

BOOK REVIEWS

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Agamid Lizards of Southern Asia — Agamen des südlichen Asien — Draconinae 2, Leiolepidinae, by Ulrich Manthey. 2010. Terralog Vol. 7b. Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt am Main. 168 pp. Hardcover. 39,80 Euros (approximately US \$50.00). ISBN 978-3-89973-375-4.

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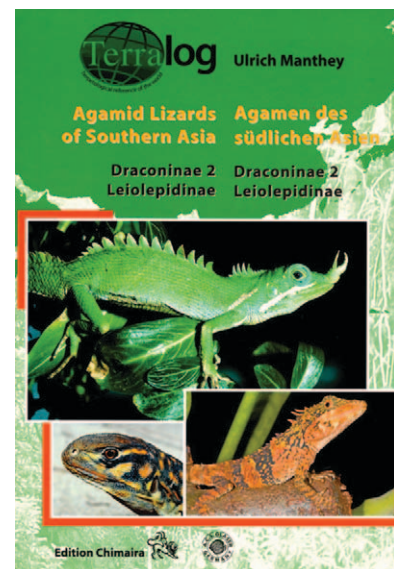
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Only a handful of researchers work on South Asian agamids. Synthetic works on this group are scarce, and a new book on this subject is hence very welcome. It follows a first volume in the Terralog series on South Asian agamids, that included only part of the Draconinae (Manthey 2008), and it aims to list and illustrate the remaining taxa that were not dealt with in that first volume. Taxa newly recognized belonging to genera starting with the letters G to S (*Gonocephalus*, *Harpesaurus*, *Hypsiculotes*, *Japalura*, *Lophocalotes*, *Lyriocephalus*, *Mantheyus*, *Mictopholis*, *Oriocalotes*, *Otocryptis*, *Phoxophrys*, *Psammophilus*, *Pseudocalotes*, *Pseudocophotis*, *Ptyctolaemus*, *Salea*, and *Sitana*), the Leiolepidinae (*Leiolepis*) and the genus *Physignathus* (whose subfamilial position is still unclear), as well as several undescribed taxa. The book, well bound and with high-quality glossy paper, is bilingual (English-German). It is divided mainly into a table of contents (pp. 3–5), an introduction in which the author gives his point of view on the taxonomic status of various taxa (pp. 6–8), a section on how to use the book, which provides brief advice on captive maintenance (pp. 9–11), literature references (pp. 12–14), and the main section, the species illustrations (pp. 16–168). The front and back covers are finely illustrated and the inner covers provide geographical and political maps of the area covered.



The literature section is short (147 references) and does not provide an exhaustive list of publications on the species concerned, but rather useful references to original descriptions. The most recent references date from 2009.

Color illustrations are provided for each species and represent the strongest point of the book. We counted a total of 524 photographs (not including the nine images on the front and back covers). Twenty-nine of them are biotope photographs. Besides these color photographs, there are four drawings. Only ten species are not illustrated alive, but by drawings or through photographs of preserved type material (clearly indicated as such). All photographs are of very high quality (the whole book is a real delight for the eyes), and many of them, taken *in situ*, provide useful information on biotopes. One of the photographs, showing a *Mantheyus* hatching *in situ*, deserves a special mention. Nearly all of the photographs are accompanied by locality data, which increases their value. Each picture is also associated with a unique coded number, facilitating reference to it, and under each species' pictures, symbols (explained on a folded page) add ecological information. Maps are provided for all species, generally with several species per map. Thirty-three species' geographical distribution maps are distributed throughout the illustrations section. They are not always complete (i.e., some published localities were sometimes omitted), but are generally very good. A very good point is that they include specific dots for the type localities of the species as well as of their synonyms. When a given species the map is not in direct proximity to the corresponding photograph(s) there is a reference to the map page, which greatly facilitates the use of the book.

