

PREFACE

In the present work the author has aimed to give in a popular manner a general survey of the reptiles of the world. While the manner aims to be popular, and while the purpose has been to make the book interesting reading, it is at the same time, the writer hopes, everywhere in accord with the latest results of the scientific study of the subject; and he believes the special student may find scattered through the volume new information drawn from the author's long and systematic observation of the various orders of reptiles, their habits, etc.—a course pursued both among the homes and haunts of these creatures in many parts of the world, and in the New York Zoological Park. The scope of the book prevents it from being, as a previous book by the same author was, primarily a volume intended to be used for identification purposes: it is here designed to consider the class of reptiles as a whole and in a general way. But for purposes of identification the profuse illustrations cannot fail to be serviceable in a high degree.

It is not unlikely that the quest of specimens, and the methods employed in capturing them, of which much is said here and there in the text, will prove both entertaining to the layman and helpful to curators, to the collectors and students, amateur or professional. And the same may be said of what

is written regarding the feeding and general care and treatment of reptiles in captivity.

Handling the entire class—the crocodilians, turtles and tortoises, lizards and snakes of both the New and the Old World—elaborate description is necessarily limited to *groups*, and says little of individual *species*. The method here has been to select representative types, treating them according to their importance as to anatomical characteristics and habits. The North American reptiles have, however, received considerable attention, as they naturally attract our special interest, while their habits and structure must be compared with their Old World allies, if a general idea of the Class *Reptilia* is to be acquired. But among the illustrations the South American and the Old World reptiles predominate, for here is a field quite neglected from a photographic standpoint, and demanding much space. Thus, to make room for the great array of foreign reptiles, the illustrations of the North American species have been limited to a condensed but representative series. To thoroughly round up the subject the author has prepared detailed charts showing the classification and approximate number of species among all the genera of reptiles found in all parts of the world. Such will impress upon the student the full scope of the subject, though references to numerous genera in the text must be omitted.

The author may be permitted to say, without being accused of immodesty, that, however the text of this volume may be received, its illustrations make it of high value, and indeed unique among books on the same subject. The plates from photographs taken from life will be useful to the student and interesting to the general reader. They are not merely pictures "snapped" at the most convenient moment, but life studies from poses displaying distinguishing characteristics, and involving work on many of the negatives requiring the use of restraining dyes to produce effects of coloration beyond

the power of lens and color-sensitive plates. The results exceed in value the familiar pen drawings of reptiles ordinarily employed in popular works. Among the latter a snake is merely a scaled creature, and, unless exhibiting some striking development, produces no lasting impression in the mind of the student. It may tally with every word of an attending description, but would probably not be identified with an actual specimen seen soon after. Expert photography imparts, in a work like this, a strong individuality to each species, positively branding the various forms and capable of imitation only by such exceedingly painstaking draftsmen as are employed to illustrate the highly expensive monographs of the great museums — institutions having the means to pay for the labor of drawing a reptile scale by scale, each minute part of the integument receiving its share of work according to color value or shading and intricate structure. The cost of such labor would be enormous in a work like this, placing it beyond the reach of most popular readers. It is such illustrative work the author has tried, as far as possible, to approach in value in the pages following. The several hundred illustrations are the result of his personal endeavors. A number of the specimens photographed have been exhibited in the Reptile House of the New York Zoological Park.

For the encouragement and suggestions of Director William T. Hornaday, of the New York Zoological Park, the author wishes to express his hearty appreciation and esteem. In the pages that follow the author has drawn freely from observations made in the splendid Reptile House erected by the New York Zoological Society, whom he has the honor of serving.

Throughout this work the classification of Dr. George Albert Boulenger has been generally adopted. Dr. Boulenger's monumental series, *The Catalogue of the Chelonians, Lizards and Snakes of the British Museum*, stands as the only complete

technical work on the reptiles of the world. From its pages the author has derived valuable assistance in treating the Old World reptiles and in the lists showing classification.

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