

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES OF MADAGASCAR AND THE MASCARENE, SEYCHELLES, AND COMORO ISLANDS by Friedrich-Wilhelm Henkel and Wolfgang Schmidt. 2000. English edition. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida. viii + 316 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 1-57524-014-9. Available from Krieger Publishing Company, P. O. Box 9542, Melbourne, FL 32902-9542, USA. Fax: ++ 321 951 3671; Email: marketing@krieger-pub.com. Price (excluding postage): US\$ 64.50

Originally published in German in 1995, the English language edition of the work originally entitled 'Amphibien und Reptilien Madagaskars der Maskarenen, Seychellen, und Komoren' is now available as yet another title in the growing series of volumes on herpetology issued by Krieger Publishing Company.

Although the cover page identifies only Henkel and Schmidt as the authors of the volume, the preliminaries show that the taxa covered by the volume was the work of three additional authors- Michael Knöthig (geckos and skinks), Klaus Liebel (frogs and snakes) and Roland Zobel (plated lizards). The final translation and technical edit was done by Hinrich Kaiser.

The organisation of the book includes: a preface by the first two authors, an account of the geological history, climate, vegetation and fauna of Madagascar, Comoro, Seychelles and the Mascarene Islands, followed by the species accounts. Finally, there is a three and a half page section on references and an index to scientific names, locality names, and various English names of species, herpetological and otherwise.

Species accounts for 240 species of amphibians and reptiles native to the region (plus introduced species such as *Calotes versicolor* and *Lycodon aulicus*) comprise the current scientific

name and authority (updating the taxonomy from the original German edition), type locality, distribution (within the region, as well as extralimital), a general description of habitat, size, distinguishing features, biology and vivarium care. A colour photo is printed on the same page, when available. While the text will allow field identification, it is also geared for use by the terrarium-crowd, and contains tips on housing, feeding and breeding many of the rarely seen species from this archipelago.

Admitted the volume is expensive, the placement of photos of individual species within the species account (rather than bundled together and placed in one section of the book) may be one of the factors. The photos themselves are uniformly good, and many are apparently "shot in the field".

Overall, this is yet another fine production from Krieger, and deserves place in every library concerned with the herpetology of Africa and of island herpetofaunas.

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AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN. AN ATLAS AND FIELD GUIDE by Ahmad M. Disi, David Modrý, Petr Necas and Lina Rifai. 2001. Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt am Main. 408 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 3-930612-12-7. Available from Chimaira Buchhandels-gesellschaft mbh, Friedberger Anlage 14, D-60316 Frankfurt am Main, Germany; Tel: + 49 69497223; Fax: + 49 69497826; Email: frogbook@aol.com. Price (excluding postage): DM 78.00 (Euro 40).

The herpetofauna of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, unlike some of neighbouring countries, suffered from a lack of an accessible field guide to its herpetofauna. Written by a

well-known team of Jordanians and Moravians have rectified the situation with this excellent field guide.

The contents of the work include: a preface (by Wolfgang Böhme), acknowledgements, an introduction with notes on format of the work, abbreviations used, an account of the geography and climate of Jordan, biogeography, an account of the history of herpetological research, hints on field observations and herpetological collecting in Jordan, threats and conservation of the herpetofauna, a list of protected areas, herpetofauna in the cultural heritage (including a recipe for cooking the Dabb, *Uromastix aegyptia*), venomous snakes, snake-bite, snake venom, and treatment of snake-bite, identification keys to amphibians (including the larval stages) and reptiles, species accounts, a list of additional species likely to occur in Jordan, or questionably recorded from the country (e.g., *Triturus vittatus*), the appendices (including mention of amphibians and reptiles in the Quran and the Bible), a gazetteer of localities, list of antivenom serum for Jordanian snakes and their suppliers, common Arabic names of Jordanian amphibians and reptiles (using Arabic script, as well as their English transcriptions, and finally, 20 pages of references.

Species accounts comprise the current scientific name and authority, the original citation, a list of common names in English, German and

French, systematic notes, general distribution, local (i.e., within Jordan) distribution, habitat, description, notes on biology, additional remarks (including miscellaneous remarks on systematics, folklore, etc.) and finally, the pertinent references. A dot-map shows the Jordanian distribution of each of the five species of amphibians and 85 species of reptiles.

Overall, this is an excellent production from Chimaira, a relatively newcomer in herpetological publishing, with several new titles as well as reprints of important works. The binding is solid and the work is entirely printed on art paper. Colour photos of species, which, by the way, are excellent, are placed directly opposite the description. What this work does lack is an index of scientific names, and perhaps also names of author and of localities.

Arguably, this is the best herpetological field guide published this year, for content, format and affordability.

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LIFE, LOVE AND REPTILES by Sherman A. Minton, Jr., M.D. 2001. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida. 236 pp. ISBN 1-57524-172-2. Available from Krieger Publishing Company, P. O. Box 9542, Melbourne, FL 32902-9542, USA. Fax: ++ 321 951 3671; Email: marketing@krieger-pub.com. Price (excluding postage): US\$ 24.50.

Between the Ditmars era and "us" (baby boomers and such) exists another generation of herpetological mentors and luminaries and Dr. Sherman Minton is one of them. I'm kind of intimidated by the lab herpetologists - they communicate just fine among each other but somehow, it's usually the field person who has the time and patience to listen and answer the ravings of a novice.

From what people tell me, Sherman was just that. I do know he answered my inane letters (usually snakebite and venom queries) with thoughtful responses. I regret never having been

in the field with Sherman but I did get to meet him at the First World Congress of Herpetology in Canterbury in 1989 and a few other herp get-togethers. Naturally we talked about India, Pakistan and snakebite - trying to spew out all my pent-up questions before the rest of the gang surrounding Sherman whisked him off to their subject.

It was a pleasure to read Sherman's autobiography. For one thing, names of folks I know or idolise keep popping up and his descriptions of herp hunting in remotest Pakistan and tropical México were reminiscent of the nostalgic favour-