

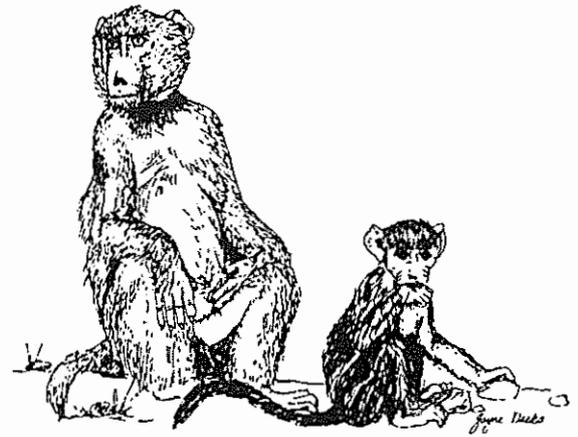
Resource Reviews Bronmateriaalbesprekings

TABLE MOUNTAIN: A NATURAL WONDER by Glen Moll. Published by The Wildlife Society, Western Cape Branch, Tokai 1987. 44pp. 115 colour plates, 12 black-and-white plates. R9,95 excl. GST.

Did you know that a giant carnivorous bear, ancestor of the modern-day Panda, lived in the vicinity of Table Mountain about five million years ago? Or that by the time of Christ, the staple food of the San people living on the mountain was watsonia bulbs, the growth of which they encouraged by the use of veld fires? And how about Table Mountain's own gold rush in 1886 when gold quartz was discovered near Lion's Head? These are just some of the fascinating items of information contained in the first ever comprehensive book about Table Mountain.

Table Mountain: A Natural Wonder by botanist Glen Moll deals with the pre-history, the history, the ecology, animal and plant kingdoms and conservation of South Africa's best-known natural monument. The interesting text covers the formation of the mountain, the naming of the hills, hikes and climbs, descriptions of the various biological communities, the threat of invader plants and the need for a comprehensive conservation management plan for the mountain. It is amply illustrated with beautiful colour photographs of the mountain in all its moods and facets; its flowers, birds and animals. Descriptive modern illustrations as well as reprints of historic photographs and drawings complete the picture of this unique and precious 'living treasure'.

It is no coincidence that the authors' husband, Prof. Eugene Moll, led the first botanical survey of the mountain in the mid-70s. In the survey published in



the Wildlife Society's magazine, *African Wildlife*, in 1976, Prof. Moll declared "Table Mountain is in a mess". Fire had eaten into the natural forests, pines had crowded out the proteas, picnickers had trampled some places bare and hikers had eroded gullies and paths. If this state of affairs continued, he predicted, the natural wonderland of the mountain would not last 50 years.

This survey inspired the Western Province Branch of the Wildlife Society to launch a 'Save the Table Mountain' campaign which has contributed tremendously to greater conservation awareness, particularly among the many different owners of the mountain's surface area. Glen Moll's inspiring book 11 years later is a means of spreading awareness of the wonder of the mountain and our responsibility towards it, to all the people of South Africa.

Erina Botha

A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THREE FIELD GUIDES TO MAMMALS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Dave Irwin and Pauline Hill

MABERLY'S MAMMALS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA - A POPULAR FIELD GUIDE by Richard Goss. Published by Delta Books, Johannesburg 1986. 347 pages. ISBN 0908 387 63 6.

LAND MAMMALS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA - A FIELD GUIDE by Reay H.N. Smithers. Published by Macmillan, Johannesburg 1986. 229 pages. ISBN 0 86954 268 0.

A FIELD GUIDE - MAMMALS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA by Burger Cillié. Published by Frandsen Publishers, Sandton 1987. 182 pages. ISBN 0 620 10367 1.

Richard Goss' book is a revision of Charles Astley Maberly's *The Game Animals of Southern Africa*. It is a fitting tribute to the original author and as such provides much interesting information and many original sketches. It does not, however, serve well as a field guide because it lacks both diagnostic keys and definitive illustrations. It would be suitable as a second reference.

