

## BOOK REVIEW

*'Verbreitung, Ökologie und Schutz der Schlangen Deutschlands und angrenzender Gebiete';*  
M. Gruschwitz, P.M. Kornacker, R. Podloucky, W. Völkl & M. Waitzmann (eds.)

By: Twan Leenders, Prof. Bromstraat 59, NL-6525 AT Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

English corrections by Ken Welch.

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The third volume in the Mertensiella-series, the supplement to Salamandra, is here, entitled 'The distribution, ecology, and protection of the snakes of Germany and adjacent areas'. The knowledge of these snakes has increased significantly over the last couple of years and the German Society for Herpetology (DGHT) decided to publish this title to make this information readily available to everybody. The result is a 431 page book that consists of 28 separate contributions. Most are written by German authors, although one Swiss and a couple of Dutch articles are included as well. In these articles, several different aspects of the species are covered, although the emphasis is on distribution, ecology and protection of these species (as is indicated by the title).

The book starts with a review of all 6 species of snakes which occur in Germany (*Coronella austriaca*, *Elaphe longissima*, *Natrix natrix*, *N. tessellata*, *Vipera aspis* & *V. berus*), in which their current status and distribution is sketched. After that the book is divided into 7 chapters, six of which focus on the different species separately. The 7<sup>th</sup> chapter, entitled: 'Species exceeding aspects', consists of two articles. The first one treats current concept plans for the protection of all German snake species. The second is about the fossil snakes discovered in Germany, and the research involved. The editors have succeeded in producing a timely work that is filled with interesting and useful information. It is definitely not aimed at the scientifically trained only, everybody who wants to know more about the 'daily life' of snakes in the wild will learn a great deal from it. Information on hibernation, feeding, life cycle, etc. are essential for terraria keepers.

Additionally, a great deal of attention is paid to the endangered snakes and their habitat. Many useful suggestions on protection are presented. Since 3 of the above mentioned species (*Elaphe longissima*, *Natrix tessellata* & *Vipera aspis*) inhabit Germany in small or very small numbers, their populations are carefully monitored and their status is constantly watched. Therefore, German researchers already have ample experience in the protection of these animals. Hopefully this information can be used for the further development of nature protection programmes.

'Verbreitung, Ökologie und Schutz der Schlangen Deutschlands' is written completely in German. It is available in the familiar Mertensiella paperback edition, with several photographs (mainly black and white), drawings, maps, and diagrams.

The book can be ordered from the DGHT, Postfach 1421, D-53351 Rheinbach, Germany. It costs DM 39,80 for non-members, and DM 22,50 for members of the DGHT.