

## **CHAPTER 3 PLENARIES**

*Biology and Conservation of the Amphibians, Reptiles and their habitats in South Asia* (Proceedings of the International Conference on the Biology and Conservation of the Amphibians and Reptiles of South Asia, Sri Lanka, August 1-5, 1996) October 1998, pp.74

### **HISTORY OF HERPETOLOGY IN SOUTHERN ASIA**

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The history of herpetology in South Asia is traced, from Vedic time to the present. In the pre-scientific period, knowledge of amphibian and reptile biology went beyond that typically associated with utilisation, and Vedic texts refer to observations that indicate a deep interest in these organisms by our ancestors.

With the advent of Europeans, knowledge of the systematics and biology of the region's herpetofauna have continued to grow, leading to major regional monographs on the amphibians in 1890 and on reptiles, in 1890 and a series published between 1931 - 1943, which are the last comprehensive works on these groups.

Major books dealing with the herpetology of the Indian sub-continent are reviewed, and an emphasis is made on the scarcity of modern field guides and other identification resources to this specious fauna.

(in abstract form, Editor)