

The Reunion and the “Munchausen Beetle”

The next morning at dawn I flew to one of the many waterholes. Just before I arrived, I got a pleasant surprise. I met the one of the white storks I had travelled with on my long journey to Africa.



I called, “Hey long-beak, nice to see you again. How are you and the others?” He was also delighted to see me, “Hi fotolulu, thanks I’m great! How do you like Africa? Have you taken a lot of photos yet?” “Lots”, I replied, “Africa is great and totally different from Europe.

Until now I only knew Africa from TV or from books. I’m impressed by the animals and the wonderful landscape.” The stork was happy about this, “It’s good that you like it, I’ll tell the others when I meet them. Well, have fun and take care!” Then he flew away and I continued my way to the waterhole. When I arrived there, I saw a giraffe which had to bend a lot to get a drink of water.



I flew over and said, “That doesn’t look very comfortable.” The giraffe groaned, “That’s how it is. Everything has its advantages and disadvantages, if you are extra tall like me. It’s easy for me to reach the tender shoots of the umbrella thorn, but at the same time I have to bend down a long way to reach the water.”



On a tree stump there was a colourful southern tree agama. I flew over and took a picture of this multi-coloured creature.

The lizard looked at me puzzled and asked, "What are you doing with that black box?" I said, "Hello, I'm fotolulu and this black box is a camera.



I can take pictures with it for my photo album." The lizard looked at me quizzically. "You don't know what a camera is?" The lizard shook her head, "No, no idea at all! I don't understand any of this modern technical stuff. I'm probably too old for it. But tell me what your camera can do."

I took a picture and showed the old lizard on the display screen. "Look, with this camera I can catch moments and show them to others." "What a great invention, amazing! But I have to go now I need to warm up a bit more in the sun," said the lizard and climbed on to a stone to sunbathe.



A ground-hornbill had watched us and called me. I flew over and he said, "Excuse me, but the southern tree agama doesn't understand anything about the new stuff. She's been living here by the waterhole for many years. She's never seen anything else."



“Never mind, that’s okay, sometimes progress can overtake you. Nowadays new inventions appear nearly every day. By the way, I have a question: I have been watching you and noticed that you only walk around and you never fly. Can’t you fly?” The ground hornbill stood erect and replied, “Well, I can fly, but I prefer to walk around. I like to eat fruit, insects and occasionally a mouse and all the stuff I find on the ground.”



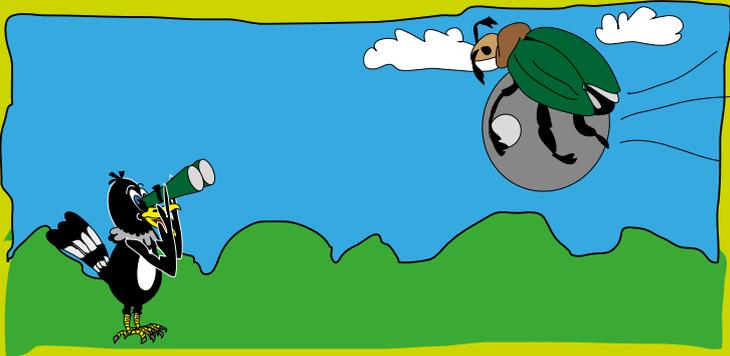
He looked a bit sad and continued, “Flying is also a bit embarrassing for me.” “How can it be embarrassing?” I probed. “It’s because I can’t fly quietly. When I fly it sounds like an approaching steam train.

Then everyone laughs at me and points their fingers. That’s why I’d rather walk which I can do just as fast as flying.”

I felt a bit sorry for him. “Don’t be upset, none of the others are as perfect as they make out. When they laugh at you they try to cover their own insufficiencies. I think someone who can run at 30 km/ hours doesn’t need to hide from anybody!” The ground-hornbill grinned, “You’re right! But I’ve got to go. Good luck with your journey,” he said and disappeared smiling into the high grass of the savannah.

I also walked on and met a funny looking guy. It was a black beetle rolling a big ball in front of him. I said to him, “Hey, Baron Munchausen, are you intending to fly with that ball?”





Completely out of breath the beetle replied, "Are you joking? Do you think I'm doing this for fun?" "But you remind me of Baron Munchausen with your cannon ball. What are you doing? Who are you?" I stammered.

He lent on the ball and replied, "I am a dung beetle." I couldn't stop myself from saying, "So you work for the Council and clean up the mess of the elephants?" "Let me explain." he replied, "The ball is made from elephant dung which I need for my future family. My wife is going to lay an egg into the dung ball and then I'm going to bury it. The larvae will feed from it and grow." I was astounded, "That's very interesting, even though I have another idea of baby food. But good luck with it and all the best for your offspring."

Remarkable, the things you come across. In nature everything has a use, even dung. Mind you, we have earth-boring dung beetles in Europe that live off animal dung.



Great, I had learnt something else. Let's continue the safari. I continued flying further across the beautiful countryside, when I noticed a small stream. I landed to check out who was staying there. I was lucky to find some more creatures to photograph. There were an African open-bill, a saddled-billed stork, a grey heron, two spotted thick-knees and a turtle. A strange mix at first sight and also at second sight.



The saddle-billed stork is tall, magnificent and colourful. He just looks great! The African open-bill has a strangely shaped bill, which the wind whistles through. The spotted thick-knees stood around looking a bit bored and the turtle lay there like a stone.

I called over, "Hello there, what made you meet here today?" The turtle didn't move, the thick-knees stared into the water and the saddle-billed stork pretended not to understand me. However, the African open-bill stirred and lisped, "We love to eat tasty crabs." From behind, the saddled-bill stork added, "You said that very nicely... hihihihih!" The African open-bill got annoyed and started stuttering, "You st t.t... u.u.p... ppp..id pp... oser. You always take the mmm... icky out of me. I hhh... ate you!" The stone-faced turtle grunted, "Can't you just get on with each other?" One of the thick-knees ordered, "Quiet! Stop quarrelling, you're scaring all the tasty crabs away!"

This row sounded very familiar and I listened with interest.

A long time ago, when I was still at Birdschool, we often had rows like that in the playground. There was a red crossbill in my class who also had a lisp, like all his relatives. He couldn't do anything else with his beak.

We also had a poser like the saddle-billed stork, the European Goldfinch. Because of his colourful feathers he thought he was the bird of paradise. And then there was the cheeky sparrow from the neighbouring woods. He had been transferred for disciplinary reasons and constantly played the clown.



Red Crossbill



African Openbill

