

heelwalkers, was reported at the Massif Brandberg in Namibia. The last time a new order of insects had been reported was in 1915. It is fortunate for us that Naskrecki has developed an interest in photographing what he calls “the smaller majority,” as a result of his wife, Kristin M Smith, giving him a camera as a Christmas present, a gift that has fortunately become an obsession. I wonder if his wife is being more careful nowadays with giving him presents.

The book is separated into three sections: Tropical Humid Forests; Savannas; and Deserts. Hundreds of absolutely fascinating photographs of insects, spiders, scorpions, frogs, millipedes, centipedes, flatworms, and lizards, among others, are interspersed with delightful information on these organisms. One has to marvel not only at the depth of knowledge embedded in Naskrecki’s brain, but more so at how little we know about nature, especially in an era when we think we know so much. Who could have come up with such a farfetched idea as a worm that inserts its head in the female’s genital opening to deliver sperm. This is what some velvet worms do, while others simplify the process by placing the sperm on the female’s head from where it is absorbed into the body, eventually reaching the ovaries. How about flatworms, which in case of starvation can digest their own bodies to remain alive! And how about phoretic mites that, during their dormant period on insects, consume water through their anus? Well, such is life.

If we were looking at nature with purely industrial eyes—as so many do—it would take but a minute to understand that many solutions to issues related to human affairs come from organisms we have become so adept at making extinct. Even though the chemistry of the smaller majority is not the focus of the book, we learn that the UV reflectance in scorpions—neatly shown in a huge photograph—is due to the presence of beta-carbolines, and that these are being studied as a possible treatment for cataracts. Similarly, we learn that fibroin, a protein in the silk of spider webs, is stronger than steel. Unexpected tidbits such as these—on top of so many others—are arguments for the conservation and study of nature.

One of the most beautiful photographs in the book depicts two green weaver ants (*Oecophylla smaragdina*) with their gorgeous green abdomens. As it turns out, these ants are consumed by humans due to their delicious citrus flavor. Another fascinating photograph is that of a parasitic fly attached to the antenna of a walking stick. It seems unbelievable that a human eye could have seen such a minute organism and subsequently photograph it. Naskrecki also does a great job in presenting the

many forms of mimicry in nature, including spiders that mimic ants, katydids that mimic ants or leaves, caterpillars that mimic the eyes of toxic frogs or bird droppings, and mantids that look like lichen.

The Smaller Majority is an outstanding contribution to the fields of science and photography. All in all, this book can be summarized as follows: “Ay caramba, what a heck of a wonderful book! How can anyone be so talented?”

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CLADOCERA: FAMILY ILYOCRYPTIDAE (BRANCHIOPODA: CLADOCERA: ANOMOPODA). *Guides to the Identification of the Microinvertebrates of the Continental Waters of the World, Volume 22.*

By Alexey A Kotov and Pavel Štífler. Leiden (The Netherlands): Backhuys Publishers and Ghent (Belgium): Kenobi Productions. €52.00. v + 172 p; ill.; index of Latin names of crustaceans. ISBN: 90-5782-167-2 (Backhuys); 90-804341-6-7 (Kenobi). 2006.

INCUBATION OF REPTILE EGGS.

By Gunther Köhler; translated by Valerie Haecy. Melbourne (Florida): Krieger Publishing. \$38.50. 214 p; ill.; index. ISBN: 1-57524-193-5. [Originally published in German, 1997.] 2005.

This book is an updated translation of an original German edition that covers a wide variety of topics related to the incubation of reptilian eggs. The author presents some basic information about the biology of reptilian eggs, their development, and physiology. In doing so, he sets the stage for the main goal of the volume, that is, to provide readers with the principles for the successful incubation of reptilian eggs.

The first part of the book describes topics such as: the formation of eggs inside the female; their morphology and composition; embryological development; and the effects of important factors such as temperature, moisture, gas exchange, substrate, and manipulation on incubation duration, hatching success, and hatchling sex, survival, size, growth, and behavior. Some space is devoted to the natural conditions under which incubation takes place for different reptilian groups as influenced by maternal effects on nest characteristics, as well as on egg quality. The other part of the book is dedicated to the comparison of specific techniques and their appropriateness for the incubation of eggs from different reptilian groups, based on their natural conditions and the characteristics of the eggs (such as pliability and permeability of the eggshell). The author provides a useful section for “troubleshooting” particular problems that might

be encountered when incubating reptilian eggs and their possible causes and solutions. The final chapter is devoted to a series of species-specific observations made by a multitude of breeders that may serve as guidelines for readers who attempt to breed these specific animals.

