

The Venomous Sea Snakes: A Comprehensive Bibliography. Culotta, W. A. & Pickwell, G. V. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida, xx + 504 pp. Available from: Krieger Publishing Company, P. O. Box 9542, Melbourne, Florida 32902-9542, U.S.A. Price US\$79.00.

From the time of buccaneers and philosophers, not to mention travellers, natural historians, scientists, and naval personnel, mankind has always been interested in snakes of the family Hydrophiidae. Accounts of these animals by drunk or delirious sailors have been published in the works of Aristotle (ca. 350 B.C.) and Pliny the Elder (ca. 77 B.C.). This exceptionally stout tome under review by Culotta (a member of the library Faculty at the California State University, Long Beach) and Pickwell (Head of the Biotechnology Laboratory, Naval Ocean Systems Center, San Diego) has scoured the world's literature on the subject from Pre-Linnean to modern times, adding significantly to the last bibliography of the group compiled by Vigle and Heatwole (1978).

Printed in hardcover (minus a dust jacket), the front cover shows the global distribution of sea snakes, while the multicoloured endpaper feature various species of living sea snakes. The text (which starts with extracts from Coleridge's 'The rime of the ancient mariner') includes a foreword by Harold Heatwole, a preface by Sherman A. Minton, introductions from both a science librarian's (Culotta) and a marine biologist's perspectives (Pickwell), acknowledgements and a listing of journals cited.

The main body of the volume comprises the bibliography, organised into 245 sections (from 'Pre-Linnean and other Pre-Nineteenth Century References' to 'Additional Bibliographic Sources'), containing about 2,5000 citations, and end with an index to authors. Each citation (which mostly follows the CBE Style Manual, 5th Edition), include a number (by which references can be located by author's name at the back), author name, date, name of paper/book/book chapter, name of journal and further particulars of the fascicle and pagination, in case of a journal article. Unfortunately for a work of this nature is the absence of details of pagination and plates of books for most references. At the end of each chapter is a genus-species index, a useful device for quickly locating necessary reference for individual taxa. Coverage of literature appears comprehensive, including both fossil and recent forms, with references in English, Dutch, German, Russian, Japanese, French, Portuguese and Latin, sometimes from journals and books not likely to be consulted otherwise by natural historians. There is little to crib about a book such as this, although I wish more attention was paid to accents, such as diacritical marks, which are mostly ignored. The format of the text also permits too much wastage of space, with just 7-10 references to a page. A more judicious use of page space would have decreased the size (and certainly the price as well) of this rather squat volume substantially.

These are, of course, minor criticisms, and workers on sea snakes will doubtless be grateful to have yet another work on herpetology from Krieger, and one hopes to see resurgence of sea snake studies in the near future.

LITERATURE CITED

Vigle, G. O. & H. Heatwole. 1978. A bibliography of the Hydrophiidae. *Smithsonian Herpetol. Infr.* (41): 1-20.

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Centre for Herpetology,

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