Book Review

Australia's Dangerous Snakes—Identification, Biology, and Envenoming

Peter Mirtschin, Arne R. Rasmussen,

Scott A. Weinstein

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Australia is famous for its unique and often dangerous animal life, and especially its venomous snakes. *Australia's Dangerous Snakes* provides an in-depth look into the lives of this iconic group of animals.

More than 100 terrestrial and 30 marine species of venomous snakes inhabit this island continent and the waters surrounding it; these include some of the world's most deadly serpents. The book reviews the biology, natural history, behavior, and health risks of Australian snake species that are dangerous to humans, including the production, actions, and uses of their venoms and the clinical management of their bites. Something not usually seen in books about venomous snakes and a particular strength of this book is its discussion of the essential roles these animals play in their ecosystems.

After a short introduction, Chapter 2 discusses the public health significance and relative danger of snakes and snakebites. Chapters 3 through 5 then cover in much detail the morphology, identification, and distribution of the species most dangerous to humans. These 3 chapters constitute 40% of the book. Chapter 6 reviews the declining numbers of snakes and conservation efforts to combat the many existential threats facing some of these species. Chapters 7 and 8 will likely be of most interest to medically oriented readers insofar as they discuss

envenomation and the various snake venoms, as well as the first response to, clinical management of, and complications of bites from these species. Although the discussion of snakebite medical management is substantive, many clinicians will want to have ready access to other clinical references when managing bites from these species, especially when managing their diverse complications. The body of the book concludes with a chapter on snake-human interactions. This is followed by an appendix on Australian antivenoms and snake handling, a glossary, a 45-page bibliography, and an index. I was disappointed that the many references are not linked to the content of the chapters, precluding the ability to easily access references supporting individual statements or data cited in the text.

Australia's Dangerous Snakes is a substantive, fact-filled, and easy-to-read book. The clear and straightforward text is robustly augmented by photographs, species distribution maps, tables, and other illustrations. The book will be equally at home on a herpetologist's laboratory bookshelf or an outdoor adventurer's living room coffee table. The book may be of particularly keen interest to herpetologists and other snake aficionados, but physicians, toxicologists, and other healthcare professionals who have an interest in snakebites—as well as zoo personnel, outdoor enthusiasts exploring Australia, and anyone else wanting detailed information about Australia's dangerous snakes—will find the book to be a rich resource.

Kenneth W. Kizer, MD, MPH
Atlas Research, LLC
Washington, DC