

Michael Sears:

Short bio:

Michael Sears was born in Johannesburg, and grew up in Cape Town and Nairobi, Kenya. He is a mathematician by training. At the end of 2007 he retired from the Anglo-American corporation where he managed a remote sensing group. He has traveled widely in Southern and Central Africa, with Botswana always being a special favorite.

Long bio:

Michael Sears was born in Johannesburg, and grew up in Cape Town and Nairobi, Kenya. In the worst of the apartheid era, his family emigrated to Australia, where he completed a doctorate in dynamical systems. But Africa drew him back in 1972, and he accepted a position at the university in Johannesburg where he specialized in applications of mathematics in a variety of areas including image analysis and ecological modeling. One of his more adventurous projects involved radio-tracking hunting lions through the Botswana night. Another was a system model for the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park.

He has traveled widely in Southern and Central Africa. Botswana has always been a special favorite with its magnificent conservation areas, dramatic scenery, and varied peoples. A long-held ambition was to capture the flavor of the country as the canvass of a novel.

During a term as Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University, he focused on working with black students and encouraging them into science careers. This culminated in the College of Science program, which accepted students with inadequate backgrounds due to the apartheid school system, and fast tracked them into mainstream science. A few now hold doctorates and are academics in their own right. This period also enabled him to make contacts with the historically black Southern African universities.

In 1997 he accepted a position managing remote sensing at Anglo American, a major international mining house. Its associate – the diamond giant De Beers – has extensive interests in Botswana through the Debswana joint venture with the government. The mining and exploration threads in the book draw on experiences in this context.

Although he still lives in Johannesburg, his mind is often in the African bush, and the rest of him follows as often as possible.