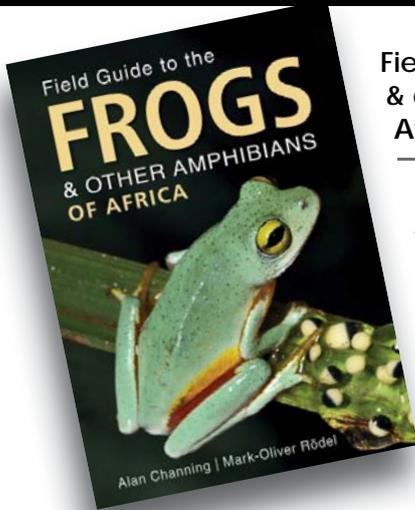


Books



Field Guide to the Frogs & other Amphibians of Africa

By Alan Channing & Mark-Oliver Rödel. 407 pp. Struik Nature. R400

This book represents an extraordinary feat, because it covers all 815 species of amphibians – 788 frogs, 23 caecilians and four

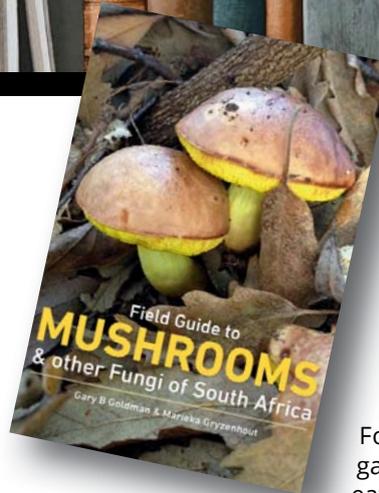
salamanders – that have been described from the African continent, the first guide ever to do so. Depicting all these species was made possible by the more than 100 friends and colleagues of the authors who contributed photographs. These reveal a fascinating variety of frogs and toads, from the cute and colourful to rather ugly, warty specimens that even the most desperate handsome prince-seeker would not want to kiss!

The book adheres to the classic field guide format, with species entries on the left and colour plates of photographs on the right. Each species is described in terms of its common and species name, identifying features, distribution, habitat, advertisement call, biology and conservation status. There is also an introductory section, covering the biology and ecology of amphibians, and tips on finding and handling them.

A Guide to Dragonflies & Damselflies of South Africa

By Warwick & Michèle Tarboton. 224 pp. Struik Nature. R310

Dragonflies dart about so quickly that it would be impossible for most of us to identify them in flight, but fortunately they often settle in one spot long enough for us to photograph. Then, with the help of this book, putting a name to the species shouldn't be too difficult, because clear photographs are provided of the 164 dragonfly and damselfly species known to occur in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, along with information on their size, identifying features and occurrence. Apart from photographs of each species in its natural environment, there are colour plates showing key diagnostic features for identification, and distinguishing characteristics for males and females. An introductory section covers aspects like life cycle, behaviour, biology and breeding, and includes some useful guidelines to make identification easier.

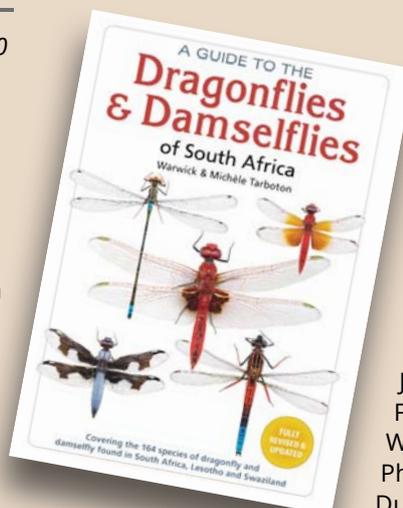


Field Guide to Mushrooms & other Fungi of South Africa

Gary B Goldman & Mariëka Gryzenhout. 360 pp. Struik Nature. R370

For those who want to gather 'wild' mushrooms to eat, being able to identify species accurately is vital, because getting it wrong could be deadly, given the toxicity of some examples. But there are many naturalists who just want to be able to put names to the interesting fungi they might see or photograph on their favourite walking trails.

This book caters for both target groups, covering everything from fairy ring-forming mushrooms to brackets, puffballs, stinkhorns, corals, jellies and more. It features 200 of South Africa's most distinctive and conspicuous fungal species, each described in detail with notes on its ecology, distribution, habitat, edibility and any similar species with which it might be confused. Many of the species have an entire double-page spread devoted to them, with photographs taken from a number of different angles to aid identification. Apart from these species accounts, there is an introduction outlining the basic anatomy and biology of mushrooms and their role in nature, as well as guidelines to foraging for and photographing them.



Overall, the guide – a revised and updated edition of a book first published in 2015 – is both attractive and user-friendly. And who knew that these insects had such evocative and lyrical names, such as Dancing Jewel, Springwater Sprite, Friendly Hawker, Gracious Wisp, Deceptive Widow, Phantom Flutterer, Smoky Duskdarter, Denim Dropwing and Elusive Skimmer?