



HERPETOLOGISTS OF THE PAST

by Kraig Adler

THE OCCASION OF herpetology's first world congress is a proper time to evaluate the present state of the discipline and to consider its future. But it should also be a time, however brief, to reflect on herpetology's rich past and to recognize the men and women whose contributions have developed the field to its present state. Unlike several other biological disciplines, herpetology has never had its singular history written. To be sure, this book is not that history—which is well beyond the scope of this project—but this volume does represent an attempt to bring together some of the basic materials necessary for that untold story.

Rather than a history, the first part of this book focuses instead on 152 individuals, all deceased, who have advanced the study of amphibians and reptiles. One is immediately struck by the divergent careers of these persons. Some were gifted amateurs, often having no formal education at all, and others were among the most distinguished personages of their day. Several of them devoted their life's fortune to zoology, and to herpetology in particular; a few went bankrupt in doing so. Others accomplished their work despite severe physical handicap or prolonged illness, and some even lost their lives in carrying out their research. There is much here to admire and even to provide inspiration.

The main part of this book had its genesis in an audiovisual program developed by David M. Dennis and myself for the 25th Anniversary Meeting of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles in 1982. The Society commissioned a brief sound-and-slide presentation on the history of herpetology—entitled "Herpetologists Then and Now"—which utilized six computer-controlled projectors. To our amazement, this show, which was scheduled to be shown but once, was in fact screened numerous times, by popular demand. With such interest, we decided to enlarge our production and, eventually, the program was expanded to a 40-minute show during which several thousand 35mm slides of people, institutions, and herpetological illustrations were displayed. This program subsequently has been shown dozens of times, both at national and regional herpetological society meetings in the United States over the last six years, and for the last time at Ann Arbor in 1988.

A common complaint at those showings was that no permanent record existed of the hundreds of portraits of herpetologists that moved past the viewer so quickly. This book was originally intended partly to satisfy that need but it has been expanded to include brief biographical sketches of some of the most prominent people. To this has been added two useful compilations of information that were started as independent projects by my colleagues, John S. Applegarth and Ronald Altig. I had known of their work and, because of the opportunity of the First World Congress of Herpetology this year, it seemed appropriate to pool our efforts into a book of greater reference value. I thank them for their willingness to do so and for their cooperation.

Content and Organization.—While Applegarth's and Altig's sections are intended to be comprehensive, mine has had to be more selective. My most difficult task was to choose the persons to feature in these biographies, representing only a small proportion of the many individuals worthy of this recognition. No one will agree with all of my choices and, indeed, I am painfully aware of the many omissions dictated by the severe space constraints.

The biographies are arranged in an approximately chronological order, so that the development of the discipline of herpetology can be visualized and also that each person can be viewed in a broader context. In addition, this arrangement permits the reader to see the influence of some key individuals not featured in these biographies (for example, the renowned early teachers, J. F. Blumenbach and Johannes Müller). Since some biographees had short careers of less than a decade whereas others were active for more than half a century, each person is positioned in sequence according to the period in which he or she first rose to prominence in herpetology. This organization is reflected in the Table of Contents and in the titles at the top of each page, in which each person has been categorized according to some time period. Admittedly this procedure has been somewhat arbitrary. Due to this arrangement, some persons at first may seem to be oddly placed. For example, Giorgio Jan, born in 1791, appears in the section for 1860-1870 because he only began his herpetological work at the age of 62. In another instance, the pupil (Johann J. von Tschudi) precedes his teacher (Louis Agassiz) because the former's contributions to herpetology occurred first. Because of this sequencing and because numerous other persons are mentioned in these biographies, I have included a comprehensive index (pages 136-141). Names abbreviated in the text are given in full in the index.

Format of Biographies.—Each person's name is given in the title of their biography in its usual form, that is, the style most frequently encountered in their own publications. Where alternative spellings of a name have been used, these are listed, but preference is given to the form used by the person, as indicated by the style of his or her signature. All names are spelled in their romanised form.

In reviewing a person's contributions, emphasis has been given to their herpetological work. Thus, non-herpetological aspects of a person's life, which in several instances were more prominent than their work with amphibians and reptiles, are given little discussion here. Since herpetology as a biological discipline is a 20th Century phenomenon, the earlier contributors were general naturalists or zoologists for whom herpetology was only one of several interests. Certainly they were not herpetologists in the modern sense.

References to obituaries or other biographical information are provided for each person, although for some no such articles have been published. In other instances, the