

## BOOKREVIEW

*Snakes of Medical Importance*; by P. Gopalakrishnakone & L.M. Chou (Editors), 1990. National University of Singapore. Pp. 1-676.

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A rather fat and heavy book full of colour plates and information with chapters on specific countries of the region: Australia, Burma, China, India, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Papua New Guinea which at first glance is impressive and desirable.

Close inspection shows many of the problems that arise in multi-author books, a lack of consistency in standards of presentation. The first chapter on the venomous snakes of Australia is illustrated with what can only be called superb quality photographs whilst many other sections include undesirable photos of (dead and) poor quality.

The book is punctuated with many small errors which includes photographs upside down and substandard maps plus the frustrating use of venomous and poisonous. I know of no poisonous snakes but there are many venomous species.

One area of lack of quality that should have not occurred is two separate chapters by different authors on the same region, where the title is different but the authors work do cross with each other and they then differ in how they present the work. Pakistan comes under this last comment where identification of the species should have been left in the capable hands of M. S. Khan. The other contribution on Pakistan, in their key to the species, does not allow for anyone having a specimen of *Hydrophis* in their hands.

Despite many small irritating errors in the presentation of the text, the book as a whole is a worthy addition to the book shelf for its photo content (including areas not readily available in book form) and as an awareness book on the matter of envenomation. I, personally, have already spent many hours browsing and reading, the corners of the pages of my copy starting to show wear.