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GREEN SNIPPETS

North West Parks Board donates rhinos to Botswana.

In August this year, the North West Parks and Tourism Board (NWPTB) donated three white rhino cows to the Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust in Serowe, Botswana, thereby making a meaningful contribution to this significant southern African rhino conservation project.

The project will ultimately ensure that viable rhino populations occur in Botswana. This follows an earlier donation by the Board of five white rhinos in 1995. The three rhinos were relocated from the Pilanesberg National Park.

Apart from the donation of the three rhino cows, future co-operation will involve close liaison to ensure that the Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust's management policies and practices meet the NWPTB standards regarding the conservation and security of rhinos. Visit the Khama Trust's website at: wildnetafrica.com/wildlifeorgs/khama and the NWPTB website at: www.parks-nw.co.za

From the sea...

Whales now have to watch (out for) people. Normally it is people who watch whales, but it seems that the tables have been turned. Recent reports indicate that endangered whales frolicking off the southern tip of Africa - and the tourists watching them, for that matter - are in danger of being hit by pot-shots from the South African Navy.

According to conservationist Nan Rice of the Dolphin Action and Protection Group there is a conflict of interest between the natural migration pattern of the whales and the needs of the South African arms industry. But the navy, which carries out ammunitions testing from its base at Simonstown in False Bay, argues that it is taking all the necessary precautions to safeguard whales and their human observers.

By agreement between conservationists and the navy, testing is suspended annually from mid-September until the end of November - the height of the whale-watching season.

This year, however, the navy has an urgent contract and says it has permission from a higher authority to override the agreement. "The navy has chosen the worst possible time to go ahead with this testing and has not consulted with us about the suitability. This is a high-density calving area and after all the battles we have fought to save the southern right (whale) and bring it back to its traditional breeding grounds, this is very inconsiderate and inappropriate," Ms Rice said.

Penguin nest robber ends up with egg on her face

A Chinese tourist to the Boulders coastal park near Simonstown had to fork out R1 500 to pay an admission-of-guilt fine after being caught stealing six penguin eggs. The woman, who was with a tour group, was caught red-handed by a German tourist who reported the incident to conservation staff at the park. The egg thief was confronted and six eggs were found in her handbag. A seventh egg was found smashed and conservation staff believe it had been broken to test the freshness of the eggs in the nests at the colony, but this could not be proved.

The accused appeared in the Simonstown Magistrate's Court in connection with a contravention of the National Parks Act, where she was allowed to pay the fine. Although the number of African penguins (formerly known as jackass penguins) at Boulders has increased rapidly in recent years, the overall population of this species has declined dramatically since the turn of the century and it is now considered endangered. ■

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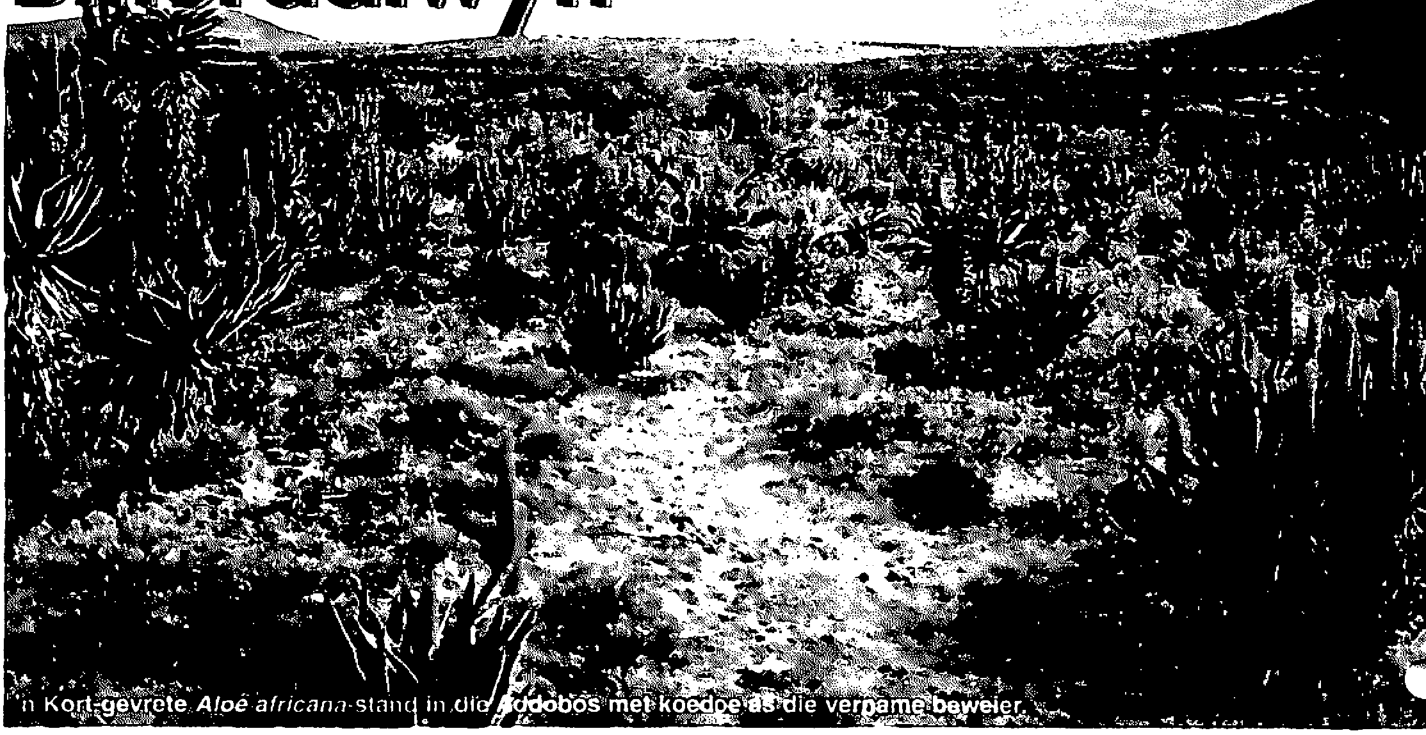
Bitteraalwyn



'n Kort-gevrete *Aloe africana*-stand in die Addobos met koedoe as die vername beweier.

