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Birds Of Southern Africa: Fourth Edition (Princeton Field Guides)



Synopsis

Birds of Southern Africa continues to be the best and most authoritative guide to the bird species of this remarkable region. This fully revised edition covers all birds found in South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and southern Mozambique. The 213 dazzling color plates depict more than 950 species and are accompanied by more than 950 color maps and detailed facing text. This edition includes new identification information on behavior and habitat, updated taxonomy, additional artwork, improved raptor and wader plates with flight images for each species, up-to-date distribution maps reflecting resident and migrant species, and calendar bars indicating occurrence throughout the year and breeding months. Fully updated and revised 213 color plates featuring more than 950 species 950+ color maps and over 380 new improved illustrations Up-to-date distribution maps show the relative abundance of a species in the region and indicate resident or migrant status New identification information on behavior and habitat Taxonomy includes relevant species lumps and splits Raptor and wader plates with flight images for each species Calendar bars indicate occurrence throughout the year and breeding months.

Book Information

Series: Princeton Field Guides

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: Princeton University Press; Fourth edition (November 13, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 069115225X

ISBN-13: 978-0691152257

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.9 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (44 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #58,734 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #51 in Â Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Birds & Birdwatching > Field Guides #69 in Â Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Field Guides #292 in Â Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Fauna

Customer Reviews

A slight improvement on the previous edition in terms of maps (which are now colour-coded) and new species (with updated taxonomy). The illustrations are actually produced at a touch larger scale, which is nice, however the pages have begun to look a bit crowded. It may just be a printing

error with my personal copy, but the plates seem too garish and over-coloured, as if someone has turned up the saturation a few notches too far. Call me fussy but they also have a somewhat unlikeable scaly, scratched effect. I would question whether the very "Robertsy" inclusion of Afrikaans names (and sonograms in places) is really necessary. (If so why not include all the main languages of the region?). The overall arrangement has been improved (no separate pages for in-flight illustrations, they all appear in one place within their species). There is also a helpful seasonality bar for each bird. So despite the relatively minor flaws I have listed, it is still the best and most useful field guide to the region.

This book has full color plates of nearly every resident and migratory bird found in S.A. Plates are in full color and show juvenile and morph colors so that you can make clean decisions on what that bird "really is." Descriptions show known ranges, migratory occupation areas and timeframes, and even the rare sightings and unusual or unexpected locations where each species has been seen. However, it is the good organization and outstanding color plates showing profile, head feature, upper and lower wing features, and leggings that will keep you paging through this book on your trip. It is the right size to stuff in your day gear or car without getting in the way, so it is easy to keep handy.

Birds of Southern Africa is probably the best available field guide to the birds of southern Africa. However, that does not mean it's without shortcomings. Having more illustrations of each species (as with the Sibley guides) would be valuable. In most cases there were only two illustrations of each species, only rarely including alternate plumage or juvenile birds. There were several times while birding in South Africa that I had difficulty identifying birds in something other than the adult plumage usually illustrated in this book. On the other hand, providing more illustrations would significantly increase this book's size from one that is already too large to be carried comfortably as a field guide. I also found that sometimes the distribution maps were inaccurate (this may be due to their small size). This was especially true of Lesotho, where I found four species (Green Wood-Hoopoe, White-browed Sparrow Weaver, Pale-winged Starling, and Common Myna) that according to distribution maps in this book should not be found in that country.

This book is great because it shows full-color drawings of the birds, the areas in which they are found, etc. It's useful. If you're planning on going on safari, you will for sure want to have this book on you, because people will fight over your guide's book (if your guide is intelligent enough to bring

a book) and you'll want to have your own.

In planning a birding trip to the Republic of South Africa, I obviously wanted the best field guide available, and I wanted it in BOOK format so I could personally write in every field mark I deemed valuable. After reading various reviews online, and borrowing the 3rd edition of this guide from friends, I ordered this field guide. I was NOT disappointed!! Considering the artwork, the updated range and migration maps - which were seriously compromised in the previous edition - the size of the guide and its relatively low price, it is clearly the best current book option available. The one very mild criticism of the book would be the somewhat arbitrary selection of sonograms the authors have included. While of marginal value, the space would have been better used for more artwork. Still, I now have been using this guide to study the birds I am most likely to see, and find it immensely useful. The guide has enhanced my anticipation for my upcoming trip later this year and - at the time of this writing - I would enthusiastically recommend the the birds of South Africa 4th edition, by Sinclair, Hockey, Tarbotton & Ryan, to anyone planning to bird in this area of the World over any other field guide.

The Birds of Southern Africa is a beautiful book with exquisite paintings of each bird, male and female, along with a smaller representations of in-flight. The birds are grouped by genus and physical similarities. On the opposing page is a small map of southern Africa (Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa with Lesotho and Swaziland) with the range of the bird represented by seasonal colors. There is also a quick thumbnail description of the bird, voice, and habitat. At the top of each thumbnail is a calendar bar indicating migration and egg laying periods. This really seems like a smart way to present information in a field guide. The book will be a bit heavy (~ 2lbs/1kg) for lugging along on our excursions but, heck, maybe I'll leave lunch behind. It looks that wonderful. And penguins! I'll try to leave an update after I return from my trip.

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