CHAPTER 2

The Vocabulary of Reptilian Thermoregulation

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I. Introduction

The thermoregulatory activities of animals are nearly as varied and complex as the terminology devised by students of thermoregulation to describe those activities. Furthermore, the numerical predominance of biologists who study birds or mammals and the misunderstanding of the complexities of ectothermal physiology have led to erroneous synonyms and antonyms. Survival, and even revival, of archaic terms such as "cold-blooded" and "warm-blooded" plus the synthesis of inappropriate new jargon ("bradymetabolism", "tachymetabolism") have compounded biological complexity with semantic confusion.

Tracing the origins and changing uses of terms describing reptilian thermoregulation is an entertaining etymological exercise. Furthermore, the shades of meaning of nearly synonymous terms sometimes express important differences in views of reptiles and their physiology. There is even a literature of thermoregulatory terminology that exists in some instances quite separate from the biological phenomena the words are intended to describe (Gunn and Cosway, 1938; Cowles, 1940, 1961; Cowles and Bogert, 1944, 1947; Bogert, 1949, 1980 [1981]; Bligh and Johnson, 1973; Pough, 1974, Hutchison, 1979).

The accumulated terminology of thermoregulation may fascinate some specialists, but the mass of verbiage and the absence of a standard usage can