

Advancing Bee Taxonomy in Sub-Saharan Africa through *Abc Taxa*

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Advancing taxonomic knowledge is no simple endeavor, especially not in the developing world where needed resources remain very scarce, even in the 21st century.

Advancing taxonomic knowledge implies mobilization of several kinds of resources. Researchers need access to relevant specimen collections and literature, but also need to be instructed skills on how to do taxonomic research.

Advancing taxonomic knowledge inspired the Belgian National Focal Point to the Global Taxonomy Initiative to set up the series *Abc Taxa*. This periodical provides a toll-free taxonomic information highway between experts and novices and as such aims to speed up the construction of taxonomic capacity.

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Pollination is a central essential service to all ecosystem functions. It provides food for animals and humans through plant reproduction, seed set and fruit production. Consequently pollination contributes significantly to biodiversity conservation and to agriculture. As different animal species have specific diets, and many plants have specific pollinators, a diversity of pollinators contributes to maintaining all terrestrial biodiversity. Humans however require a varied diet and therefore a diversity of pollinators is needed for good human health.

Most plants are pollinated by insects. And bees, through their active gathering of pollen often from a single plant species, are responsible for much of the pollination in many ecosystems. Therefore understanding bee diversity is a first step towards the conservation of pollinators, and ultimately in the conservation of natural and agro-biodiversity.

Africa has a wide variety of habitats, ranging from deserts to tropical forest. Within these there is diversity, for example deserts with winter rainfall have a distinctly different bee fauna to those with summer rains. Africa also hosts several of the World's biodiversity hotspots. Therefore Africa has a large, varied bee fauna.



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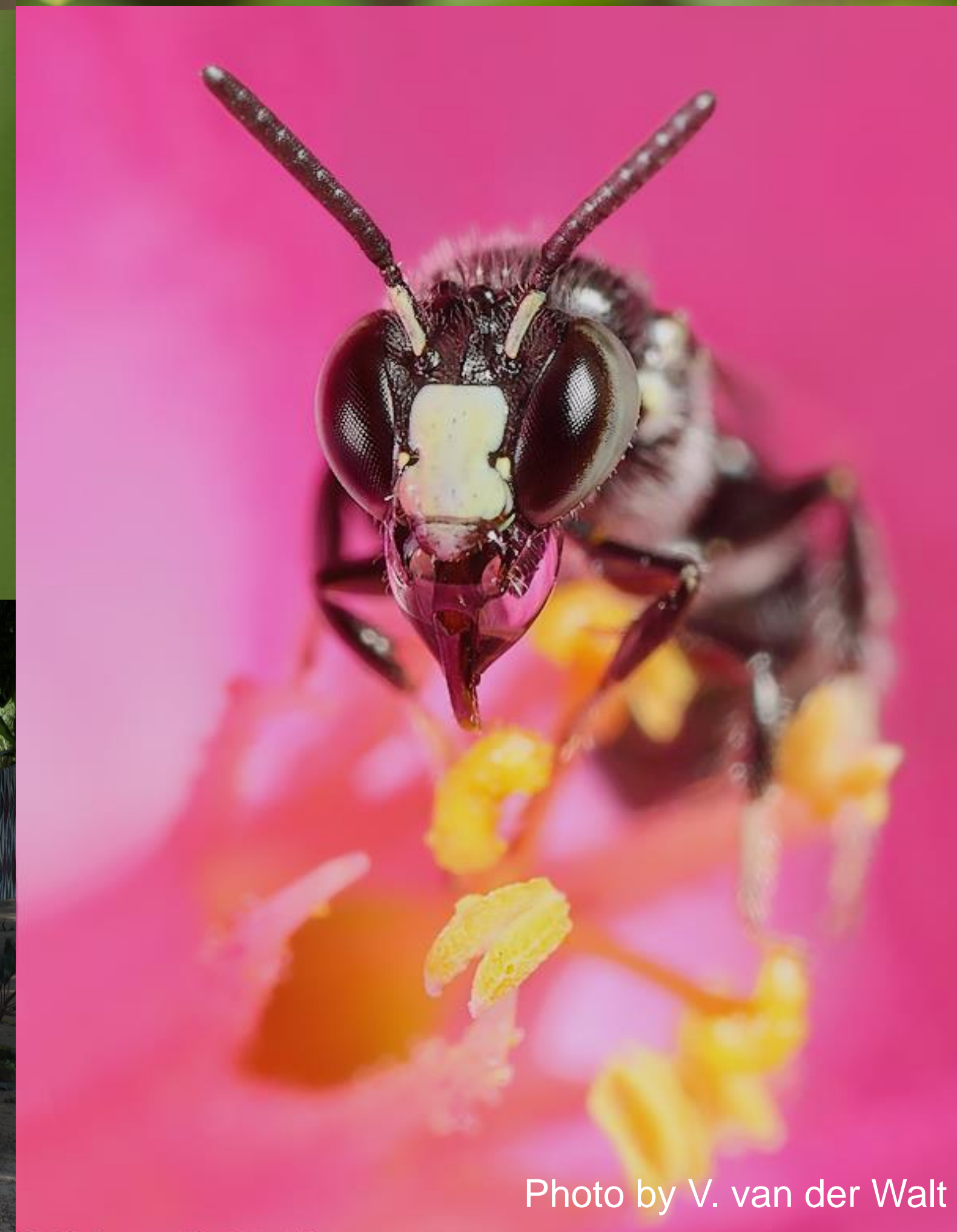


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