

BOOK REVIEW

Jensen, Gregory C. 1995. Pacific coast crabs and shrimps.—Sea Challengers, Monterey, California, U.S.A. US \$21.95. Paperback. Pp. 1–87. ISBN 0–9300118–20–0.

Over the past 17 years, Sea Challengers, Inc., has become a relatively well-known name among publishers of natural history guidebooks, and for fairly good reason. The books tend to be nicely produced and executed, and nearly always contain an abundance of high quality photographs which, especially for the amateur naturalist, are of considerable use in making field identifications.

Color photography appears to be so important to the Sea Challenger series of books (they have produced 12 to date) that it can be a bit of a drawback, in that it often seems as though the photographs are the driving force behind the selection of the species to be treated. At times, common species go unmentioned, presumably because no appropriate photograph was in hand at the time. Although understandable from the viewpoint of a publisher hoping to make a large visual splash, this makes for sometimes spotty treatments.

The newest offering by Sea Challengers, Greg Jensen's short book on crabs and shrimps of the Pacific coast, is a jewel. The photographs are beautiful, and because so little is known about the natural history of many of the species treated, we gain insight into the natural habitat and colors. For a few of the species, I previously had no idea as to what constituted natural color in the field, having seen only preserved specimens. For most west coast species, the only option before now has been to consult out-of-print volumes, such as Schmitt (1921, University of California Publications in Zoology 23: 1–470), to find scattered bits and pieces of information on color; these are often anecdotal or incomplete, if any color notes exist at all [one obvious exception is the 1980 tome by Morris *et al.* (Intertidal invertebrates of California, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California. Pp. i–ix, 1–69), but that work is unfortunately restricted to intertidal species]. Many of the

species included in Jensen's book have never had any color notes mentioned in the primary literature, much less been the subject of a published color photograph. Thus there is a considerable amount of very useful information contained in these pictures. My favorite photograph of Jensen's is a gorgeous shot of the leucosiid *Randallia ornata* among a bed of living sand dollars; the color is spectacular. It would have been nice to have included photographs of the range of variable colors or color patterns for those species that exhibit such diversity, but this was likely an editorial decision. Such a range was provided to some extent for *Cancer productus*, where color patterns of juveniles are included as well, but there are no photographs of variation in color patterns of other species (although the range is occasionally mentioned, as, for example, in *Lophopanopeus* and *Cycloxanthops* among the brachyurans and *Heptacarpus* among the carideans). This may make field identification difficult when one of the nonpictured variations is encountered.

There are approximately 160 species treated in only 87 pages of text. The stated range of coverage is from southeastern Alaska to the Mexican border. For the most part, the depth of species treated is restricted to 100 feet (31 m) or less, but some predominantly deeper species are included and some shallow species are excluded. The author is to be commended for successfully completing what must have been a very long and arduous task of taking and compiling these photographs, nearly all of which were taken in the field.

On a more technical level, the book suffers from a number of small problems that are typical of guidebooks aimed at lay audiences. These are all the more aggravating because they could have been avoided so easily. The family Goneplacidae is consistently misspelled. Grammatical and typographical errors are too common and detract from the overall quality. Many species occurring in the area are not treated, presumably because a color photograph was not available. Other species are included,

but only by rather poor illustrations (by comparison), such as the porcellanid *Petrolisthes rathbunae*. Although color photographs are desirable in popular books and make the volume attractive, they lose their usefulness when the subjects blend so nicely with the background. Thus, for example, although the photographs of several carideans show how well these species are camouflaged against their background, the pictures do not allow for reliable identification (e.g., especially the photographs of *Crangon stylirostris* and *Eualus pusiolus*). In those cases, perhaps a simple line drawing would have helped. The book is slightly awkward in its arrangement, again unfortunate in light of how easily this could have been avoided. The two sections dealing with shrimp species are separated; carideans are treated between brachyurans and anomurans, whereas the penaeids (and only 1 of these is included) appear between the Palinura and Stomatopoda (the latter two groups included despite the title of the book). This arrangement is most likely a reflection of the dendrobranchiate/phyllobranchiate division, but there is no mention of this in the text and a general audience will be left wondering why "shrimp" occur in two places. The one-page glossary is not of tremendous utility, and the picture-keys, although very easy to use, are, of course, limited, because not all possible species are included in the treatments. The authority

and date are not given for any of the species treated, which is not a crucial omission in a popular publication such as this, but would have been a nice (and easy) addition that would have given the book much wider appeal. There are essentially no papers cited under the treatments of individual species, so that the reader has no idea where the information about a particular species originates. This will probably cause some consternation when a worker, attempting to locate *Callinassa affinis*, finds that the species is now in the genus *Neotrypaea*, but finds no clue as to when or why this transfer occurred. On the other hand, and much to his credit, Jensen has indicated by an asterisk when his own previously unpublished and valuable observations have been included, so that the reader can easily dissect the old from the new information presented.

As a systematist, the above omissions and slight problems bother me, especially because they could have been avoided with so little additional work. But they do not bother me to the point that I would not buy the book. I suspect that beginning natural historians and the public in general, the admitted target audiences of the book, will delight in the photographs and relative ease of identification that this volume provides.—Joel W. Martin, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90007, U.S.A.

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