

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## **Philippine Land Vertebrates: Field Biology**

Review Author: Salvacion S. Placer

*Philippine Studies* vol. 25, no. 3 (1977) 376–378

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

I have always been uneasy with the theological slogan of "Christianity incognito" — and I have run into at least some non-Christian friends who resent the name as an example of the insufferable patronizing attitude of Christians. I personally would like to see both the term and theological tour-de-forces which elaborate on it be quietly laid to theological rest. Theological courtesy demands, I think, that we deal with others on their terms, not on those of our wishful thinking. But this is another story.)

There is much more in this book than a brief review can do justice to. There is interesting information — Bishop James Sangu's note that "Africa is experiencing the greatest numerical growth on a sustained basis [7.5 million Christians per year] of any period of history . . . Christianity in Africa is growing twice as fast as the population." There is a highly interesting piece on Father Inocente Salazar, M.M., and his attempts at "inculturation" in Peru among the Aymara Indians. There is an equally stimulating interview with Brazilian Pentecostalist Manoel de Mello. And much more.

The foregoing presentation of the content of these two books will have to suffice to indicate (to suggest, really) what readers can expect from them. Both books accomplish excellently the purpose for which they were compiled. We end by renewing our thanks to the editors for the quality of these anthologies and not least for the brief introduction before each article, prenotes which situate the papers adequately and which are uniformly helpful. We can only wish the series, so auspiciously begun, success with readers and book-buyers; it is well deserved.

*C. G. Arévalo*

**PHILIPPINE LAND VERTEBRATES: FIELD BIOLOGY.** By Angel C. Alcala. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1976. 176 pages.

This book is, in the author's own words, an attempt "to summarize the information on the field biology of nearly a thousand species of Philippine amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals that exists in scattered scientific publications and therefore not generally available to teachers and researchers."

The first two chapters, concerned mainly with the geography of the Philippines and with the zoogeography of Philippine land vertebrates, lay the setting for the next four chapters, in which the author takes up in turn each of the four major classes of land vertebrates — Amphibia, Reptilia, Aves, and Mammalia.

Each of these chapters begins with a brief summary of the general characteristics of a particular class followed by a section on the external anatomy of a representative member. The remainder of the chapter deals with the general habits and distribution, life histories, population structure

and dynamics, relation to the environment, and behavior of the various Philippine species belonging to that class.

The approach is comparative, and thus this slim volume may serve not only as a text for a formal course on Philippine land vertebrates but also as a profitable reference work for courses in comparative vertebrate anatomy, natural history, and ecology. The account is easy and flowing, laced with occasional tidbits, such as a categorical denial that there are any venomous lizards in the Philippines, as well as the information that the largest snake in the world (the reticulated python) is found in our country. The book also contains numerous tables and figures, and an extensive bibliography.

In his foreword, Professor Alcala admits to a particular bias, and indeed his longest chapters are those on the two groups he knows best, the amphibians and the reptiles. The chapter on mammals is deficient in much of the type of information found in the others, due, as the author points out, to the limited research and data on this group. Such a want of information is a recurring complaint throughout the book; the author tackles this problem by pointing out in the appropriate sections the gaps that need to be filled in our knowledge of Philippine land vertebrates. Hopefully, some users of this book may be inspired to fill those gaps. Hopefully, too, Professor Alcala's argument of the case for wildlife conservation, found in the last chapter, will be heeded before it is too late.

*Salvacion S. Placer*