Warriors, Dilettantes & Businessmen

BIRD COLLECTORS
DURING THE MID-19TH TO MID-20TH CENTURIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

WRJ DEAN

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Warriors, Dilettantes & Businessmen focuses on the activities of collectors of bird specimens in southern Africa and their contribution to southern African ornithology. It also covers some of the history and the development of ornithology as a science in southern Africa.

The southern African region has an exceptionally rich bird fauna but with the difficulty of identifying closely related species in the field, it has been very important to build up extensive collections of preserved bird skins and of eggs in natural history museums. This book throws light on how these collections were built, with various collectors selling or donating specimens to museums. Particular attention is given to the period between 1850 and 1950 when museum collections were growing intensively, and were being used.

WRJ (Richard) Dean began his working life in the printing industry, but has been a full-time biologist since 1972, initially working in Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. From 1974 to 1978, he was a research assistant for the former Transvaal Division of Nature Conservation at Rieberspan Ornithological Research Station, and from 1979 to 1982 was Officer-in-Charge of Nylsvley Nature Reserve. In 1982 he was elected Associate Member of the Transvaal Museum and, in 1995, an invited guest scientist at the UFZ-Centre for Environmental Research in Leipzig, Germany. He was awarded the Gill Memorial Medal in 2009 for his lifetime contribution to southern African ornithology.

From July 1986 to his retirement from academia at the end of 2006, Richard Dean had been a research officer at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, studying plant-animal interactions and the biology of birds in arid and semi-arid ecosystems. Recent projects include editing (with Sue Milton) a synthesis of research in the Karoo (Cambridge University Press) and a book on nomadic birds (Springer).