

## Birding

You can find birds everywhere, even inside shops! This makes birding a rewarding hobby. Birds are a great focus for nature journaling. In fact, nature journaling is recommended by expert birders from South Africa and abroad. Birders refer to it as keeping a **field notebook**. In "Basic Bird ID for Southern Africa" a field notebook is listed as **one of four essential pieces of equipment**.

South African birding authority, Faansie Peacock, emphasises the purpose and benefits of field notes for birders:

"The aim of taking notes is not only to represent what you see in the field but ultimately also

- to develop more effective observation skills and
- to force you to look at birds in more detail and
- remember details better.

Keeping a notebook is undoubtedly the fastest (and arguably also the most satisfying) way to improve your birding skills."

p 24 "Chamberlain's LBJ's: The definitive guide to Southern Africa's Little Brown Jobs"

Many expert birders agree that keeping a field notebook with sketches, words and numbers is vital to birding. This advice is given by:

- Roy Cowgill
- Stephen Davis
- Doug Newman
- Gordon King
- David Allen Sibley
- Audubon Society
- Cornell Bird Academy (All About Birds)
- British Trust of Ornithology

It applies equally to casual birders as it does to researchers, and to both new and experienced birders.

Birding involves hearing or seeing birds, or finding evidence of birds. At general level, there is nothing place specific about the how to bird, or about nature journaling with birds as your focus. However, identification of species, by sight or sound, changes within the country and across the Southern African region. What species of birds can you expect to find? Where might you find them? When? And what changes might you come across at different places and times of year? For example, typical bird sounds of one species change within one province. Appearances may change across the Southern African region.

## Books

The relationship between people and birds in Southern Africa has a long history. There are a variety of ways of people knowing about and relating to birds. The history of different groups and the interactions between groups is complex. Insights into our understanding of these relationships and ways of knowing is highlighted in these books:

“Birders of Africa: History of a Network” by Nancy J Jacobs, 2016 Yale University.

The scientific knowledge that is contained in the field guides, books and resources below has a complex history. “By distilling the interactions between European science and African vernacular knowledge, this stunningly illustrated work offers a fascinating examination of the colonial and postcolonial politics of the expertise about nature.” From front inside cover flap.

“Zulu Bird Names and Bird Lore” by Adrian Koopman

The author describes the complex relationship between birds, the Zulu language and Zulu culture including in praise poetry, proverbs, riddles and children’s games. It also presents the Zulu Bird Name Project a series of workshops held with Zulu-speaking bird guides to establish a list of species-specific names for all birds in the Zulu-speaking region.

Most Southern African birding books use the scientific names of birds with explanations of changes to naming and grouping of bird species. They also provide the English and/or Afrikaans common names. Common bird names in other Southern African languages are less common in standard birding field guides. Here are a few books that are multi-lingual:

**The beginners' nature book series "The My First book of ..."** with field note style information. Each book has text in four Southern African languages:

- English
- Zulu
- Xhosa
- Afrikaans

There are three books in the series just on birds:

“My First Book of **Southern African Birds**: Volumes 1 and 2” by Erroll

Cuthbert, illustrator Jennifer Schaum. Volume 1 had information on 56 species. Volume 2 has information on 58 species.

"My First Book of **East African Birds**" by Dave Richards, Illustrator Jennifer Schaum

## Nature Journal - Birds in Southern Africa

The series also includes birds in other titles such as “My First Book of Southern African ... Wildlife, Tracks. Most titles in the series are available through the library.

While not a book, Roberts VII Names Database Version 2005.10.3 has **common names of birds in languages** commonly spoken in Southern Africa. People are invited to share names or languages which may be missing.

<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; Zulu Names</i>	<a href="#">Zulu</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; Xhosa Names</i>	<a href="#">Xhosa</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; Tswana Names</i>	<a href="#">Tswana</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; South Sotho Names</i>	<a href="#">SouthSotho</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; North Sotho Names</i>	<a href="#">NorthSotho</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; Swazi Names</i>	<a href="#">Swazi</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; Tsonga Names</i>	<a href="#">Tsonga</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; Shona Names</i>	<a href="#">Shona</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; Kwangali Names</i>	<a href="#">Kwangali</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, English, Afrikaans &amp; German Names</i>	<a href="#">SciEngAfrGer</a>
<i>Roberts VII Scientific, German, Portuguese &amp; French Names</i>	<a href="#">SciGerPorFre</a>

### Standard Field Guide-Style Books

“Faansie’s Bird Book: a fully-fledged field guide ...for kids” is written for children but also loved and used by adults. It contains 722 species found only in South Africa. It is also available in Afrikaans “Faansie se Voëlboek ‘n volledige veldgids ... vir kinders”.

