

such conclusions await further study, but the analysis presented here will surely occupy an important place in the history of agricultural origins.

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The Mammals of Ancient Egypt. Dale J. Osborn and Jana Osbornova. *The Natural History of Egypt: Vol. IV.* 1998. Aris & Phillips Ltd., Warminster, England. Pp. 224. \$75.00 (paper). ISBN 0-85668-510-0

This is the fourth volume of Aris and Phillips' *The Natural History of Egypt*. The volume synthesizes information from mammalogy, ecology, Egyptology, and archaeozoology to provide a comprehensive summary of our present knowledge of the mammalian taxa. Osborn is a mammalogist and systematic zoologist who co-authored *The Contemporary Land Mammals of Egypt*, the widely respected publication series of the Field Museum of Natural History. Although neither author is an Egyptologist, they have thoroughly researched the Egyptological literature. The result is a very strong effort and the best text of the series.

The discussion of each taxon begins with a segment on nomenclature. This is an important contribution in itself because significant confusion exists in the Egyptological literature over the names of various taxa. This volume establishes the nomenclature for the taxa of mammals known from ancient and contemporary Egypt, and, while minor disagreements still remain (e.g., *Dama dama* Brooke or *Dama mesopotamica* L.), it provides the scientific and common names that should be used in future publications.

Following each nomenclature segment is a description of the taxon. These descriptions form the basis of the authors' identifications and inform their critique of identifications made by previous authors of the taxa in rock carvings, tomb and temple representations, and sculptures. Although arguments in the literature concerning the identification of mammalian representation in the art of ancient Egypt are profuse, Osborn and Osbornova's detailed discussions and expertise inspire a rare sense of confidence in the reader. Only a handful of identifications (e.g., the representations of the oryx, gazelle, and of one feline) may arouse some skepticism.

The discussion on the various breeds of dogs and their artistic representation is fascinating and particularly useful. The treatment of the relationship between the shrew and the ichneumon in ancient Egypt mythology is intriguing. It leads the authors to suggest that confusion in identifying sculptures of the shrew and ichneumon may result from the purposeful blurring of the differences between the two taxa by the sculptors. Perhaps the most entertaining section is entitled "Errors and Discrepancies." In this section the authors catalogue misidentifications and errors in nomenclature in the literature. The longest list is for the oryx, but the errors and discrepancies for the canids, particularly the domestic dogs, are the most useful and interesting.

While the book is well conceived and certainly well written, a number of small irritating problems stand out. The nomenclature discussions, although valuable as a whole, are very variable in detail. Some include short explanations for the etymology of the scientific names while others do not. The sections dealing with the natural history of each taxon are also variable in quality. Descriptions of the environments in which the taxa might have occurred in ancient Egypt are frequently omitted. In the discussion of the fallow deer (*Dama mesopotamica*), for example, it would have been useful to point out that the deer inhabited thickly wooded areas along the edges of the Nile Valley, thus making the early disappearance of this taxon more understandable. The layout of figures within the text is often clumsy and forces the reader to shift back and forth between pages. The worst example of this miscue is the location of the identifications of animals in Table 1, which is located at the end of the chapter some twelve pages later. The discussion of lion manes (p. 114) is also confusing. Two 1996 articles by Houlihan are cited, yet, since they lack further differentiation in the text [i.e., Houlihan (a) v. Houlihan (b)] it is difficult to tell which reference is being cited.

With the exception of these minor errors, this is an outstanding text. The volume synthesizes an impressive amount of information from at least four sometimes-disparate disciplines. What makes such a synthesis such a valuable resource is the comprehensive literature review coupled with flashes of insight. Given these criteria, this is an extremely valuable resource for anyone working with mammals in ancient Egypt. It belongs on the shelf of every archaeozoologist working in North Africa and the Middle East and most certainly on the bookshelf of every Egyptologist.

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American Bamboos. Emmet J. Judziewicz, Lynn G. Clark, Ximena Londoño, and Margaret J. Stern. 1999. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. and London. Pp. 392. \$49.95 (hardcover). ISBN 1-56098-569-0

The histories of humans and the bamboos have pushed and pulled at one another for thousands of years. Bamboo tends to provoke deep-seated responses from people in North America because it is invasive, quick growing, and, perhaps above all, *eastern*. Many non-scientists are frequently stunned to learn that bamboos are even native to the western hemisphere, never mind that the number of New World bamboos rivals that of the Old. As this text is very accessible to anyone equipped with some basic understanding of the natural sciences, it will hopefully dispel some of these false impressions. More importantly, the book somehow manages to be accessible to more general audiences while being extremely detailed, insightful, and useful for the most accomplished botanist. Such a combination is rare.

A key to the American bamboos and basal grasses follows five chapters of