
BOOK REVIEWS

Commercial Fishes of the Philippines, by Norbert and Anke Rau, 1980. German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Eschborn, FRG, 623 p. Price not stated.

Philippine Shore Fishes of the Western Sulu Sea, by Robert R. Schroeder, 1980. National Media Production Center, Manila. 266 p. Price ₱300.00 (about US\$40.00).

These two books were written for the same explicit purpose of helping fisheries researchers, extension workers, students and instructors working in the field to identify the fish they are likely to encounter. Both books were written by volunteers, the first by a couple from Kiel's Institute for Marine Sciences and based at San Carlos University in Cebu; the second by a US Peace Corps volunteer based mainly in Palawan and working there with the Regional Office of the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Both books were written by non-taxonomists, and although an impressive array of cooperating ichthyologists is listed in each of the books, the identifications must remain questionable as no revisionary work was undertaken. Both books are fully referenced, indexed and contain a glossary of technical terms.

The books nevertheless differ very much from each other, and can be discussed only separately.

The first has two titles. On the cover page and back, we read, "Commercial Fishes of the Philippines." On the second and third pages, we read "Commercial Marine Fishes of the Central Philippines (Bony Fishes)." Let's stick to the first title, although it's only the second which is really appropriate.

The "Key to Families (arranged according to similarity in appearance)" is very helpful, but ordering all fish families in the book alphabetically was probably going too far in trying to help the reader. One finds catfish close

to moorish idols, and herring-like fishes close to butterfly fishes.

The figures are well done, but remind one that even elaborate shading techniques can not replace colors. The brief descriptions are in the usual jargon, and do not include anything on biology or habitats of the fish in question. Five hundred and eighty-one (581) fishes are described, i.e., 264 more than the widely used FAO identification sheets from which more than a quarter of the illustrations were reproduced.

The descriptions and identifications could not all be assessed, but one fish is included (*Leiognathus rivulatus*) whose range, I believe, is limited further north (Taiwan to Japan). This fish is included here with the remark "known from Southern Japan; possibly also occurring in the Philippines (Wong-ratana, pers. comm. 1978)." More than 2,000 species are reported from the Philippines; it would seem unwise to let gossip add to this.

In spite of these and other problems, especially with the lists of references, the book is going to be helpful (granted it is distributed free throughout the Philippines): it looks so plain that there is a fair chance that some copies won't be intercepted on their way down to the people who actually do the field work.

Robert Schroeder's book is something else. In fact, this book is so beautiful (and expensive) that there is no chance it will reach its intended readership.

The book has two sections. The first is a superb series of color plates of the fish against black backgrounds; the second contains descriptions of 525 species and includes biological information, such as depth of occurrence, feeding habits, schooling and other behavioral patterns, etc.

One simply gets the impression Schroeder describes living organisms, while the previous authors classified dead things. The text section of the book is also well-illustrated with at least one color plate every second page. Many of these photos depict fishes in their habitat, often caught just as they were turning away from the photo-

grapher. This adds to the impression one gets that this book is devoted to living organisms. Schroeder is certainly a good photographer; let's hope his identifications are right.

This book is a marvelous coffee-table book. Maybe somebody will make a cheaper edition for the intended audience. **Daniel Pauly**