

Editor's note

Special issue:

Studies in the History of Herpetological Exploration

This volume had its beginnings nearly a decade ago, with the suggestion of one of the contributors, Liliane BODSON, that a symposium on the History of Herpetology be organized at the Third World Congress of Herpetology in Prague, Czech Republic. Another of the contributors, Kraig ADLER, was enlisted as co-organizer of the symposium and the focal theme "Herpetological Expeditions and Voyages" was selected.

The symposium was held in the afternoon of 3 August 1997 and included eight presentations as follows:

- Early Herpetological Travels in South America by M. S. HOOGMOED and T. C. S. DE AVILA-PIRES
- America's First Herpetological Expedition: William BARTRAM's Travels in the American Southeast by K. ADLER
- Early Herpetological Journeys and the Resulting Research in the Dutch East Indies between 1820 and 1850 by M. S. HOOGMOED
- The HORN Expedition to Central Australia in 1894: A New Direction in Australian Herpetology by G. SHEA
- History of Herpetological Studies in Jordan by Z. S. AMR
- A Report on Herpetological Specimens from the Stathouder Collection in the National Museum of Natural History, Paris by M. THIREAU and R. G. SPRACKLAND
- Early Herpetological Collections from Southern Africa in the Zoological Museum of Berlin by A. M. BAUER
- A Python for the King. Remarks on a 3rd Century B.C. Herpetological Expedition by L. BODSON

The symposium contributions thus included papers dealing with each of the continents inhabited by amphibians and reptiles and spanned from the ancient period almost to the present. Arrangements were made by the organizers and Marinus HOOGMOED, then of the Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum in Leiden, to edit and publish the contributions. However, several authors chose to publish their contributions elsewhere and several additional papers were solicited by these original editors to maintain a geographic balance in the work as a whole. As is often the case in the publication of symposia, delays of various types arose and progress on the publication of the symposium slowed.

In 2003 when it became clear that the original plans for publication would have to be abandoned, I contacted the authors of the eight manuscripts that had been submitted some years previously and suggested that the papers be updated as necessary and submitted to *Bonner zoologische Beiträge* for publication. All of the contributors were willing to do this and in the relatively short span of about six months, the new manuscripts were submitted, sent for review, and revised again. The result is the diverse array of papers presented in this volume. Although neither geographically nor temporally comprehensive in scope, the contributions nonetheless cover a period of several thousand years and deal with herpetological exploration and collecting in North and South Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Australia, the West Indies, Mexico, and the United States. Although some of the contributions are true to the original theme of "Herpetological Expeditions and Voyages", others more broadly review the progress of herpetology on a regional or national basis. For this reason the present special issue of *Bonner zoologische Beiträge* bears the more general title "Studies in the History of Herpetological Exploration".

I am grateful to Wolfgang BÖHME for encouraging me to publish the results of the symposium in *Bonner zoologische Beiträge* and to Michael SCHMITT for devoting this issue of the journal to this rather specialized topic. I thank the contributors for their promptness in preparing their own papers and for their willingness to serve as reviewers for others. In addition I extend my thanks to the following "external" reviewers for their comments on the manuscripts: Michael BATES, Wolfgang BÖHME, Donald G. BROADLEY, J. Whitfield GIBBONS, L. Lee GRISMER, Marinus HOOGMOED, Robert F. INGER, Adrienne MAYOR, Sarah A. SMITH, and Van WALLACH.

Herpetologists, as a group, tend to be especially interested in the historical aspects of their discipline and it is hoped that the present volume will increase their appreciation for this subject. Moreover, nearly all of the people and events discussed in this volume have relevance for the history of other fields of zoology and natural history in general. As such I hope that this special issue will appeal to the broader readership of *Bonner zoologische Beiträge*.

Aaron M. BAUER

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Zeitschrift/Journal: [Bonn zoological Bulletin - früher Bonner Zoologische Beiträge.](#)

Jahr/Year: 2004

Band/Volume: [52](#)

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