
BOOKREVIEW

Hoser, R.T., 1989. **Australian reptiles and frogs**. 238 pages, 613 pictures. Published by Pierson & Co., P.O. Box 87, Mosman NSW Australia. ISBN 0 947068 08 2. Hardback with dust jacket.

There is no shortage of books on Australian herptiles so it was with interest that I waited for this book. It is a large format book, with 613 colour pictures covering more than 200 species, "those which are most commonly encountered..... and species of special interest for a variety of reasons". This restriction in its cover of some Australian reptiles and amphibians immediately had to be tested - was the inclusion/exclusion of a species fair or subjective on the part of the author. As a reviewer not resident in Australia I only have my notes of a six month jaunt around NSW as a travelling herpetologist to judge the contents - everything I saw and caught is in this book except for a few obscure species of tiny skink. So, the book has an immediate advantage over others - what in many situations is excess info and species descriptions has been shed.

The book is presented in three parts:

- a. Introduction, which includes the usual short essays on the origin and classification of reptiles and amphibians (of Australia).
- b. Australian frogs and reptiles described. Contrary to most books of this kind no keys are included. The author has minimised descriptive information relying on quality photographs to complement the text which includes distribution, size,

food, habitats and breeding. A distribution map is included in the text for each species.

- c. Captivity and conservation. This part begins with sound advice on keeping and feeding herptiles; captive breeding; ailments and diseases and their treatment; photography, and conservation. The final section of this part is -- fabulous. Twenty five pages packed with photographs of habitats, and for each, the author lists the species found in that habitat. It is true a picture speaks a thousand words. These pictures give a real insight to the habitat requirements of captive specimens. Other and future authors please note, habitat photos are surely a must.

This is a very good book, anyone visiting Australia should buy this one -- forget the rest. The authors enthusiasm and knowledge is evident throughout the book. Finally, many thanks to the publisher for making available a book of such all round quality.

K.R.G. Welch.