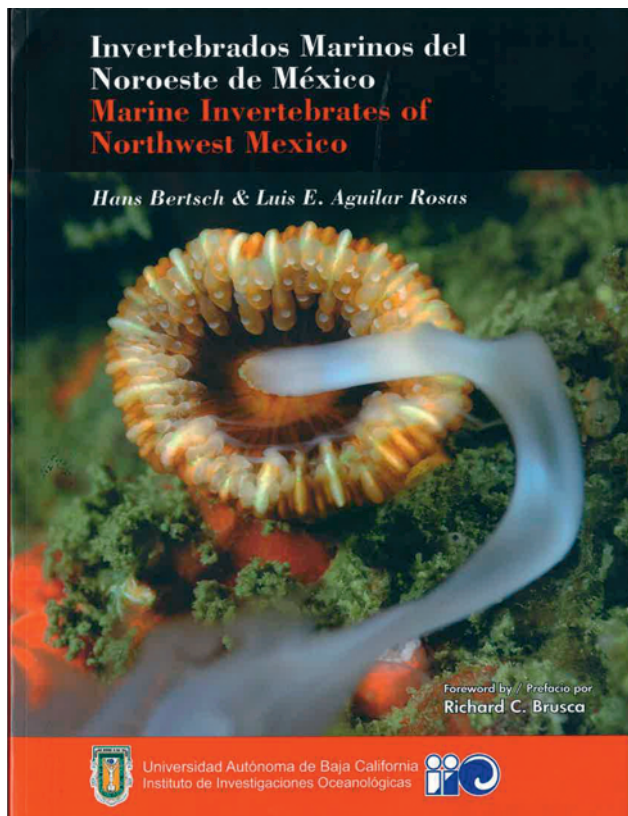


## Book Review

Hans Bertsch and Luis E. Aguilar Rosas. 2016. **Invertebrados Marinos del Noroeste del México – Marine Invertebrates of Northwest Mexico.** Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Instituto de Investigaciones Oceanológicas, Ensenada, Mexico, 432 pp. ISBN 978-0-692-76682-8, \$75 (Contact: hansmarvida@sbcglobal.net) [In English and Spanish.]

Given my lack of familiarity with the region covered in this bilingual book, I hesitated for a couple of heartbeats before accepting to review it. However, I was genuinely curious and thrilled by the concept of an international cooperation of this type, particularly one involving the invertebrate fauna of Baja California, the Gulf of California, and neighboring areas. The senior author, Hans Bertsch, is a well-known marine biologist and sea-slug specialist from southern California who has also published on some of the cultural aspects of mollusks from the region. Luis Aguilar Rosas is a respected marine biologist from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in Ensenada.



Knowing previous productions by the authors, I knew what to expect in terms of choice of subjects and accuracy in their reporting. However, an aspect in particular stood out during my initial examination of the book, one that expands the scope of the work into a different realm, beyond that of a traditional identification guide. The authors' unique arrangement includes precious cultural information within the treatment of many species, and in particular of mollusks. This is not at the expense of accurate and relevant taxonomic information. The biological and identification value of the book is augmented by addition of data on traditional customs of local people, including uses of some species as food, their spiritual importance, medicinal and pharmaceutical values, and others. In many cases, there is also information on the local nomenclature and the indigenous take on the folk taxonomy of those species. A typical species entry contains (in addition to the scientific and common names and great color illustrations) the subsections *Description*, *Size*, *Habitat*, [geographic] *Distribution*, and *Remarks* (cultural and ethnographic information, when available, is included in this latter subsection). Entries in the section on mollusks, in most cases, include an image of the live animal. The section on Mollusks comprises 390 species, for a total of 806 species (48 %) treated in the book (hence the relevance of this review in *The Nautilus*). There is a glossary and separate literature sections for the different groups (the literature section for Mollusca alone spans 7.5 pages). The volume also includes essays by José Luis Carballo, Donald Potts, Jesús Angel de León-Gonzalez, Paul Valentich-Scott, and Francisco A. Solís-Marín. The individual sections benefitted from the taxonomic expertise and contributions of a large cadre of international specialists in the different phyla. Spot checks reveal that the taxonomy and binominal nomenclature is up to the most recent standards compiled in the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS Editorial Board, 2016.)

Did the authors aim to provide a complete guide of regional marine invertebrates for northwestern Mexico? They didn't, but this doesn't detract from the usefulness of their production. For instance, from the standpoint of mollusks, there are gaps in the taxonomic coverage of the phylum, with lack of a more comprehensive coverage for some families of microgastropods and small bivalves. It is not a purpose of the book, however, to include the entire representation of invertebrates for the covered area, but to present a selection of the most conspicuous and relevant taxa that fit in a handy book format.

This production by Bertsch and Aguilar Rosas is symbolic of a much-desired type of cooperation between

the two great North American nations. No dividing wall separates the complementary interests and important contributions from these two authors. On the contrary, there is a clear synergistic component in their work. Beyond its efficacy as an invertebrate field guide, Bertsch and Aguilar Rosas's stimulating volume transcends its regional-guide aspect to become a very readable narrative of the taxonomy, natural history, ecology, and cultural aspects of the species it covers.

#### LITERATURE CITED

WoRMS Editorial Board. 2016. World Register of Marine Species. Available from <http://www.marinespecies.org> at VLIZ. Accessed 2016-10-22. doi:10.14284/170

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