



The Vultures of Africa

Peter Mundy, Duncan Butchart, John Ledger, Steven Piper

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In **The Vultures of Africa** all eleven species of vulture known to the continent are presented, for the first time, in an authoritative account that will rank as the most important ornithological work on these fascinating yet threatened birds.

Vultures have always evoked a strong response in people, whether it be one of reverence, as in the Ancient Egyptians or the present-day 'vulture-watchers', or of aversion, as shown by many of the explorers and hunters of the last century. In this major, fully illustrated monograph, Dr. Peter Mundy and his co-authors endeavour to answer every conceivable question on the biology and lifestyles of these birds, in a text that is a refreshing departure from traditional bird monographs in terms of its lively and contentious style. The book, nevertheless, remains comprehensive in its approach, and combines the insights gained from the authors' personal experiences with a scholarly review of all the available literature.

The book is divided into four parts. First, the vultures are introduced and described from the evolutionary standpoint, both globally and in an African context, so that the world's 22 species of vulture are grouped and defined. Then, the African species are placed under the spotlight. This part covers the following species: Cape Griffon, Röppel's Griffon, Eurasian Griffon, Whitebacked Vulture, Hooded Vulture, Lappetfaced Vulture, Cinereous Vulture, Whiteheaded Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Bearded Vulture, Whiteheaded Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Bearded Vulture and Palmnut Vulture. Each species' account encompasses the history of the bird's discovery, its complete identification, distribution and preferred habitats, its behaviour, in particular its sociality, flight and actions at a carcass, food, breeding, and its current conservation status. The third part reveals the diversity within this group of scavenging birds by taking a comparative look at their foraging, feeding, socialising and breeding habits. Finally, the interrelationship of vultures and humans in Africa through the ages is documented, and modern-day conservation issues and strategies are discussed in depth.

Each species is superbly illustrated by watercolour paintings, and more than 100 pencil sketches appear throughout the text. Over 130 photographs of the birds in action in different parts of the continent add to the book's visual excitement, and give life to the wealth of data included in the text, maps and diagrams.

The Vultures of Africa will be essential reading for all bird enthusiasts, conservationists and ornithologists, and will amply reward both the informed reader and the collector of fine works of Africana.

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