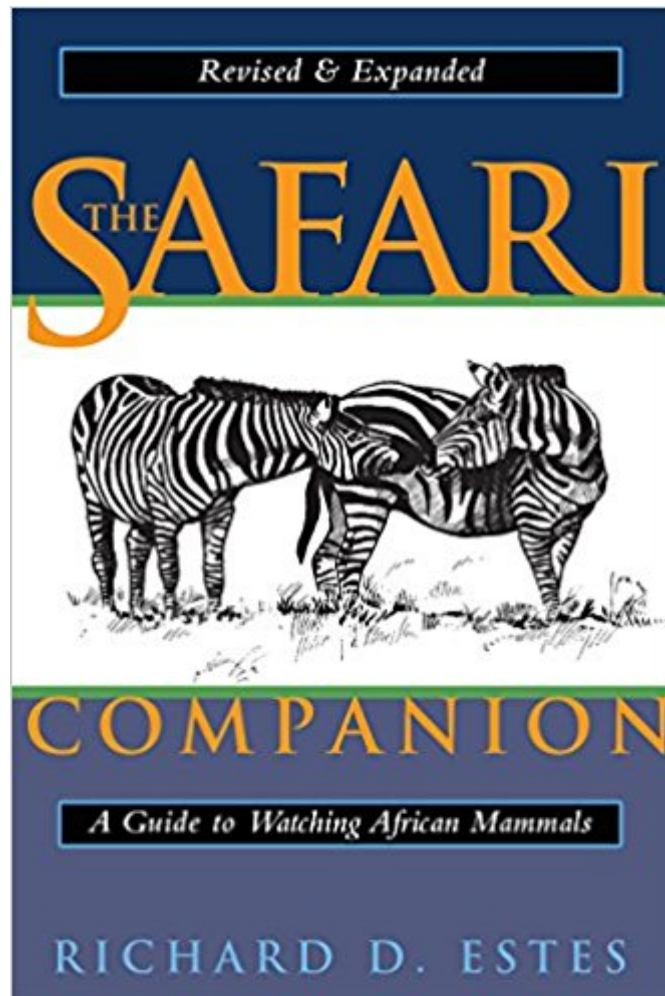




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The Safari Companion: A Guide To Watching African Mammals



Synopsis

Since its original publication in 1993, *The Safari Companion* has been the best field guide to observing and understanding the behavior of African mammals. An indispensable tool for naturalists traveling to Africa, this new edition has been revised to acknowledge the enthusiasm to those watching these magnificent animals at zoos and wildlife parks, and on film. *The Safari Companion* enables readers to recognize and interpret visible behavioral activities, such as courtship rituals, territorial marking, aggression, and care of young. Each account of over 80 species includes a behavioral table in which the unique actions of the hoofed mammals, carnivores, and primates are described for easy reference. In addition, useful maps show the major national boundaries, vegetation zones, and game parks relevant to the guide. The book includes an extensive glossary, as well as tips on wildlife photography, a list of organizations working to protect African wildlife, and advice on where and when to see the animals.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Library Journal-Anyone who goes on safari will want to make room in his or her suitcase for this treasure. Estes, who is affiliated with the Smithsonian Institute as a research associate, spent over eight years doing fieldwork in Africa and over 17 years leading safaris. His admirable qualifications as an expert on the social ecology of African mammals are reflected in the text, which describes approximately 86 species of African mammals. Introductory chapters give practical advice on how to observe animals, including tips on using binoculars and photographic equipment. Other chapters are arranged by standard taxonomic classification. Estes first covers the characteristics of families

and subfamilies and then goes into even more detail on the individual species, charting behaviors one can expect to see and the usual context or meaning. Icons illustrating the behaviors effectively take the reader to a description of the behavior being observed. Appended to the text are a brief suggested reading list, addresses of major wildlife organizations, a glossary of terms, and a thorough index. The only "fault" with this exceptionally well-written and researched book is its size. With a 6 9 trim and some 470 pages of text, this is a fairly large, hefty volume to pack on safari--but it is worth the extra effort, as nothing compares with it. Essential for any traveler to Africa, any student of animals or behavior, any zoo visitor, and any size public library.

Richard D. Estes has led wildlife-viewing safaris in Africa for many years and is one of the world's foremost experts on the social ecology of African mammals. Dr. Estes is a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution Conservation and Research Center, an Associate at the Harvard Museums of Natural History, and a Trustee of The Rare Species Conservatory Foundation. He lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire.

