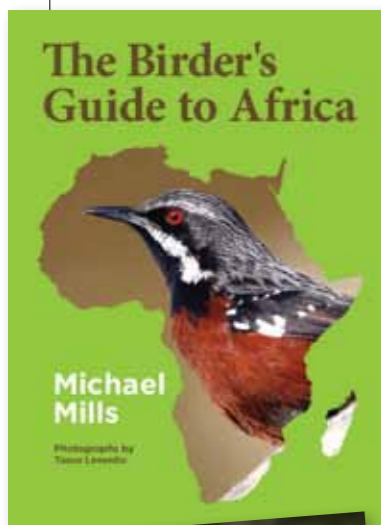


look out for these **new books**



Here are some suggestions of new titles that would make great gift ideas for birdwatchers of every ilk, from armchair readers and garden birders to intrepid explorers and Africa bundu-bashers... Some of these titles will be reviewed in more depth in upcoming issues.

THE BIRDER'S GUIDE TO AFRICA Michael Mills

Go-Away-Birding. Softcover; 544 pages. R400. ISBN 978-0-6207-1725-0

The Birder's Guide to Africa presents the first comprehensive summary of birdwatching in the African region, covering all mainland territories and associated islands. The introduction gives an overview of the birding in the region, highlighting key destinations for different types of travellers. This is followed by country accounts for all 68 territories that comprise the region, in which details about travel and birding are provided for each territory, including a comprehensive list of important bird taxa to be targeted on a visit. The species accounts for all 2792 bird species give information on ease of seeing, distribution, status, habitat, subspecies, taxonomic issues and best places to see. A must for any serious world-lister or keen African eco-traveller.

GARDEN BIRDS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA Duncan Butchart

Struik Nature. Softcover; 192 pages. R230. ISBN 978-1-7758-4474-7

This handy guide profiles the birds most likely to be found in gardens across southern Africa, informing readers about what to look and listen for, and where and when. It is also an inspirational guide to creating a bird-friendly garden, giving practical advice on designing your garden to attract the widest range of birds and other wildlife, and the plants and structures to include to provide food and shelter for birds. This book is bound to be a bestseller!

POCKET GUIDE: BIRDS OF NAMIBIA Ian Sinclair & Joris Komen

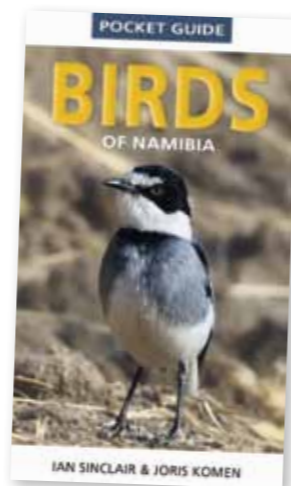
Struik Nature. Softcover; 144 pages. R160. ISBN 978-1-7758-4522-5

Namibia is home to some 690 bird species, of which 110 are endemic or near-endemic. This compact field guide in Struik's popular pocket guide series features 357 species, focusing on the most conspicuous and commonly seen birds. It features up-to-date distribution maps and an informative introduction that highlights the specials of the key destinations in the region. It is an ideal introduction and travelling companion for local enthusiasts and visitors alike.

50 TOP BIRDING SITES IN KENYA Catherine Ngarachu

Struik Nature. Softcover; 168 pages. R180. ISBN 978-1-7758-4248-4

For the first time, birders now have a detailed guide to Kenya's best birding sites. This colourful, compact book will help to locate the key species in each area, including sought-after specials and endemics. It offers a detailed map for each site, giving specific advice on what birds to look for and where. In addition, the descriptions of each site indicate the plants and wildlife that may be encountered. On a practical level it offers tips for planning your trip and gives road directions to each site.



