

BOOKREVIEW

Met gespleten tong. Zoo Informatie 2 van het Noorder Dierenpark.

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Nice books on herpetology do not need to be large and expensive. For instance, sending a postal cheque of only f 10,- to the Noorder Dierenpark, Postbus 1010, 7801 BA Emmen in the Netherlands gets you a nice little Dutch booklet, written on the occasion of the opening of the Asia house of the most beautiful zoo I have ever seen. The 24 pages of text and 8 pages of beautiful colour pictures are interesting enough for even the most dyed-in-the-wool herpetologists.

First the text, which is shaped in the form of a snake, coiling 24 pages long and giving lots of information on herpetology. The introduction with remarks on the position of snakes in mythologie and religion and some remarks on specialities of snakes is followed by a few chapters of which the titles indicate something of the contents: *Worshipped and abused*, about the ambiguous human attitude towards snakes; *No leg to stand on*, a chapter on herpetological archeology and physiology; in *A lot of species and sizes* the reader finds information on the huge diversity in the herpetological world and on some qualities of a few families. The chapter *Lering and tracing* is a completion of the former chapter and gives details on feeding and hunting. *Deadly perfection* tells the reader about the toxological aspects of poisonous snakes; *To swallow of to stick* learns more about the culinary needs of snakes, and the chapter titled *Its own fault* is less pleasant to read, as it gives examples of the tragic end of some snakes. *Courtship* of-course, deals with courting and mating, and this chapter is logically followed by *Viperous brood*, about egg laying, ovoviparity and breeding.

As the textual snake emaciates in this last chapter, the reader notices that the text is getting to its end. The last tip of the tail is formed by the name of the author: **J.M. Meulemans**, who finished his manuscript in June 1991. And he has done a marvellous job.

Not only the text, but also the pictures are of an outstanding quality. The 12 pages with full colour pictures are first class. The climax of these pages is formed by a photograph over 2 pages, showing a *Python sebae* swallowing an antelope. As a matter of fact I red some time ago a description of this incident, written by Klaus Zimniok. He mentioned a photo series in *Das Tier*, which caused some excitement in 1982. From this text I learned that the snake, before starting her meal, cracked the antlers of the Thomson's Gazelle (Zimniok, 1984, page 30). It is nice to complete this description with the picture.

Because the textual snake only fills the middle of the pages, there is a lot of spare room left in the margin. This margin is used for a lot of small photographs illustrating the text. Perhaps more experienced herpetologists know of these pictures, to me they were all new.

One critical note: during reading I wondered where the author had found all his information. Undoubtly he has used sources which can give more information, but he does not give any references. That is why I invite the author to write about his sources in this magazine, so that the readers of *Litteratura Serpenti* can profit from them.

To end, one remark on the occasion of the publishing of this booklet: the opening of the Asia House in the Noorder Dierenpark in Emmen. This Asia House has a few dozens of snakes (the book mentions one hundred, but I did not count so many). These snakes are housed

in large terrariums, which are decorated excessively. So excessively that it is even pretty difficult to find five *Trimeresurus albolabris* in a room of a few cubic metres.

The exposition in the Asia House also contains an educational part: in show cases the visitor gets information on all kinds of herpetological matters. This educational part, which is found anywhere in the zoo, makes the Noorder Dierenpark in my eyes one of the best zoos I know.

The Asia House is managed by Eddy Even, a name which might sound familiar to the readers of *Litteratura Serpentium* (see References). His enthusiasm and skill guarantee that the Asia House and the Africa House (with *Python* and *Dasypeltis*) will be maintained at a high standard.

REFERENCES

- Even, E. 1989. Care and repeated breeding of the green rat snake (*Gonyosoma oxycephala*). *Litteratura Serpentium* Vol. 9 (4): 145-155.
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- Zimniok, Kl., 1984. Die Schlange, das unbekannte Wesen. Hannover.