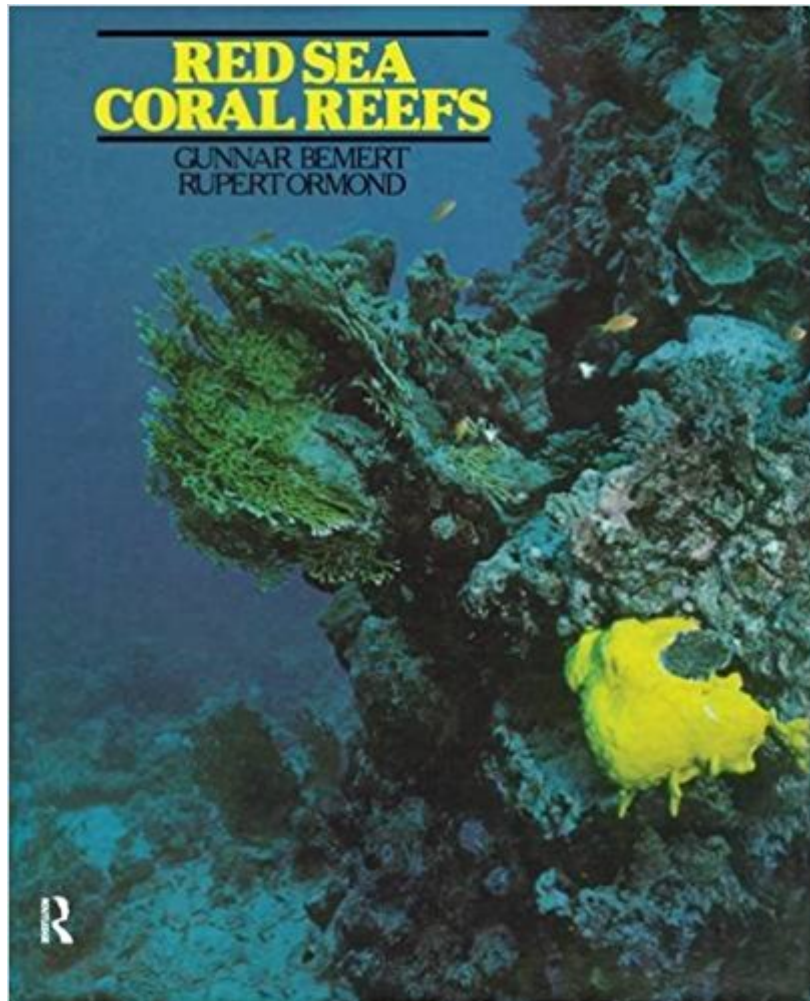




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Red Sea Coral Reefs: Marine Life Of Saudi Arabia



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

There have been several books of underwater photography on the flora and fauna of the Red Sea. Leni Riefenstahl, who was once the very effective de facto propaganda minister for Adolph Hitler, was most (in)famous for producingÂ Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will. Over the age of 65, she took up scuba diving, and produced an excellent book of photographs, entitledÂ Coral Gardens. Pretty pictures indeed, certainly enough to encourage one to go scuba diving. But the "how-things-work" aspect of what you will be seeing is missing. Gunnar Bemert and Rupert Ormond formed a wonderful partnership to overcome the normal "picture book" deficiency. Dr. Rupert Ormond is a university professor who had conducted research on coral reefs in the Red Sea for 10 years prior to the publication of this book in 1981. He provides sophisticated and substantive explanations of the coral reef itself, as well as the creatures that inhabit it. As an academician, he provides the Latin names for all the creatures. For the truly interested non-specialist, this book is an excellent introduction, as well as a useful reference that can be consulted numerous times. He commences with a description of the Red Sea itself, which is an unusual body of water in that it is part of the "Great Rift" that extends from north of the Dead Sea down through the middle of Africa. That is the reason it is so deep, in relationship to its width. With some good maps and drawings, he describes and illustrates where the reefs are located, and how they are formed. Coral is an

ANIMAL, and it is their external "skeletons" that create the reef. Some corals have no skeleton, such as the sea-fans. He provides excellent explanations on how they feed and reproduce. Ormond devotes a chapter each to the large invertebrates, such as the starfish and sea-urchins, and the small invertebrates, such as the seashells, worms and sponges. A first time diver is confronted with a bewildering array of fishes. The author urges the novice diver to group and recognize the fish by one of 15 different families: these include Wrasses, Parrotfish, Butterfly and Angelfish, Damselfish, Surgeons, Snappers, Groupers, and others, such as the Box fish. There is a separate chapter devoted to the many symbiotic relationships among the fishes and the corals that is most beneficial. Another chapter covers the dangers on the reef, which, with a little knowledge are minimal, and then he concludes with a chapter encouraging you to join the ranks of divers...AFTER the proper training. I met Gunnar Bemert in 1980, in Jeddah. He was already a "legend" in dive circles, yet I found him "down-home" and self-effacing. In reading the book, I continued to imagine meetings between the two, in which Ormond was telling him he needed yet one more picture to illustrate a particular creature. And Bemert appears to have come through, virtually every time, since there is a wonderful "marriage" between the text and the photographs. And his work is the equivalent of Riefenstahl's work, with the added fillip that he did not carry her "political baggage." Diving from Jeddah in the late '70's and early '80's was not easy. There was one, possibly two commercial compressors, and NO dive chamber; so one truly had to pay attention to one's dive tables. Facilities were rather rudimentary, and there was much diving conducted from beach camps. For those who know the area, there are a couple of truly extraordinary aerial views of Sharm Obhor (roughly, a creek) in its undeveloped stage. Today it is literally "chock-a-block" with resorts and homes. Throughout the book, there was never a mention or a whine about the "hardships" involved in the diving enterprise. For the beginner, or the seasoned dive veteran, this is the one book I'd recommend buying if you are privileged enough to have the opportunity to experience the Red Sea. 5-stars, plus.

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