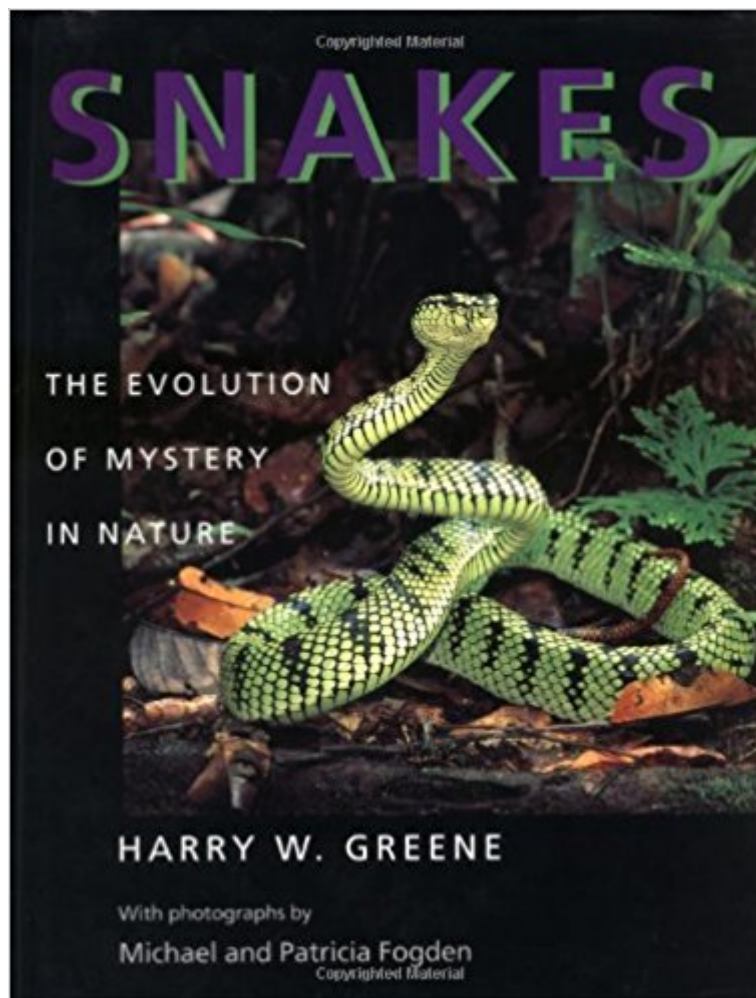




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# Snakes: The Evolution Of Mystery In Nature (Director's Circle Book Of The Associates Of The University O)



## Synopsis

This is a book about some of nature's most alluring and forbidding creatures, written by a man with an abiding passion for snakes, as well as for science, the fate of the planet, and the wonder of life. Harry Greene presents every facet of the natural history of snakes—their diversity, evolution, and conservation—and at the same time makes a personal statement of why these animals are so compelling. This book provides an up-to-date summary of the biology of snakes on a global basis. Eight chapters are devoted to general biology topics, including anatomy, feeding, venoms, predation and defense, social behavior, reproduction, evolution, and conservation; eight chapters survey the major snake groups, including blindsnakes, boas, colubrids, stiletto snakes, cobras, sea snakes, and vipers. Details of particular interest, such as coral snake mimicry and the evolution of the rattle, are highlighted as special topics. Chapter introductory essays are filled with anecdotes that will tempt nonspecialists to read on, while the book's wealth of comprehensive information will gratify herpeto-culturalists and professional biologists. Greene's writing is clear, engaging, and full of appreciation for his subject. Michael and Patricia Fogden are known internationally for their outstanding work, and their stunning color photographs of snakes in their natural habitats are a brilliant complement to Greene's text. Here is a scientific book that provides accurate information in an accessible way to general readers, strongly advocates for a persecuted group of animals, encourages conservation—not just of snakes but of ecosystems—and credits science for enriching our lives. In helping readers explore the role of snakes in human experience, Greene and the Fogdens show how science and art can be mutual pathways to understanding.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Herpetologists are sure to rejoice at this information-dense study of the world's snakes, illustrated with more than 200 photographs of the reptiles in action. Harry W. Greene offers life histories of cobras and adders, of rattlers and constrictors, showing the astonishing variety in what is, all in all, a fairly simple form. He discusses snake locomotion, adaptation, coloration, nomenclature, mimicry, and habits; and he offers a rigorous account of herp physiology, all the while peppering his scientific prose with personal notes on encounters with sometimes testy subjects around the world. He ends his absorbing book with a detailed discussion of issues in snake conservation, especially identifying and protecting key habitats that are in danger owing to human economic development.

