



BOOK REVIEW

by Anton van Woerkom

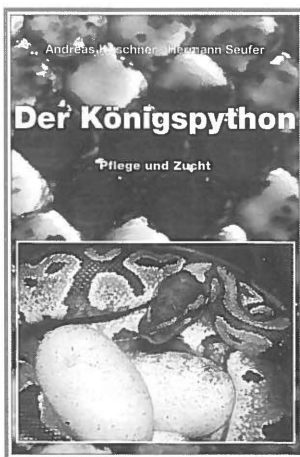
Der Königspython - Pflege und Zucht,
by Andreas Kirschner and Hermann Seuffer.
Kirschner & Seuffer Verlag, Keltern-Weiler,
Germany, 1995. Pp 1-71, 17 full colour photos,
5 black and white photos and 1 map. Size:
21x5 cm. Price: unknown

This book is dedicated to John van der Pols. I knew him well and appreciated him very much. It feels good to realize that he hasn't been forgotten, although he died more than eight years ago. Perhaps his name doesn't mean very much to new members of the European Snake Society, but I would like to refer them to a previous article that I wrote about John in *Litteratura Serpentina* (Van Woerkom, 1988). Now something about the book. The introduction and a chapter on the snake's name are followed by some interesting chapters on sizes, weights and colour varieties. Then, after three somewhat poorer chapters on the area of distribution, biotope and climate, we get to the more practical part for the snake keeper: how to house the Royal Python. Indispensable information is given in two chapters: 'points to pay attention to when buying Royal Pythons' and 'how to get them to eat' (these two chap-

ters together take eleven pages). And these eleven pages are necessary, because the rate of imported Royal Pythons to captive bred Royal Pythons is still 50:1! The next chapter 'Diseases' (10 pages) is again a chapter which should be well studied before buying animals in a pet shop. Quite rightly the authors warn the reader not to 'doctor around', but to take the advice of a Vet who has experience with reptiles. However, it is quite an omission that the authors do not even mention the successful treatment of mouth rot in Boidae as described by John van der Pols (Van der Pols, 1980). Breeding however is described extensively (17 pages).

I hope a lot of snake keepers will be stimulated as they read this. The sex of the Royal Python can only be determined by probing half grown and adult animals. This should always be done by someone with experience in sexing snakes. In this point I totally agree with the authors, but I miss the instructions to work with sterilized (in boiling water or microwave) or at least disinfected (in 70% of alcohol) instruments. Even material to lubricate the equipment is not mentioned. The authors are disappointed that breeding reports do not

give any information on the size of egg or litter, size and weight of the female snake or the period of laying eggs. This however is not fair to all these authors who have given notice of their breeding results: Kirschner



and Seuffer neglect to give their own result too! Otherwise, in the chapter about raising the young snakes I miss graphs or tables on growth and weight. And as a matter of fact, all available information is necessary for further discussion.

To end my review, I would like to make a critical note on the literature references. These should be placed at the end of every article or book.

But it is my opinion that these references should at least give some more information on the contents of the referred article. For 'Langeveld: *Python regius* from first generation to second generation in captivity' the content of the article is clear, but as for 'Krapp: Übrige Erd- und Baumhörnchen' or 'Zwart: Kongenitale Wirbeldeformitäten bei *Thamnophis radix*' this is obviously not the case.

Furthermore there is some carelessness in the (literature) references, for instance on page 8, where a complete line has been dropped in a reference to Stimson (Liste der rezenten Amphibien und Reptilien, Das Tierreich, Lieferung 8). This kind of carelessness can also be found in the bibliography (but I will not bother the reader with it).

All in all, I must admit that I like this book very much. It looks very nice and the snake keeper may consider it an almost complete book on the Royal Python. But it is a pity that the publisher has not chosen for a bounded edition. But still, I strongly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the Royal Python.

■ LITERATURE

Pols, J.J. van der, (1980) Mondvuil (*Stomatitis ulcerosa*) bij slangen. *Litteratura Serpentina* 1 (1): 9-13.

Woerkom, A.B. van, (1988.) In memoriam John van der Pols, 25-5-1958 to 27-2-1988. *Litteratura Serpentina* 8 (6): 238-243.

Translated by Jan-Cor Jacobs

English correction by Chris Mattison.