

*punctata*) receives two different and somewhat contradictory species accounts, one brief account under its correct subfamily (Cyclanorbinae; page 134), and a longer account under an incorrect subfamily (Trionychinae; page 139). Despite these errors, there are some good things about this book. Part 1 does provide a very brief and readable introduction to the world

of turtles. The photographs are generally quite good. Ultimately, however, this book could have been greatly improved by a thorough review from an expert on turtles.

DAVID SEBURN

Seburn Ecological Services, 2710 Clarendon Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2B 7S5 Canada

## Whales and Seals Biology and Ecology

By Pierre-Henry Fontaine. 2007. Schiffer Publishing, 4880 Lower Valley Road, Atglen, Pennsylvania 19310 USA. 448 pages. U.S. \$35. Paper.

During my career as a marine mammal research scientist I was reluctantly dragged in on several occasions to necropsy and dispose of large dead mammal carcasses found along the beaches of Canada's east or west coast. Almost always these mammoth mountains of mammalian flesh were in an advanced stage of putrefaction. Upon opening the body cavity one would confront what has been termed a "gaseous pudding" and it was challenging to properly identify even the most conspicuous organs. It is with this in mind that I say that I am impressed with the work in hand, which has yielded for the author a large amount of useful, detailed information, gathered with fortitude and persistence, from a source that many would have been wont to avoid.

The illustrations, particularly the excellent photographs of the organs and musculature, will serve as a valuable resource for field biologists learning their way around marine mammal carcasses. The author's expertise in marine mammals comes primarily from his extensive experience in performing necropsies of beach cast cetaceans and to a lesser extent pinnipeds. This book uses this as the point of departure relating the specific adaptations, the senses, nutrition, and locomotion, to the anatomical structures which he has studied and illustrated during his years of studies.

The remainder of the book attempts to give a general account of whales and seals, particularly from the North Atlantic, where the author has worked. The chapter on strandings is devoted to the question of why live cetaceans beach themselves. As the author points out, almost every imaginable reason has been offered from geomagnetic anomalies to suicide. The chapter leaves one hanging as do most articles on this subject. One very important recent work on this subject is the monograph *Marine Mammals Ashore* (J. R. Geraci and V. Lounsbury. 1993. Texas A&M Sea Grant Publication). This not mentioned by the author and would be a valuable source of additional information.

The chapter on mounting marine mammal skeletons will be found especially useful by museums and institutions wishing to do such displays. Little detailed

information exists on this subject and the author has learned valuable lessons in avoiding errors in skeletal reconstruction from his numerous and careful field dissections.

The remaining chapters, while not based on the author's direct experience, are well researched and illustrated. The long association of people with whales and seals is presented in an interesting manner. Some specific examples of marine mammal hunting in the St. Lawrence are little known. The technique on Walrus hunting in the Magdalene Islands, which led to the early extinction of the southern-most Atlantic Walrus stock, is one such example.

The chapter dealing with the complicated subject of marine mammal paleontology gives a good introduction to a discipline which is both difficult to assimilate and where the information is not well organized in any single comprehensive source. This will serve as a good point of departure for students who want to learn more about the origins of marine mammals.

The last chapters, the fact sheets on Cetaceans and Pinnipeds, might be considered useful additions to this general work on marine mammals only because they include the species found in the North Atlantic, which is where most of the author's work has been done. One wonders why the author has included the Northern Elephant Seal (only found in the Pacific) and why the Pacific Walrus (*Odobenus divergens*) is mentioned and shown in one of the illustrations. The Arctic Ringed Seal, which is found as far south as the Labrador coast (Lake Melville) is omitted. A number of up-to-date field guides exist, which give a comprehensive account of the seals and whales in the North Atlantic and would serve their readers more effectively.

I recommend this book to the non-specialist who has an interest in whales in particular. It will also be a useful source of information for field biologists and naturalists who might deal with beach cast remains of marine mammals. It succeeds in what the author set out to accomplish by sharing his considerable knowledge of a subject, in which he has thoroughly immersed himself.

THOMAS G. SMITH

EMC Eco Marine Corp, 5694 Camp Comfort Road, Beaulac-Garhby, Quebec G0Y 1B0 Canada