

Book Review: Wild About Reptiles. Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of the UAE

Wild About Reptiles. Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of the UAE, by Marycke Jongbloed, 2000. Barkers Trident Communications; London, 116 pp., numerous unnumbered color photographs. Order from Natural History Book Service: www.nhbs.com

This attractive little spiral-bound book is the first field guide to the amphibians and reptiles of the United Arab Emirates. Most of the 68 species covered are illustrated with good color photographs. There are no keys, but the color photographs will serve to identify most live specimens. Descriptions are sketchy and the emphasis is on natural history. The book should serve well as an introduction to desert reptiles, sea snakes and sea turtles, and the few amphibians of the region. English speakers who work in the Emirates, particularly members of the natural history societies, will find this a handy reference. Visiting herpetologists, while they will still want the keys and descriptions of Arnold (1986), Balletto, *et al.* (1986), Gasperetti (1988), Leviton and Anderson (1967), and Leviton, *et al.* (1992), will want this for quick identification. The technical papers that emphasize the herpetology of the Emirates are few in number (see Arnold, 1984; Leviton and Anderson,) and only Arnold (1984) concerns the ecology and natural history of this region of the Arabian Peninsula.

Jongbloed takes a highly personal and anecdotal approach in this book, demonstrating her enthusiasm for these creatures. She includes field notes taken by her friend, John Norman Bishop "Bish" Brown. Because so little professional herpetological work has been done in the Emirates, and those studies that have been carried out have dealt mainly with systematics, using preserved specimens, this book is almost the only source of natural history information for these groups in the UAE. The natural history observations are informal, but still, informative. The bibliography is sketchy and disappointing and will not lead the beginning naturalist very deeply into the literature of the UAE.

I recommend this field guide to any naturalist, professional or amateur, planning to travel to the UAE.

Anyone seriously interested in the herpetofauna of Southwest Asia in general or the Arabian Peninsula in particular will want this in his library.

STEVEN C. ANDERSON

Department of Biological Sciences, University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA 95211 USA and Department of Herpetology, California Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, CA, 94118 USA. email: asaccus@aol.com

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