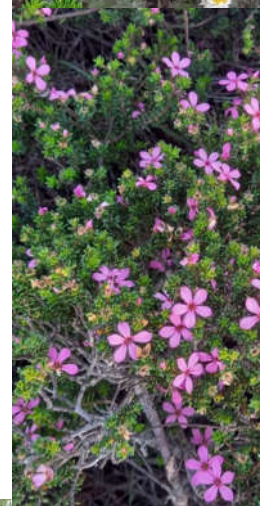


## What (Really) is an Eco-estate

The popularity of living in a gated estate has seen enormous growth, much of it associated with golf courses. Whilst security is the major driver of these estates, many aspire to an eco-lifestyle when we can benefit from South Africa's natural beauty, its spaciousness, the fabulous natural beauty and biodiversity. Sharing a similar eco lifestyle may also contribute to a sense of community in sharing responsibilities towards a sustainable lifestyle.



While the boon in 'eco-lifestyles' is to be welcomed, one wonders how many are genuinely committed to a sustainable lifestyle. Golf courses are not eco-estates and many estate agents are skilled at 'green washing care should be take g' the properties in their portfolio.





Remarkably, there is no definition of the an eco-estate, despite its popularity. Erecting signage and marketing the “excellence of your lifestyle” in an eco-estate is easy, but it may also a little devious at times. Green washing may attract prospective new homeowners, who may be more interested profit than protecting the environment.

Assuming that resident who bought into an eco-estate fundamentally hold a positive attitude towards the environment, it follows that caring for the environment will not be confined to their own piece of land, but also display a caring attitude towards the environment in general.

So what about our Village on Sea? Do we qualify as a genuine Eco-estate? Is there not a way of scoring an estate according to a set of rules. Let’s explore some of the features that may be relevant.

#### Protection

Most often, a new eco-estate will be created on a piece of land that is considered as natural and rich in biodiversity. Erecting a home can have major biological upheaval so that great care and siting must be adhered to. The objective here is that new development will leave the site largely untouched and that rehabilitation is effected on the damaged site. This would include the protection of birds, wildlife and vegetation. In particular, invasive species are a frequent problem, such as the Rooikrans acacia invader or free roaming dogs. This calls for collective action to share the environmental costs (and pain) that this may inflict.

There are 17 internationally recognised sustainability goals promoted by the United Nations. Called SDG’s , they provide guidance on steps to take in support of a sustainable planet. This includes an awareness of climate change, natural environmental limits and include recycling and green energy.

Probably the single most challenging objective is to have the entire estate operating on a zero-carbon basis. This calls for calculating our environmental footprint, as has been done at several sites including the Seychelles’ tourist island of Cousin- which has been operating on net zero carbon situation for almost a decade

Perhaps we can development an environmental scoring system for Estates by allocating points to specific actions which are adhered to but >50% of residents. For example solar power, rain water harvesting, indigenous rehabilitation, fire and wood used,

So, what about VoS? Our Constitution already places environmental rules on our residents. Although I suspect there could be intense discussions! Any comments or suggestions welcome. [rudyvanderelst@gmail.com](mailto:rudyvanderelst@gmail.com)

