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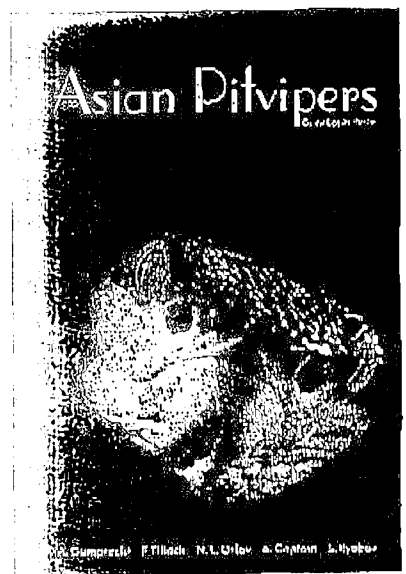
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Asian Pitvipers, by Andreas Gumprecht, Frank Tillack, Nikolai Orlov, Ashok Captain, and Sergei Ryabov. 2004. Geitje Books, Berlin (www.geitje-books-berlin.de). 368 pp. Hardcover. † 59.00 (approx. US \$78.00), † 49.00 (approx. US \$65.00) for subscribers of *Sauria*. ISBN 3-937975-00-4.

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This large format hardbound book (21.0 x 29.5 cm) is a breathtakingly beautiful work of art. In fact, the title of this book would more appropriately have been "Photographic Atlas of Asian Pitvipers," which more accurately describes its contents. The quality of the photography is excellent, on par with that of Chanard et al. (1999), Orlov et al. (2002), and Whitaker and Captain (2004), as the majority of photographs



were taken by Gumprecht, Orlov, Grossmann, Tillack, and Captain. The color photos are enhanced by the glossy texture of the paper.

In addition to the 312 pages of photos (1179 figures), there are 42 pages of text (with four pages of scale counts and a 26-page checklist), eight pages of bibliography, a four-page index, and two pages of photographic credits. The summary scale counts given in the table include dorsal scale rows, ventrals, subcaudals, and supralabials with the ventrals and subcaudals listed separately for males and females. Rare states of dorsal scale rows and supralabials are listed parenthetically.

Useful additions to the checklist include the original citation, listing of the type material and type locality, distributional range by country and state, a list of significant references pertaining to the taxon, and systematic comments noting recent taxonomic changes or controversial opinions regarding the status. The paper by Malhotra and Thorpe (2004), which revised Asian pitviper taxonomy with the resurrection of three genera and proposal of four new genera, appeared too late for the authors to follow the latest nomenclature. However, a conversion table is presented on page 11 for reference. The changes include *Ovophis* (with separation of *Garthius*) and *Trimeresurus* (with separation of *Cryptelytrops*, *Himalayophis*, *Parias*, *Peltopelorus*, *Popeia*, and *Viridovipera*).

The snakes are presented in alphabetical order by genus and species (the same arrangement as the checklist). The photos vary in size and range from 1–8 per page, the number per page being most commonly 3 (158 pp.), followed by 4 (83 pp.), 5 (29 pp.), 6 (28 pp.), 2 (6 pp.), 8 (5 pp.), 1 (2 pp.), and 7 (1 p.). In addition to 44 habitat shots, the number of photos of each genus is as follows: *Calloselasma* (17), *Deinagkistrodon* (12), "*Gloydius*" (97, with 12 of *Garthius*), *Hypnale* (15), *Ovophis* (87), *Protobothrops* (123), *Triceratolepidophis* (14), "*Trimeresurus*" (686, with 234 of *Cryptelytrops*, 37 of *Himalayophis*, 80 of *Parias*, 12 of *Peltopelorus*, 57 of *Popeia*, and 72 of *Viridovipera*), *Tropidolaemus* (71), and *Zhaermia* (13). These are both aesthetically arranged and conveniently grouped such that all of the photos on a given page are of the same species. Full-body (dorsal, lateral, and ventral) shots of snakes predominate, followed by close-ups of the head (dorsal, lateral, and ventral), tails, hemipenes, egg clutches with hatching neonates, and feeding specimens. When living material is not available, good color photos are provided of preserved and type specimens. Neonates, juveniles, and adults are figured. Some of the photographs (or nearly identical photos) in this book were previously published in other works, including Chan-ard et al. (1999), Orlov et al. (2002), and Whitaker and Captain (2004).

My chief criticisms of the book are the complicated method of numbering plates, lack of identification keys to the genera and/or species, and lack of synonymies for all taxa. Instead of consecutively numbering the photos, the figures are renumbered with Roman numerals on each page, necessitating reference to two values to denote a particular photo (i.e., p. 253 no. II, 253 II, or 253-II). This will make reference to these figures in the literature complicated, lengthy, and possibly misleading.

In a monumental work such as this, which will obviously be the volume on Asian Crotalinae for years to come, it would be expected that a key to at least the included genera and possibly also the species be included. Such keys should not have been difficult to produce considering the authors' experience and vast array of

excellent photographs.

