

Animal Behavior

Edited by Tim Halliday. 1994. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman. 144 pp., illus. \$25.95.

Here is an excellent addition to the genre of academically solid yet appealing books serving to introduce a subject to a broad audience. The text is supplied by well-known, and mostly British, contributors, and is brightly augmented by superb photographs and illustrations in a very effective large-format layout which includes boxes highlighting selected examples. The emphasis is on the diversity of behaviour and its functional aspects, especially in vertebrates, and the tone is cheerfully conversational.

The four main sections are From Birth to Maturity (courtship, mating (including alternative strategies), births, and parenting, including helpers), Food and Shelter (hunting (including co-operative aspects, misconceptions about some species, and domestication by humans), foraging and storing, and animal architecture (under which termite mounds scale taller than our skyscrapers)), The Social Animal (panoply of communications, aggression, hierarchy, and symbiosis), and Instinct and Intelligence (survival skills handling temperature and water balance, migration (including the key role of stored fat), and adapta-

tions, particularly through learning, to a world increasingly dominated by humans). While the coverage is broad and up-to-date, there is no discussion of what is *not* known for each topic. Similarly, there is an index but unfortunately no list for further reading. There are a few minor infelicities, such as an all-black "white-winged chough" on page 31, and a photograph of a hummingbird illustrating a discussion of migration in Arctic terns on page 124.

Of the most similar recent books, David Attenborough's 1990 *The Trials of Life* is a companion to the television series while Peter Slater's (Editor) 1987 *The Encyclopedia of Animal Behavior* is very similar indeed, in scope and layout (also 144 pages of text measuring 28 x 21 cm with a big-eyed bird on the cover, and Halliday among the contributors), except that it laudably pays more attention to mechanisms of behaviour such as genetic inheritance which are unfortunately unconsidered in Halliday's volume. Nonetheless, this book is an attractive and competent introduction for general readers.

PATRICK W. COLGAN

Canadian Museum of Nature, P.O. Box 3443, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6P4

Herpetology in Australia: A Diverse Discipline

Edited by Daniel Lunney and Danielle Ayers. 1993. Transactions of the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales. Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton, NSW, Australia. viii + 414 pp. A\$80.

This paper-back "perfect bound" volume is a compilation of 67 articles and notes plus 12 book reviews. It was intended to be an overview of the past and present status of herpetology in Australia. On one hand, as an overview, it achieves some of the intended goals but on the other hand, the quality suffers severely. The papers vary widely in significance and scope; some are very interesting and others belong in a society newsletter at best. Contributions range in size from less than one page notes and comments to research articles of greater than ten pages. Short notes predominate. In general, the compilation is definitely not aimed at the academician but rather the amateur herpetologist and interested novelist; overall, there is little meat to the reading. This diversity of quality comes as a surprise as each paper was sent to at least two reviewers. The volume comes nowhere near the exceptionally high standard set by its predecessor, *The Biology of Australasian Frogs and Reptiles*. [Grigg et al. (Editors) 1985. Surrey Beatty and Sons].

The volume consists of many subjects with no theme of organization except to randomly associate

topics. About 11 papers can be roughly categorized as historical and species status reports. Some, such as the one dealing with the Northern Territory, are outstanding. About 20 contributions deal with species legislation and/or conservation issues; although some are very interesting, all are destined to be outdated as new laws are passed. There are eight "viewpoints", including a rage by an animal rights activist. Most of the 15 research papers consist of "preliminary" or "initial" reports and few follow rigorous methods. Other papers consist of distribution notes, zoo management, ecological notes, and speculations on amphibian decline. One paper reviews the utility of molecular data in uncovering "cryptic species", recommends this approach as a national priority, but provides neither new insights nor a thorough review of the literature.

Overall, the volume is very disappointing. Perhaps Australia has the most noteworthy herpetofauna of any place on earth. It certainly holds me captive having had the pleasure of two visits. Unfortunately, this volume does little to promote an appreciation and inspire research and conservation interests in this herpetofauna of herpetofaunas.

ROBERT W. MURPHY

Department of Ichthyology and Herpetology, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C6



Murphy, Robert W. 1994. "Herpetology in Australia: A Diverse Discipline, eds. Daniel Lunney and Danielle Ayers [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 108(4), 503–503. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.356846>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/106813>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.356846>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/356846>

Holding Institution

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Sponsored by

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.