

**Book Review: *Rattlesnake: Portrait of a Predator* by Manny Rubio  
1998. 272 pp. Smithsonian Institution Press. \$39.95**

**Don Wheeler  
2705 Sunset Trail  
Riverwoods, IL 60015**

Manny Rubio, forever linked with Carl Kauffeld and the Staten Island Zoo, has given us a book, *Rattlesnake: Portrait of a Predator*, that fills a void between the Peterson field guides and Laurence Klauber's epic work.

Anyone with even a passing interest in these reptiles will find this book "fascinating — can't put it down" reading. From undisputable facts presented in a different light to newly researched ideas and even some strange theories this book will hold your interest.

Those who have a passion for these beautiful but maligned and misunderstood animals will be referring to these pages for years to come. Not only for reference but to enjoy the creativity captured within its covers. The photographs by the author are shockingly lush and beautiful. Over 250 such pictures are to be found, each one somehow more spectacular than the last. More than 80 living species and subspecies of rattlesnakes are pictured.

Unusually colored, patterned and hybrid rattlesnakes are discussed and explained. Mr. Rubio's insights on rattlesnake roundups and religious serpent handling cults are windows into worlds unfamiliar to most of us.

William S. Brown says it well in his foreword to the book: ". . . topics as diverse as the evolutionary origin of rattlesnakes, their sex and growth, their internal functions, their venom and bite and their role in the environment— all based on recent scientific findings— are covered in a relaxed readable style. This book will appeal to its two intended audiences, amateur naturalists and technical readers."

*Rattlesnake: Portrait of a Predator*, 272 pages, 14 chapters, appendices of common, scientific and Spanish names of recent rattlesnakes and a partial list of North American professional, avocational and regional herpetological societies. A book that deserves to be read and used.

---