

Neotropical Treeboas- Natural History of the *Corallus hortulanus* Complex, by Robert W. Henderson. 2002. Krieger Publishing Co., P.O. Box 9542, Melbourne, FL 32902-9542. 228 pp. Hardcover. US \$ 44.50. ISBN 1-57524-038-6.

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With more and more books being published on the subject of herpetology, titles and subjects covered are becoming more specialized. That is certainly the case with Bob Henderson's new book on one group of tree boas within the genus *Corallus*. The primary focus of a very detailed and scholarly work is the "Corallus hortulanus Complex" which since 1996 is comprised of the following species: *Corallus cookii* (St. Vincent Island), *C. grenadensis* (the Granada Bank), *C. hortulanus* (Amazonia, Guianas, and SE Brazil) and *C. ruschenbergerii* (Costa Rica, Panama, northern Colombia and Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago). *Corallus hortulanus* was previously referred to as *C. enydris* and has by far the widest distribution. Henderson has studied *C. grenadensis* in the field for the past 17 years and his writing concentrates on the huge amount of data he has collected on this particular species. But this book is much more.

There are 10 Chapters in all which are entitled: Introduction, Methods, Species, and Study Sites; Color and Pattern, Meristic Characters, and Size; Habitat Selection and Use; Activity; Food and Foraging; Predators and Defensive Behavior; Reproduction; Populations; Ecological Relationships with Other Boids; and finally, Treeboas and Humans. Additional sections are Literature Cited and Additional *Corallus hortulanus* Complex Literature, and these alone are valuable resources.

Each of the four species is dealt with individually and at length, and this is the heart of the book. However, the Chapter on "Ecological Relationships with Other Boas" was what I particularly liked and its presence may be overlooked by those who shop by title only. Using text and extensive Tables, Henderson provides a wonderful overview of the 22 species of boines known to inhabit the American tropics from northern Mexico to southern South America, including many island populations. There is a summary for each on distribution, size, habitat and diet for Neotropical boines. The prey that has been recorded for each species is listed in an extensive Table.

The *hortulanus* complex of treeboas are known for their extreme variation in both color and pattern. There are 32 Plates (two to a page) showing this amazing variation, and not only that, the locality is given for the individuals depicted which increases the value of these photos. For herpetoculturists it may be possible to confirm or figure out where the treeboa they have or wish to have, may have originated. There are also many black and white photos, especially of the habitat where treeboas are found.

Any professional herpetologist interested in snakes will want this classic book in their library. Herpetoculturists who like boas in general will find this book a wonderful source of information. Treeboas as a group show such variation in color and pattern that these traits alone make them fun to keep and breed. Henderson deals with all aspects of their physical being. In addition, their natural history and its variation between and within species is

described with detail and thoroughness. Although there are many Figures and Tables of data, the writing is clear and flowing so that one can stop for the details of data or read on without that digression.

Photos in several other books show the Emerald Treeboa (*C. caninus*) eating a pre-killed parakeet in a controlled situation and the same snake/prey situation has also appeared on commercial natural history television programs on the Amazon Basin. Although some treeboa species do include birds as a component of their diet, Emerald Treeboas do not. Perhaps there is a chance that this book may now put that myth to rest.

In the final Chapter, "Treeboas and Humans" there is fascinating information on how humans have interacted with treeboas, beginning about 15,000 years ago. Besides killing them, animals were introduced which killed Treeboas as prey or became new prey for the snake. Over the years, plantations have replaced their forest. In recent years, 18,000 *C. hortulanus* have been exported to the pet industry.

Herpetoculturists are keeping several species of treeboa and working especially with the red, orange, and yellow color phases. A litter of captive born treeboas with a number of color phases taken to a show in San Diego recently, sold out immediately as they were a big hit (Rich Ihle pers. comm. 2002). In the past, imported treeboas predominated but this is beginning to change with more captive born treeboas showing up (Danny Mendez pers. comm. 2002). There will undoubtedly be a growing market for the more spectacular patterned and colored animals.

This is a fine book and I highly recommend it to every herpetologist, especially those interested in snakes. Serious herpetoculturists will also find this book interesting and valuable. Although some may be intimidated by the level of scientific writing, they shouldn't be, since the natural history and other interesting topics are easily assimilated and enjoyed.

