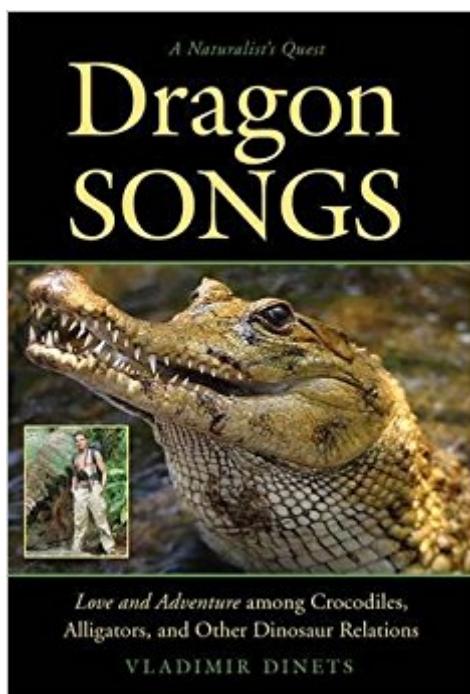


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Dragon Songs: Love And Adventure Among Crocodiles, Alligators, And Other Dinosaur Relations



Synopsis

A born naturalist and a fearless traveler, Vladimir Dinets wrote travel guides, conducted field research, and lived a couple of lives before he was accepted into the PhD program in zoology at the University of Miami. He thought crocodiles were a dead-end research topicâ "survivors from the age of the dinosaurs but not much elseâ "until he witnessed groups of up to seventy alligators performing mating choruses that included infrasound vibrationsâ "a form of communication extremely rare in natureâ "and a â œdanceâ • unknown in the scientific literature but that resembled a scene from Jurassic Park. To prove his thesis about the language of crocodiles, he spent the next six years traveling around the world on shoestring budgets and in extreme circumstances, studying almost every living species. At the same time, as a man desiring companionship in life, he sought love. With adventures on five continents, Dragon Songs is his account of this quest. It includes an escape from a boiling lava lake in the Afar Desert, being chased up a tree by a tiger in India, hitching a ride with a cocaine smuggler in Bolivia, and diving with giant Greenland sharksâ "all in the name of studying crocodiles, among which he routinely paddled in his inflatable kayak. Of course, not everything went according to plan. But, in the end, his ground-breaking research helped change the field. And during the course of his adventures, he met and courted his future wife.

Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Arcade Publishing; 1 edition (November 6, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1611458935

ISBN-13: 978-1611458930

Product Dimensions: 6 x 6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 18 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #752,963 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #51 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Reptiles #174 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Reptiles & Amphibians #1440 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Scientists

Customer Reviews

Shortlisted for Russia's Prestigious Big Book and Enlightener Prizes

With his artist's eye, scientist precision, and explorer's free spirit, Dinets, a Russian immigrant and Louisiana State University professor, is no ordinary zoologist. Here, he leads readers on an intense and joyous global pursuit of the mating customs of crocodiles (as well as his own), chroniciling the adventures in fieldwork that would inform his graduate thesis. Along the way, he notes how he prefers assistants "pathologically prone to risk taking behavior," and on several occasions persuaded bush pilots to let him fly their planes -sans license. Dinets is smuggled through Somalia along with "rap music tapes and cases of Coca Cola," and avoids the bandits of Chambal, India (who live near a river filled with hundreds of singing "mugger" crocs); he offers opinions on the politics of science ("negative results are virtually impossible to publish") and seeks out scientific art, like an ancient Chinese "magic bowl" that produces infrasounds- sounds at frequencies of less than 20 Hz, the low end of the normal human hearing range - as crocodiles do. Throughout gators and crocs sing, slither, and dance, providing fascinating glimpses of the dinosaurs from which they evolved (the discovery that Siamese crocs feed their yearlings indicates even the earliest dinos may have had "complex parental care"). Dinets offers an exuberant, intelligent take on the adventure of science that has the power to inspire aries of starry-eyed, flack-jacketed Ph.D.'s Photos & maps.-Publishers Weekly

Very well composed story, very easy to follow and fascinating. Dinets is able to give enough history in his life to allow you to understand him and at the same time not bog down the story with details. As a person whom has done research and understands the persistence it takes to find what you are looking for I really loved his story. If you love road stories and adventure mixed with animals this will hold you. He does mention a bit of his romantic interludes but never got to the place were his descriptions made me uncomfortable. (It is clear to the reader what is going on just no graphic details.) I wish he had described a bit more of how he lived off of the land etc. (Made bow & Arrow and hunted fish.) Spent time in Asia, South America, US and Africa studying Crocodilians I would for sure recommend it and fully expect it to go up in price and the published books get sold out. Will become a herping classic I expect.

