

## The First Safari: Searching for Francois Levallant

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By Ian Glenn

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Francois Levallant was the first and greatest South African birder, the first major figure of modern ornithology, the creator of the first safari, the first anthropologist of the Cape and the first investigative reporter criticising colonial brutality. He predicted the rebellion of the frontier Boers and was the first to portray the dilemmas of coloured identity. His work in creating beautifully illustrated bird books of his time inspired a map for King Louis XVI that has become the most valuable African map ever produced. His *Travels into the Interior of Africa* was a best seller across Europe and the most widely translated text on SA until Nelson Mandela's autobiography two centuries later. This book tells how, for a quarter of a century, a South African researcher searched for Levallant's travel notebooks and the fate of his collection, and tried to solve the puzzles and mysteries of Levallant's life and times. Glenn's search took him from the banks of the Orange River to the vaults of the Paris Museum where no Dan Brown hero ever went, facing 30 000 dead birds alone in search of Levallant's legacy.