

Book Review

111 Roadside plants

By Antje Burke

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The popularity and success of any quick reference field guide depends upon it striking a balance between providing too little information, and trying to be comprehensive and all inclusive. Antje Burke's *111 Roadside plants* documents 34 tree species, 32 shrubs and dwarf shrub species, 22 short lived species and 13 grass species and promises to be a handy travelling companion.

The book is soft covered, A5 size, 148 pages in content and each species is succinctly profiled on one page. Equal weight is given to the general description, distribution and uses and adaptations of each species. In addition there are at least two photographs illustrating each species' general form and its flowers, leaves or fruits. Ghosted behind the text is a map of Namibia depicting the broad general distribution of each species. At first glance this seems distracting but, once tuned in, these maps provide an effective quick reference tool which has allowed the book to remain a light-weight, compact product.

The first thirty pages provide a brief insight into the biomes, vegetation types and ecological challenges facing the flora of Namibia including comments on specially adapted and unusual species, endemics, invasive aliens, plant harvesting, habitat rehabilitation, fire and climate change. This book, by definition, is not designed for the hard core botanists. With Palgrave's *Trees of Southern Africa*, the *Tree Atlas of Namibia*, Le Roux and Müller's *Field guide to trees and shrubs of Namibia* and Müller's *Grasses of Namibia*, comprehensive botanical works are available. This book is designed for the lay person, tourist and researcher wishing to enhance their enjoyment and appreciation of the Namibian outdoors. While many ecologists are familiar with the more common tree species how many can profess a knowledge of many (or any) of the dwarf shrubs and grasses? For those with no previous experience, attempting to acquire a working knowledge of trees, grasses or special plants in Namibia can be a daunting prospect. Burke's book provides an entry point into a discipline often coveted by scientists as a reserved arena and as such is a welcome addition to the literary resources available in the country. It complements some of the author's previous works (*Wild Flowers of the Central Namib* and *Wild Flowers of the Southern Namib*) as well as the guide books by Craven and Marais (*Namib Flora* and *Damaraland Flora*). *111 Roadside plants* has its place in the book case next to these and other field guides such as Newman's and SASOL's field guides to birds and Smither's *Mammals of Southern African ...* ready to be scooped up and taken on the next expedition into the heart of Namibia.

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