



**Asia Pacific Reef Guide.** Debelius, H., 2001. · IKAN – Unterwasserarchiv, Frankfurt. 321 pp. Without ISBN number.

‘Asia Pacific Reef Guide’ concentrates on selected marine fauna of the Western Central Pacific area that includes Malaysia and Indonesia in the south, the Gulf of Thailand, the coastal waters of Vietnam and China in the west; and Japanese coral reefs in the East China Sea southwards of 30 degrees north. To the east, it covers the Philippine Archipelago and the oceanic islands of Ogasawara, Yap and Palau, which are popular diving destinations. This book is intended to replace ‘Southeast Asia Tropical Fish Guide’ in the same richly illustrated series that ran out of print two years ago.

The author designed this book as a guide not only to fish, but also to other groups of mostly reef-dwelling marine life ‘that are more likely to attract the interest of divers and snorkellers’. Even though bony fishes cover about three-quarters of the volume, reptiles, crustaceans, and molluscs are also prominently featured. Considerably less extensive coverage are given to cnidarians, flatworms, polychaete worms, echinoderms, and ascidians. Each species is illustrated with at least a colour photograph, and accompanied by a short text that identifies the animal with its currently used scientific names, and specifies the size, distribution, and depth where the animal is usually

encountered. This is followed by general comments such as that of diagnostic characters, similar species, ontogenetic changes, and whether it is harmful to humans, or otherwise heavily exploited by the latter.

Inserted at intervals throughout the book are twenty picture stories from the Asia-Pacific region written by the author and various underwater photographers. Some of these highlight interesting animal behaviour, and how animals interact with other species and their environment. Others show how man has excessively exploited many marine creatures, and cause damage to the marine environment in the process.

This book is recommended as a field guide, but to some it may be too glossy and expensive to be used outdoors. On the bookshelf at home, it makes a handsome addition. It is a pleasure simply to flip through its pages, for it contains an outstanding collection of very attractive and superbly printed pictures, almost all taken in the wild.

On most instances, the location of each picture is indicated. However, the pictures supposedly taken in Singapore on pages 81, 99, 170, and 217 are open to doubt. Not only are the waters of all the shots unusually clear for Singapore’s standards, the fishes - *Epinephelus flavocaeruleus*, *Apogon aureus*, *Cirrhitops fasciatus* and *Acanthurus olivaceus* would otherwise be new records for the country.

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