

Following an extensive (and rather technical) section on snake envenomation are the accounts of the species and subspecies occurring in Texas; this section makes up the bulk of the text. The organization of these accounts is by family, with the Colubridae divided up into groups of genera ("garter and ribbon snakes") or mixtures of adaptive types ("large, brown-blotched terrestrial snakes"). Most subspecific accounts are divided into subject areas indicating whether the form is venomous or not, its seasonal and/or geographic abundance, the average and/or maximum length in inches, the habitats frequented, the prey items taken, data on reproduction, a description of coloration and scalation, and differentiating characters from other snakes. The subspecific accounts are truncated for some polytypic forms with peripheral Texas distributions. The author does not always stay with this organizational system, for the content of each section often shows some crossing of categories. This is particularly evident in remarks on abundance, habitat, and habits. Moreover, one also finds spread throughout the individual species accounts remarks germane to larger groupings of taxa. Thus the text contains a great deal of information about snake biology in general, but it is necessary to read all the accounts as a narrative in order to glean it. Most statements of abundance, habits, reproduction, etc., are documented by either published reference or by personal communication from others; hopefully the latter works will someday be published so as to make their data bases available to the scientific community. In only a few cases are there very poor to no documentation for some rather significant observations. Following the species accounts is a glossary that the heavy use of technical expressions in the text renders invaluable. The volume ends with an extensive Literature Cited and Index.

Although this book has many strengths, my principal disappointment is with the presentation of distribution and abundance data. In many cases, textual material is presented in anecdotal form. As alluded to earlier, distributional information on the relative abundance of most snakes in extreme western Texas is lacking. This weakness has led to particularly ill-informed statements concerning rarity of such species as *Salvadora deserticola*, *Trimorphodon biscutatus*, and *Tantilla nigriceps* in the "Trans-Pecos" area. Moreover, I also have some doubts about some of the generalizations made about habitat and abundance for such taxa as *Tropidoclonion lineatum* and *Virginia valeriae* in the south-central part of the state. As also mentioned earlier, a county-based distribution map is provided for each taxon covered, with shaded areas demarcating ranges of the polytypic forms. Whereas these shaded areas were probably only intended to show areas where particular subspecies could occur, they effect an overestimation of distributional limits in several taxa. This is particularly noticeable for those forms with highly localized populations in disparate portions of the state. Also, whereas the dot-in-the-county approach is satisfactory for the small counties in the eastern two-thirds of Texas, this approach for the large western counties also tends to exaggerate the actual distributions. A further weakness in my view also lies in the use of "unpublished observational records from reliable sources" in denoting occurrence in particular counties. For the author's target audience, these kind of data are informative, but since they are apparently not backed by preserved voucher specimens, do not represent verifiable distributional data.

These weaknesses and professional disagreements aside, Mr. Tennant is to be commended for his ambitious attempt and a very fine contribution. Although it should not be considered the last word on the subject of Texas snakes, this volume is nevertheless a must for the den or library of anyone with a serious interest in the State's herpetofauna.—CARL S. LIEB, *Laboratory for Environmental Biol., Univ. of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX 79968.*

THE CATTLE EGRET: A TEXAS FOCUS AND WORLD VIEW.—By Raymond Clark Telfair II, Texas A&M Univ. Press, 144 pp, illustrated, \$16.95, 1983. This monographic treatment of the natural history of the cattle egret is divided into 9 chapters. The first chapter considers the taxonomic status and distribution of the species. Chapter 2 documents the cattle egret's recent arrival and subsequent expansion throughout the State of Texas. Factors associated with heronry location and migration in Texas comprise Chapter 3. Chapters 4 through 7 detail autecological data on nesting habits, food habits, reproduction, and demography, respectively. The presence and effects of chlorinated hydrocarbon residues on cattle egret biology are considered in Chapter 8. The economic impact of cattle egrets, and their health-related effects are the concern of Chapter 9. Appendix A documents the flora and fauna associated with cattle egrets; appendices B and C provide quantitative dietary information based upon bolus and stomach contents.

Although the text is somewhat tedious, anyone interested in ardeid biology will find this monograph useful because of its encyclopedic approach and concern with details. Moreover, this work may provide the necessary basic information on cattle egret biology to facilitate more theoretical or comparative (interspecific) analyses in the future.—MICHAEL R. WILLIG, *Dept. of Biological Sciences and The Museum, Texas Tech Univ., Lubbock, TX 79409.*