My wife likes playing the game with me by asking “without thinking, tell me what image comes up immediately when I say ….” and then she would name something. The technique is called ‘active affective imagination’ or something. She is a psychologist and undoubtedly one of her reasons for marrying me was that I offered an intriguing lifelong study project. Her study has so far revealed that my brain has the illogical ability to find instantaneous emotional connections between a rather wide variety of subjects and a rather restricted range of images, all of which somehow seem to cause her eyes to roll upwards.

It is a mystery what information she subtracts from these studies. In an effort to figure it out, I’ve been playing the game with myself lately. So, when I read in the recent issue of Haworthiadiad the editor’s suggestion for articles upon one’s favourite Haworthia, I allowed myself no time to think and I was quite surprised that the image that jumped to mind was not that of a spectacular shining H. splendens or a beautiful bronze H. badia, but it was the rather ‘dull’ coloured form of H. magnifica growing in the Soetmelksrivier area east of Riversdale!

It is true that I have a very special appreciation for those H. magnifica plants growing in that area despite the fact that I must admit that there are several other species and...
varieties that are more strikingly attractive to me. But perhaps it is specifically the subtleness of the beauty of these plants that placed them a millisecond ahead of other favourites during my self-imposed active affective imagination test.

Perhaps also it has something to do with the fact that during my first attempt to find these plants in the wild, I stumbled, an entire day in vain, up and down steep and slippery pebble-covered hills and ended up in a deeply

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A plant with very rough and densely tubercled leaf surfaces and bright red-brown colour despite growing well hidden in dappled shade.

In this plant the leaves are more subtly pimpled, allowing the facial lines and flecks to show more prominently.
disappointed semi-coma of exhaustion. Only after receiving more detailed instructions from that most inimitable of all Haworthia field explorers, Bruce Bayer, did I go again and finally managed to find the plants.

In self-defence I must add that part of the reason for my initial fruitless search was that after Bruce Bayer had discovered the plants there, a house had been built within fifty metres of the habitat! Each time I neared the house
during my first attempt I figured that it can’t be right as nowhere did Bruce mention anything of a house. That portion of the Soetmelksrivier farm had been sold to a new owner who built a house there and he has since built several self-catering guest houses nearby as well in addition to fencing the farm with a high game fence and introducing some wild antelope amongst other wildlife. It is therefore a very nice place for a Haworthia enthusiast to stay over during a visit

Looking south at the habitat on Soetmelksrivier: north and north-east facing slopes of a low ridge covered with dense layers of ferricrete gravel overlying kaolin-like clay.
and enjoy not only Haworthias in habitat as well as some wildlife. Unfortunately I have lost the contact details of the place, but I should actually obtain it again and publish it in *Haworthiad* as a recommended Haworthiaphile-friendly stopover.

In fact, on the hills behind the house are not only *Haworthia magnifica* but also a rather attractive form of *H. retusa*, while *H. floribunda* is also very nearby on a hill on the same farm.

The *H. magnifica* plants in this area are very variable and some plants show a clear and close link to the variety *splendens* while others again remind of a chunky red-brown *enigma* variety of *atrofusca* and others have transparent flecked leaves of typical *magnifica* as found at Riversdale.

I seem to remember seeing the informal reference ‘*subsplendens*’ given to these *H. magnifica* plants from this area. None of these plants is as glossy and heavily flecked as the typical *splendens*, however and can’t ever be confused with it. The restricted area where *H. magnifica* var. *splendens* occur is only 12 km to the south-east.

To me the most attractive individuals in this area are plants with densely ‘pimpled’ upper leaf surfaces and with some subtle flecking shining through the windows framed in opaque dull bronze-brown.

The farm Kruisrivier where a most interesting and well-known *H. magnifica*-imitating form of *H. retusa* occurs is only 10km to the west. These Kruisrivier plants look so similar to *H. magnifica* that they are still grouped under *H. magnifica* (or ‘*mirabilis*’) in most publications.
However, the form of *H. retusa* occurring together with these *H. magnifica* plants at Soetmelksrivier is the grass green ‘fouchei’ type with semi-erect and very sharply acuminate leaves.

The typical *fouchei* type of *H. retusa* is known from Komserante north-east of Riversdale, only about 8km to the west. At Komserante it also grows very close to a variety of *H. magnifica*, in the latter case the so-called ‘asperula’ variant. Both the *retusa* and *magnifica* have the tendency to form offsets at Komserante while both are solitary growing at Soetmelksrivier.

The Soetmelksrivier *H. magnifica* flowers in mid-summer which is a key character of the *H. magnifica* and *H. mirabilis* groups.

For numerous practical purposes and more balanced nomenclatural arrangement, it works best to keep the *H. magnifica* group separate from *H. mirabilis* based upon various leaf characters and distribution of *magnifica* largely east of the Overberg region. *H. magnifica* is therefore characterized by having smooth leaf-sides and subtle to prominent rounded pimples on the upper leaf surface. The typical variety of *H. magnifica* also features few to numerous silvery-white flecks inside the leaf windows. The latter feature is frequently shared by some varieties of *H. pygmaea*, but the flowers and flowering seasons differ distinctly between the two groups.