

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

Franz Werner (1867–1939)

Franz Werner was born and raised in Vienna. At the age of six, his father presented him with a little glass terrarium in which a Green Treefrog (*Hyla arborea*) was supposed to forecast the weather by selecting perches on a miniature step ladder provided for that purpose. A common European Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) soon joined the treefrog — and a lifelong interest in herpetology was established.

Werner studied zoology at the University of Vienna, receiving his doctorate in 1890. He studied briefly in Leipzig before moving back to Vienna in 1895 to accept an appointment at the Imperial Zoological Institute at the university. He rose to full professor in 1919, retired in 1933, and died in 1939.

Despite an inability to work with the herpetological collection at the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna, due to the personal animosity of the director, Franz Steindachner, who may have perceived Werner as a competitor, Werner used material from other European

museums and those in his personal collection to publish over 550 titles, most in herpetology. He described 24 genera and over 400 species and subspecies of amphibians and reptiles. Although he occasionally erred in describing as new well-known species based on specimens with poor or erroneous locality data, most of his work was quite competent.

Werner's major works included faunal surveys of Austria-Hungary (1897), the Bismarck Archipelago east of New Guinea (1900), and Greece (1938). Taxonomic monographs included one on chameleons (1902), a three-part series on colubrid

snakes (1923, 1924, 1929), several issues in the *Das Tierreich* series, and the two herpetological volumes in the fourth edition of Alfred Brehm's "Tierleben" series (1912–1913), from which the current and recent excerpts were taken. He also wrote the section on amphibians for the *Handbuch der Zoologie* (1930) and, with Rodolpho Kraus, the standard work on venoms and venomous snakes (1931).

Unlike many scientists, Werner was not averse to popular or semi-popular writing.

His efforts along those lines, particularly a little volume entitled "Amphibien und Reptilien" (1910), did much to develop an interest in herpetology among German-speaking people, to encourage amateurs, and to stimulate and inspire young zoologists.

Sources:

Adler, K. 1989. Herpetologists of the past, pp. 5–141. In: K. Adler (ed.), *Contributions to the History of Herpetology*. Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, Contributions to Herpetology, Number 5. Ithaca, New York.

Mosauer, W. 1940. Franz Werner (1867–1939). *Herpetologica* 1:178–183.



Franz Werner with a *Boa constrictor* (photograph courtesy of Kraig Adler).



Franz Werner at Djebel Zalagh, near Fes, Morocco in 1928 (photograph courtesy of Kraig Adler).