

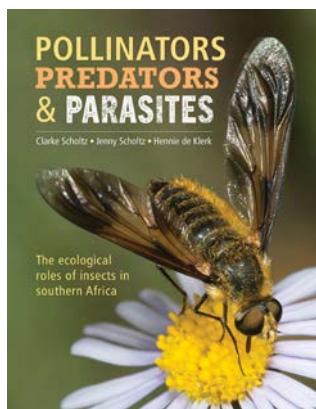


REGULARS | BOOKS

# Books

## Pollinators, Predators & Parasites: The ecological roles of insects in southern Africa

By Clarke Scholtz, Jenny Scholtz & Hennie de Klerk.  
Struik Nature.



A book like this comes along only once every few decades in South Africa, so while it's a pricey purchase for the average reader, it's a must-have for insect lovers, natural history buffs and academic libraries. It's also a great 'coffee table book', given the many colourful photographs, fascinating facts, and subsections with attention-grabbing headings that make it easy to dip into. The latter

includes numerous boxes, such as those on Bushman arrow poison, commercial use of wild silk, feeding mechanisms in aquatic insects, and floral adaptations for pollen attachment.

Rather than having chapters ordered by taxonomic groupings of insects – like the classic *African Insect Life* written by Dr SH Skaife in 1953 and updated by Dr John Ledger in 1979 – this book is structured around southern Africa's biomes. There is an introduction on insects and their ecological role, and then chapters dedicated to the Fynbos, Succulent Karoo, Desert, Nama-Karoo, Grassland, Savanna, Indian Ocean Tropical (Coastal) Belt, Albany Thicket

Struik Nature also recently released two books that should appeal to visitors to South Africa's national parks and private game reserves.

*Shaping Addo: The Story of a South African National Park*, by Mitch Reardon, is a highly readable account of how a small sanctuary for elephants – established when hunting had reduced the Eastern Cape population to just 16 individuals – was transformed into a successful mega-park that stretches from the Bird Island marine protected area inland to Darlington Dam and beyond. This means that Addo now hosts the 'Big Seven': elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, rhino, great white shark and southern right whale, along with numerous other species. Today there are about 650 elephants in the park, as well as large herds of other herbivores such as zebra, red hartebeest and kudu. The book's RRP is R320.

*Walking Safaris of South Africa*, by Hlengiwe Magagula and Denis Costello, covers 59 guided walks and trails in 21 national parks and game reserves, two of them in eSwatini and one in Botswana. Each entry includes a useful box

and Forest Biomes. Four additional chapters focus on freshwater habitats, caves, the coastal zone and the urban environment. The taxonomy isn't neglected either, because an appendix at the back of the book provides the names and short descriptions of the 25 orders of insects that occur in southern Africa, listed in evolutionary sequence.

The authors explain in the preface that they have tried to highlight some of the interesting aspects of insect life history in these biomes and other areas, and to emphasise their environmental importance as ecosystem service providers. So the content isn't limited to pollination, predation and parasitism as suggested by the title, but also covers other ecological processes such as soil modification and nutrient recycling.

The lead author, Clarke Scholtz, is an emeritus professor of entomology at the University of Pretoria, where he continues to teach undergraduates, supervise postgraduates and conduct entomological research. Jenny Scholtz studied nature conservation and worked for a conservation NGO before her focus turned to the study of insects. Hennie de Klerk took the vast majority of the book's more than 1 600 photographs; although he studied and worked in the field of metallurgy, he dedicates his leisure time to capturing creatures on camera, with a focus on insects and birds.

The recommended retail price (RRP) of the book – a 448-page hardcover – is R590, but it is also available as an eBook for R399.

detailing the walk type (day walk, backpacking trail or wilderness trail), operator, cost category, minimum and maximum group size, minimum age and the best time to go. Apart from an account of what to expect, there are interesting articles written by Hlengiwe Magagula, a seasoned travel writer and blogger, about her first-hand experiences on the trails. 'The pharmacy of the dunes', for example, relates what she learnt from her guide about the useful plants in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The RRP of this book is R270.