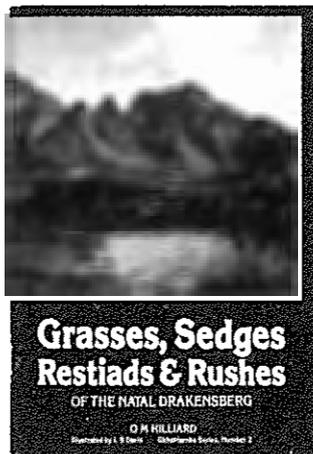
The most positive aspects of Smithers' field guide are the large number of species covered, a useful reference list, informative introduction and excellent explanatory notes. The text is concise, the illustrations are outstanding and the cover and binding can withstand heavy use in the field. Unfortunately, the absence of diagnostic keys detracts

from its value as a field guide for species identification. It is consequently most suitable for use by people who are already reasonably familiar with Southern African mammals, but require a comprehensive, portable, up-to-date reference text.

Cillié approaches the style of a true *field guide*, providing at least some guidance for complete strangers to Southern African mammals with his 'Identindex' and distribution table. The most valuable features of this book are its excellent photographs (which clearly show the differences between males and females), compactness, consistent style of presentation and availability in two languages. Obvious negative aspects are lack of durability, inadequate explanatory notes and the limited number of species covered (species such as the Small-spotted Genet and Cane Rat are omitted). Considering its comparatively low price, however, this book represents excellent value. Of the three guides reviewed here, it is clearly the most suitable for both students and teachers who are unfamiliar with our mammals and do not require the more comprehensive coverage offered by Smithers.

Finally, a point worth noting is that in all three books there are incorrect distribution maps. In none of them for example is the substantial Eland population in the Natal Drakensberg shown.

	Cillié 1987	Smithers 1986	Goss 1986
Approximate price (excl. GST)	R22,50 (available in English and Afrikaans)	R29,95	R29,95
Size (mm)	148 x 210 x 11	143 x 220 x 20	175 x 215 x 28
Cover and binding	Soft cover, stitched and glued	Hard cover, stitched and glued	Hard cover, stitched
Durability	Easily damaged	Very durable	Durable
Paper finish	Gloss	Non-gloss	Non-gloss
Introduction	Limited	Very informative	Limited
Explanatory notes on layout and use	Inadequate	Very good, comprehensive	None
Arrangement of species	Not in conventional sequence; grouped in Orders, Families and Subfamilies	Conventional sequence grouped in Orders and Families	Conventional sequence, no obvious grouping
Use of keys and tables to assist identification	Yes, but use of the 'Identi-index' not clearly explained	None	None
Species covered	83 (numbered in sequence)	197 (Smithers' numbers) including small rodents, bats, some alien species	105 (not numbered)
Information on species	(subheadings) Description Sexual dimorphism Habitat Voice Food Gestation period Breeding Number of young Mass (male and female) Shoulder height Life expectancy Tail length	Size, distribution, description and distinguishing features, habits, general reproduction, mention of closely related species	(subheadings) Descriptive notes Distribution and habits Breeding Also provided; weight and length of male and female, gestation, number of young, longevity, classification
Illustrations	Excellent colour photographs of all species covered	Excellent colour drawings of most species; outstanding line drawings of bats	Colour photographs of 21 species; sketches of others comparatively poor and not suitable for identification
Distribution maps	Grey on white	Pink on white	Black on white (based on Smithers')
Spoor (footprints only)	With each species (some tabled for comparison)	With each species that might produce tracks	Only for a few species
Accuracy of information	Generally accurate, but some maps incorrect	Text very good, but some maps incorrect	Typological errors and some maps incorrect
Glossary	None	Adequate; covers technical terms	Limited to common terms used in the text
Indexing	English/Scientific or Afrikaans/Scientific	Separate English, Afrikaans and Scientific	Separate English, Afrikaans and Scientific
Selection of references for further reading	Adequate	Good	Limited
Language; expression, reading levels and use of jargon	Well written & clearly expressed, but not concise; most suitable for junior secondary level and above; moderate use of technical jargon	Very well written, concise, clear; most suitable for senior secondary level and above; considerable use of jargon	Rather long-winded, much unnecessary repetition, tending towards anecdotal prose; possibly suitable for senior primary and above; few technical terms
General suitability as a field guide	Good, despite a lack of diagnostic keys	Good, but more of a 'reference' than a 'guide'	Unsuitable; useful as a second reference



GRASSES, SEDGES, RESTIADS AND RUSHES OF THE NATAL DRAKENSBERG by O.M. Hilliard, illustrated by L.S. Davis. Ukhahlamba Series, No. 2. Published by University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg. 80pp. R7,95.

