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Review: Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico, Texas, Louisiana and Adjacent Waters (2nd ed.) by H. Dickson Hoese and Richard H. Moore

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BOOK REVIEW

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Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, and Adjacent Waters. 2nd ed. 1998. H. Dickson Hoese and Richard H. Moore, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, Texas 77843-4354. 422 p.

More than 20 yr have passed since Hoese and Moore published the first edition of *Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico*, which has become a standard in the ichthyological tool chest for researchers and laypeople throughout the region. The second edition is improved, making it a must for serious enthusiasts, including fishermen, scuba divers, students, and scientists. What makes this book unique and particularly useful when compared to other field guides is that it contains a set of dichotomous keys to identification, first to the families then to species within families, of the more than 550 fish species found in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. Indeed, I use the book as a text in my vertebrate zoology classes at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Although the use of dichotomous keys can initially be somewhat daunting, the book's numerous photographs and line drawings (539 plates), discussion of the means of identifying fishes complete with an example of how to use keys, and extensive illustrated glossary make the book useful even to those with sparse knowledge of fish anatomy. Moreover, based upon review of my own extensive notes in the margins of the first edition, some of the mistakes in keys that so frustrated both my students and me have been corrected in the second edition.

Significant changes to the second edition

mostly reflect increases in knowledge about the varieties and biology of fishes in the northwestern Gulf. There are more than 60 new species included in the book, some of which have been scientifically described since the first edition was published in 1977. In addition, scientific and recommended common names of some species (including a few very common ones) have changed since 1977, and these have been updated. The authors also have assembled over 200 new or better pictures of fishes among the numerous plates, mirrored closely to the first edition's format and stated objective of "bridging the imaginary barrier between the technical and the popular" (Second Edition Preface, page x). Those readers expecting a "picture book" of fishes, however, will be disappointed. All of the plates are small, with images comprised from a mixed bag of formats, including photographs of preserved specimens, of live but posed fishes, of fishes in their natural environment, and of stuffed (taxidermy mounts) fishes, as well as illustrations.

Our knowledge of the biology of northwestern Gulf fishes also has increased dramatically in recent years, particularly with regard to early life histories. Much of this new information is briefly synthesized in the expanded introductory sections of the book, with subsections titled Purpose and Scope, Ecology and Life History, Zoogeography, Conservation, and History of Ichthyological Research, and is referenced in the greatly expanded bibliography of scientific literature for those wishing more details.

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