

Book Review

GULF OF MEXICO ORIGIN, WATERS, AND BIOTA: BIODIVERSITY (Volume 1). Editors: Darryl L. Felder & David K. Camp. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, Texas, USA, 2009. ISBN 978-1-60344-094-3, 1,393 pp.

The first volume of the multivolumed series *Gulf of Mexico Origin, Waters, and Biota*, edited by Darryl L. Felder and David K. Camp, is a distinctive scientific reference that provides a complete biodiversity inventory of the Gulf of Mexico, including a full range of biotic and biogeographic information. After four years of preparation, in collaboration with 140 international contributors representing 80 institutions in 15 countries, this work is the first complete all-taxa record of what is known about the Gulf of Mexico biota through the year 2004.

The book begins with a very relevant discussion on the importance of biodiversity assessment and species inventories in order to successfully manage their long-term sustainable use and conservation in a state of constant environmental change. The claim is supported with an argument for conservation of biodiversity from economical, ecological, moral, and legal standpoints (Costello, 1998). It became quite evident that there was a need for this informational gap to be filled, which prompted the creation of this groundbreaking work.

This unprecedented compilation is structured into 79 chapters and provides a detailed inventory of approximately 15,419 species in 40 phyla or divisions, which currently inhabit the Gulf of Mexico. Each chapter starts with a brief narrative introduction to the group being discussed and offers pertinent information, such as the group's overall history, along with a citation of all references. Subsequently, there is a categorical list of data on each species' habitat, biology, depth range, and geographic range. The data are efficiently organized into checklist tables, which comprise the bulk of nearly all of the chapters. There are also 248 line art illustrations that can be found throughout the text, and located directly between Chapters 44 and 45 are 225 large color illustrations. These color illustrations offer additional clarity and precision, which significantly aid the reader in the identification of specifically selected species.

This textbook will serve as an invaluable resource for a wide audience interested in marine

biology, especially researchers, scientists, and students. Although there is a vast amount of information presented, it is well-organized, concise, and easily navigated. As science continues to progress, there has been a recent development of more modern techniques that has created a resurgence in both the exploration and sampling of the Gulf of Mexico biota, which will undoubtedly build upon this extensive body of work.

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Literature Cited

Costello, M. J. (1998). To know, research, manage and conserve marine biodiversity. *Océanis*, 24, 25-49.