

Recent Environment - January 2015

Southeast Asia Head Office
Blk 231, Bain Street
#03-05, Bras Basah Complex
Singapore 180231
Tel : +65-6883-2284/6883-2204
Fax : +65-6883-2144
info@marymartin.com
www.marymartin.com

South Asia Head Office
8/123, Third Street,
Tatabad, Coimbatore 641012
India
Tel : +91-422-2499030/2495780
Fax : +91-422-2495781
info@marymartin.com
www.marymartin.com

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The Search for the Rarest Bird in the World / Vernon R.L. Head
Jacana Media, South Africa 2014

244p.;
9781431410927
\$ 28.50 / HB

Part detective trail, part love affair and pure story telling at its best. In 1990 an expedition of Cambridge scientists arrived at the Plains of Nechisar, tucked between the hills of the Great Rift Valley in the Gamo Gofa province in the country of Ethiopia. On that expedition they collected twenty three species of small mammals, a rodent, a bat; three hundred and fifteen species of birds were seen, sixty nine species of butterfly were identified; twenty species of dragonflies and damselflies; seventeen reptile species were recorded; three frog species were filed; plants were listed. And the wing of a bird was packed into a brown paper bag. It was to become the most famous wing in the world. When the specimens finally arrived at the British Natural History Museum in Tring it set the world of science aflutter. It seemed that the wing was unique, but they questioned, can you name a species for the first time based only on the description of a wing, based on just one wing? After much to and fro confirmation was unanimous, and the new species was announced, Nechisar Nightjar, *Caprimulgus solala*, (solus:only and ala:wing). And birdwatchers like Vernon began to dream. Twenty two years later an expedition of four led by Ian Sinclair set off to try to find this rarest bird in the world. Vernon R.L. Head captivates and enchants as he tells of the adventures of Ian, Dennis, Gerry and himself as they navigate the wilderness of the plains, searching by spotlight for the elusive Nechisar Nightjar. But this book is more than a boy's own adventure in search of the rarest bird in the world. It is a meditation on nature, on ways of seeing, on the naming of things and why we feel so compelled to label. It is a story of friendships and camaraderie. But most of all it embraces and enfolds one into the curious and eye-opening world of the birdwatcher. For birdwatchers, twitchers, bird lovers, and about-to-become birdwatchers everywhere. For those who enjoy the natural world, the outdoors, the untamed places. Reminiscent of Nathaniel's Nutmeg and Longitude, this true story of incredible adventure will bring out the explorer in everyone who reads it.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=171288>

Insider's Guide - How and Where to Photograph Birds in Southern Africa / Isak Pretorius

Jacana Media, South Africa 2014
380p.;
9781431409303
\$ 31.25 / HB

Whether you are new to bird photography or already a passionate hobbyist, this guide will teach you all the tools, techniques and creative ideas required to take your bird photography to the next level. It covers everything you need to know to make your images look spectacular, including how to choose the right equipment, where to look for birds and how to predict their movements, how to get close enough to your subject and how to produce sharp images, to the digital darkroom. This is the most comprehensive guide on bird photography available - and the only guide you'll ever need.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=171289>

Western Siem Pang : Hidden Natural Wonder of Cambodia / Jonathan Charles Eames

Jonathan Charles Eames, Phnom Penh 2012
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