

PERACCA, Mario G. (1861-1923).

Conte (or count) Mario Giacinto Peracca, noted Italian herpetologist, was born in Turin on 21 November 1861. Interested in zoology by his father, an amateur ornithologist, Peracca enrolled as a medical student at the University of Turin but soon switched to zoology. He obtained his doctor's degree in 1886 under the guidance of Michele Lessona, author of several major monographs on the Italian herpetofauna. Earlier, as a student, Peracca had been an assistant to Lessona and, in 1887, officially became Assistant at the Zoological Institute of the university, a position he retained when the directorship of the institute passed from Lessona to Lorenzo Camerano. The latter was also an eminent Italian herpetologist, who published the first modern monographs of the amphibians and reptiles of Italy (in five volumes, 1883-1891).

Until he retired from his assistantship in 1920, Peracca curated the herpetological collections and added specimens purchased by him from collectors around the world or from exchange with other museums. Many specimens also came from his estate, where he built an enormous temperature-controlled vivarium adorned with luxuriant tropical plants and which he stocked with giant salamanders, Galapagos tortoises, and other local and exotic specimens. Unfortunately, most of his studies on living animals were never published. Despite his nobility, Peracca was said to have lived modestly, and he devoted his fortune to zoology and to helping others. He died in Turin on 23 May 1923 after a long, debilitating illness.



Mario Peracca

Peracca's research was clearly in the tradition of George A. Boulenger, who was a longtime friend. He published about 55 papers (1886-1917), virtually all of them on herpetology. Some are on Italian species, but his most extensive series of papers dealt with collections obtained in South America and Africa, including Madagascar, but there were also titles on the Middle East, China, and Australia. Many new genera and species were described, and the collections were eventually donated to the Zoological Institute at Turin.

• *References*: "Mario Giacinto Peracca," by L. C. de Martiis, *Boll. Mus. Zool. Anat. Comp. Univ. Torino*, new ser., 38 (12): 1-7, addenda, 1923; "La Collezione Erpetologica del Museo di Zoologia dell'Università di Torino," by O. Elter, *Catal. Mus. Region. Sci. Nat. Torino*, 5: 1-116, 1981 (1982). • *Portrait*: From Martiis, 1923, courtesy Olindo Bortesi and O. Elter. • *Signature* (1907): Adler collection.

ROLLINAT, Raymond (1859-1931).

Pierre André Marie Raymond Rollinat, French amateur naturalist, became his country's leading authority on the life histories of native reptiles. He was born in Saint-Gaultier, near Argenton-sur-Creuse (Indre), on 2 September 1853, and developed a love for animals as a young boy, under the influence of his great uncle who was an amateur ornithologist. Rollinat attended high school in Châteauroux but resisted scholastic discipline and much preferred his sessions, every Thursday, with a local taxidermist who taught him his technique. He declined to go to Paris for advanced study in zoology and decided instead to stay in Argenton. Except for military service, he remained there until his death, on 27 December 1931.

During most of his life, Rollinat made detailed studies of the vertebrates of central France, in particular the reptiles and amphibians. He built a laboratory in his house and in the large garden adjacent to it he erected various enclosures where he could study animals at close hand. The lizards were often so tame that they would take food from his fingers or even from his lips. The structures in his garden included terraria installed in flower beds where temperature and humidity were most favorable for hibernation, breeding, and hatching of eggs, all topics on which he published. Besides these subjects, Rollinat made a special study of embryonic development in several species. The local turtle, *Emys orbicularis*, which he maintained in two artificial ponds, was a favorite species for study. He even kept aquaria next to his bed, so that he could observe the nocturnal egg-laying activities of some species. The result was a long series of about 30 papers (over the period 1892-1932), in which he detailed the life histories of all the local species, and his book, "La Vie des Reptiles de la France Centrale," published posthumously in 1934 (reissued in 1937, 1946, and 1980).

Rollinat was the most prominent of a small group of French herpetologists who were interested in the local fauna at a time when their museum-based colleagues in Paris