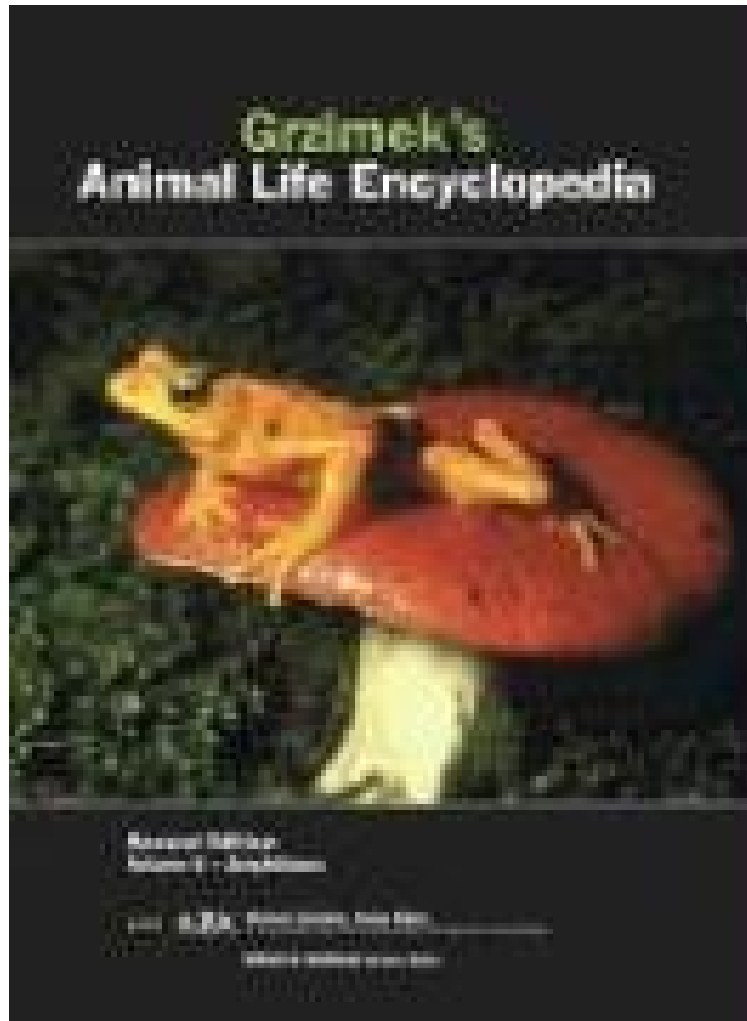


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Book by Hutchins, Michael

From Booklist*Starred * "Enjoyable reading" is not usually a phrase used in descriptions of encyclopedias, yet these

four volumes of the second edition of Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia provide just that. Part of a 17-volume rewrite of the original 13-volume edition published beginning in 1967, these volumes exhibit excellence in writing, organization, illustration, and editing. Following an extensive six- to nine-chapter overview, organization is taxonomical. Each family or order is discussed in terms of general description, evolution, structure and function, distribution, habitat, behavior, feeding, reproduction, conservation status, and relationship to humans. These descriptions are generally followed by anywhere from 2 to 20 representative species accounts that include rich illustrations and range maps. Formatting and layout are similar in all of the volumes, making the set consistent and easy to use. Illustrations, photos, and maps are in full color, serving the needs and expectations of today's readers. Editing of the volumes is tight, yielding uniform entries written by numerous expert contributors. Volume 4 and volume 5--Fishes 1 and Fishes 2-- open with an elegant explanation of the diversity of the superclass Pisces and the difficulty of giving a general definition for all fish. Treatment is thorough despite the complexity of the topic caused by the sheer numbers of families, species, and habitats. Volume 6, Amphibians, includes introductory chapters on larvae and an expanded section on the early evolution and fossil history of amphibians. Volume 7, Reptiles, is the strongest of these excellent volumes. The contributors' expert knowledge and love of reptiles is evident. The "Order: Crocodylians" section is particularly well written. Indexing is good in all volumes, giving access to both taxonomic and common names. Bibliographic references and further readings are well chosen and current. Recommended Web sites are authoritative and well cited. Criticism of these volumes is minor but must include the observation that the glossaries are on the scanty side. Examples of significant terms that should have been included in the glossary for Reptiles include envenomated, hibernaculum, vomeronasal, vomerofaction, TSD (temperature dependent sex determination), and GSD (genetic sex determination). The scientific illustrations are extremely well done, and the illustrations and photos are present in just the right amount--there when needed yet not intruding on the text. The addition of some minor cross-referencing of page numbers between the species/family accounts and the in-text illustrations and maps would be helpful. These volumes are recommended for academic and larger public libraries.

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