
Book Reviews

Mammals

Field guide to the mammals of the Kruger National Park
(ISBN 0 86977 432 8)

Veldgids tot die soogdiere van die Nasionale Krugerwildtuin
(ISBN 0 86977 433 6)

Both by U. de V. Pienaar, S.C.J. Joubert, A. Hall-Martin, G. de Graaff and I.L. Rautenbach. 1987. C. Struik Publishers, Cape Town, in collaboration with the National Parks Board of Trustees, Pretoria. Pp. 176. Price R19,95 (excluding tax).

At last! A book that tells visitors to the Kruger National Park much more than just gestation period and record horn length of the larger mammals. With the wealth of ecological and ethological information gathered over the past two to three decades, this book is long overdue. But is it a field guide? This concept was developed by Roger Tory Peterson to provide interested laymen with a means of identifying birds in the field. In the introduction to this book it is stated that space limitations allowed the inclusion of some characteristic features of each species only; the identification must therefore be achieved by comparing the animal seen with the illustrations provided. In the case of small carnivores and small antelope, not to mention rodents, bats and insectivores, this will be a daunting task for the amateur, however keen he may be.

In the text species descriptions are limited to a sentence or two, mainly on mass attained, tucked away at the end of the "habits" section. A short, concise description of the diagnostic features of each species to complement the photographs would greatly enhance the value of the book. To identify a black rhinoceros from the photograph on page 103 would be a major achievement.

The descriptions of distribution, habits, diet and breeding are quite comprehensive in most cases and the authors must be congratulated with their effort. It was probably unavoidable that a few errors slipped into the mass of information presented.

Wild dogs are said to be susceptible to canine distemper (p. 69), and periodic sharp declines in population density of black-backed jackals are attributed to the same cause (p. 71). This is mere conjecture, as canine distemper has not yet been confirmed in free-ranging wild dogs or jackals.

In elephants, fighting is said to consist of pushing head to head with the point of contact being the base of the *head* (p. 98). That would be the area of the foramen magnum. I presume "base of the *trunk*" was intended.

Immature zebra stallions are said to be driven from the family units (p. 104). This is not the case. As Klingel (1969, *Zool. Afr.* 4: 255) pointed out, colts leave the herd of their own accord for various other reasons, i.e. a sibling is born, loosening the bond between mare and older offspring; no playmates in the herd; joining a bachelor group in the vicinity of the family unit.

The dassie's lifespan is given as 4–5 years (p. 106), while up to 9½ years has been recorded (Steyn & Hanks, 1983, *J. Zool., Lond.* 201: 247–257).

The major area of occupation of Sharpe's grysbok (p. 124) is said to stretch along the eastern half of the park, while the map shows a more westerly distribution and a major concentration in the far north-west. Grey rhebok are said to be exclusively grazers (p. 128), while Rowe-Rowe (1983, *S. Afr. J. Wildl. Res.* 13: 1–8) stated that forbs make up 80–90% of the grey rhebok's diet. This has subsequently been confirmed by Ferreira & Bigalke (1987, *S. Afr. J. Wildl. Res.* 17: 123–127).

There is no distribution map for *Nycteris woodi* (p. 36).

The selection of information to be presented was obviously a subjective matter. However, I found it strange that Rasa's series of papers on the fascinating social organisation and behaviour of the dwarf mongoose, probably the most intensively studied small carnivore, is summed up in a single word: "gregarious".

Some statements are rather quaint. "Schools" of hippo is a bit strained (p. 111), while the decline of brown hyaena numbers seems to be attributed to the Second World War (p. 86).

The choice of Meester *et al.*'s (1986) choice of popular names is, as stated, personal preference. I can see no reason for dropping "tsessebe" and the descriptive "grey duiker" in favour of the archaic "sassaby", and "common duiker" respectively.

Die vertalers het hulle oor die algemeen goed van hul taak gekwyd. Om bv. "a full-throated roar" van 'n leeu as "'n bielie van 'n brul" te vertaal, is meesterlik. Ongelukkig is daar nie oral met insig vertaal nie.

