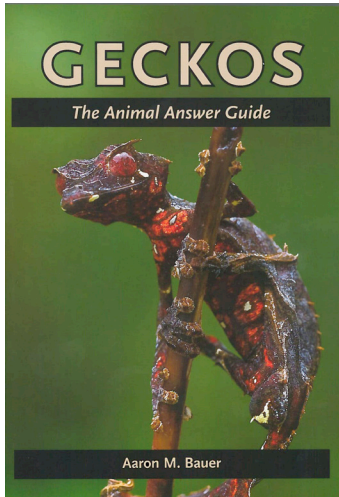


Geckos: The Animal Answer Guide

Aaron M. Bauer (2013)

JHU Press, 192 pp, ISBN 978-1421408538



You'd be forgiven for thinking this to be a kid's book judging by the title, but a glance at the authors name will make you realise that this is more than that; Aaron M. Bauer has been working with geckos for many years and has published hundreds of papers based on his research. This accumulation of knowledge allows him to answer a range of

questions in a clear and informative way, that add up by the end of the book into a very good overview of gecko natural history and biology. Technical terminology doesn't feature too heavily and when it is in a laid back and non-threatening way that should encourage readers with varying degrees of knowledge to enjoy the book. Gecko classification, potentially difficult to explain to a non-herpetologist, is dealt with in a very clear way, and the discussion of diurnal and nocturnal activity and the relevance of temperature and competition is concise and jargon-free but still very informative. The explanation of autotomy and it's consequences is as good an introduction to the subject as I've seen. The question and answer format might put some people off but I'd recommend persevering; the simple 'Do all geckos lay eggs?' for example was followed by an answer that manages to discuss viviparity, oviparity, the effects of temperature and geography, embryonic survival and growth rates as

well as the general evolutionary aspects involved - in about two pages! Also included are a few brief but sensible sections dealing with geckos in captivity.

All information presented here seems totally up to date, there is a selected bibliography pointing to further sources of information and a complete and informative list of all known gecko species. There are two very good sections of colour plates and many black and white photos throughout. Although well placed to explain and illustrate points in the text, about half of them appear rather too dark which is frustrating and detracts slightly from the overall feel of the book. Ignoring that and the odd typo and mistake that crop up in the second half, this book is a success. To make science and herpetology in particular, accessible and interesting to a wider audience has to be a target for us all if we are to enhance people's understanding and appreciation of, and therefore potential to care about and conserve these animals. If ever a reptile group is going to win over non-herpers surely it must be the geckos with their wide range of colours and patterns, frequent presence around humans and their harmless nature. But don't be put off if you are already well read in the world of lizards - I certainly found a number of nuggets of information that I wasn't aware of and this book is by no means 'just' for a general readership. Respect is due to Aaron M. Bauer for distilling vast amounts of information into a very readable summary of gecko biology, diversity and ecology.

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