Grasses and sedges are plants in which the layman usually expresses the least interest during visits to wild areas. This is understandable due to these plants being less spectacular than trees and flowering forbs; in fact people are often surprised to learn that grasses also bear flowers.

This general lack of interest in these groups of plants is unfortunate, however, since grasses and sedges comprise in number the principle plants in many areas. Hence they are of major ecological importance with respect to food for animals and the conservation of soil and water. Furthermore, although these groups of plants appear at first glance to be relatively unspectacular, a whole new fascinating world is opened up when an effort is made to distinguish the subtle differences between the various species.

It is thus extremely pleasing that someone as knowledgeable as Dr. Hilliard has authored a booklet on grass and sedge identification which is intended for people with no formal training in botany. The major portion of this booklet is devoted to line illustrations of a species in each of the many genera of grasses, sedges and sedge-like plants occurring in the Natal Drakensberg together with descriptive notes. Since these illustrations and notes are, alone, insufficient for accurate identification, the author has gone to a great deal of trouble to provide additional identification aids. These take the form of keys, explanations of technical terms and diagrams of grass and sedge anatomy.

Despite the admirable effort made by the author to aim the booklet at the interested layman, it is necessary here to express a word of caution to the reader. The identification of grasses and sedges is no easy task and it is important that users of the booklet take the trouble to carefully study and become thoroughly familiar with the anatomical diagrams and technical terms *before* attempting to identify species from the line illustrations and keys. If need be, they must constantly refer back to the diagrams and explanation of terms while working through the keys.

Provided the above advice is heeded, I believe this booklet is a must for farmers, hikers and naturalists wishing to become more familiar with the natural biota of the Natal Midlands and Drakensberg. I believe it can also serve as a useful back-up reference for the professional ecologist working in these areas.

Roger Collinson

REPTILES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA by Rod Patterson and Anthony Bannister. Published by C. Struik. Cape Town 1987. 128 pp. Full colour. R24,95.

A comprehensive book of this nature, aimed as it is at the general public, is long overdue in Southern Africa, not only because of the ecological and aesthetic significance of our rich reptilian fauna, but in order to present updated information and dispel the myths and bogeys which are still so prevalent in our society. Many of the irrational notions associated with reptiles and with snakes in particular are thoroughly debunked - 84% of our snake population is, for example, harmless.

Illustrated in full colour this publication contains a wealth of interesting information, including specialised chapters on 'Tortoises, terrapins and turtles', 'Crocodiles', 'Lizards', 'Snakes', 'Snakebite' and 'Reptiles in captivity'. The chapter on snakebite contains the latest ideas on the treatment of this relatively rare(!) phenomenon, while the chapter on captivity is packed with practical advice both for the benefit of reptiles and their captors - particularly the large number of schoolboys who at some time or other 'collect snakes'.

In summary, this book is extremely good value and is a must for every school library and for anyone even remotely interested in the subject. The *Journal* wishes it every success.

Pat Irwin

GUIDELINES FOR BIRD SANCTUARIES/RIGLYNE VIR VOËL RESERVATE

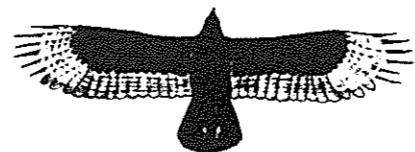
BIRDWATCHING HIDES - a design by Nigel Robson.

Both published by the Southern African Ornithological Society, Box 87234, Houghton 2041.

The titles of these two excellent brochures speak largely for themselves. They are both practically orientated, the former providing an overview of the principles and factors to be taken into account when setting aside and designing bird sanctuaries and hides. The latter brochure contains detailed suggestions for the construction of inexpensive and durable hides.

The information contained has wide application ranging from nature reserves and municipal sanctuaries to school grounds. These brochures are in fact particularly useful to enterprising teachers and parents wishing to encourage the more effective educational use of their school's resources.

Pat Irwin



"Give us theories, theories, always theories. Let every man who has a theory pronounce his theory."

- James Baldwin

"Never trust an experimental result until it has been confirmed by theory."

- Sir Arthur Eddington