BOOK REVIEWS

Birds of Palau


This is surely one of the most informative, attractive, and complete regional fish guides available. More than 1250 species of reef fishes (about 10% of the world’s marine fish fauna) are featured in individual accounts, and most are illustrated with underwater color photos.

It is apparent that this book was a labor of love for the author, who is an active fish systematist as well as a true artist with the underwater camera. Not only did Myers write the text and take most of the book’s thousand or so photos, he also prepared hundreds of line drawings and did his own typesetting.

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Reef Fishes


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Introductory material reviews the geography and
oceanography of Micronesia, reef habitat characteristics, Indo-Pacific marine zoogeography, ecology and behavior of reef fishes, and general anatomy and classification of fishes. The bulk of the book is devoted to accounts of the reef-associated species occurring within the upper 60 m of water around the islands of Micronesia (the Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall Islands plus Wake Island).

The individual species accounts contain scientific and common names, basic meristics, distributional records, and information on diet, habitat, and behavior. In addition to information from the literature, the author frequently includes his own observations from many years of studying reef fishes in Micronesia. For most species, the photographs and drawings provide sufficient information for their identification; for less distinctive groups, such as pipefishes and gobies, keys are provided for identification.

The book concludes with a valuable distributional checklist, a very complete bibliography of Micronesian fish references, and indices of scientific and common names.

The book is a very timely compilation of information on the fishes of Micronesia. The last 30 years have seen a tremendous growth in interest in tropical reef fishes, with corresponding attention to their taxonomy. Greater understanding of systematic relationships among these species has resulted in many reclassifications and name changes. Myers’ book brings the reader up to date with these changes. Although taxonomic studies will continue, the book provides a benchmark for students of Micronesian fishes.

Myers’ book is essential for anyone interested in the fishes of Micronesia and is extremely useful for students of fish elsewhere in the Pacific (only 1.9% of the Micronesian marine fish fauna is endemic to the region). Its only shortcoming (which is a self-imposed one) is that common pelagic and deepwater fishery species (tunas, billfishes, deepwater snappers, etc.) are not included in the species accounts (although they are included in the distributional checklist). But perhaps we can look forward to a second volume including these species and the freshwater fishes of the region to complement the exceedingly fine work of Myers’ current book.

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