

GEAR

BOOK
REVIEWS

The last twelve months have been good for print publications. Here are two books you'll definitely want to seek out...

THE BICHR HANDBOOK

Author: Joshua Pickett

ISBN: 9781789727708

Pages: 144

List price: £25

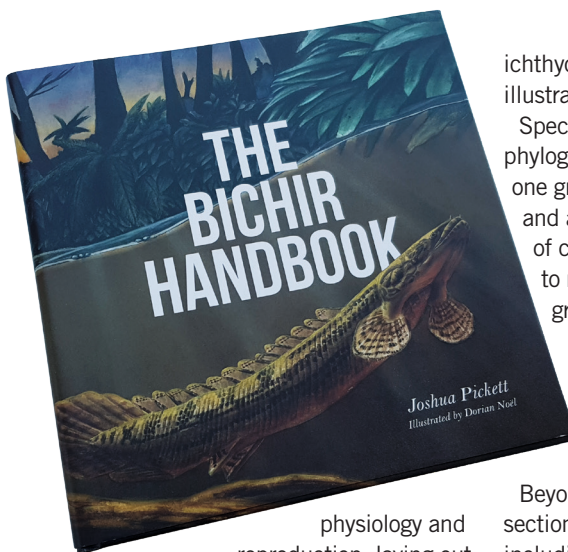
Bibliophiles will recognise Joshua Pickett as the designer behind Ivan Mikolji's recent 'Fishes of the Orinoco' project. This time, being his own boss, Joshua's creative brakes are off, resulting in a book with astonishing design values.

The book is built around a single theme, and that theme is bichirs (buh-sheer, as is clarified at the start) and remains true to that throughout, never digressing or straying from the polypterids at hand.

As soon as you open it up you're hit with additional treats — a two-sided *Polypterus* poster and a bookmark that doubles as a checklist to record all of the species you've kept yourself. If you've bought directly from the website, you may have a signature from the author, too.

With such focused subject matter, you might be worried that the book has lots of unnecessary fleshing out and repetition, but the reality is that Joshua has assembled what is possibly the single most comprehensive work on this family of fish.

After the foreword, Joshua leaps straight into the story of bichirs, from their origins and taxonomic relationships into anatomy,



physiology and reproduction, laying out

the path for a thorough background understanding of who these fish really are.

Next, he delves into the practicality of aquarium keeping and care, leaving no stone unturned. Substrate choices for individual species, dietary specifics, compatibility, disease issues and even the ethics and sustainability of sourcing are all covered in-depth and comprehensively.

Joshua's flair for design comes to the fore throughout, with an abundance of easy-to-read charts peppering the pages. One masterstroke among many is a size comparison chart (shown below), a visual tool that offers a simple reference to the adult mass of the different species.

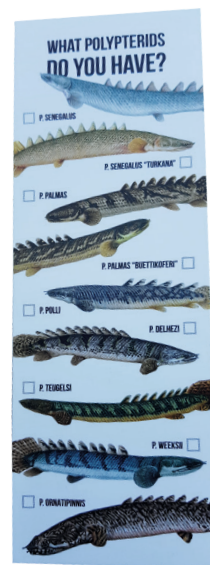
The main body of the book is then given over to species profiles, each delightfully illustrated by Dorian Noel, himself an

ichthyologist in training, and as an illustrative guide, it is unrivalled.

Species are categorised according to their phylogenetic relationships and addressed one group at a time, species by species, and as well as copy for each, a selection of consistent infographic tools are used to rate them for criteria like activity, growth rates and territoriality.

This work has been carefully considered, and it's difficult to take for granted the amount of time and effort that has gone into its creation.

Beyond species specifics, there's even a section on extinct but related species, including a true dinosaur of the order, measuring just shy of 10ft. No matter how much you think you know on the bichirs, I guarantee that you will learn something about them in this majestic book, and I can only hope for all our sakes that Joshua decides to pit his awesome design and journalistic talents to use on more publications in the future. A triumphal book, and a must-have for any fan of these fascinating jurassic oddballs.



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