



BOOK REVIEW

Spectacular Treeboas

Natural History of Neotropical Treeboas (genus Corallus). 2015. Robert W. Henderson. Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. 338 pp. Hardcover — ISBN 978-3-89973-438-6. €68.00 (~\$80.00).

With the publication of his latest profusely illustrated book, Robert W. Henderson not only gives us an excellent synopsis of the past research associated with these beautiful snakes, but also the benefits of his 25 years of passion and experience hunting treeboas throughout the southern Windward Islands and Central and South America.

Browsing through the book, I was genuinely astonished at the beauty and quality of the photographs that serve as an introduction to the genus *Corallus* and which later illustrate the major chapters of the book. In fact, assembling such a remarkable portrait gallery of these beautiful boas was in itself a major accomplishment. The natural colorations of some of these species are so outrageous that they rival the lurid photographic depictions of snakes in *Fascination* by Fred Kundert published more than 40 years ago.

Short sections on methodology and a key to the genus segue into brief definitions and distributions of the nine species. The real fun, however, begins in the following sections, where the book is subdivided into larger general chapters such as color and pattern, habitat use, activity, diet, and reproduction, and it is within these areas that the natural history of treeboas is revealed. Aside from descriptions of habitat and range maps, Henderson provides considerable scientific analyses of prey selection, foraging strategies, habitat selection, and similar topics relevant to the natural history of these snakes. Accompanying these sections are nice photographs of habitat, remarkable illustrations of prey capture, and graphical treatments of scientific information.

As in any generic-level treatment of a group of animals, much more information and scientific analysis is provided on some species, such as *C. grenadensis*, than others, for example, the bizarre *C. cropanii* — known from only five specimens from the rapidly disappearing Atlantic coastal forests near São Paulo, Brazil. What, however, impressed me most about this book is that it is exactly the type of publication that can and should inform conservation policy. The author's intimate knowledge of the life histories of these species, the habitats in which they are most likely encountered, and the natural and anthropogenic threats that they face can serve as the basis for development of informed conservation strategies. The

statistics on habitat loss, exploitation for the pet trade, and personal experience with population declines at well-studied localities are particularly sobering.

Despite the author's disclaimer that he does not "write well enough to provide a successful armchair ... experience," he has distilled the scientific literature and his own experiences with these snakes into a highly readable and enjoyable account that will be welcomed by every biologist and enthusiast lucky enough to be working with boid snakes.

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