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Book Review - Dangerous Wildlife in the Southeast: A Guide to Safe Encounters at Home and in the Wild, by Lynn F. Bachleda

from a Bayou Meto floodplain pool were used in swimming endurance tests; they are currently retired from their careers as professional swimmers but their role in primitive fish research continues as growth rates are monitored in laboratory aquaria.

The WES Fish Team, with sponsorship from the U.S. Army Engineer Mississippi Valley Division, is also continuing studies of shovelnose and pallid sturgeons in the lower Mississippi River. More than 1200 sturgeon have been sampled from Memphis to Donaldsonville, Louisiana. Data are collected on macro- and micro-habitats, fish size structure, morphometric characters, and most recently on food habits. A technique for safe and gentle gut sampling (i.e., colonic flushing) was developed and has proven very successful for obtaining fecal samples from which prey are identified and enumerated. Preliminary results indicate that in winter pallid sturgeon and shovelnose sturgeon both feed on caddisworms, burrowing mayflies, and larval midges, but that pallid sturgeon also consume large quantities of cyprinids.

Smaller streams of east Mississippi are also under study by the WES fish team. In cooperation with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, delta streams that were sampled for flood control studies in 1989-1994 are being re-sampled so that fish-based indices of environmental quality can be developed. Also, upland streams of the Yazoo Drainage are being sampled in conjunction with geo-morphological studies in an effort to relate the sediment transport dynamics and stream channel evolution to fish communities.

Jan Hoover

BOOK REVIEW

DANGEROUS WILDLIFE IN THE SOUTHEAST: A GUIDE TO SAFE ENCOUNTERS AT HOME AND IN THE WILD. Lynn F. Bachleda. 2001. Menasha Ridge Press, Birmingham, Alabama. ISBN 0-8973-2335-1. 231 p., \$22.95 (soft-cover).—F. Lynn Bachleda's *Dangerous Wildlife in the Southeast: A Guide to Safe Encounters at Home and in the Wild* deserves a better title. A suitable replacement would be: *You Have Very, Very Little to Fear in Nature*. This sentiment, in the author's own words from the Introduction, is a more accurate reflection of the overall philosophy of this guidebook on dealing with potentially dangerous wildlife. Bachleda wisely combines very recent evidence, scientific data, and personal accounts to instill the idea that Nature is not as scary as most people think. The main strength of this guidebook is its presentation of timely facts that clarify or completely debunk the many assumptions about the dangers of venturing into the wild. While there are some problems with consistency and a few sections where the scientific matter could be stronger, the information in the guidebook still provides valuable peace-of-mind to those who regularly work or play outdoors.

Although very few of the animals described are aquatic, southeastern ichthyologists and fish biologists will still find many useful and relevant sections in the guidebook. Browsing through the chapters, the fish-oriented reader cannot help but

reflect upon his or her own disastrous fieldwork mishaps and exciting "encounters with nature." For example, it is not uncommon to find alligator snapping turtles (page 49) and cottonmouths (page 29) in hoopnets set for fishes. Proper removal of these by-catch animals is important to all parties involved. Seemingly innocuous activities, such as changing batteries in a remote data-logger, can become painfully memorable, especially if a misplaced ladder is combined with an underground yellow jacket nest (page 85). Then there are those field incidents that generate thought-provoking questions: "I wonder if this pronounced cephalic swelling I'm experiencing is caused by a reaction to multiple mosquito bites (page 105) or my copious use of bug spray (page 114)?" Events like these will always plague field biologists, but Bachleda's guidebook offers calming and logical advice for handling such situations.

The guidebook is organized in typical field guide format with each chapter beginning with general information on the taxa covered and ending with specific accounts of organisms. Because of the wide-breadth of life forms discussed (from viruses to plants to sharks), the reader may notice inconsistencies in coverage among chapters. The overall impression is that Bachleda has acted as an editor for various expert sources, "cutting and pasting" information into a final product. This approach might explain the redundancy found in some of the species accounts and the inclusion of information not relevant to Southeastern wildlife (e.g., a description of elk (?) biology is nearly a page long yet the same attention is not given the much more common white tail deer). A typical problem involves the helpful "similar species" section of a species account. Although this section is included for mammalian species, there is no such information provided for insects, arachnids, or other invertebrates (though it is needed). Unfortunately irregularities like this raise doubts in the reader's mind about the validity of the information being provided and whether thorough research has been applied to all the subjects covered.

Even with these problems, Bachleda's guidebook should prove useful to any Southeastern field biologist. The objective description of outdoor products and first aid procedures makes the book worth buying. Bachleda's coverage of the snakebite treatment debate is especially even-handed and informative. Admittedly, there are sections in the guidebook that might frustrate some biologists, such as the mosquito-control suggestion to stock ponds with "top minnow [*sic*] *Gambusia affinis* or the common goldfish". In general, though, *Dangerous Wildlife in the Southeast* is a good source of practical and up-to-date information on human-wildlife interactions. Perhaps most beneficial is the guidebook's goal to inform non-scientist readers about the realities of interacting with Nature. If readers can grasp the philosophy "that every snake is not a venomous snake, and for that matter, every venomous snake does not automatically deserve to die," then the people and wildlife of the Southeast will have a brighter future of coexistence.

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Southeastern Fishes Council Proceedings

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The primary purpose of the *Proceedings* is to publish peer-reviewed research papers and critical reviews of activities; regional reports and notes; and other pertinent information pertaining to the biology and conservation of southeastern fishes. The *Proceedings* is also an outlet for range extensions, distributions, and status papers, covering ecology and conservation ichthyology. Life history studies, faunal surveys, management issues, behavior, genetics and taxonomy of southeastern fishes are appropriate topics for papers in the *Proceedings*. Review papers or information on imperiled waters or fishes are particularly appropriate.

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