



Book review

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A Guide to the Mammals of China

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This book is the first comprehensive information on mammals in China and in this form it is unique. 546 mammal species are briefly described and their distribution illustrated in a map, most are also depicted in a drawing. Due to its size and latitudinal extension, as well as diversity of altitudes and therefore habitats from high alpine mountains to desert and tropical rain forest, China has a rich mammal fauna. About 10% of all recent mammals can be found in China. Therefore the comprehensive volume is of great interest.

In the brief introduction the geography and the mammal biogeography of China are briefly outlined and the most typical habitats illustrated in representative photos. A brief history of mammalogy in China, some remarks on the protection of mammals and the most standardized measurements of mammals follow. In 64 color plates most of the described species are illustrated in fairly well done drawings. As with all illustrations of mammals it is difficult to adjust the illustrations to all possible color variants of a species. With the illustration species names are given in English, Latin and in Chinese as well as – where known – the characteristic measurements: Head and body length, tail length, hind foot length, ear length, greatest length of skull and weight. About two thirds of the book are the taxonomic description of the species and include brief keys to orders, families, genera and species. The keys are very clearly arranged and brief, and could imply that the determination is straight forward. The usefulness and robustness of these keys will be tested with use.

The section on each species includes a short description of the most important characters, the distribution, brief information on the natural history like habitat, food and reproduction. This is followed by comments on taxonomic problems, sometimes peculiarities of the species, protection status in China and references. A map of distribution of the species is included.

Overall a very interesting, comprehensive and concise volume on the mammals of China, useful for

identification and first information on the mammals of this large Asian country and therefore an important book for all mammalogists with interest in China and collections with material from China. It is also useful for travellers to China who are interested in Natural History and all students of mammalogy as overview. Due to its weight, however, not too many people will be willing to carry it in the field.

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