Book Reviews

Coral Reef Fishes, Revised edition

Ewald Lieske and Robert Myers

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US \$24.95, 400 pages, softcover

White sand beaches, coral reefs, and brightly colored fish are what come to mind when most people think about the tropical oceans. However, coral reefs are not found everywhere in the tropics. Indeed, specific zoogeographic conditions are needed to support the development of coral reefs, and these conditions are found in relatively few areas.

Coral reefs are common in the Indo-Pacific and Western Atlantic oceans; a few are found in the eastern Pacific. But coral reefs are not all alike. The array of life that lives on these reefs varies greatly. More than 4000 species of fish inhabit coral reefs, with about 1700 species found only in the Indo-Pacific and some 350 species found only in the Western Atlantic. Identifying such diverse species can be a problem for sport divers, scientists, and other marine enthusiasts. *Coral Reef Fishes* should make this task easier.

Coral Reef Fishes is a concise but comprehensive guidebook to the fish found in or near coral reefs to a depth of about 60 m. The book begins with a 20-page introduction that, in essence, is an abbreviated last-minute study course on ichthyology and reef ecology. Because of the very small font size, a lot of text is contained on each page. The main portion of the book—the color illustrations—follows.

More than 2500 color illustrations cover the main forms of 2118 species. These color illustrations and the text associated with them consume 350 of the book's 400 pages. Although not photographs, the color illustrations are of consistently high quality. They are arrayed into groupings of about 8 to 12 similar species per page and are arranged so that the illustrated species are described on the facing page of text. The text follows a consistent format, listing the common name, followed by its technical biological name, a sentence or two about distinguishing features of the species, and then a few words about its ecology and range. The book concludes with a brief bibliography and a scientific name index, followed by a common name index.

While its compact size (5 by 8 inches) means it will easily fit into a backpack or dive bag, the book has substantial weight, consistent with the density of information it contains.

Overall, *Coral Reef Fishes* is a highly useable guide-

book that I readily recommend as a field guide for scuba divers, naturalists, and others having more than a superficial interest in recognizing the inhabitants of coral reefs.

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