

A Guide to Common Marine Fishes of Singapore. Lim, K. K. P. & J. K. Y. Low, 1998. 163 pp. ISBN 981-00-9904-5. Singapore science Centre, 15 Science Centre Road, Singapore 609081.

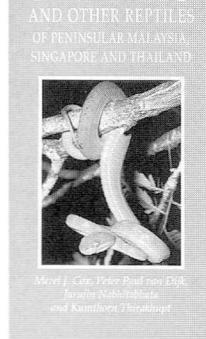
The present book, the 31st in a series of guide books on Singapore's natural history, is a welcomed, if not long awaited addition! Of the over 800 species of marine and estuarine (including mangrove) fishes known from Singapore, about 200 are treated in this compact little book, and most are illustrated by photographs of live or freshly dead specimens. The book is arranged very nicely, with well written introductory chapters and special sections like "Some Fishy Trivia", "Dangerous Fishes" and "Fishes and Man". The section showing the outlines of all

the families known from Singapore waters is useful. The text for each species treated is short but quite sufficient. The book will be useful for the professional ichthyologist as well since all the photographs provided clearly indicate where the specimens came from, and in most cases, the actual specimens are preserved in the Zoological Reference Collection of the National University of Singapore. If I have one criticism, it would be that for some species (e.g. for the boxfish *Rhynchostracion nasus*), the photographs provided of preserved specimens do not reflect the live colouration of the actual species! But as no comment was made, the reader might get the wrong idea of the particular species' actual colour. All in all, however, the book will be a very useful reference not only for laymen but ichthyologists as well!

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A Photographic Guide to Snakes and other Reptiles of Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. M. J. Cox, P. P. van Dijk, J. Nabhitabhata & K. Thirakupt, 1998. New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd. 144 pp. ISBN 1 85368 438 4



Reptiles form the latest offering in this excellent series of photographic guides which have featured considerably more popular animal groups like birds, butterflies and mammals. 290 colour photographs of some 222 species and subspecies of snakes, lizards and turtles found in Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore grace the pages. These photographs, largely of excellent quality, are all of live, or otherwise freshly-dead subjects. Colour pictures can be the best and quickest tools for accurate identification provided the author/s link the subjects to correct names. Thankfully this book does not seem to suffer from misidentification problems.

Both common and rarely-seen reptiles are featured. Each species is introduced with an English name, its current Latin name, attainable size, and accompanied by a short note on key identification features, remarks on biology, ecology and geographical distribution. This is one of few publications to feature rarely seen species of skinks and forest-dwelling agamid lizards. Despite the title, however, species common in Singapore, like the striped kukri snake (*Oligodon octolineatus*), the dwarf reed snake (*Pseudorhabdion longiceps*) and the maritime gecko (*Lepidodactylus lugubris*) could have been included. These omissions are by no means critical for the book is not intended to be comprehensive, and its selection does represent the full range of reptiles in the area. Also, the authors are based mainly in Thailand, and some species common in Singapore may not even occur up north. The coverage of terrestrial venomous snakes found in the region is fairly comprehensive.

The layout is well-planned. Every page is neatly arranged with photographs and text, and hardly any space is wasted. This book does excellent public relations for reptiles as the beautiful pictures depict them as attractive and unusual creatures. Its compact, pocket-fitting size enables it to be easily carried in the field. It should appeal to any avid naturalist, student or reptile enthusiast among both residents and visitors in Southeast Asia.

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