Book Reviews

The Venomous Reptiles of the Western Hemisphere, Volumes 1 and 2

Jonathan A. Campbell and William W. Lamar
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005
US \$149.95, 2 volumes, 1032 pages, hardcover

With 1500 extremely high-quality color photographs depicting animals and clinical presentations, this 2-volume work is a remarkable and spectacular accomplishment. It is extremely comprehensive and handsomely presented. Covering the entire Americas, the authors describe in great detail the habits, reproductive traits, feeding behaviors, taxonomies, evolution, mimicry, and venomous bite characteristics of 190 species of venomous snakes and 2 species of venomous lizards.

Volume 1 contains regional accounts and keys to venomous reptiles in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean islands, and South America. This is followed by taxonomic accounts of venomous lizards, coral snakes, sea snakes, and pit vipers. Volume 2 is devoted to rattlesnakes, venomous snake mimicry, evolution of New World venomous snakes, venomous poisoning by North American reptiles, and snakebites in Central and South America. The geographical descriptions of the reptile habitats are extraordinary; the high quality of the color images is striking; and the plates are crisp, clear, and comprehensive.

The clinical information is provided in contributions by Drs Robert Norris and David Warrell, 2 eminently qualified authorities and among the best modern clinicians and writers on the topic. The recommendations offered are current and supplemented by outstanding images of human snakebite victims and the sequelae of certain therapies (eg, fasciotomy). The index, however, is not as comprehensive as it could be. For instance, it does not have entries for “electric” or “shock,” although electric shock as a therapeutic maneuver is discussed (and appropriately condemned) in the text.

I cannot imagine that any students or aficionados of snakes would consider their library complete without *The Venomous Reptiles of the Western Hemisphere*. This definitive book is destined to become a classic. I highly recommend it to any person who has a more-than-casual interest in snakebite, and it will be a useful guide for those persons who are called upon to “look in the sack” and determine if the biter is a venomous species. I would love to see the authors continue their

efforts and produce additional volumes that cover reptiles around the globe.

Paul S. Auerbach, MD
Los Altos, CA, USA

Tigers of the Snow: How One Fateful Climb Made the Sherpas Mountaineering Legends

Jonathan Neale
New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 2002
US \$26.95, 320 pages, hardcover

Life and Death on Mt Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering

Sherry B. Ortner
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999
US \$23.95, 392 pages, softcover

The Sherpa people are one of many ethnic groups indigenous to Nepal. From relative obscurity among Westerners, they have become famous over the past century for their work as porters and guides on trekking and mountaineering expeditions in Nepal, Tibet, India, and Pakistan. The word *Sherpa* has come to refer not only to members of an ethnic group, but also to high-altitude porters and guides in general. Their capacity for hard work at high altitudes and their cheerful attitudes are legendary.

After several encounters with ethnic Sherpas while on treks and on mountaineering expeditions, I had the great fortune to live with them in the Khumbu region (Mt Everest region) for periods as long as 3 months at a time, starting in 1989. I knew a number of Sherpas as pleasant companions on mountain adventures and as friends and coworkers at the Himalayan Rescue Association aid post at Pheriche, yet I had little idea about their society and beliefs. It was not until I read the famous ethnography *Sherpas of Nepal: Buddhist Highlanders* by Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf¹ that I began to appreciate the richness of their culture.

A chance meeting with anthropologist Bruce Morrison at the Kathmandu Guest House in 1991 led to my chance to do a little fieldwork. Bruce has been working on an opus magnum about Sherpas and mountaineering for over 15 years but has experienced some interruptions. In the meanwhile, he has edited a textbook on indigenous peoples of Canada² and a book on wheelwrights and is writing a biography of Andy Russell.³ Bruce was