Magnificent photographs enrich this anecdotal and scholarly narrative that lifts the lowly snake to loftier heights by presenting its unique evolutionary story. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book is not an encyclopediac treatment of snakes, but rather a natural history of some of the 2,700 species of snakes that are currently recognized. Eight chapters are devoted to general topics in snake biology, including anatomy, feeding, venoms (more snakes are venomous than we used to think), predation and defense, social behavior, reproduction, evolution, and conservation. The illustrations supplied by world-acclaimed nature photographers Michael and Patricia Fogden are absolutely gorgeous---snakes in every aspect of their dangerous, seductive charm, including my favorite of Perringuey's Adder in Namibia. This snake's tail protrudes above the sand as a lure, and if you look very closely at the picture, you might make out eyes and head scales that are almost completely invisible between the grains of sand. It is quite startling to be looking at a pile of sand and suddenly see the outline of an adder's head. The author, Harry W. Greene is Curator of Herpetology in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and Professor of Integrative Biology at the University of California, Berkeley. He opens each chapter in 'Snakes' with an essay that considers the subject from a more personal perspective: many of his fellow herpetologists have been bitten by venomous snakes, and some have died. The essays lead to Greene's epilogue and his answer to the question, "Why snakes?" This book is a fascinating read. I sat down to learn more about garter snakes when I came across several of these handsome reptiles that were just emerging from

hibernation. I soon found myself rereading the whole book. There are fourteen references in the index to '*Thamnophis sirtalis*' (the common garter snake) but they are scattered throughout the book in interesting chapters such as "Diet and Feeding." I didn't know garter snakes were semi-aquatic and dined mainly on other watery creatures such as frogs. They also form mating balls which may stay together for two or three days---one female and multiple males. They spend the winter together in hibernaculums--one hibernaculum in Ontario was found to have over 6,000 garter snakes! The author's favorite reptiles are the venomous snakes, their ability to cause damage measured in the number of mice that would die from the poison injected through a single bite. "Drop for toxic drop, the Inland Taipan (*Oxyuranus microlepidotus*) wins hands down: a bite from this Australian cobra relative contains enough venom to kill two hundred thousand mice..." In the introductory essay, the author and some of his friends go scrambling through a Costa Rican rain forest, looking for the deadly Bushmaster (*Crotalus mutus*). They weren't bitten by the Bushmasters they found, just by "huge black ants with the most intensely painful and long-lasting sting of any hymenopteran." If you'd like to explore the beauty and seductive grace of these ancient reptiles against a detailed backdrop of their biology and natural history, I highly recommend that you read "Snakes: The Evolution of Mystery in Nature." I own the hard-bound version, and it is 315 pages of dense text and hypnotic photographs.

One of the finest herp themed books ever written. A must own.

This is an amazing book. Greene gives a scientific and detailed account of the subject, well organized and broad in scope. His writing is urbane and often funny. The photographs are wonderful. The book goes beyond my level of education, and I'm glad it does--I'm learning a lot.

Excellent book with lots of good information. I really enjoyed the authors style and obvious love of the subject matter. This will be a welcome addition to my personal library/collection!

This book encompasses all of the main groups of snakes. There are absolutely amazing and beautiful photographs that illustrate the diversity of snakes. The writing is clear and understandable to a novice, but at the same time is very informative. The book is broken into sections: General snake biology, Snake Taxonomy, Venomous snakes, and Conservation. I highly recommend this book--even just flipping through and glancing at the pictures make a person excited about herpetology!

An outstanding resource with equally stunning photographs. This book is an essential. I initially purchased it as a gift for a young herpetologist/ biologist and decided I had to own my own copy. Both witty, informative and appealing to all levels. I highly recommend it.

The book is in excellent condition and brand new, and the delivery was so effective and fast. No complaints at all

Greene's book is natural history writing at its finest - it contains the ideal combination of individual case studies together general observations, so that the book both holds the reader's interest and provide the big picture on snake evolution and ecology. Additionally, the accompanying photographs are magnificent. One small feature that could have improved this book, in my opinion, would have been the inclusion of schematic figures to accompany some of the anatomical discussion, perhaps in the introductory chapter. Not every reader is likely to recall the name and location of every cranial element (particularly on a snake skull) or every facial scale, and some figures would have accomplished more than lengthy verbal descriptions when these topics are referenced. However, this problem is easily solved by looking at an old comparative anatomy textbook or with a quick internet search, and so doesn't substantially detract from the book's overall quality. I would highly recommend this book to anyone with even a passing interest in herpetology or natural history in general.

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