

Instead, the aim is to show *why* this field of scholarship is an important one". In reality, the *why's* were relatively few, and dominantly found in the first chapter, *Why study a lot of old bones?* However, even this chapter barely had any of the promised *why's*. I think the author could have left out this attempt at philosophy and moved right into the down and dirty of zooarchaeology. Ironically, there were a lot of *how's*: many chapters were devoted to *how* archaeologists sort, age, quantify, and more; most methods were treated as overviews (which is appropriate in such a short book), with ample references to the primary literature.

As one would expect in any book on animal bones, there is an early chapter introducing the reader to bone (the material), the bones themselves and the sum of all the bones, the skeletons. Sadly, the orientation diagram of a bird skeleton has two mistakes (the fibula is mislabelled, digits of the manus are misnumbered), not a great start to a book on bones – the second printing, no less. The text of this chapter on orientation to the skeleton contains misleading statements (what is a "higher" vertebrate?) and outright mistakes (e.g., pectoral girdles do not attach the limbs to the vertebral column; caudal vertebrae are not "often reduced to a simple short rod of bone," etc.).

The study of all the events that take a bone from the living animal through to the researcher's bench is known as taphonomy. In addition to orienting the reader to bones, a must-have in a book such as this is an outline of taphonomic processes; without this knowledge, an archaeologist cannot correlate earlier peoples'

use of animals with the bones themselves. O'Connor gives a succinct description of these processes, with several examples (hypothetical and real) to allow the reader to understand that the bones dug up are not exactly as they were dropped by the people who used them.

Many methods used by archaeologists for dealing with animal bones are described, often with both pros and cons explained. Where appropriate, the techniques are compared with those used for working with ancient human remains. O'Connor has also done a good job of bringing in the literature from other disciplines that would clearly bear on the interpretation of, for example, diseases in animals.

This book has not been written for the specialist; my feeling is that it has been written with the interested novice or hobbyist, or perhaps even first year university students in mind. That said, it would have been a very useful addition to have, perhaps on the inside back cover, a geologic time scale; O'Connor liberally uses terms such as *Holocene* and *Neolithic*, terms that are undoubtedly quite meaningful to experts, but in and of themselves, relatively meaningless (other than "old") to the non-specialist. I did enjoy the odd interjection of humour – just like O'Connor's descriptions of his real forays into middens, the humour gave the book personality, a thoroughly appropriate quality.

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Snakebit: Confessions of a Herpetologist

By Leslie Anthony. 2008. Greystone Books. #201–2323 Quebec Street, Vancouver, British Columbia V5T 4S7 Canada. xi + 292 pages. 29.95 CAD.

There really are two kinds of people: those that like snakes and those that get the heeby-jeebies even at the mention of snakes. Leslie Anthony is certainly in the smaller, but more enlightened, former group. With a PhD specializing in herpetology, Anthony has caught more than his fair share of snakes. In this lively volume, he mixes personal memoir and adventures in exotic locales with a healthy dose of herpetology.

Anthony sets the stage with a prologue of discovering European Adders (*Vipera berus*) while skiing north of the Arctic Circle in Finnish Lapland. From there Anthony takes the reader through adventures more or less chronologically, beginning with childhood hunts for snakes in the suburban wilds of Willowdale and Don Mills, Ontario. Along the way he introduces a veritable who's who of Canadian herpetology.

Anthony completed a master's degree with Dr. Jim Bogart of the University of Guelph, as part of the team working on the genetics of the Blue-spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*) and Jefferson Salamander

(*A. jeffersonianum*) complex. He gives a detailed explanation of the current understanding of these strange unisexual hybrids, although is somewhat vague about his own work. The most vivid scene from his days in Bogart's lab is being attacked by a two-metre Hispaniolan Boa (*Epicrates striatus*). Anthony continued his work on the Blue-spotted Salamander complex in his PhD studies at the Royal Ontario Museum under the supervision of Dr. Bob Murphy, the "Punk King of Herpetology." Along the way he participated in the world's first phylogenetic rock opera, ROMMY, loosely based upon The Who's rock opera Tommy.

The highlights of the book are Anthony's stories of adventure on collecting expeditions with Dr. Bob: ambushed by bandits in Baja, Mexico, adventures with cobras and kraits along the Khe Moi River of Vietnam, and vipers in Armenia. In between, Anthony finds time to explore the Red-sided Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis*) dens in Manitoba and hunt for Northern Pacific Rattlesnakes (*Crotalus oreganus*) in British Columbia.

Anthony abandoned academia for travel and adventure writing, and his journalistic prowess is clearly evi-

dent. Scenes are vividly drawn and his writing style sharp and ironic, although Anthony sometimes becomes too glib, for example, "If continents are the earth's skin, then deserts are a patch of eczema on its butt" (page 132). Some readers will find his fondness for four-letter words unnecessary.

Canadian herpetologists will find this book on Canadian herpetology and Canadian herpetologists essential

reading. And anyone with a healthy interest in snakes or herpetology will find this book from a Canadian, snake-loving Indiana Jones to be a lively, educational and enjoyable read.

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NEW TITLES

Prepared by Roy John

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ZOOLOGY

The Lives of Ants. By Laurent Keller and Elisabeth Gordon. 2009. Andrew Isles Natural History Books, 115 Greville Street, Prahran 3181 Australia. 252 pages. 50 AUD, Paper.

* **Arctic Fox – Life at the Top of the World.** By G. Hamilton. 2008. Firefly Books Ltd., 66 Leek Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1H1. 232 pages. 39.95 CAD, Cloth.

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Birds of Eastern Africa. By B. Van Perlo. 2009. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey. 304 pages. 29.95 USD, Paper.

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* **Birds of East Asia.** By M. Brazil. 2009. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey. 528 pages. 39.95 USD, Paper.

Birds of Europe, Russia, China, and Japan: Non-Passerines: Loons to Woodpeckers. By Norman Arlott. 2009. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey. 256 pages. 29.95 USD, Paper.

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* **The Frogs and Toads of North America.** By Lang Elliott, Carl Gerhardt, and Carlos Davidson. 2009. Houghton Mifflin Company, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, Massachusetts. 343 pages. 19.95 USD, Paper.

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* **The Beachcomber's Guide to Seashore Life in the Pacific Northwest.** By J. Sept. 2009. Harbour Publishing, P.O. Box 219, Madeira Park, British Columbia V0N 2H0. 224 pages. 26.95 CAD, Paper.