

BOOK REVIEW

FASCINATING SNAKES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA - AN INTRODUCTION. by Francis L. K. Lim and Monty T. M. Lee. Tropical Press Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur. ISBN 967-73-0045-8.

Books on the snakes of our region, published hitherto, have all been formal accounts of the subject, enumerating the species and providing for their identification. Francis Lim and Monty Lee have written an appreciation of Southeast Asian snakes, making it clear that they enjoy handling and associating with them and would like to persuade other people to this attitude; to some extent they will surely succeed.

The introduction includes a section on keeping snakes in captivity, illustrated by two charming photographs (pp. 2, 3), and on their place in religion and folklore. Various aspects of encountering snakes are illustrated with excellent and amusing drawings by Kelvin Lim, and there is a detailed and valuable section on the subject of snake-bite.

The systematic section comprises about two-thirds of the book and describes over 70 species and subspecies. The colour photographs supporting the text, almost all by Francis Lim, form the book's most attractive and striking feature and make it impossible to deny that snakes are most beautiful animals. Some of the photographs are dramatic (e.g. pp. 39, 76, 80) and some portray uncommon species hardly ever illustrated in colour before; these include the rare red-headed Krait (p. 87).

In terms of nature conservation, snakes are just as well worth preserving as birds and butterflies, and are in far greater need of protection. Such an enthusiastic presentation of them as we have here cannot fail to benefit their cause.

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