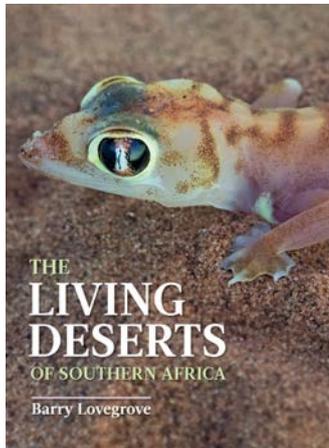


# Books

## The Living Deserts of Southern Africa

By Barry Lovegrove, *Struik Nature*



Prior to the publication of the first edition of this book in 1993, it was anticipated with great excitement by members of the zoology and botany communities who were aware that it was coming. Lovegrove's 'labour of love' promised to open a window to a world that few had been privileged to get well acquainted with, and in that sense it did not disappoint. Focusing largely on the adaptations

that allow animals and plants to cope with life in arid environments, it was packed with information, but many felt that this was also to its detriment. It was rather too cramped, too technical, and therefore risked not appealing or being readily accessible to the broader public. And raising awareness about these often overlooked, seemingly 'barren' landscapes was – and still is – important for their conservation. Although the Desert Biome, Arid Savanna Biome and Succulent Karoo Biome in southern Africa are

well protected within large state and private parks, the same cannot be said for the Nama-Karoo Biome, where only 1% of the land area is under state conservation management.

But Lovegrove heeded the criticisms when – after retiring from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where he retains Emeritus Professor status – he began revising the content. He has reduced the number of scientific diagrams and graphs, and instead has provided discrete references (via endnote numbers corresponding to a list of publications at the back) for the benefit of those wanting more detailed information. Some chapters needed more updating than others, with the final one, 'The future of the deserts', having been given a major overhaul to incorporate new developments in conservation and climate change. An extra chapter called 'The ancient Karoo' has also been added to provide an overview of the proto-mammals and dinosaurs that once inhabited the Nama-Karoo. Now, Lovegrove has succeeded in creating an informative and interesting book that comfortably straddles the 'key reference work' and 'coffee table' genres.

The designers, Janice Evans and Neil Bester, should be congratulated too, as the attractive, 'clean' and spacious layout has increased the book's readability immensely. The recommended retail price (RRP) for the hardcover version is R450, but there is also an eBook for R360.

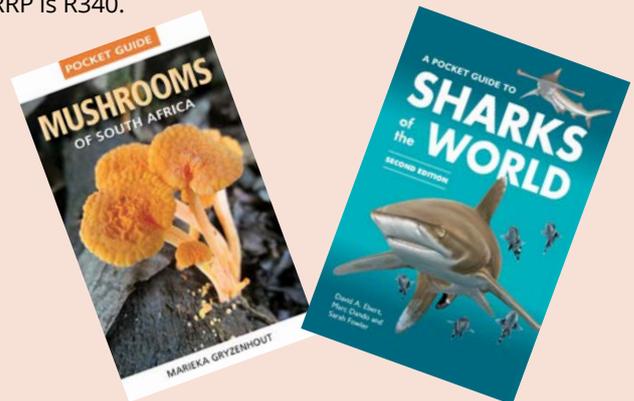
Struik Nature recently released two new pocket guides. *Mushrooms of South Africa*, by Marieka Gryzenhout, is a new edition of a book first published in 2010. It features a selection of species most commonly found in the region, and will enable mushroom 'hunters' and natural history enthusiasts to identify them in the field. Each entry includes informative species accounts highlighting distinguishing characteristics, with full-colour photographs, and edibility at a glance.

Gryzenhout is a lecturer in the Department of Genetics at the University of the Free State and a member of various mycological associations. She is the author and co-author of numerous scientific papers and books on fungi, including the popular *Field Guide to Mushrooms and other Fungi of South Africa*. She shares her passion for the subject on her website, [www.themycologyblog.com](http://www.themycologyblog.com). The book's RRP is R200.

*A Pocket Guide to Sharks of the World*, by David A. Ebert, Marc Dando and Sarah Fowler, is also a new edition of a previously published book, this one in 2015. This expanded edition presents richly detailed colour images, information on newly discovered species, and updated text throughout. It is apparently the only field guide to identify, illustrate and describe every known shark

species. Apart from species accounts, it has fin guides and teeth guides, allowing for some level of identification on the basis of these parts. It also includes sections on shark biology, ecology and conservation.

Lead author Ebert is programme director of the Pacific Shark Research Centre in California, USA, and a research faculty member at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, Dando is a scientific illustrator and publisher based in the United Kingdom, and Fowler is a scientific advisor to the Save Our Seas Foundation, co-founder of the Shark Trust and the European Elasmobranch Association, and a member of the IUCN Shark Specialist Group. The book's RRP is R340.



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