Hundreds of described taxa are included and illustrated, plus eleven populations whose status is unresolved, among them some representing taxa new to science. The most remarkable undescribed taxon photographed is a beautiful green arboreal agamid from Sumatra, provisionally called 'Genus X sp. A'. The others belong to *Gonocephalus*, *Phoxophrys*, *Pseudocalotes* and *Sitana*. The photographs of these possibly undescribed taxa were smartly included directly near the most similar described species in order to facilitate visual comparisons. Some readers might wonder why the book does not mention *Physignathus lesueurii*, while it has a section on *P. cocincinus*. It is due to the fact that both species were recently shown to be distant and not congeneric, *P. lesueurii* belonging to the *Amphibolorus* group (Hugall et al. 2008).

The book proposes a new generic reallocation '*Pseudocalotes kakhienensis* nov. comb.', for a species previously included in *Salea*; the rationale for this new placement is briefly mentioned on page 8. Such a reallocation should have deserved a more detailed explanation, but more details can be found in Mahony (2010) who reached the same conclusion in a paper published shortly after the book discussed here. It is to be noted that the monotypic genus *Mictopholis*, recognized as valid by Manthey in the presently reviewed book, is synonymized with *Pseudocalotes* by Mahony (2010). This latter author moreover synonymized *Japalura kaulbacki* with *Calotes kingdonwardi* and transferred it to the genus *Pseudocalotes*. The species had been illustrated under *Calotes k. kingdonwardi* and its synonym *C. kingdonwardi bapoensis* in the first Terralog volume on Draconinae (Manthey, 2008, pages 72–73). '*Pseudocalotes* sp. A' (pp. 144–145) was described as *Pseudocalotes ziegleri* Hallermann, Nguyen, Orlov &

Ananjeva, 2010 (Hallermann et al. 2010) just after the book was published. It is a pity that such important changes could not be taken into account in the book.

Several individuals of 'Genus X sp. A' were preserved and currently are under study by one of us (DTI). Unfortunately only females are so far available. The individual in photograph RA02341-4 on page 54, identified as '? *Harpesaurus brooksi*,' is not a *Harpesaurus* (or *Thaumatorhynchus*), but more likely a *Pseudocalotes tympanistriga*; compare with the female of that latter species on photograph RA03696-4 on page 143, showing the very same color pattern. We are unclear as to Manthey's basis for regarding the genus *Thaumatorhynchus* as a synonym of *Harpesaurus*, in spite of striking differences in habitus—roundish body section in *Thaumatorhynchus* versus triangular in *Harpesaurus*, and the absence of dorsal and nuchal crests in *Thaumatorhynchus* versus presence in *Harpesaurus*. The individual in photograph RA02905-4 on page 105, identified by U. Manthey as *Lophocalotes ludekingi*, more likely belongs to the very rare species *Pseudocalotes* (or *Pseudocophotis*) *sumatrana*. The assumption that this latter species has a prehensile tail (see page 7) remains unverified. The '*Leiolepis belliana ocellata*' in photograph RA04712-4 on page 161 is apparently actually a *Leiolepis peguensis* (J. L. Grismer pers. comm. to U. Manthey). This would be good news since that latter species is otherwise illustrated in the book only through a photograph of a faded, preserved paratype of the species. We take the opportunity to mention that the '*Bronchocela* sp. A' illustrated in Manthey (2008, pages 55–56) has since been described as *B. rubrigularis* Hallermann, 2009, and that '*Acanthosaura* cf. *crucigera*' (see Manthey, 2008: 27) was since described as *A. cardamomensis* Wood, Grismer, Grismer, Neang, Chav & Holden, 2010 (see Wood et al. 2010).

Such excellent book quality is no surprise given that the author is already well known for having co-authored a remarkable synthetic opus on Southeast Asian reptiles and amphibians (Manthey and Grossmann 1997), and for his taxonomic studies on agamids (see the literature cited in the volume discussed here). He has described, among other agamid taxa, the enigmatic *Ptyctolaemus phuwuanensis* Manthey & Nabhitabhata, 1991, which was so unique that it was later placed in the distinct genus *Mantheyus* Ananjeva & Stuart, 2001, a name that was coined in recognition of the author's significant herpetological contributions.

The book's price indicated on Chimaira website, 39.80 Euros (ca. 50 USD) excluding shipping costs, is a bit high, but is largely compensated by the excellent printing and binding quality, and the numerous beautiful photographs. We highly recommend it to all herpetologists and natural history lovers.

