

RED SNAPPER ECOLOGY AND FISHERIES IN THE U.S. GULF OF MEXICO. *Based on a symposium held in San Antonio, Texas, 10–12 February 2006. American Fisheries Society Symposium, Volume 60.*

*Edited by William F. Patterson, III, James H. Cowan, Jr., Gary R. Fitzhugh, and David L. Nieland. Bethesda (Maryland): American Fisheries Society. \$69.00 (paper). xi + 396 p.; ill.; no index. ISBN: 978-1-888569-97-1. 2007.*

Properly managing commercially important marine fishes can be extraordinarily difficult because of the complex scientific and political challenges involved. Few systems illustrate this better than red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, which is the subject of this volume. The book includes contributions from experts working on diverse aspects of the ecology and fishery management of the species. There are 22 chapters, written as scientific papers, in three parts. The first part consists of seven chapters on red snapper life history and ecology spanning all ontogenetic stages, including larval behavior and distribution, settlement, habitat use, feeding habits, and fisheries-related mortality. Part II includes seven chapters on the population dynamics and structure of the species. Topics such as site fidelity, age/growth, demography, and population genetic structure are discussed. The final part, on fisheries management and conservation, includes eight chapters on subjects such as the history of red snapper exploitation, past efforts to manage the fishery, demography of commercial catches, year-class strength, and declining size at age.

There are many positives to this book. Above all, it serves as a single source on red snapper and provides a compilation of the widely scattered literature on the species. Additionally, several of the ecology chapters concern topics of broad interest, making the book a useful reference for modern methods in marine fish ecology. The chapters on feeding habits (by McCawley and Cowan) and population genetic structure (by Gold and Saillant) are good examples. The merging of chapters on basic ecological research and fisheries management works well and provides a broader context in which to appreciate the species than is usually available. Similarly, the inclusion of treatments on the history of the fishery enriches the book, providing a better appreciation of the complexity of the issues involved in managing marine fisheries.

There are always a few negatives. I would have liked to have seen an introductory chapter that provides a broader picture of red snapper ecology and evolution. Overall, this volume makes an important contribution to the field and should serve as a valuable resource for many years to come.

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LIFE IN COLD BLOOD.

*By David Attenborough. Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press. \$29.95. 288 p.; ill.; index. ISBN: 978-0-691-13718-6. 2008.*

This book is the companion to the BBC documentary television series of the same name. It is a testament to the author's skills as a popularizer that such a concise volume, written largely without recourse to technical jargon, is successful in summarizing the major themes of amphibian and reptile structure, function, ecology, and behavior that make the lives of these animals so fascinating. This is achieved by the judicious selection of focal taxa whose features and life histories exemplify the more inclusive lineages to which they belong. The stories of such exemplars are expertly woven together to yield a cohesive overview of the natural history of poikilothermic tetrapods.

Aside from being consistently engaging, the text is scrupulously accurate and the biology presented, although abbreviated, is current. Recent findings, such as the discovery of venom in varanids and other lizards, as well as the description of the Devonian fossil sarcopterygian *Tiktaalik*, are deftly worked into the narrative. Unfortunately, another timely revelation, the global decline of amphibians, is only touched on in the foreword, and may not be fully appreciated by most readers. Other criticisms—that the treatment by taxonomic group is less than equitable (the approximately 5600 species of frogs are allocated only slightly more space than the 23 living crocodylians) or that no literature references are provided—may irk professionals, but are unlikely to be relevant to the volume's intended general audience. Indeed, aside from a few incorrectly spelled scientific names, there is little to complain about in the text of this book. Paradoxically, given the spectacular imagery of the corresponding television series, the same cannot be said of the many color photographs in the volume. Although adequately illustrative, these mostly lack the vibrancy that has come to be expected in recent herpetological books. This issue aside, the accessibility and accuracy of the text, combined with its low price, make this an ideal choice for the amateur naturalist's introduction to the herpetological world.

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THE ECOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR OF AMPHIBIANS.

*By Kentwood D. Wells. Chicago (Illinois): University of Chicago Press. \$75.00. xi + 1148 p.; ill.; index. ISBN: 978-0-226-89334-1. 2007.*

This state-of-the-art book has made its timely emergence amid a crisis of global magnitude: that of population declines, range reductions, and extinc-