

**LISTE DES REPTILES D'AFRIQUE CENTRALE**

by Thierry Frétey and Charles P. Blanc. No date.

Les dossiers de l'ADIE. Série Biodiversité N° 2. Agence Internationale pour le Développement de l'Information Environnementale, Libreville. 73 pp. In French. Softcover.

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Synthetic works on the rich tropical African herpetofauna are missing, and in this respect the recent work of Frétey and Blanc, intended to list all reptile species of seven central African countries, is a very welcome addition. Although no date appears in the publication, it was submitted to ADIE in late 2001 and effectively out-dated when distributed in late March 2004 (Thierry Frétey, pers. comm.; Jean-Marie Ndong Nzue, PSP Libreville, pers. comm.; Jean-Pierre Vandeweghe, ADIE, pers. comm.). We got our copy in Libreville in early April 2004. The volume is numbered "2" in the ADIE Biodiversity Series, but is in fact number 3, after two volumes dedicated respectively to the birds and amphibians of the same countries. The foreword states that the aims of the present work are: (1) to make available an update of all knowledge gathered to date on the reptiles of the area; (2) to contribute to the establishment of a database on the Central African vertebrate fauna; and (3) to contribute to the formation of a "tableau de bord de l'environnement" (monitoring chart of the environment).

The area covered by the work includes Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. After a brief introduction, the larger part of the work (pages 13 to 52) is a table of taxa with the presence of a species in each country indicated by a dot. The list is followed by an impressive literature section of 20 pages. The authors did not indicate a cut-off date for literature, but an examination of the references shows the latest is from 2001. However, even for 2001 some essential publications, such as the major work of Chippaux (2001) on West and Central African snakes, are missing. A number of local inventories have also been pub-

lished subsequently, implying additions to the herpetofaunas of several countries, notably the Congo (Maran, 2002: addition of the formerly Gabonese endemic terrapin *Pelusios marani*), Equatorial Guinea (De la Riva, 2004; Lasso et al., 2002; Watkins-Colwell and De León, 2003) and for Gabon (Bauer and Pauwels, 2002; Pauwels, 2004; Pauwels et al., 2002; the latter notably adding the formerly Cameroonesse endemic aquatic snake *Hydraethiops laevis*). Since 2001 some species were also withdrawn from national lists (Pauwels and Branch, 2003). The references section is somewhat problematic. On page 5, we read that the literature was arranged country by country, which is actually not the case. A long list of 662 references was compiled, but 11 are listed twice. Among the 651 remaining, 79 (12 %) are not correctly arranged by alphabetical order. There are no bibliographical references in the species list, hence no link between the quoted taxa and the literature cited, making the latter mostly unusable.

Species numbers for some countries are in contradiction with those found in other works. For example Frétey and Blanc listed 12 non-marine chelonians from Gabon, but Maran (2002) recognized the presence of only nine. They also listed 160 reptile species from Gabon, but Lötters et al. (2000) listed only 95 for that country. Unfortunately, with no references in the species list, there is thus no way to know on which references Frétey and Blanc based their assertions. There are a number of typos, and the use of italics for Latin names is irregular, but these are minor errors.

If the 2nd and 3rd objectives of the present work were partly fulfilled, it is certainly not the case for the first objective. A good deal of the knowledge on the listed species is not gathered nor referred to in the present work, and a very

long list of references on their ecology, care in captivity, ethnozoology, etc., etc., could have been added. Despite these shortcomings, mostly inherent to that kind of large-scale bibliographical work and also to the unfortunate publication delay, I regard this contribution as a useful landmark. It is an essential tool, being the only publication to date to give a synopsis – even if somewhat imperfect – of the herpetological riches of these seven, still poorly studied, Central African countries.

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#### SNAKES AND THEIR WAYS

By C.H. Curran and Carl Kauffeld Original Edition 1937,  
Reprinted by Krieger Publishing Company, Krieger Drive,  
Malabar, Florida, 2003. 285 pp. ISBN 1-57524-229-X  
Price: unknown.

Whenever we get a book parcel from Krieger Publishing Co. it's a bit like Christmas and this time was no exception. Seeing the late great Carl Kauffeld's name on a new book was a bit of a shock but it was quickly obvious that here was a reprint of Curran and Kauffeld's excellent work. Out of print for forty years. "Snakes and Their Ways" is a general snake book, simply written, packed with facts, first hand experience and sparkling anecdotes.

Delving into it, "Snakes and Their Ways" is like a little (285 pages) encyclopedia. There are seventeen chapters running from Chapter I "General Considerations" which is your snake

primer, through chapters on snakebite (a bit dated of course), rattlers, vipers, tree snakes, cobras and one on snakes in religion. The book ends with a list of American snakes but the rest of the book covers the world.

While the snakebite treatment bit is way out of date there is very little you can quibble with in the rest of the book. The anecdotes, both scientific and fanciful are what make this book agelessly entertaining. How about Dr. Eigenberger who is so interested in the effects of snake venom that he tries out little doses on himself. Having tried various rattlesnake venoms the good doctor gives himself a tenth of a