More than a simple field guide, this book focuses on East African mammalian behavior and social organizations. Much contemporary research on mammalian behavior informs the chapters. Line drawings take the place of the color photographs (that you would find in many other guides), which give it a nice retro feel. Nevertheless, it has a modern organizational schema with lots of boldfaced subheading and bullet points which make it easy to find information quickly. There are icon-based labels that allow the reader to identify the characteristics of each species' social organization. Descriptions of social organization, play, courtship behaviors, territoriality, parenting patterns allow observers to interpret their observations in the field while on safari. It's like having a naturalist along with you, pointing out the subtleties of animal behaviors and communication. In some parts of the book, there is specific information about wildlife populations. For example, in the section on Spotted Hyenas, the author reports data from one female that was tracked with a radio collar in the Ngorongoro Crater, noting how starkly different the level of activity necessary to find food was compared to hyenas in Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, where food is harder to come by. This level of scientific detail nicely complements the comprehensive descriptions of each species' life and environment. I ended buying this after borrowing it from my local library. I also purchased a Princeton Pocket Guide to Wildlife of East Africa by Withers and Hosking full of colored photos - mostly because of its vast listing of birds that are not in the Safari Companion. The Princeton Guide also has photos of many reptiles. It is clear that I will learn the most from the Safari Companion,

however.

More of a reference book than a reading book, at least for me: nonetheless I at least skimmed every page, so I feel fair counting it toward my annual total. Unlike most field guides, which tell you what the animals look like and how to find them, this book concentrates on the animals' typical behavior and how to understand what you see when you watch them. It is, frankly, repetitious and more than a bit boring. But such is the price of information sometimes. The illustrations, by Daniel Otte, are quite beautiful.

I bought the book for my wife in 2005 before she left on a three-week photo safari in Kenya. Even though the driver/guide was an outstanding source of information, she said the book was very helpful, especially for reading about the various animals before leaving on the trip. In the twelve years since we bought the book, we've loaned it to two other people, and they both enjoyed the book and said it was helpful to them.

Tremendous amount of detailed information about many species' behaviors, relationships, biological data, etc. I read it back at camp and gained a much greater understanding of the animals the book covers.

Read this before a trip to Tanzania, and it really helped me understand what I was seeing. Prior to reading this work we did a self-drive tour of Namibia (a place everyone should go as soon as they possibly can!!). We saw lots of large mammals, but, not being able to put their behavior into a larger context, I feel (after having read this work) that I didn't appreciate our sightings as fully as I would now. A great book! VISIT NAMIBIA!!!!

We have a few books to read in advance of going on safari next month. This field guide was recommended as a resource to become familiar with and later refer back to learn about individual animal behavior.

Taking pictures of the Big 5 is great fun on a safari. However, too many safari-goers simply take pictures without understanding the animals they're observing. A lot of guidebooks give you information on how to identify a species, but don't really tell you much about the animals themselves (and unfortunately most guides and drivers aren't much help either). Richard Estes' *The Safari*

Companion: A Guide to Watching African Mammals Including Hoofed Mammals, Carnivores, and Primates

is a great remedy to this. Estes treats the major African mammals with the detail of a graduate biology textbook, explaining their evolutionary history, diet, and behavior. Each chapter follows a set, easy-to-follow pattern with key information. They also include a pictorial guide to each animal's behaviors (with images of how, for example, hyenas behave when they're submissive). While other guidebooks might cover the information on elephants and giraffes, Estes' passion is antelopes and it shows in this book. Many other guidebooks and safari guides consider antelopes the "junk" game animals, but Estes shows that they are a fascinating and successful group of animals. I learned to appreciate Thompsons Gazelles and Oryx a whole lot more after reading this book. In fact, the section on antelopes alone is worth the price of the book. Estes' book is heavy - as befitting a book so packed with information - so you should probably take a smaller, more traditional wildlife checklist on your safari (I recommend *Wildlife of East Africa* (Princeton Illustrated Checklists), which I used in Uganda and Kenya). However, Estes' book is necessary if you want to go beyond simply a photography expedition and actually learn about African mammals.

I bought this book in preparation for a recent safari to Kenya. The trip was a long time in planning and I wanted to get the most out of the time spent watching wildlife. The book proved itself multiple times. For example, we watched two elephants have an argument while on safari. The book accurately described the behavior, the actions, and the reasons behind the behavior. The book added tremendously to my understanding of the situation and the complex interplay in the animals' behavior. This is the kind of book that enriched my once in a lifetime trip to Kenya.

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