FEATHERINGS Edited by Vernon R.L. Head

Jacana. Hardcover; 200 pages. R280. ISBN 978-1-4314-2579-2

If the bird writings of Levaillant turned a generation of young European readers into ornithologists, this remarkable collection of birding curiosities written by some of our most intrepid bird observers will convert a new generation of South African readers. Along with tales of a trip on the wild side of Borneo, the stories behind feathers in a glass vase and mysteries of owls hidden in caves, the accounts take readers on journeys across the mesas and buttes of the Karoo and the rolling red dunes of the Kalahari, through vast swathes of broad-leaved woodland to the Upper Guinea Rainforests and on to the Kitulgala Forest Reserve. There is a story here for everyone.



review

Warriors, Dilettantes & Businessmen

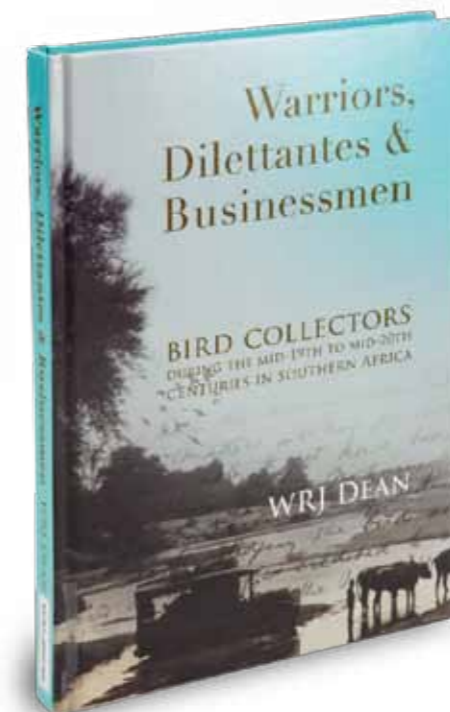
Bird collectors during the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries in southern Africa

W.R.J. Dean

The John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town
Hardback; 196 pages. R290.
ISBN 978-1-920602-04-8

Richard Dean's latest offering is more about history than birding, but it will be of interest to any birder who wants to know more about the people responsible for first collecting the southern African avifauna. Celebrated early explorers such as Burchell and Levaillant are joined by a diverse and at times motley crew of adventurers, under-employed army officers, missionaries, farmers, entrepreneurs and museum professionals. Together they were responsible for gathering the hundreds of thousands of bird skins, nests and eggs that formed the foundation for our initial understanding of the rich avian diversity found in the subcontinent.

The book focuses mainly on the period from 1850 to 1950, which was the heyday of specimen collecting. It is broken down into a series of short, readable chapters, each of which tackles a different theme. The chapter titles are a delight, designed



to draw you in. I can think of no better way to advertise the scope of the book than to list a select few: 'Ivory, hides and horn'; 'A bird in the hand is money in the pocket'; 'Trigger-happy trophy hunters'; 'Military politics, battle zones and birds'; 'Birds, beetles and butterflies, or my collection is bigger than yours'; and 'Brewers, brick-layers, carpenters and customs officers'. The book also describes the formation of museums in southern Africa ('The mud fort and the origins of southern African ornithology'), touches briefly on the development of ornithology ('The written word') and considers what we can learn from the old collections ('The feathered reference library').

This is a scholarly work, fully referenced with footnotes. Drafting the text required considerable detective work. Richard visited many of the world's major ornithological museums to track down skins collected in southern Africa and decipher the sometimes confusing web of labels to infer when, where and by whom they were assembled. Yet despite his best efforts, little is known about some of the collectors and so in places the text becomes a little dry, a catalogue of collectors and the magnitude of their stockpiles. But there are enough diversions to maintain your interest – from the distance covered per day by collectors travelling by ox-wagon to the varied returns made by professional collectors and the many ways they supplemented their income (for example, Thomas Ayres was famous for brewing Ayres XX Pale Ale).

The text is further leavened by a diverse array of historical photographs and illustrations. Particularly interesting are the maps summarising the areas where different groups of collectors were active, chronicling in part the development of transport infrastructure.

Ultimately Richard's book is a celebration of museums and an impassioned plea for the importance of their assemblages as an irreplaceable research tool that provides a window into southern Africa before hunting and widespread habitat transformation radically changed the landscape. Reading this book will give you a new respect not only for the hardships faced by the early collectors, but also for the importance of maintaining the museums that curate the fruits of their labours.

PETER RYAN