



BOOK REVIEW

Women in Herpetology

Steven J. R. Allain

Writtle School of Agriculture, Animal and Environmental Sciences, Anglia Ruskin University, Lordship Road, Writtle, Chelmsford, CM1 3RR, United Kingdom (steveallain@live.co.uk)

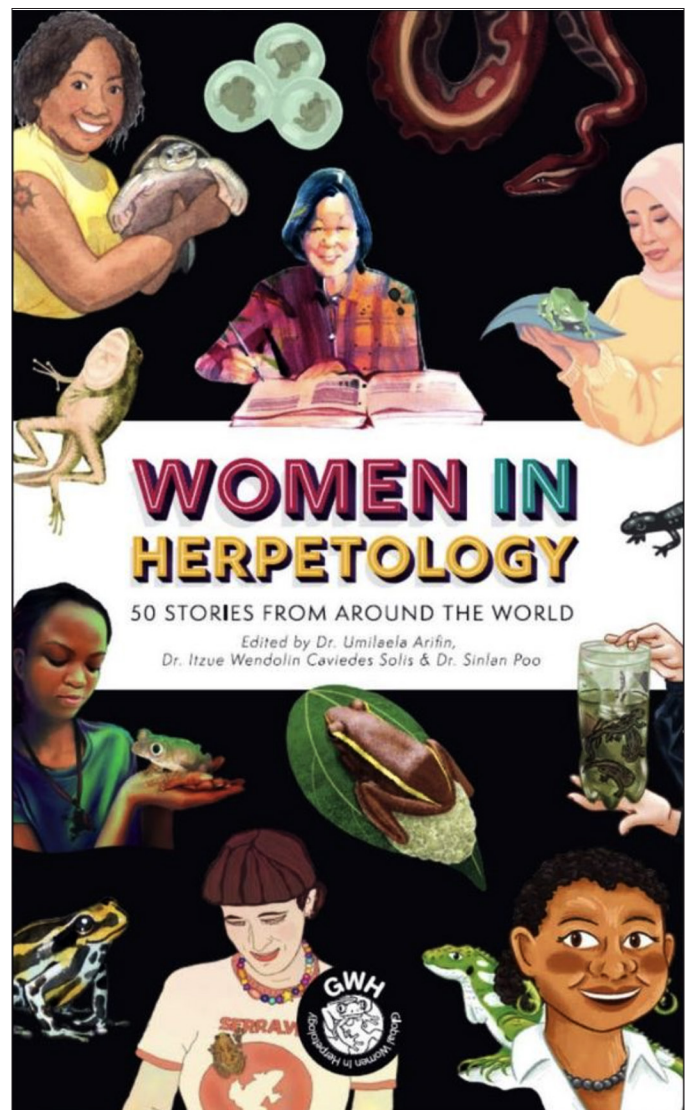
Women in Herpetology. 50 Stories from Around the World. 2023. Umilaela Arifin, Itzue Wendolin Caviedes Solis, and Sinlan Poo (eds). Lulu Press, Inc., Durham, North Carolina, USA. 323 pp., 50 illustrations, 6 maps. Paperback – ISBN 9798988585909. \$27.99.

Like most fields of science, herpetology has historically been dominated by men due to societal structures, traditions, or cultures that have existed in the establishments where research has been conducted. However, if you attend conferences as often as I do, you quickly notice that the tide is turning. More and more women have become involved in herpetology through their studies, and are pursuing careers in the field. In order to help elevate the voices of these women working in various herpetological subjects, the Global Women in Herpetology (GWH) project was born, with one of the products being the very book currently in front of me. Founded by the editors, GWH aims to provide role models to women in countries where representation is lacking at all career stages, inspire hope, provide funding via scholarships so women from marginalized regions can attend conferences, and act as a network to bring researchers together.

As someone who pursued his academic training in a developed nation, I am aware of a number of women active in herpetology in the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, and other similar nations. At conferences, I have met a number of outstanding women scientists from regions such as southeastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where representation is far lower than in Europe and North America. However, Global Women in Herpetology is working to change that, in part with the publication of *Women in Herpetology*.

For users of the social media website X (formerly Twitter), I am sure many of you can remember the myriad posts from herpetologists around the world using the hashtag #HERper, following Women in Science Day 2020. In my mind, *Women in Herpetology* is a spiritual successor to this online campaign to raise awareness of the unequal representation in our field.

This book gathers the stories of journeys submitted by 50 authors from around the world, with each representing their home country regardless of where they live or work today. This encompasses more than a fourth of the countries of the world, with each contributor having entered herpetology via a different route, depending on their culture and background. Collectively, *Women in Herpetology* shines a spotlight on a small



number of the women working in our field from around the world. Each story is complimented with a short biography of the author describing their academic journeys and current roles, fun facts about that person, their favourite amphibian or reptile from their home country, and their contact information.

These captivating stories of female herpetologists working in diverse fields across the globe, including field and laboratory research, conservation, and education, offer valuable insights for those who aspire to similar goals. To me, one of the most important factors highlighted in *Women in Herpetology* is noting the ever-present challenges one must face to achieve those goals. Some are unique to a given situation and some of the authors touch on these, but a lack of suitable resources or mentorship opportunities are common hurdles that need to be overcome before that particular researcher can progress. Humour abounds as each author

relives her journey, the rewards they accrue from their work, and copious amounts of inspiration. I was impressed to see so many women sharing their stories, what motivates them, and their goals to help act as a source of inspiration.

As a community, we have come together due to our shared love of reptiles and amphibians, whether that be academic or not. *Women in Herpetology* helps enlighten readers about the rich and diverse landscapes from which herpetologists can come, which match those of our study species in terms of diversity. An excellent touch is the vibrant illustrations of each of the women featured throughout, which often show them actively engaged with the species that means the most to them or for which they are best known. By breaking down barriers in academia through the awareness shared through books like this, I hope to see herpetology become even more diverse in the future.