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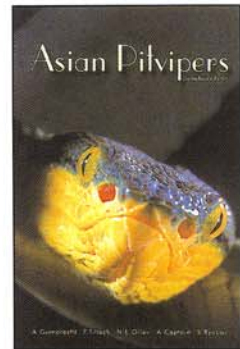
# Book Reviews

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## Asian Pitvipers

GUMPRECHT, A., F. TILLACK,  
N. L. ORLOV, A. CAPTAIN, and S.  
RYABOV. 2004. GeitjeBooks, Berlin.  
368 pp. ISBN: 3-937975-00-4



This excellent-quality hardback is a survey of the Asian pit vipers (subfamily Crotalinae) and the taxonomic literature concerning them. The relatively large format of the book allows for an impressively ample layout, with photos much larger than those of pocket-sized field guides.

The book starts with about 10 pages of preliminaries (foreword, acknowledgments, introduction, abbreviations used, acronyms used for names of museums, glossary, list of English common names, etc.), followed by a four-page table of scale-count data useful for identifying the taxa covered.

A 26-page checklist of the Asian members of the Crotalinae is thorough and technical. Taxa are ordered by their currently recognized names. The original names (which may be different) are also given as published in the

original descriptive works, which are cited. In collating information from primary literature the authors have tried to make adjustments for incongruent data and existing errors. Type locality, type material, distribution, and references are given for each taxon, and additional comments are given for some. The glossary comes in especially handy for distinguishing type-material terms such as holotype, allotype, paratype, neotype, syntype, lectotype, paralectotype, etc., and making sense of Latin terms such as *hoc loco*, and *sensu lato*. Museum codes of type specimens are also given. Distributions are described, but there are no maps or descriptions of habitat types, or other notes on natural history.

The extensive section of color plates makes up the bulk of the book — more than 300 pages, with 3–5 photos on most. Photos are not cross-referenced in the checklist, but follow the same alphabetical order. There are many photos of each species — e.g., 7 photos of *Hypnale walli*, 10 photos of *Gloydius strauchi*, 37 photos of *Trimeresurus albolabris*, etc. A variety of views are shown, usually including close-ups of head scalation, and in some species showing close-ups of other structures such as everted hemipenes or exposed fangs. Most of the photos are of live specimens in the wild, but some are of captives or museum specimens. In many cases the great number of photos allows appreciation of pattern variation within a species. The last eight pages of photos show habitats.

An alphabetical systematic index at the back of the book is especially useful for locating entries for species whose names have changed.

This book will be of great technical value for anyone involved in the taxonomic study of Asian pit vipers. Moreover, it assembles for the first time photos of every recognized member of the subfamily, many of which are restricted to limited and isolated ranges, and have been relatively unknown. This offers a visual stimulus that will help to raise awareness and appreciation of the diversity of these snake species, and, in turn, of the incredible world in which we live.

*Steven Winchell*