Nancy J. Jacobs. *Birders of Africa: History of a Network*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. 352 pages. Map. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. $85.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-300-20961-7.

Nancy Jacobs, a Brown University historian, has used her formidable research skills to help uncover the ways in which bird study was conducted in southern Africa while European powers were colonizing and cataloging most of the continent. Visiting scientists came from Europe and North America; some stayed for years, others just for the length of a career-building expedition. Black Africans at that time were not allowed any formal scientific training or status. However, many became invaluable field workers and museum assistants, while at the same time being denied comfortable salaries, pensions, and leadership positions. This book is less about the biological data amassed than it is a history of science, race relations, and cultural differences.

In most cases the scientists came to Africa, then took their specimens and experiences back home to write papers and books. Even those who spent decades in Africa looked to their peers in the European science networks to validate their work and their status. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, many of the birders were amateurs employed in the colonial bureaucracy.

Jacobs separates the birders into three types: 1) those from white ruling classes making or striving to make a contribution to ornithology; 2) resident Africans, often rich in vernacular knowledge of birds; 3) recreational birders, who increased in number as the European nations divested their political control of African nations.

The approach to bird study and collection varied between these three birding groups. European and American scientists created a taxonomic and descriptive regime built on the Linnaean system and demanding rigid data verification. Ornithologists as well as scientific amateurs required hard facts based on direct observation or dissection. These observations could be summarized, published, and recognized by fellow scientific birders the world over. What does the bird eat? How many days are needed to incubate the eggs? When and how does the species molt?

Yet much of the scientific work was dependent on local workers and their vernacular knowledge. These were "soft facts" compared to what scientific publications required, but without this vernacular foundation, African ornithology would have made "discoveries" much more slowly. Many facts published for the first time by European and American scientists would have been elementary and obvious to the informed African birder.

Jacobs explains: "The quality of knowledge has less to do with whether facts are soft or hard than how they are launched into circulation. . . . Biologists may repackage what they learn from vernacular experts about honeyguide calls, strengthen it through association with methods that are already accepted, and launch it into scientific fray"(103).

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Today many African nations depend on businesses based on eco-tourism. This often includes recreational birding, even in locations where the mega-fauna is the star attraction. These birders rely heavily on hard facts found in books, digital apps, birding magazines, and websites. Yet most of the guides still have a wealth of vernacular knowledge. They must know where a species will feed or nest or find water, and this knowledge must link to specific locations that can be visited and seen. My wife and I made a birding trip to Uganda, primarily to see the Shoebill in the papyrus swamps of Lake Victoria. Our excellent guide was Ugandan, and his encyclopedic, vernacular knowledge of birds was complemented by his familiarity with scientific publications and field guides, all in English. On this field trip we were all amateurs to science yet still using the accreted hard facts of ornithology.

Many of the white men and women directing bird study in colonial Africa left scant record of their interaction with the African men who did much of the field and museum work. Of course, local men with local language skills and bird knowledge were critical to many ornithological "discoveries." For these vernacular experts the bird work paid little, and there was almost no status to be attained among white scientists. Sometimes, however, the local birders did attain some local status as respected hunters for all the specimens they collected. Jacobs notes: "Histories of scientific research in colonial Africa are often histories of labor relations" (21).

Jacobs delves into some specific working relationships between expert black collectors or specimen preparators and their white employers. Some of these relationships stretched across decades and thousands of miles of expedition travel. Racism, then apartheid, dominated the labor scene. The social and political situation determined what the white scientist and the black employee could or could not do or even write.

There was only a single natural history museum in southern Africa during the colonial period. The Transvaal Museum had been founded during the Boer Republic and was later Anglicized after the Boer War. Any black worker there, regardless of knowledge or skills, had a white supervisor. Segregation was inviolable in the work place. Only after empires were disbanded could Africans themselves become scientists recognized outside their local community.

Jacobs deftly gives us the Greater Honeyguide as exemplary of the evolution of science and society in Africa. In the 1770s, Swedish biologist Anders Sparrman was the first white man in South Africa to describe how the honeyguide interacted with Africans. True to its name, the bird would lead local men to an active bee nest. The men would break into the nest and take much of the honey, leaving enough to reward the honeyguide. There would be calls and whistles back and forth between bird and man during the travel to the nest site. At the time, this was seen as a unique interaction of bird and man to the advantage of both. None of Sparrman's information, however, would have surprised any African living near the honeyguides. At the end, Jacobs tells us that the honeyguides now find

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fewer men interested in wild honey. Yet the birds have adapted to urbanized life, able to attract attention from people on bicycles, in cars, or motorboats. This book is ultimately about adaptation and change.

Harry Fuller
McMinnville OR
atowhee@gmail.com

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Valérie K. Orlando, *New African Cinema*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017, 175 pp. Notes. Works Cited. Index. Paper. $17.95. ISBN: 978-0813579566.

Published in the Rutgers University Press Quick Takes series, Valérie Orlando's *New African Cinema* takes on the complex task of introducing its reader to contemporary African cinema both north and south of the Sahara. Orlando opens the book by stating that it will offer a "cogent overview of the latest trends in twenty-first-century African film production" (vii), but she also provides her reader with a history of African cinema in the second half of the twentieth century. *New African Cinema* is divided into three parts: a thirty-eight-page introduction, a forty-two-page chapter on African cinema from the 1960s to the 1990s, and a fifty-eight-page chapter dedicated to the new African cinema of the book's title. At times the book includes African television and digital media in its purview, but not consistently. *New African Cinema* seems to be targeted toward undergraduate readers, perhaps in the context of a survey course on international film traditions.

It is quite difficult to tell the histories of North African, sub-Saharan African, and South African cinemas and medias in a single short work, and Orlando for the most part keeps these strands separate. Her knowledge of North African and particularly Moroccan history, politics, and films makes these sections the strongest of the book. When discussing the other parts of the continent, which receive less attention, Orlando tends to rely on series of lengthy citations, which at times give the text a collage-like character. Manthia Diawara's 1992 *African Cinema: Politics and Culture*, for example, is quoted eight times on pages 22–24 and six times on pages 53–54. Over the course of the book, Orlando refers to important scholarly works on African cinema by Frank Ukadike, Roy Armes, Anjali Prabhu, Kenneth Harrow, and Olivier Barlet (whose name is misspelled as "Bartlet" throughout). *New African Cinema* also highlights key filmmakers and films from different areas and eras, addressing primarily their social, historical, and political contexts. In the chapter devoted to the New African Cinema of her title, Orlando recognizes new modalities of film production and distribution, with digital video for the most part replacing celluloid and DVDs, and internet platforms replacing chronically scarce movie theaters.

In such a brief survey, it is understandable that an author would speak in generalities. Yet Orlando misrepresents the variety and range of African cinema when she begins by stating that it is "never made purely for entertainment" (3) and concludes by characterizing contemporary African cinema

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