

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES
OF
NORTH AFRICA

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by

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Amphibians and Reptiles of North Africa - Biology, Systematics, Field Guide (1996)
625 pages, 185 colourphotographs, Hardcover

€ 113.- / US\$ 126,-

ISBN 3-87429-377-7 (060987)

The lack of a comprehensive work on the herpetofauna of North Africa has remained a handicap to our days, in spite of the fact that reptiles play a key role in desert ecosystems and show a surprising wealth of forms in the Mediterranean zone.

This book tries to fill this gap as far as the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) and Libya is concerned.

In the introductory chapters much space has been devoted to characterize the wide span of ambient conditions from dense forest to scorched desert. Synoptic topics cover different aspects as biotopes, activity patterns, physiological adaptations, food chains and webs, communities of amphibians and reptiles, or zoogeographic aspects. In a series of north-south-transsects through the countries of the region hundreds of data on the local distribution of species are summed up and give an overview of the regional herpetofaunas.

The special chapters which cover most of the contents treat the species (there are about 100) separately and emphasize their biology, devoting much room to ecology, behaviour and reproduction. The authors evaluated data from hundreds of scientific works, but the contents also reflect their own work, presenting unpublished field data considering thermal behaviour, fecal pellet analyses and observations on behaviour. Social interrelations are presented in a series of new flow diagrams.

Among the papers studied are many recent observations on captivity breeding which help to complete our knowledge on husbandry and reproductive biology. The impact of man on different species is shown, as many species have a relictary distribution pattern and are threatened by human activities.

At least three species - the Dabb-lizard (*Uromastix acanthinura*), the Sand fish (*Scincus scincus*) and the Desert monitor (*Varanus griseus*) - are eagerly hunted as human food, and other reptiles play an important role in popular beliefs.

Information on species is of very different availability and, consequently, the space devoted to them is very different. Well known forms are e.g. the Dabb-lizard (*Uromastix acanthinura*, 10 pages) and the Common chamaeleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*, 9 pages).

New distribution maps for all species are presented.

Besides scientific names the available English, French, German, Arabic and Berber as well as some Spanish names are presented.

As to taxonomy the book tries to take an up-to-date standpoint comprising a series of newly established species, e.g. of skinks. Nevertheless a series of questions remain unanswered.

The book contains illustrated keys for all North African species including Egypt. Often they can be identified at the first glance, but in some cases even an experienced scientist may remain in doubt.

Several hundreds of drawings show the morphological characteristics of species, as reptile pholidosis or pattern types, but also selected osteological characteristics, mainly skulls.

185 colourphotographs show most of the species, typical biotopes and a series of traces in the sand.

The appendix contains an ample documentation of predators, a list of frequent Arabic and Berber toponyms and their meanings, and explanations of scientific terms.

There are separate indices for scientific, English, French, Spanish and German names.

The work is a rich and valuable source of reference to readers of scientific and general interest in the region, to anyone interested in desert ecosystems, to zoologists working in the field or engaged in amphibian and reptile husbandry.

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