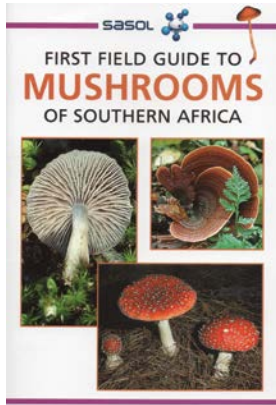


Books

Sasol First Field Guide to Mushrooms of Southern Africa

By Margo Branch. Struik Nature.



This is an updated and redesigned second edition of a book that was originally published in 2001. The text has been revised to address taxonomic changes, new photographs have been included, and the design is simple but attractive. Being a pocket-sized book about the size of a smartphone, it's easy to take along on walks into forests and other damp areas where mushrooms and other fungi can

be expected to be found. This is especially useful for those who intend collecting mushrooms to eat, given that some are toxic, and potentially deadly.

The book is not limited to edible species, but rather covers 44 common species or groups of fungi that are most likely to be encountered in southern Africa. These include well-known examples like pine rings, puff balls, ink caps and red stinkhorn, and the even more evocatively named chicken of the woods, bird's nest fungus and turkey tail. An introductory section provides a brief overview of fungi, including the types of fruit bodies, the main identifying features in the form of cap shapes, gill attachment and gill spacing, and the three modes of nutrition – saprophytic, parasitic or symbiotic.

The author, Margo Branch, has written a number of books, including *Living Shores* with her husband, marine biologist Emeritus Professor George Branch, who took the photographs for this field guide. The recommended retail price is R80, and it is also available as an e-book for R55.

Other recent releases by Struik Nature that will appeal to both amateur and professional astronomers and stargazers include the 2021 edition of the *Sky Guide*, published each year by the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa (R150), and *Night Skies of Botswana* by Stephen O'Meara (R240).

While the *Sky Guide* – now in its 75th year of publication – contains more technical detail, with monthly tables, charts and maps, *Night Skies of Botswana* is more attractive and easy-to-digest, with colourful maps and bite-sized bits of information that are conducive to casual browsing by stargazing members of the public. The content of both books will assist in identifying the stars and constellations in southern African skies that are visible to the naked eye, for those without telescopes. Both books also cover some local star lore.

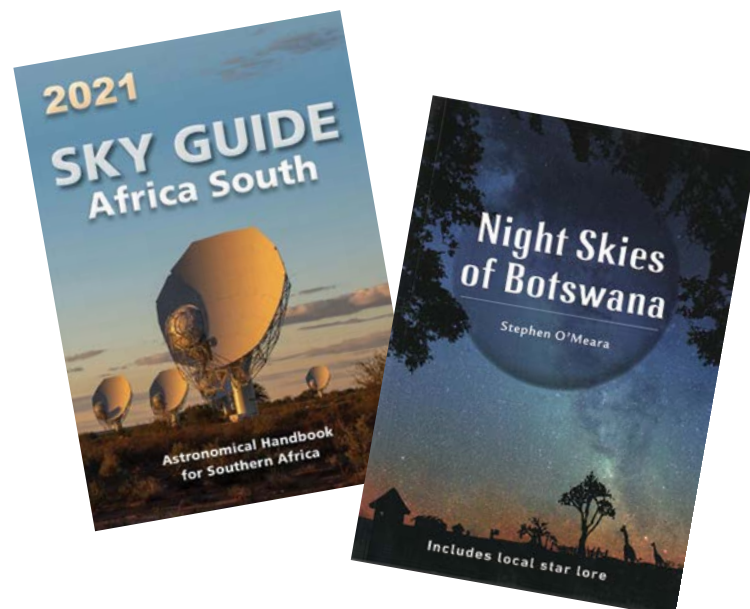
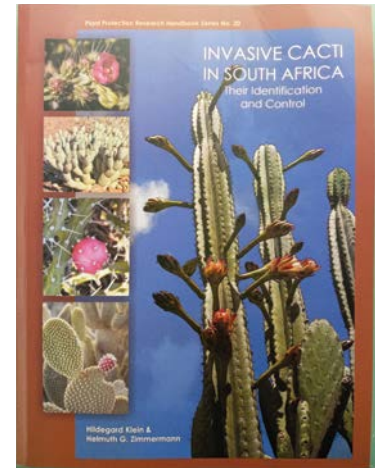
Invasive Cacti in South Africa: Their Identification and Control

By Hildegard Klein and Helmuth Zimmermann. Agricultural Research Council.

Although cacti are popular in South Africa as garden ornamentals, and in some cases as a fruit crop or source of fodder, they rank among the worst alien invasive plants overrunning agricultural and conservation land.

This book will allow landowners to identify the 33 species covered by the Alien and Invasive Species Regulations of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEM:BA), as well as six other emerging invaders. For each of these species, the authors recommend the best management strategy for various growing conditions. They also explain the science of biological control in simple terms, indicating which biocontrol agents are available for each cactus species, and with enough details to enable landowners to use them successfully against their own cactus weeds.

Before their retirement, the authors were both researchers in the Agricultural Research Council's Plant Protection Research division, spending large parts of their careers on research into the biological control of cactus weeds. The book costs R200 and can be ordered from Hendrieta Moletsane at MoletsaneH@arc.agric.za.



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