

A PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO SNAKES AND OTHER REPTILES OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE AND THAILAND by Merel J. Cox, Peter Paul van Dijk, Jarujin Nabhitabhata and Kumthorn Thirakhupt. 1998. ISBN 1 85368 438 4. New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd., 24 Nutford Place, London, W1H 6DQ, U.K. Fax: 0171-724-6184. Price £ 9.99. Distributed in Thailand by Asia Books Co. Ltd., 5 Sukhumvit Road, Soi 61, P.O. Box 40, Bangkok 10110, Thailand. Price 395 Thai Baht.

The wonderful herpetofauna of mainland south-east Asia, subject of several scientific monographs and books, was not accessible to the common man. Who better to write a readable and well illustrated text than Jack Cox, Peter Paul van Dijk, Jarujin Nabhitabhata and Kumthorn Thirakhupt: names everybody who works on, or has in interest in, south-east Asian herpetology, are familiar with? Their long-awaited field guide to the 222 species of reptiles (crocodiles, turtles, lizards and snakes) found in the erstwhile Kingdom of Siam (now Thailand) and Malaya (at present West Malaysia and Singapore) is finally out.

The work includes an introduction, tips on how the work is to be used, description of reptile habitats in the area covered by the book, hints on finding, identifying and recording reptiles, conservation and protection of reptiles, snake-bite and its treatment, the species descriptions, glossary, further reading and an index of both English and scientific names.

In all, about half of the known fauna has been dealt with. For each of the selected species, there is at least one (and sometimes two or more) colour photo, showing the animal in life. For species that vary in colouration, either as adults (such as *Naja kaouthia*) or as juveniles, there are additional photographs. The text is short, and includes a suggested English name, the valid scientific name, maximum length recorded, followed by a short description that will be useful for quick field identification, as well as brief natural history notes, including clutch size, habitat and conservation status. The photographs have

been gathered from a large number of colleagues. The quality of the photos ranges from good to superb, and in here is my only complaint—I wish the size of the book was bigger, to enjoy the wonderful snake and other reptile photographs more!

An additional small point is the absence of the citation of the work of Boulenger (1912) in the bibliography provided at the end of the work—this is arguably the most important work on the subject for Peninsular Malaya. However, the publishers thought that pre-1970 literature would be unavailable to the general readership of the book (P. P. van Dijk, pers. comm., 1998).

This pocket guide is arguably New Holland's best in their growing series on the world's "snakes and other reptiles", and will surely become a backpacker's item, as travel industry in south-east Asia continues to burgeon. And given the large number (290) of colour photos, at a mere £ 9.99, to use an old cliché, this book is good value for money.

LITERATURE CITED

BOULENGER, G. A. 1912. A vertebrate fauna of the Malay Peninsula from the Isthmus of Kra to Singapore including the adjacent islands. Reptilia and Batrachia. Taylor and Francis, London. xiii + 294 pp.

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