By die piesangvlermuis (p. 48) word "Plantains" bv. met "weeblare" (*Plantago* sp.) vertaal, terwyl groot styselryke piesangs (*Musa* sp.), wat in tropiese streke as stapelvoedsel verbou word, bedoel word. By die bakoorkakkals (p. 67) lees ons dat die groot ore dien as meganisme om verlies aan liggaamshitte teë te werk. In 'n onverstaanbare sin (p. 81) word beskryf dat die witstertmuishond "met die liggaam hoër as die kop, die rug en agterlyf" draf. Die stelling dat witrenosters beter in staat is om beweging in die verte te sien as stilstaande voorwerpe naby (p. 101), word soos volg weergegee: ". . . makliker om bewegings in die verte te sien as wat dit is om bewegings naby hom te identifiseer". Die Engelse "feet and legs" lewer groot probleme op, maar daar word nie konsekwent by een vertaling gehou nie. So word "hindlimbs" op p. 23 as "agterbene" vertaal, en "forelimbs" net daarna as "voorpote", terwyl 'n gouemol se "forepaws" op p. 31 *hande* genoem word.

Die Engelse "records" word herhaaldelik verkeerd as rekords vertaal, terwyl op- of aantekening geïmpliseer word. Op p. 35 lees mens dat Egiptiese vrugtevlermuis vrugte pluk terwyl hulle "sweefvlieg", terwyl die Engelse term

“hover” hier eerder “fladder” of “fladder-hang” beteken. Wahlberg-witkolvrugtevlermuis kry dit reg om op hul hoede vir roofdiere te wees *terwyl hulle slaap* (p. 32), alhoewel die Engelse term “roosting” nie noodwendig slaap beteken nie. Die “scimitar” waarmee ’n bastergembok se horings vergelyk word (p. 129), is ’n “kromswaard”; ’n swaard is reguit.

Enkele sinne lees koddig, bv. die ratel (p. 74): “Die dratyd is ongeveer 6 maande. Die wyfie dra die welpies . . . in haar bek”.

Die omslagtige “diere wat deur leeus doodgemaak is” word herhaaldelik gebruik i.p.v. die kort en kragtige “leeuvangste”. Ons lees verder van koeikalwers i.p.v. verskalwers (p. 97), renosterwyfies (p. 100) en waterbokramme (p. 141).

Onder die hofie “Dieet” word deurgaans van “eters” gepraat, alhoewel ek gewoon is dat diere in Afrikaans “vreet”. Tog word dit nie konsekwent toegepas nie, en lees mens herhaaldelik “. . . hoofsaaklik graseters, maar vreet ook kruid . . .” ens., wat baie hinderlik is.

Die skrywers se persoonlike voorkeur vir die gewone name wat Meester *et al* (1986) verkies, is sekerlik hul goeie reg. ’n Paar koddighede kom egter te voorskyn. Die letterlike vertaling van die Engelse “greater” en “lesser” in bv. “groter dwergskeerbek” gaan net nie op nie. Die invoering van “tsessebe” in Afrikaans is ’n nuutjie, maar ongelukkig word die gevestigde naam “basterhartbees” glad nie eers genoem nie. Die skrywers se keuse van “Sharpe-grysbok” (p. 124) i.p.v. die ingeburgerde “tropiese grysbok” en hul voorkeur vir die omslagtige “Lichtenstein-hartbees” bo die eg-Afrikaanse “mofhartbees” (p. 116) val vreemd op die oor. Ek betreur ook die summiere verswyging van die Afrikaanse naam “kwagga” en die slaafse invoering van die Engels-klinkende “sebra”. “Kwagga” word nie eers as wisselvorm genoem nie. Moderne navorsingstegnieke wat toon dat die bontkwagga van die Krugerwildtuin ook *Equus quagga* soos die uitgestorwe kwagga van die Karoo is, asook die volksnaam oor baie jare, bevestig die onbetwiste korrektheid van die gebruik van “kwagga” om in Afrikaans na die gestreepte perdagtige te verwys.

Die punte van kritiek hierbo genoem is in werklikheid van minder belang. Ek het die boek baie interessant gevind en kan dit met vrymoedigheid aanbeveel. Ek is seker dat dit in sy doel sal slaag en vir talle mense die kwaliteit van ’n Wildtuinbesoek sal verhoog, omdat hulle nuwe dinge sal raaksien. Ek voorspel dat hierdie boek ’n blitsverkoper sal wees.

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