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The Natural History of Madagascar

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The Natural History of Madagascar

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Separated from the mainland of Africa for 160 million years, Madagascar has evolved an incredible wealth of biodiversity, with thousands of species that can be found nowhere else on earth. For instance, of its estimated 12,000 plant species, nearly 10,000 are unique to Madagascar. Malagasy animals are just as spectacular, from its almost forty currently recognized species of lemurs—a primate group found only here—to the numerous species of tiny dwarf chameleons. With astounding frequency scientists discover a previously unknown species in Madagascar—and at almost the same rate another natural area of habitat is degraded or destroyed, a combination that recently led conservation organizations to name Madagascar one of the most important and threatened conservation priorities on the planet.

The Natural History of Madagascar provides the most comprehensive, up-to-date synthesis available of this island nation's priceless biological treasures. Contributions by nearly three hundred world-renowned experts cover the history of scientific exploration in Madagascar, its geology and soils, climate, forest ecology, human ecology, marine and coastal ecosystems, plants, invertebrates, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Detailed discussions of conservation efforts in Madagascar highlight several successful park reserve programs that could serve as models for other areas. Beautifully illustrated throughout, the book includes over one hundred color illustrations, with fifty color photos by nature photographer Harald Schütz, as well as more than three hundred black-and-white photographs and line drawings.

The Natural History of Madagascar will be the invaluable reference for anyone interested in the Malagasy environment, from biologists and conservationists to policymakers and ecotourists.

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