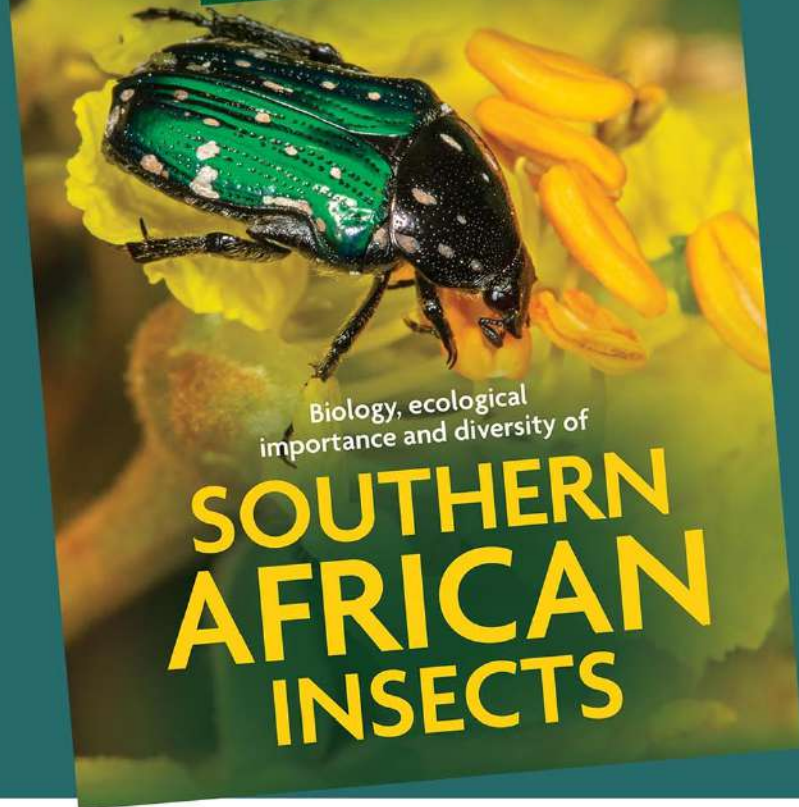


Clarke H. Scholtz & Hennie de Klerk



Biology, ecological importance and diversity of

SOUTHERN AFRICAN INSECTS

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INSECTS ARE THOSE SMALL THINGS that keep natural ecosystems functioning, thereby making life on earth possible for all plants and animals, including humans. They provide essential ecosystem services by pollinating plants that enrich human lives by their beauty, by feeding humanity and producing the oxygen we breathe; they bury the dung of farm and wild animals that improves the soil and prevents the spread of disease; and they decompose the remains of plants, thereby returning the nutrients locked in their tissues to the soil for use by living plants in an endless cycle of life and death. There are huge numbers of them, they differ vastly among themselves, and they perform multitudes of different activities during their respective lives. They are the only invertebrates that fly and have a history millions of years older than flowering plants, birds and mammals. They are the only organisms to have influenced human evolution. Some aspects of their life histories are simply amazing, and their behavioural exploits astonishing.

In this book we document the stories of southern African insects in over 800 pages, with 3,200 beautiful photographs illustrating the rich morphological diversity and biological attributes of the insect species of the region. We emphasise their environmental importance as ecosystem service providers, and narrate, highlight, and illustrate many of the interesting, often remarkable, aspects of their life histories and behaviour, a first for insects of this region.

Clarke Scholtz is an emeritus professor of entomology at the University of Pretoria where he studied and taught over a period spanning more than 50 years. During this time, he spent 13 years as head of the Department of Zoology and Entomology, taught undergraduate courses in entomology, trained many postgraduate students, and published about 250 research papers as well as several books on insects in general and dung beetles in particular. During his career, he achieved significant international recognition for his research. Although retired, Scholtz is still associated with UP and continues research on insects.

Hennie de Klerk trained, then worked, as a metallurgist for all his professional life, but for the past 40 years he has spent his spare time in the field ringing birds and studying and photographing plants and animals, especially birds and insects. This has turned to a full-time occupation since retiring a few years ago. He also regularly gives talks to various natural history-interest groups on the lives of birds and insects, and presents courses on macro-photography; all of these are illustrated with many of his magnificent photos such as the ones presented in this book.



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