

ADLER, KRAIG (ed. 2007): Contributions to the History of Herpetology, Volume 2. – Ithaca, New York, USA, Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, 389 pp. ISBN: 978-0-916984-71-7. 65,- \$.

Like the DGHT, our major US sister society, the “Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR)”, strives to further the knowledge of amphibians and reptiles by making available a wide variety of publications, including, for example, the two renown journals “Journal of Herpetology” and “Herpetological Review”. A particularly laudable initiative of the SSAR is the facsimile reprinting of difficult-to-access herpetological standard references. As only one such example may serve LEOPOLD FITZINGER’s (1802-1884) “Systema Reptilium” dating back to 1843, which is the original source of numerous generic names, many of which are still valid today.

How important the roots of our science are to the SSAR was also demonstrated by their publishing KRAIG ADLER’s “Contributions to the History of Herpetology”, a book that was issued in 1989 on occasion of the 1st World Congress of Herpetology in Canterbury. Comprising 202 pages, it provided biographic data for 152 herpetologists, beginning with the famous naturalist CONRAD GESSNER (1516-1565) of Zurich, and ending with the Spanish-Argentine herpetologist AVELINO BARRIO (1920-1979). The volume included both persons who dedicated their entire lives to herpetology, like ROBERT MERTENS (1894-1975) for example, and those for whom herpetology was merely a marginal aspect of their actual activity, as was the case with the famous CARL VON LINNÉ (1707-1778). These portraits were not strictly limited to scientists either, but also included some prominent amateur herpetologists and terrarium keepers, such as WILHELM KLINGELHÖFFER (1871-1953) or ZDENĚK VOGEL (1913-1986). As far as is known, the personal and scientific careers and the most important scientific works of the individual persons are portrayed. Every biography furthermore includes an autograph and, in most of the cases, a portrait. The latter was impossible to trace in only three instances: for the French explorer of Indochina, RENÉ BOURRET (1884-1957), and, unfortunately, also for two famous authors of well-known valid taxa, JOSEPHUS NICOLAUS LAURENTI (1735-1805) and FRANÇOIS-MARIE DAUDIN (1774-1804). These biographies are followed first by a list of authors of herpetological taxa that was compiled by JOHN S. APPLGARTH, and then by an overview

of herpetological schools per country by RONALD ALTIG.

The year 2007 saw the SSAR celebrate their fiftieth year of existence. On occasion of the anniversary congress in Saint Louis, KRAIG ADLER presented his “Contributions to the History of Herpetology, Volume 2”. This sequel follows its predecessor in both external appearance and internal structure. Containing 285 biographies on a total of 389 pages, it is almost twice as voluminous, however. The biographic portrayals of the individual persons conform to the proven concept of the first volume as well. While CONRAD GESSNER appeared as the sole “father” of herpetology in the first volume, he is now joined by three Italian researchers: NICOLÒ LEONICENO (1428-1524), PANDOLFO COLLENUCCIO (1444-1504), and the famous ULISSE ALDROVANDI (1522-1605). The biographic section ends with a portrayal of the US-herpetologist JOSEPH B. SLOWINSKI (1962-2001) who succumbed to the bite of a krait (*Bungarus multicinctus*) in northern Myanmar (Burma) on 12 September 2001. Interestingly enough, the sequence of the biographies in both volumes does not follow the years of birth or death of the portrayed persons, but rather the year of their first herpetological publication.

Portraits of German herpetologists feature quite prominently in both volumes, accounting for 28% in the first volume. By comparison, US-Americans are represented for 23%, Brits and French for 11% each, and Italians and Russians for 3% each. The biographies contained in the second volume still refer for 17% to herpetologists from the German-speaking part of Europe. While the first volume took the honour of being the first book that was solely dedicated to presenting biographies of herpetologists, KRAIG ADLER has managed with his second volume to complement it in an excellent manner, adding major personalities such as PETER SIMON PALLAS (1741-1811), EDUARD EVERSMANN (1794-1860), and WILLY WOLTERSTORFF (1864-1943). Furthermore included are of course researchers who have died since the appearance of the first volume, as was the case, for example, with MARTIN EISENTRAUT (1902-1994), JOSEF EISELT (1912-2001), and HEINZ WERMUTH (1918-2002).

For the intended third volume, I would personally wish that space be found for more personalities of historical importance. Names such as EGID SCHREIBER (1836-1913), the author of the “Herpetologia europaea”, BRUNO DÜRIGEN (1853-1930), author of “Deutschlands Amphibien und Reptilien”, and HANS-GÜNTER PETZOLD (1931-1982), author

Book Review

of "Aufgaben und Probleme bei der Erforschung der Lebensäußerungen der niederen Amnioten (Reptilien)", come to mind spontaneously.

The herpetological achievements of the portrayed personalities take of course centre stage in the biographies. But KRAIG ADLER also relays the stories of the humans behind the stories and their social activities. In this fashion, it is for example mentioned that WILLY WOLTERSTORFF lost his hearing due to an illness just as well as his being very much involved in founding the "Salamander", the predecessor of today's DGHT, in which scientists and amateurs would find a common platform right from its inception.

In this volume, the biographies are again followed by an overview of authors of herpetological taxa compiled by JOHN S. APPEGARTH. It now also contains persons living today, providing name, date of birth (also the date of death where

applicable), country, and focus animal group. This list contains a total of not less than 3603 (!) names of persons. The book ends once more with an overview of herpetological schools by RONALD ALTIG, which serves as a source of information for where herpetologists of name received their education and earned their first merits.

Those who have tackled biographic research themselves will know what an immense effort it sometimes takes to retrieve data. It cannot therefore be praised enough what KRAIG ADLER and his co-workers have pieced together and thus made available to every reader. It is something they can only be congratulated on. The book must be recommended to everybody who takes an interest beyond the actual amphibians and reptiles and also wants to learn something about the people who have dedicated themselves to their study.

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