

structing a life table for a natural population and how to go about it. Other chapters, notably those on systematics, are necessarily more specific, yet nonetheless interesting.

For the most part, this book is well-written, although there are frequent anthropomorphisms in the chapters by Congdon and Gibbons. On the other hand, Gibbons writes in an easy, anecdotal style that makes the reader want to keep reading. He apparently gave his contributors considerable latitude in writing style and even in choice of what to call the slider (*Trachemys scripta* or *Pseudemys scripta*); in Chapter 1, he gives a humorous guide to the various possible pronunciations of these generic names. There are, not surprisingly, a few overlaps between

chapters and occasional disagreements (e.g. Ernst and Legler differ in the number of subspecies of sliders that they recognize). The book has only a few obvious errors (e.g., the incorrect conversion of acres to hectares on page 31). The Figures and Tables are generally well-produced and informative.

The slider ranges over about 77° of latitude. By any criterion, it is a very successful species. Gibbons' book was equally successful in stimulating my interest in this animal.

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## Sharks, Sharks, Sharks

By Tina Anton, illustrated by Grace Goldberg. 1989. Raintree Publishers, Milwaukee. 31 pp., illus. U.S. \$12.33.

## Sharks and Whales

By Burton Albert, illustrated by Pamela Johnson. 1989. Grosset and Dunlap (Canadian distributor Putnam, Mississauga). Revised Edition. 42 pp., illus. U.S. \$7.95.

Whales and sharks are ever popular with younger readers for their size and/or their perceived ferocity. There are many books on the market with these interesting organisms as topics; choice of book is often a matter of a personal taste by the adult or child in the manner of presentation.

Both these books have text in short paragraphs with accompanying colour drawings as illustrations of that text. Colour photographs are preferred by some young readers. Each book deals with a selection of shark or shark and whale species in a mixture of factual and narrative styles. Both deal with some species found outside North American waters but there is usually no indication of where these fish and mammals can be found.

The first book discusses various aspects of shark biology in short, mostly simple, sentences. There are 14 text and 14 facing illustration pages. The book is meant to be read by or to a younger age group. In general this format and content succeeds. Occasionally words are used which may baffle a youngster, such as lab instead of laboratory. There are as few as three sentences for a total of 24 words to as many as eight sentences and 99 words with most falling in between these two extremes. There is some standardisation of drawings, e.g. same gill slits on dissimilar species, but generally the drawings are accurate at this level of presentation. Some errors do crop up in the text. Scientists do know how sharks

got into a lake (the bull shark in Lake Nicaragua has been studied quite extensively). Calling placoid scales "teeth" is a little confusing when teeth are modified scales. The attempt to explain the acoustico-lateralis system does not succeed at this reading level – some biological systems are too complex to summarize briefly. Not all sharks necessarily sink (hepatic floats, air ingestion).

The second book leads off with sharks and follows with whales. There are 26 shark and 23 whale species described. The information presented here is for an age group somewhat older than the first book. Sentences are longer, grammatically and informationally more complex, and words are more varied. The drawings here are too murky and have none of the light found in the sea (BWC) but they were preferred over the first book (NPC). The text is often a little too coy, e.g., "The great white, you see, stops at nothing". A young reader found it full of new and interesting information but lacking the concentrated detail needed for school projects even at the elementary school level. There are some errors of fact or explanation. The sleeping shark is not a distinct species like others dealt with here but a behaviour. Sand tigers are not the only sharks to show uterine cannibalism and oophagy. The basking shark is riding remarkably high out of the water. The whale shark rinsing its mouth by adopting a vertical position is more likely to be a feeding mechanism.

Both books would find favour with young readers simply on the basis of their content. They would be read for interest rather than as a resource, and as this is probably their intent they fulfil their purpose.

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