We moreover look forward to reading the following opus on agamids in the Terralog series, whose provisionally planned title is 'Agamid Lizards of Africa – Agaminae 1 and Uromastycinae', by Philipp Wagner and Ulrich Manthey due to appear in 2012 (U. Manthey, pers. comm.). We are very grateful to Ulrich Manthey for kindly answering our numerous questions about his latest book.

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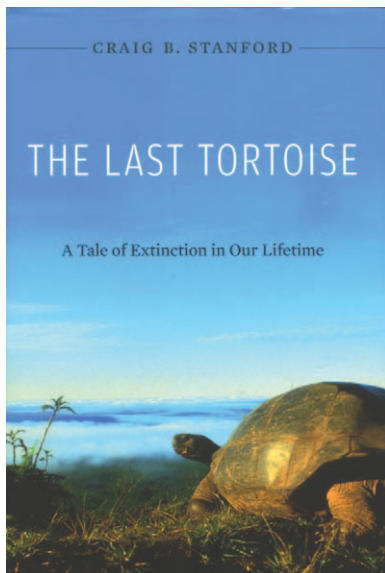
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The Last Tortoise: A Tale of Extinction in Our Lifetime, by Craig B. Stanford. 2010. Harvard University Press (www.hup.harvard.edu). Hardcover. viii + 210 pp., 16 pp. pls. US \$23.95. ISBN 978-0-674-04992-5.

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The Last Tortoise is the reptilian version of Kathryn Phillips, *Tracking the Vanishing Frogs* (1994). It is a well written book by a non-specialist that covers various aspects of the conservation and survival issues surrounding a group of animals. Stanford travels the world to visit the tortoise hotspots the same way Phillips did at the beginning of the declining amphibian phenomenon, highlighting the work of leading tortoise conservationists at various locations.



The chapters of *The Last Tortoise* cover the decline, conservation and, in some cases, the successes of tortoises across multiple continents. The initial chapters, ‘What Exactly Are Tortoises and Turtles’ and ‘Live Long and Prosper,’ provide a good background on tortoise biology and ecology. Descriptions of shell evolution, fossil record, and species diversity are written for the layperson, but provide enough depth for a biologist.

In ‘No Respect for the Ancient Lands’ Stanford highlights the issues of habitat destruction, human population growth and the

impact of invasive and introduced species on tortoises. The results of these activities lead to increased road kill, predation of nests and young, and loss of quality forage. The ‘Eating Tortoises’ chapter diverges from tortoises and covers the use of freshwater turtles in the food trade, both historic and recent. The author details how the Diamondback Terrapin fishery of the eastern United States lead to the collapse of an abundant species, which is still trying to recover, more than a half century after the end of the commercial harvest. Stanford also covers modern turtle use in China and the impact it is having around the world; although freshwater turtles are mainly at risk, many southeast Asian tortoises are also being consumed.

Many cultures have been keeping and eating tortoises for millennia. Prior to the 20th century population levels of humans were low enough to allow for sustainable use of mainland tortoises. The effect of whalers on island forms are detailed later in the book. The exponential growth of the human population starting in the 20th Century will continue to lead to the extinction of tortoises and other flora and fauna until we can control our population levels.

‘Such Huge Deformed Creatures’ covers the giant tortoises of the Galapagos and Aldabra. The whaling fleets of the 1800’s were able to quickly decimate the populations of these unique tortoises. Several species and subspecies were harvested to extinction. Besides just taking the tortoises the whalers also left rats and goats, which decimated the nests and vegetation. Stanford covers the recovery programs on both island groups to increase and stabilize the populations.

The appendices at the end of the book provide a quick reference to the largest vs. smallest tortoises, the most endangered species and a complete listing of all tortoise species with general distributional information.

The Last Tortoise is a fun and interesting read on the disturbing subject of the potential extinction of tortoises. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in turtles and tortoises. I encourage those of us who are aware of the plight of tortoise to share this book with friends and colleagues who are not. Stanford’s engaging writing style will make them advocates for tortoises by the time they are done with the last chapter.

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