Vladimir Dinets has written an extraordinary book that should appeal to a large number of readers. It has much to recommend it-- a passionate quest for knowledge, a passionate love of nature, a passionate love of different cultures (and of women, culminating in the happy ending of a marriage and academic jobs for both parties) and true adventure. To give you just a taste, one of my favorite passages has Vladimir neck deep in a pool, holding very very still as a huge "false-gharial almost

twenty feet long entered the pool, and remained motionless for an hour." Vladimir was "so afraid that it would notice him"... not from fear of being eaten, but fear of the animal leaving before it sang its mating song, the nominal topic of this book and of his thesis research. His description of this episode, and of other encounters, is both thrilling and satisfying: "Finally the "song" came.... the vibrations were so intense that I felt like a victim of dynamite fishing. A tree growing above my head showered me with dry leaves. The giant remained still for another hour, then his mighty tail slowly moved, and he slid through the grass toward the river and disappeared." Vladimir describes travels that quartered the world, and gave insights into the study of nature, and its condition, in multiple countries. He is an accomplished writer, with several books in other languages, and his authorship of this book is engaging and knowledgeable. I enjoyed his book greatly. The hardback version was originally purchased for our Biology department, but I also purchased the kindle version for myself, which I have enjoyed reading on my own travels. Whether you are an armchair or an active traveler, I recommend this book with the highest enthusiasm.

I bought this book because I spend the majority of my free time researching and photographing reptiles and pick up pretty much any book that has to do with alligators. The instant I looked at the photograph of the shirtless author on the cover I had a feeling this book was going to be entertaining because it is nothing like the typical author photo you would expect on a book jacket. This book is without a doubt the most entertaining thing I have read in a long time and I actually enjoyed it more for the author's stories and style of writing than the actual crocodilian research. The overall premise of the book is to explain the travels and people involved with the author's research done while writing his thesis on crocodilian communication. The way he travels and the descriptions are in most cases both ridiculous and amusing at the same time to anyone who travels in a typical fashion. I can't even imagine travelling some of the ways he did and would never do many of these things myself. There are perfect descriptions for many things in this book that I have also observed such as some photographers seeming to base their egos on whose camera lens is the longest. Descriptions of bribes and cultures around the world are laughable but true and I especially liked the author's mention of a foreign official not accepting a bribe in his passport once as witnessing a miracle. For those interested in reading the actual thesis that was written by Vladimir you can find it on his website in PDF format for free (the website address is mentioned on the inner book jacket). There are also PDF versions of various research papers he has published in scientific journals along with English translations of some of his earlier books. I actually learned a lot about alligators I never knew before reading his research papers regarding hunting strategies and

communication. I highly recommend this book both to people interested in reptiles and people just looking for a hilarious story.

I am a fan of Gerald Darrell books and this book is one of that kind. The author, scientist-zoologist, traveled all over the world and visited most of the national parks in remote parts of our planet in a search of rare species of animals. This book about his study of songs of crocodiles, one of the oldest species on the Earth and some of their very interesting habits. I read and listened to it and it was better than a detective (the book has an excellent quality sounded translation). I recommend this book to a different kind of readers - it is written by a writer and researcher, who really loves, what he is doing and is not afraid to reach the remotest places, outside of modern civilization for the sake of his devotion to make a new discoveries.

This book was well written. It was entertaining while also being educational. I have always been fascinated by alligators and other crocodilians and I learned more about them from this book than I learned in my 25 years of growing up in Florida.

This is a great book that is packed with new information about crocodilians behavior and ecology. It is well written and the story flows quite smoothly. Some of the things the author reports are amazing and he backs them up with data and actual observations.

It is for a gift but I looked through it and read some parts. It is even more interesting than I would have expected. It was delivered very fast! Appreciate that!

remarkable, read it.

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