
but non-trivial ("I picture the reader as a smart old attorney," he says, "who expects . . . some convincing arguments before he makes up his mind").

THE DRAGONS OF EDEN: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence
by Carl Sagan
Random, 1977, 264 pp. \$8.95
L of C 76-53472
ISBN 0-394-41045-9

Having explored the possibility of extra-terrestrial intelligence in *The Cosmic Connection*, Sagan, a witty and elegant astronomer, examines the infinite mysteries of the human brain. Natural selection, he assures us, has served as a kind of "intellectual sieve," producing intelligence increasingly competent to deal with the laws of nature. It has been a slow process. In this captivating history of cerebral development, Sagan reminds us that it was only a few hundred million years ago that an organism with more information in its brain than in its genes appeared. We still share with our less well-endowed fellow primates three inborn fears—of falling, of snakes, of the dark. But thanks to the neocortex, which grew up around our more primitive brain structures some 30 million years ago, we have a culture that includes language, logic, intuition, and myths. The human brain, Sagan predicts, will continue to evolve—with the help of its talented competitor, the computer.

SNAKES—A NATURAL HISTORY

by H. W. Parker, revised
by A. G. C. Grandison
Cornell & British Museum
(Natural History), 1977,
124 pp.
\$8.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper
L of C 76-54625
ISBN 0-8014-1095-9
ISBN 0-8014-9164-9 pbk

The 11 families of snakes in a blend of scientific data and sympathy. This short book, newly revised from the 1965 edition, with enlarged full-color plates, is authoritative enough for professional herpetologists but will not overwhelm well-read modern youngsters who make pets of garter snakes. Necessarily sprinkled with such technical terms as "keratin"—one of the three layers of a snake's skin—the text's sometimes pedantic authenticity is relieved by striking images ("a livery of warning colours") and British matter-of-factness (Typhlopidae, or "blind" snakes, "essentially subterranean creatures," feed on "small invertebrates, especially ants").

Which British snakes are dangerous? There are three species of snake native to Britain plus a fourth, non-native species. Three of these are completely harmless - only the adder (*Vipera berus*), a native reptile, is venomous. But Patrick says, 'Generally speaking with the adder, you're not going to die from a bite.' Every year, more people are reading our articles to learn about the challenges facing the natural world. Our future depends on nature, but we are not doing enough to protect our life support system. British wildlife is under threat. The book is about natural history, friendship, family, frogs, toads, newts, snakes, lizards, and the joys and anxieties of growing up. Richard has also published books and articles about nature writing and other kinds of wild literature. He teaches creative writing, including nature writing, at Bath Spa University, and was a founder of the UK branch of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. Buy *Snakes: A Natural History*: NHBS - Edited By: Roland Bauchot, Sterling. British Wildlife is the leading natural history magazine in the UK, providing essential reading for both enthusiast and professional naturalists and wildlife conservationists. Published six times a year, British Wildlife bridges the gap between popular writing and scientific literature through a combination of long-form articles, regular columns and reports, book reviews and letters. Subscriptions from £30 per year. Go to [British Wildlife](#). Conservation Land Management. 4 issues per year 44 pages per issue Subscription only. Conservation Land Management (CLM) is a quarterly magazine that is wide The behaviour of snakes and their facial features (e.g. the unblinking, lidless eyes) seemed to imply that they were intelligent, that they lived by reason and not instinct, and yet their thought-processes were as alien to humans as their ways of movement. In most cultures snakes were symbolic and symbols of healing and transformation, but in some cultures snakes were fertility symbols, for example the Hopi people of North America performed an annual snake dance to celebrate the union of Snake Youth Hognose snakes have a unique defensive behavior known as "feigning death." The hognose will roll onto its back, lie completely still, defecate, release a musk odor and hang its tongue out. Western Hognose Snakes have an upturned snout and keeled scales; each scale has a raised ridge, making them rough to the touch. Their saliva is toxic to prey, which includes toads, lizards, reptile eggs, small mammals, birds, and insects. Western Terrestrial Garter Snake. Understanding these differences and getting to know the rich natural histories of snakes can help reduce fear and increase respect for these often misunderstood creatures. Snakes in the wild. Like encounters with most wild animals, observe snakes from a safe distance.