

emphasis is on local community involvement as the key to successful conservation programmes.

The quality of the papers is uniformly high, the selection offered is coherent and fully up-to-date in the material cited. Despite having little explicit reference to Southeast Asia, this is a book of direct relevance to all interested in the conservation of biodiversity in the region because, inevitably, forest patches will soon represent the only forest there is in many areas.

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**The Amphibian Fauna of Sri Lanka.** Dutta, S. K. & K. Manamendra-Arachchi, 1996. Wildlife Heritage Trust of Sri Lanka, 95 Cotta Road, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka. 230 pp., 269 figs. ISBN 955-9114-10-7.

The present book is a very impressive compilation of the amphibian fauna of Sri Lanka (the current name for Ceylon), documenting 53 known species of caecilians and anurans from five families. The last major study of this group had been by Parakrama Kirtisinghe (1957: *The Amphibia of Ceylon*, Colombo, 112 pp.) almost 40 years ago, and it has taken a long time for anyone to come up with an update.

And what an update Dutta and Manamendra-Arachchi's book is. All the species have been treated very systematically, with a short (but quite effective diagnosis), a "clinical" description of the salient features, and sections on their live colours, taxonomy, distribution, etymology (even old names) and material examined. The maps of their distributions are crisp and well executed, with spot localities and not the irritating and uninformative broad generalisations so often seen. The section on material examined is most welcomed, especially for taxonomists, although it is frequently left out by many authors (or publishers) for dubious page-saving reasons or considered as boring and unnecessary. Every figure is also accompanied by specimen data, which again, is all too often "conveniently excluded" as being "unimportant". Almost all species accounts are accompanied by colour figures based on living specimens, most of which are of excellent quality. Live colours are an invaluable aid in identifying many frog species (especially rhacophorids like *Philautus*), and this should be a standard for all descriptions. In fact, many species are depicted with multiple photographs to show colour variations, which makes the book even more useful. The type specimens of many species are also figured (in monochrome). The line drawings, when provided, are excellent, and show the intended specific features very well. Keys are provided for all species.

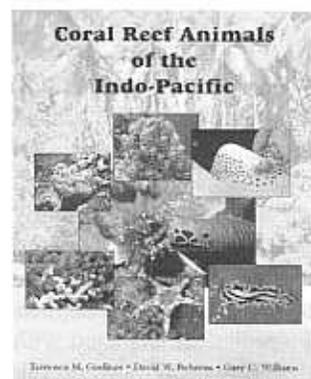
It is very clear from the text that the book has not been the result of "transferring bones from one graveyard to another" or based just on old, preserved material. The authors and their associates, who have been supported by the Wildlife Heritage Trust of Sri Lanka and World Wide Fund for Nature, have clearly done a great deal of field work and are intimately familiar with their subjects. The map of their collection sites bear testimony to this! Considering this, the book would have been even more useful if information and figures of their larvae (when available) had been provided.

The number of endemic taxa for Sri Lanka is very high, which is not surprising, with 30 species (about 57% of the known amphibian fauna) known only from the island. All three species of caecilians are known only from Sri Lanka (including the famous but often taxonomically confused *Ichthyophis glutinosus*) as are about half the microhylids, bufonids and ranids. The Rhacophoridae (tree frogs), not surprisingly, contains the most number of endemic species, with 14 of the 18 species (about 78%) being unique to Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, the conservation of these endemic species were discussed all too briefly, although the current threats to amphibians in general were discussed.

One part of the book also worth highlighting is the appendix, which briefly notes key features and figures in colour, 16 unidentified species, most of which (as the authors imply) are new taxa or at least new for Sri Lanka. The diversity of amphibians for the island is thus probably much higher than what is known at present. With the current spotlight on rainforest diversity and the crisis in many amphibian populations, the publication of this book on Sri Lankan Amphibia is most timely, and the authors must be congratulated for producing this fine tome.

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**Coral Reef Animals of the Indo-Pacific: Animal Life from Africa to Hawai'i Exclusive of the Vertebrates.** Terrence M. Gosliner, David W. Behrens & Gary C. Williams, 1996. Sea Challengers, 4 Sommerset Rise, Monterey, CA 93940, U.S.A. vi+314pp. ISBN 0-930118-21-9

This eagerly awaited volume is a magnificent successor to Dave and Jenny George's illustrated encyclopedia of marine invertebrate life produced some 17 years ago. More than 1100 common (and not so common) tropical Indo-Pacific species are superbly illustrated in full colour (the work of more than 50 skilled underwater photographers) together with valuable data on identification, natural history and geographic distribution. Where species have been scientifically described the authority is given; this and the biogeographic information makes this book highly useful to the professional marine