Die bitteraalwyn is een van die mees wyd-verspreide aalwyne in 'n substreek bekend vir sy sukkulente kleinode. Só skryf dr Pieter van der Walt van die SA Nasionale Parke in sy 29ste bydrae.

Soos wat kunsmatig versnede medisinale konkoksies van skatryk farmaseutiese huise onbekostigbaar raak vir ons kranklike samelewing verskyn al hoe meer natuurprodukte op ons rakke. Net soos 'n paar voedsame vrugte en sade die mens se sukses op aarde begelei, so verseker 'n paar volop plantwonders teen 'n sakpas-prys die mens se welsyn reeds oor baie jare. Baie plantsoorte kon die toenemende druk nie weerstaan nie. Ander met 'n lewenswyse en groeiplek meer in hul guns, kan nog vir jare 'n volhoubare diens lewer - soos die nimlike bitteraalwyn *Aloe ferox* - en dit ten spyte van 'n mensdom wat uit sy nate bars.

Aalwyn-geskiedenis

Aalwynryke kliphange langs ons meer oostelike bergvoorskote het van oudsher tot vandag noodwendig natuurreisigers so bekoor dat woord en lied nie kon ophou nie. Dit is ook die plant wat die meeste op Khoi San rotstekeninge voorkom. Dié bewondering is spoedig ook in gebruik omskep as kommersiële bronne van aalweemedisyne - van 'n sap tot pille en kristalle. Elf enkelstammige variëteite staan hier aan die voorpunt.

Die bitteraalwyn as een van die mees wyd-verspreide aalwyne in 'n substreek bekend vir sy sukkulente kleinode is, van Jan van Riebeeck se grondlegging tot vandag toe, Suid-Afrika se vernaamste kommersiële veldplant. Dit het aan hom 'n erg beskrywende versameling volksname besorg, onder andere bitter-, mak-, tap-, opregte- en kraalaalwyn *Cape Aloe*.

Die herkoms van die woord "aalwyn" (ook vir lank as alwyn gespel), het te make met "aloïen". Dit is die aktiewe bestanddeel wat aan aalwynsap sy bitter smaak gee. Die bitterwyn wat Leipoldt aan't dig gekry het, is moontlik van die Arabies "Alloch" afgelei en verwant aan die Hebreeuse "Allal" wat bitter beteken. Die woord "ferox" verwys na die skerp bitteraalwyndorings.

Die wêreld se mees gekommersialiseerde aalwynsoort is die stamlose *A. vera*, wat vermoedelik inheems aan die Arabiese Skiereiland is, maar vandag nie meer daar voorkom nie. Hierdie maklik vermeerderbare, hanteerbare en interessant genoeg nie so bitter aalwyn nie, word ook op groot skaal in ons land verbou en onderdruk die mark na bitteraalwynprodukte.

Aalweesap

Die variërende klimaat en groeiplekgesteldheid van Karoo tot die oostelike subtrope, waar die bitteraalwyn as soort vandag uitgeken kan word, het wisselende blaar- en blomkenmerke tot gevolg. Sy 2 tot 5 m hoë enkelstam laat hom as 'n boom kwalifiseer, bekroon met 'n groot sukkulente blarekrans. Kort droë blaarbasisse beskerm die stam teen vuur- en diereaanslae. Die blaaroppervlakte is glad en versier met verspreide dorings en blaarkante met 'n ry rooibruin dorings.

Die kandelaaragtige bloeiwyse, met 5 tot 12 regopstaande oranjerooi blomkerse wat vanaf Mei tot Oktober aandag trek, is 'n vername verskil met die nabylykende meer Laeveldse bergaalwyn *A. marlothii*. Hierdie trots van die Laeveld het 'n meer druipende bloeiwyse en word in 'n mindere mate vir sy sap benut. Beide se orente bloeiwyses en gevleuelde saad is ideaal vir suksesvolle windverspreiding.

Die bitteraalwyn is 'n byna kanniedood met die oog op verplanting en kweek ook maklik van saad. Dit is vinnig groeiend en stoot blom binne 4 tot 6 jaar as dit so 1 m hoog is. Dié voordele maak dat min plante uit die veld verwyder word, en dat baie in tuine en as versperrings in krale geplant word.

As langlewende plante is daar baie meningsverskil oor hul lewensspan wat wissel van 150 tot 1 000 jaar.

Die liggeel aalwynsap (bitter aloes of Cape Aloe Bitters) kom die meeste net onder die blaaroppervlak voor. Hierdie bitters is inherent die agens van 'n tweeledige verdedigingsisteem. Enersyds moet dit struikvreters en insekboorders afskrik, en andersyds moet dit oop wonde vinnig deur stolling heel. Dit is merkwaardig hoe lief koedoes en olifante vir vars aalwynblare is,