In association with this book, he developed **Bird Nerd Game**, which he’s linked to his [website](#). It is a variation of the standard bird list – with extra points for rare or difficult to locate birds. Print outs available for A4, A3 (with instructions on how to fold into pocket size) and Excel version.

"Basic Bird ID for Southern Africa" by Peter Ginn and Geoff McIlleron

"Sasol Birds of Southern Africa 4th edition" by Ian Sinclair, Phil Hockey, Warwick Tarboton and Peter Ryan, 2015 Struik. The 4th edition adds introductions to bird groups and sonograms for identifying some birds. Available in English and Afrikaans.

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"Newman's Birds of Southern Africa: Commemorative Edition" Ken Newman, New Holland. Vanessa Newman, Ken's daughter, revised his last book to produce this commemorative edition. It incorporates the latest taxonomic changes.

"Roberts Bird Guide Second Edition" by Hugh Chittenden, 2016, John Voelcker Bird Book Fund. Based on the first field guide version of Roberts Birds of Southern Africa VIIth Edition, the book covers over 950 species including all the recent splits. Being translated into Afrikaans.

"Geographic Variation of Southern African Birds" by Hugh Chittenden, David Allan and Ingrid Weiersbye, an illustrated version of aspects dealt with under the subject of Geographic Variation in the large handbook tome Roberts - Birds of Southern Africa 7th ed. Worldwide, this is the first field guide to attempt to comprehensively illustrate the varied plumages that are exhibited by the region's birds."

Errata noted on promotion page:

- 1: African Goshawk p50. Blue and green colours on map to be transposed.
- 2: Garden Warbler Plate 75. p185. Names on plate to be transposed."

"Birds of Africa South of the Sahara, Second edition" by Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan, New Holland. This highly respected publication covers over 2,129 species of African birds in a single volume. Revised to reflect the latest changes in taxonomy.

### A Different take on Identification

"Newman's Birds by Colour" by Kenneth Newman in association with Irene Bredenkamp and Phoebus Perdikis, updated by Vanessa Newman. Many new birders first notice colour. However, many experts discourage using colour as the starting point in bird identification. This book is a welcome addition to getting to grips with identifying birds.

"Complete Photographic Guide to Birds of Southern Africa" by Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan

"A Field Guide to the Tracks & Signs of Southern, Central & East African Wildlife" by Chris & Mathilde Stuart, 2019, ISBN: 978-1-77584-692-5 published by Struik Nature, contains "detailed coverage of tracks, droppings, bird pellets, nests, shelters and feeding signs, not only for mammals, but also for **birds**, reptiles, insects and other invertebrates."

# Nature Journal - Birds in Southern Africa

## Specialised Groups of Birds

"Chamberlain's LBJ's: The Definitive Guide to Southern Africa's Little Brown Jobs" by Faansie Peacock

"LBJs made Simple" by Doug Newman and Gordon King, 2011 presents and applies the authors' identification system based on first separating families, then within each family further separating into a visual groups, and finally in the third step of identifying to species level based on colour-coded, weighted characteristic features within the visual group. Includes a CD with calls for each of the birds in the book. ISBN: 9781770077997

"Pipits of Southern Africa: The Complete Guide to Africa's Ultimate LBJ's" by Faansie Peacock, 2006. Privately published by the author, unfortunately, it is no longer in print, but Faansie writes on his website:

"Because I'm such a nice guy, I've placed a whole lot of free downloadable pdfs from the pipits book here...enjoy! I've also included some background information on the book, and the story behind it." Check out his list of downloadable pdfs [here](#).

"Chamberlain's Waders: The Definitive Guide to Southern Africa's Shorebirds" by Faansie Peacock 2016

"Field Guide to Shorebirds of South Africa" by Roy Cowgill and Stephen Davis, 2013 Jacana

"Guide to Seabirds of Southern Africa" by Peter Ryan 2017 Struik Nature ISBN978-1-77584-519-5

"African Raptors" by Bill Clark, 2018

"Terrestrial Gamebirds and Snipes of Africa: Guinea-fowls, Francolins, Spur-fowls, Quails, Sandgrouse & Snipes" by Robert Little, 2017 Helm Field Guides, Bloomsbury

## Birding by Ear

"Bird Calls for Beginners" by Doug Newman 2008 Book with CD contain calls and other information on 60 common Southern African birds. ISBN: 9781770076785

"More Bird Calls for Beginners" by Doug Newman 2009 Book with CD contain calls and other information on an additional 99 mostly common with a few rare Southern African birds. ISBN: 9781770078000

# Nature Journal - Birds in Southern Africa

"500 Common Bird Calls in Southern Africa" Doug Newman 2013 Book and CD with best-known sound or call of each species with helpful notes on similar-sounding species. ISBN: 9781431701209

## Comprehensive Reference Books

"Roberts VII: Roberts Birds of Southern Africa" 2005. Also available in Afrikaans as "Roberts Voëlgids". The most authoritative reference on birds in Southern Africa.

