

Big Snake: The Hunt for the World's Longest Python

Robert Twigger



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"Discovery Channel junkie" meets "weekend warrior" in this true story of a terrified desk dweller who sets out to capture the world's longest snake. Out of funding, acclaimed poet Robert Twigger was surfing the Internet for poetry prizes when he came upon a cash reward being offered for the capture of a live snake in excess of thirty feet. Established in 1912 by President Roosevelt following the capture of a twenty-eight-foot reticulated python, the reward had gone unclaimed for eighty-six years, boosting the \$1,000 prize to \$50,000. About to be married but craving one last adventure, the scrawny Oxford poet sets off for the Far East without either hesitation or serious strategy. No matter that his closest encounter with a live snake was at the reptile house at the Howlett Zoo or that he suffers from ophicliophobia, a fear nearly universal among humans. Twigger is determined to win the moneyand to guarantee that his last escapade as a bachelor will be an unforgettable one.

Part travelogue, part classic adventure, Big Snake grapples with the mythic and symbolic status of one of the world's most fascinating yet dreaded creatures, which are generally the victims of bad press. Trekking through South-East Asia with a band of headhunters, Twigger stalks pythons in the sewers of Kuala Lumpur, is forced to survive on greasy civet cat (a relative of the skunk) deep in the jungle, attempts to date the most beautiful woman in the world, encounters the cobweb hunters of Buru, and evaluates the legacy of Alfred Russel Wallace ("the true discoverer of evolution"). Ultimately, after close encounters with snakes both petite though venomous and harmless yet gargantuan, Twigger eventually comes face-to-face with the big one-but the final capture is not quite what he had in mind.

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