

Book reviews

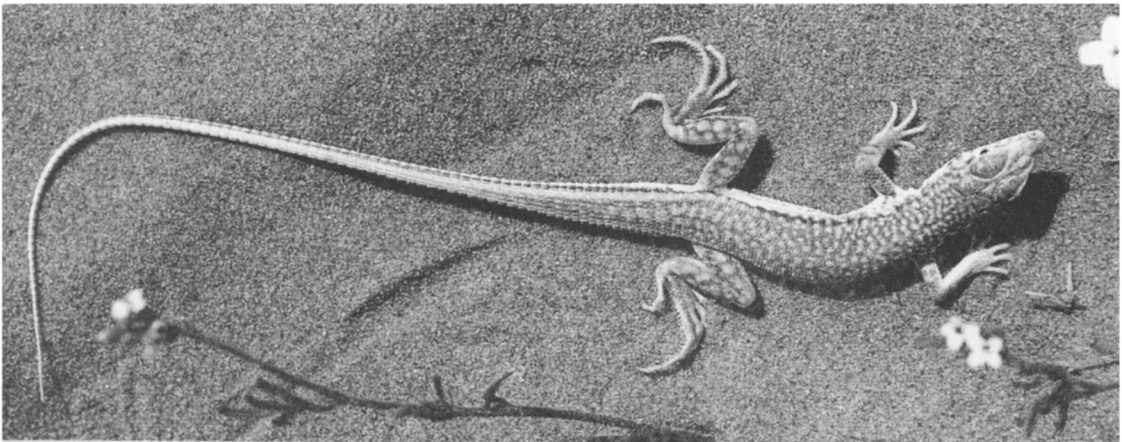
Fauna of Saudi Arabia

Prof. Dr W. Büttiker and Dr F. Krupp (editors)
Natural History Museum, Basel/Switzerland and the
Meteorology and Environmental Protection Administration
of Saudi Arabia. Distributed by Karger Libri Ag, Publishers'
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Perhaps more than for other parts of the world the literature of the zoology of Arabia has been scattered amid a host of diverse and obscure journals. The annual publication of the *Fauna of Saudi Arabia* has since 1979 gone a long way towards bringing together papers of various zoological specialisms, all primarily concerning Arabia. The volumes issued so far have been sponsored by the Meteorological and Environmental Protection Administration in Jeddah, edited by Prof. W. Büttiker and Dr F. Krupp, and published by Pro Entomologica of Basle. The journal is prepared to a very high standard in hardback format with most issues illustrated by numerous black and white photos and line figures, and a number of colour plates. The original concept of the work was to provide a medium to publish Arabian entomological research and there is still a bias of papers to the invertebrate classes, but each volume now has a number of papers on vertebrate groups and general subjects. Arabia is a part of the world where the fauna is still very imperfectly known and it is not surprising, therefore, that many papers are systematic reviews of families of animals and their taxonomic relationships, and descriptions of numerous invertebrates new to sci-

ence. Important vertebrate papers in recent years have included exhaustive reviews of amphibians, carnivorous mammals and freshwater fishes, whilst other major papers have dealt with chameleons and baboons in Arabia. These illustrate the very great variety of animal life in a part of the world that most people regard as an impoverished arid environment. Papers on individual species have dealt with the wolf, striped hyena, endangered birds (Arabian bustard and helmeted guineafowl), breeding pink-backed pelicans and lappet-faced vultures, and the extinction of the Arabian ostrich. This book also provides a platform for broader based environmental issues, including more and more conservation-orientated papers. This is vitally important in a region where wildlife and the environment has, until now, come a poor second best to the industrial and mineral development of this zoogeographically important peninsula. Medical, veterinary and applied zoology articles also figure regularly in the titles. Of the eight issues so far the average size has been 500 pages (215 × 285 mm) with about 30 contributions in each issue. *Fauna of Saudi Arabia* is an impressive work, both aesthetically and scientifically, and essential reading for all those who have a specific interest in the animal life of Arabia or, more generally, of the Middle East area.

M. C. Jennings, Co-ordinator, Atlas of The Breeding Birds of Arabia and Editor of The Phoenix.



Acanthodactylus tilburyi, a newly described spiny-footed lizard occurring in north and central Saudi Arabia (C.R. Tilbury).