



Snakes: The Evolution of Mystery in Nature (Director's Circle Book of the Associates of the University o)

By Harry W. Greene

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This is a book about some of nature's most alluring and forbidding creatures, written by a man with an abiding passion for snakes, as well as for science, the fate of the planet, and the wonder of life. Harry Greene presents every facet of the natural history of snakes—their diversity, evolution, and conservation—and at the same time makes a personal statement of why these animals are so compelling.

This book provides an up-to-date summary of the biology of snakes on a global basis. Eight chapters are devoted to general biology topics, including anatomy, feeding, venoms, predation and defense, social behavior, reproduction, evolution, and conservation; eight chapters survey the major snake groups, including blindsnakes, boas, colubrids, stiletto snakes, cobras, sea snakes, and vipers. Details of particular interest, such as coral snake mimicry and the evolution of the rattle, are highlighted as special topics. Chapter introductory essays are filled with anecdotes that will tempt nonspecialists to read on, while the book's wealth of comprehensive information will gratify herpeto-culturalists and professional biologists.

Greene's writing is clear, engaging, and full of appreciation for his subject. Michael and Patricia Fogden are known internationally for their outstanding work, and their stunning color photographs of snakes in their natural habitats are a brilliant complement to Greene's text. Here is a scientific book that provides accurate information in an accessible way to general readers, strongly advocates for a persecuted group of animals, encourages conservation—not just of snakes but of ecosystems—and credits science for enriching our lives. In helping readers explore the role of snakes in human experience, Greene and the Fogdens show how science and art can be mutual pathways to understanding.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Herpetologists are sure to rejoice at this information-dense study of the world's snakes, illustrated with more than 200 photographs of the reptiles in action. Harry W. Greene offers life histories of cobras and adders, of rattlers and constrictors, showing the astonishing variety in what is, all in all, a fairly simple form. He discusses snake locomotion, adaptation, coloration, nomenclature, mimicry, and habits; and he offers a rigorous account of herp physiology, all the while peppering his scientific prose with personal notes on encounters with sometimes testy subjects around the world. He ends his absorbing book with a detailed discussion of issues in snake conservation, especially identifying and protecting key habitats that are in danger owing to human economic development.

From School Library Journal

Magnificent photographs enrich this anecdotal and scholarly narrative that lifts the lowly snake to loftier heights by presenting its unique evolutionary story.

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From Library Journal

A lifelong craving to uncover every aspect of serpents' lives is the rootstock of this book. Greene, a professor and museum herpetology curator at Berkeley, draws from his academic research and extensive field work to delve into the specialized biology and ecology of snakes. Throughout, facts on the form, function, habitat, and evolution of these reptiles are mixed with the author's experiences, and the over 200 natural-setting color photographs that complement the text are commendable in their own right. As with most good nature writing, this book transcends its topic, giving insight into the intricacies of life and the workings of science. Some 800 citations and a highly detailed index make this book valuable to specialists. Reptile fanciers won't be the only ones captivated by this book, but its appeal will be limited to the serious wildlife reader. Highly recommended for academic and larger public libraries. ?Frank Reiser, Nassau Community Coll., Garden City, N.Y.

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