[Robert's Multi-media Birds of Southern Africa](#) CD companion to the book is available from SA Birding - [Guy Gibbons Roberts Multimedia DVD and Pda Software](#) You have to buy it and have a smartphone or computer to use it. Sound identification uses filters to provide a shortlist of possible birds. The filters are very helpful especially for length and pitch which give timing and kHz measurements. You can use the sound characteristic filters as a framework for listening to and describing sounds

"The Ultimate Companion: For Birding in Southern Africa" by Peter Ginn and Geoff McIlleron, highly praised by Southern African birding authorities, this two-volume set has over 1,400 photos of all 960 bird species recorded in the region. Free app available with the purchase of the books.

## Where to Find Birds

"The Southern African Birdfinder: Where to find 1400 bird species in southern Africa" by C Cohen & C Spottiswoode, assisted by J Rossouw, New Holland, 2006. Covers over 300 birding sites with what to expect, includes a foldout map.

"Sasol Birding Map of Southern Africa", Ian Sinclair and Trevor Hardaker, Struik, Map. 2002. Includes over 200 birding sites in southern Africa, as well as many game and nature reserves, towns, and routes.

[SABAP2 – South African Bird Atlas Project](#): website of the second South African Bird Atlas Project, run by the Animal Demography Unit, UCT, in collaboration with SANBI and BirdLife SA.

# Nature Journal - Birds in Southern Africa

## Community

Explore birds with the local birding community. They have expertise to share about local birds and birding spots. Local conservancies and nature reserves often offer bird and nature walks.

African Bird Club – has an email discussion group [here](#), produces publication twice a year [here](#), all Africa quizzes [here](#).

[Simply Birding Forum](#) hosts a wide variety of topics organised in sub-topics.

[BirdLife South Africa](#) is the largest birding organisation in South Africa. There many local bird clubs in 8 of the 9 provinces which are affiliated with the national organisation. Check [here](#) for the one closest to you.

They produce checklists, and [organise events](#). They publish a range of scientific and member-focussed publications, reports, newsletters and magazines. They are also active in education, [policy and advocacy](#), and [conservation](#). Their online resources on conservation include:

A printable **poster** on [South Africa's Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas](#).

Province specific **brochures** on Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)

- [Eastern Cape](#)
- [Free State](#)
- [Gauteng and North West](#)
- [KwaZulu-Natal](#)
- [Limpopo](#)
- [Mpumalanga](#)
- [Northern Cape](#)
- [Western Cape](#)

BirdLife South Africa also has resources on **sustainable birding tourism** for South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana and Namibia:

[Birding routes per province or country](#)

[Support of community guides](#)

[birder-friendly tour operators](#)

[Birder-friendly establishments](#)

# Nature Journal - Birds in Southern Africa

BirdLife South Africa work through community projects with young birders, and encourage [donations of surplus field guides and binoculars](#) for birders in rural areas or who have limited resources.

They have **guidelines on:**

[Fences and Birds Brochure](#)

[Bird-friendly burning and grazing best-practice for grasslands](#) English, Afrikaans & Zulu

[Bird-friendly: Habitat management guidelines for the endemic birds of the Fynbos Biome](#) in support the eight Fynbos endemic bird species.

[Floating Wetlands](#) to promote waterbird habitat rehabilitation and watercourse conservation and management for farm dams and other agricultural water sources.

[Guide to access avian data for EIA Reports](#) BirdLife South Africa registers, on a regular basis, as an Interested and Affected Party for developments that might affect areas which are important for birds. Although some Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports contain sufficient information, most EIA reports do not provide an accurate reflection of the avifauna that occurs in the proposed area of development.

[Position Statements on](#)

[Feeding of Birds](#)

[Management of Feral Cats and Domestic Cats](#)

[Fireworks](#)

[Avian Influenza](#)

[Invasive Species](#)

[Raptors and Climbing](#)

[Tracking of Birds](#)

[Flushing of Wetland Birds](#)

[Gamebird Hunting](#)

[Lead Ammunition](#)

[Concentrated Solar Power and Birds](#)

[Effect of Wind Energy and Birds](#)

[Mining in IBAs](#)

[Aquaculture](#)

[Position Statement on Birding Code of Ethics](#)



## Nature Journal - Birds in Southern Africa

BirdLife South Africa also has a Code of Ethics:

"We encourage you as birders to take responsibility for your actions when visiting birding sites and act in a manner that will have a positive impact upon the communities and environments that you visit. Support local community and conservation initiatives, pay fair prices and leave only your footprints behind. Click [here](#) to download the Birders Code of Conduct (pdf)"