BOOK REVIEW by A.B. van Woerkom

Herpetology of Africa: A Checklist and Bibliography of the Orders *Amphisbaenia, Sauria* and *Serpentes;* Welch, Kenneth R.G. pp. I-X, 1-293. Price: US $ 19,50. Krieger Publishing Co., Inc., P.O. Box 9542, Melbourne, FL 32901, U.S.A.

While reading this book one is greatly impressed with the amount of work which the author must have put into the writing of the above title. Further I do know that a number of herpetologists declined their cooperation to the author while he was preparing the text as they thought the work could not be accomplished. However he has succeeded in doing it. The wormlizards, lizards and snakes of Africa, Madagascar, Canary Islands, Madeira, Cape Verde Islands, etc. are listed in this book. For each species and subspecies the original year, original genus, distribution and relevant recent literature are listed. Also for each genus the type species is indicated. The book successfully ends with

- *Appendix 1, familial references*
- *Appendix 2, regional references*
- *Appendix 3, a list of the African crocodiles and turtles*
- *Bibliography, 62 pages listing more than 1600 titles*
- *Index to the genera*
- *Index to the species and subspecies*

On a random test through the text I found a few careless errors (?): Leptotyphlops nigricans and nigricans (p. 123); Eryx trucicus instead of turcicus; Malpolon miolensis (p. 149) instead of moilensis; Frazetta (p. 135) instead of Frazzetta; Fitsimons (p. 123) instead of FitzSimons.

The absence of synonyms for each taxa is to be considered a miss as in my opinion the author,

while consulting the literature, could have listed the synonyms. In some cases synonyms are listed though it is unclear to myself what criteria is used. For example: Broadley (1971) lists Rhamphiophis acutus wittei as a synonym of Rhamphiophis acutus acutus yet this subspecies is listed as a taxon separate of acutus. I think it is a pity that the genera within a family are not listed alphabetically but are grouped within subfamilies or tribes with the species and subspecies then listed alphabetically. In this situation if you are looking for a genus in the family Colubridae you are forced to use the index of generic names for the correct page.

Proof of the usefulness of this checklist as a reference book is that in the past few months I have consulted its pages and saved many hours that would have been spent looking for information in scattered journals. It has thus become for me an indispensable text book, that I warmly recommend to anyone who occasionally has to deal with the systematics and distribution of African reptiles.