

Tarantulas of Belize by Steven B. Reichling. 2003. Krieger Publishing Co., P.O. Box 9542, Melbourne FL 32902-9542. 148 pp. U.S. \$29.50 (Cloth) ISBN 1-57524-038-6, \$21.95 (Paper) ISBN 1-57524-228-1.

Renee S. Lizotte

Arthropod Keeper
Department of Herpetology, Ichthyology and Invertebrate Zoology
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

Tarantulas of Belize is a very readable natural history journey. The writing flows very well and even the preface is enjoyable. The book is divided into 13 Chapters, the first ten of which give a wonderful overview of arachnology in the field.

In the first chapter, we read about the author's early experiences in Belize and some of the challenges of fieldwork. In excerpts from his field journal, we learn how the author discovered tarantulas in Belize. It is both compelling and humorous. I was ready to head to Belize immediately. In the second chapter the author gives us an overview on the habitats found within Belize.

Continuing into the third chapter, the author gives us a good introduction to spider classification and where tarantulas fit into the scheme. There was one glaring mistake in the third chapter when the author stated that "spiders, along with crustaceans are the only extant members of a group known as the chelicerates." The extant members of the chelicerates include the Arachnids (spiders, scorpions, and their relatives), and the horseshoe crabs. Crustaceans are members of the mandibulates. Other than that mistake, the chapter has accurate and pertinent information on spider biology.

In chapter four, the author tackles the challenge of tarantula public relations. He includes a good discussion on environmental ethics without coming across as preachy or arrogant, which can be quite difficult. Chapter five gives us a good discussion of the protection some tarantulas are provided and the reasons for it. It goes into the problem of over-collecting and why we should protect tarantulas from unscrupulous collectors. We are given examples of tarantula habitats in chapter six and what species we should expect to see in each type.

Chapter seven finally gets into the heart of the natural history of tarantulas in general, with details about the Belizean species as examples. I applaud the author for his chapters on how to collect tarantulas and on the laws involved (chapters 8 and 9). He states clearly what a collecting ethic is, instances where collecting should and should not occur, and why all collectors, professionals and hobbyists should follow the rules.

The anatomy of tarantulas and the classification of Belizean tarantulas are covered in chapters 10 and 11. I was extremely puzzled when I tried to decipher the range maps. Something just didn't seem right. After confirming the geography with an atlas, I realized that the names for Guatemala and Mexico were switched in the maps. It appears as if Guatemala is north of Belize, when that should be labeled as Mexico.

In the final two chapters, the author speculates as to what other species might yet be found in the less explored areas of Belize. Finally, he gives us a lesson on biogeography, ecology and conservation.

Overall, I enjoyed the book very much. As a spider biologist, I was pleased that the author had made the book friendly to the novice and amateur. We need more people who are on the same side as the tarantulas! *rw*

B O A R D M E E T I N G S Y N O P S I S

27 May 2003

Robert L. Bezy, Secretary

Directors Present: Roy Averill-Murray, Bob Bezy, Jillian Cowles, Taylor Edwards, Cristina Jones, Hans Koenig, Ed Moll, Eric Stitt, Don Swann, Marty Tuegel.

Members Present: Dennis Caldwell, Caren Goldberg, Bill Savary

Treasurer's Report -Tuegel

Beginning Balance	\$11,543.20
Deposits	679.50
Expenses	200.23
Ending Balance	\$12,022.47

Speakers Bureau	\$ 999.19
Jarchow Award	120.00
FTHL Fund	120.00
C.H.Lowe Research Fund	3,503.00
PARC	250.00
General Fund	\$7,030.28

CRHSDIII (CD) \$6,938.30

Itemized Deposits: FTHL \$5.00, Jarchow \$10.00, Membership \$320.00, PARC \$25.00, Raffle \$40.00, Speakers Bureau \$10.00, T-Shirts/Mugs \$44.50.

Itemized Expenses: Bank Charge \$4.66, Newsletter \$163.89, Printing \$31.68.

Committee Reports

Speakers Bureau - Moll. The Bureau has been unusually active this month.

30 April - Taylor Edwards presented a herpetology program to 6th and 7th grades at the AmeriSchools Academy with ca 50 students presented.

3 May - Robin Llewellyn and Ed Moll operated a THS table at the Ironwood Festival held by Mason Audubon Center. They presented two half-hour talks on reptiles as well as showing and discussing live animals.