The book is geared toward a general audience and reptile breeder aficionados. As such, it does accomplish the purpose of providing information about basics, guidelines, and experiences that will introduce interested readers to the world of artificial incubation of reptile eggs. This volume also serves as a reference for more scholarly works on these topics, although the literature covered is not completely updated since 1997.

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TEXAS SNAKES: A FIELD GUIDE. *Texas Natural History Guides*.

By James R Dixon and John E Werler, illustrated by Regina Levoy. Austin (Texas): University of Texas Press. \$19.95 (paper). xix + 364 p; ill.; index of common names and index of scientific names. ISBN: 0-292-70675-8. [Revised edition of *Texas Snakes*, 2000.] 2005.

With more snake species than any other state in the union, the ophidofauna of Texas has inspired several authors to produce field guides exclusively for species found within the borders of the Lone Star State. This current volume is one of the latest attempts at combining identification information into a single guide. Being the proud owner of two copies (one for bookshelf, one for field vehicle) of Werler and Dixon's treatise *Texas Snakes: Identification, Distribution, and Natural History* (2000. Austin (TX): University of Texas Press), I was interested in whether a smaller paper version of their larger hardcover book could dislodge the predecessor from beneath my truck seat.

This is the inaugural volume in a new series, Texas Natural History Guides. This book contains 110 accounts that cover every snake species and subspecies found in the state. Information is drawn directly from the authors' larger 2000 volume, and the current book presents the same subject in a more portable, less-expensive guide. Designed for nonprofessionals, the introduction includes brief discussions on taxonomy, conservation, and general characteristics of the different snake families in the state, with over one-half of the introduction dedicated to the venomous snakes found in Texas. Information is presented on the prevention of snakebite, and specific details on venoms and toxicity are provided for 14 species and

subspecies (venom information is absent for *Agkistrodon contortrix pictigaster*). Undoubtedly, identification of venomous species is paramount for anyone involved in the outdoors, but I feel certain portions of this section may in fact encourage irresponsible or cavalier attitudes toward the management of some venomous snakebites—"every bite by this species [*Sistrurus catenatus tergeminus*], if it produces signs and symptoms of poisoning, should be seen promptly by a physician" (p 25).

The guide includes a thorough and detailed dichotomous key, which combined with several line figures and a glossary, provides a useful identification source. Despite the presence of the key, I imagine that most nonprofessionals will make their identifications using the color photographs of each species found in every one of the 110 accounts. I would have preferred that all of the photographs were grouped together, rather than included within each account. However, the standardized format places each image on the right-hand page to facilitate comparisons. Most accounts are two pages long, with 17 accounts reaching four pages in length. Each provides detailed morphological descriptions of the taxon, a thorough examination of how to discern the given taxon from other similarly patterned snakes, a color photograph, a summary of habitat information, and a shaded range map. Because the focus of the guide is identification, almost all of the natural history information outside of habitat, size, and coloration from the previous volume is omitted. Persons interested in the death-feigning behavior of hog-nosed snakes, the centipede-eating skills of the black-headed snakes, or the number of eggs laid by coral snakes must consult other volumes.

If portability and snake identifications are your primary issues in buying a guide, then this book's size, photographs, descriptions, and dichotomous key will make this volume an obvious choice. If thorough natural history information along with identification determine your guide, the authors' authoritative 2000 volume is the only choice to make. I will continue to rely on my old hardcover favorite underneath the truck seat.

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AVIAN NAVIGATION: PIGEON HOMING AS A PARADIGM.

By Hans G Wallraff. New York: Springer. \$129.00. xii + 229 p; ill.; subject index. ISBN: 3-540-22385-1. 2005.

The cues that homing pigeons use to return to their lofts when released hundreds of miles away in unfamiliar territory has long been a puzzle. It is