Synonymies of different names, junior synonyms, and various combinations are vitally important in a work of this magnitude. However, the authors provide only the original combination for each species or subspecies. It is difficult or impossible to assign other names without a good synonymy. Thus, David and Ineich (1999) or McDiarmid et al. (1999) are essential companions to the present atlas even though recent taxonomic changes have been included in the taxonomic listing of the present work. In comparison with the taxonomy of McDiarmid et al. (1999), Gumprecht et al. (2004) includes recognition of the genera *Protobothrops* and *Zhaermia* and the species *Gloydius brevicaudus*, *Ovophis tonkinensis*, *O. zayuensis*, *Trimeresurus andersoni*, *T. insularis*, *T. malcolmi*, *T. mcgregori*, *T. venustus*, and *T. yunnanensis*; transference of both subspecies *caucasicus* and *stejnegeri* from *Gloydius intermedius* to *G. halys*; synonymizing *Gloydius saxatilis* with *G. intermedius* and *Trimeresurus karanshahi* with *T. tibetanus*; and inclusion of the newly described *Gloydius isushimaensis*, *Trimeresurus gumprechtii*, and *T. vogeli*.

In addition, I noted a two minor typographical errors: *Cryptelytrops andersonii* vs. *andersoni* (p. 11), *Tropidolaemus wagleri* Boie, 1827 vs. *Tropidolaemus wagleri* (Boie, 1827) (p. 41) and a single taxon, *Gloydius blomhoffii dubiatus* Gloyd (1977), was omitted. A few other taxonomic changes and additions are too recent to have been incorporated into the book. The validity of *Cryptelytrops kanburiensis* and *C. venustus* has recently been supported by David et al. (2004). A new species, *Trimeresurus truongsongensis*, has been described from Vietnam by Orlov et al. (2004). It resembles *Cryptelytrops kanburiensis* and *C. venustus* and should probably be referred to that genus. A revision of *T. popeiorum* by Vogel et al. (2004) contains the description of two new species, *T. fucatus* and *T. nebularis*, plus the elevation of the subspecies *T. p. barari* and *T. p. subuhi* to full species status (= *Popeia* of Malhotra and Thorpe, 2004).

This book is not only a terrific bargain for the quality and quantity of the color work but also a must for all herpetologists, toxicologists, biologists, and naturalists. It provides a much needed synopsis of the pitvipers of Asia with excellent photographs to aid in the identification of any species. I highly recommend this book for both the scientist and layman as it is the most comprehensive treatment of Asian pitvipers to date.

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Snakes of the United States and Canada, Natural History and Care in Captivity, by John V. Rossi and Roxanne Rossi. 2003. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida (www.kriegerpublishing.com). xxxvi + 520 pp. Hardcover. US \$145.00. ISBN 1-57524-031-9.

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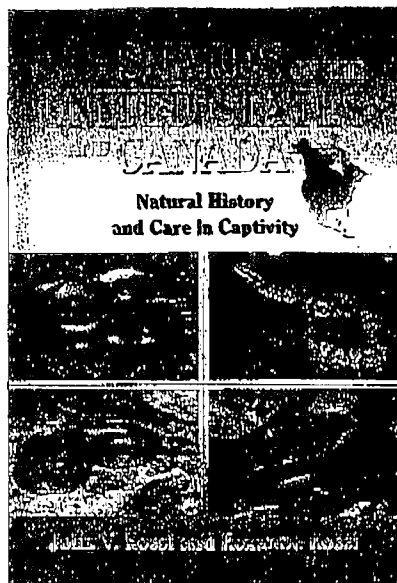
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In this book the authors attempt to present current information on captive care and natural history of most of the snakes of the United States and Canada. The work is a compilation and updating of two earlier volumes by the authors (Rossi 1992; Rossi and Rossi 1995). The goal of the authors was to present a diversity of information from a wide variety of sources in a format that would be useful to herpetoculturists and professionals wishing to



maintain captive North American snakes. For each species they offer both basic natural history information and observations on captive care obtained from amateur and professional herpetologists. They do this by combining personal communications, regional literature from field guides, and scientific paper—primarily from the herpetological journals. Information derived from their own efforts to keep most of the species make up another part of the

data presented, particularly for many of the lesser known snakes. Because of the scattered nature of the literature, those keeping snakes often have little information on the natural history of the species and many tend to keep all snakes under the same captive conditions. This book organizes the relevant information in a single source, and in so doing makes a significant contribution to the work of herpetoculturists and others keeping snakes.

Part I of the book is a long, detailed review of the methods for maintaining snakes in captivity. Although most of this information is not new, having it in this volume will be useful for persons with limited experience keeping members of this group, e.g., biologists beginning projects with new species or amateurs beginning in the hobby. It will, however, contribute little to experienced hobbyists, although observations from the authors' own experiences do add some interesting details.

Parts II and III consist of individual species accounts for nonvenomous and venomous snakes, respectively. The accounts include information on natural history and captive conditions and care. A typical account includes a short description, a range map, and a color plate of each species plus a table with a summary of captive requirements (maintenance difficulty index, cage size, appropriate substrate for the cage, and prey types eaten). The information is attractively presented and easy to read, even if it does not add tremendously to our knowledge of most of the species dealt with. We do, however, give the authors a lot of credit for keeping unusual species, such as hooknose snakes, that require spiders and scorpions as food. Indeed, this book might encourage more research on the many species that have typically been rejected as laboratory animals because too little was known about their requirements in captivity. For some such species almost nothing is known about behavior and future captive studies could make real contributions.

There are a few taxonomic problems with this volume, the black-and-white drawings are not very professional, and the scientific literature is not complete. Nonetheless, overall the authors accomplished what they set out to do. They have produced an attractive and readable summary of information as how to best maintain individual species of snakes found in the United States and Canada. The book will be of value to both amateur and professional herpetologists keeping snakes and also anyone else wishing to learn a little more about some of the less well-known North American species.

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