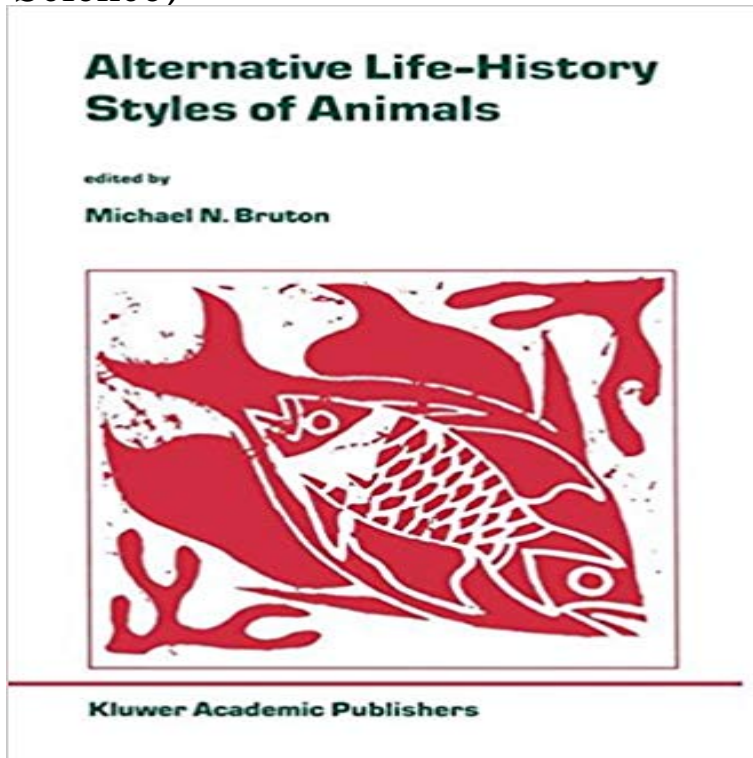


Alternative Life-History Styles of Animals (Perspectives in Vertebrate Science)



These proceedings had their origin in a conference entitled Alternative Life History Styles of Fishes and Other Organisms which was held in Grahamstown, South Africa, in June 1987. The idea for the conference arose out of the fascination of an African ichthyologist/ecologist (MNB) for the conceptual models of fish life-history styles which were being developed by an ichthyologist/epigeneticist based in Canada but with field experience in Europe, Asia and Africa (EKB). I had never been fully convinced that the adaptationist arguments of the neo-Darwinians explained all ontogenetic and evolutionary phenomena, and found that the novel approach to organism development and evolution which had been adopted by Balon, as well as by others such as LÖvtrup, was refreshing and enlightening. Their perspectives, combined with the new ideas on self-organisation and the link between nonequilibrium thermodynamics and biology by Prigogine, Jantsch, Laszlo, Wicken, Weber and others, seemed to suggest that new ways of interpreting old findings were now becoming available. On delving into the literature I found that a variety of zoologists were working in the field of alternative life-history styles and autopoiesis, yet they seemed to be unaware of one another's work. We decided that it was time for a meeting of minds. The aim of the conference was to examine the way in which epigenesis (i. e.

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