



## The Snake Charmer: A Life and Death in Pursuit of Knowledge

By Jamie James

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**The Snake Charmer: A Life and Death in Pursuit of Knowledge** By Jamie James

*Although it was still too dark to see well, Joe absentmindedly thrust his right hand into the sack to extract the specimen and have a look. Immediately, he winced with pain and yanked out his hand. A tiny black-and-white banded snake, less than ten inches long, was dangling limply from his middle finger, its fangs still sunk into his flesh.*

In the fall of 2001, deep in the jungle of Burma, a team of scientists is searching for rare snakes. They are led by Dr. Joe Slowinski, at forty already one of the most brilliant biologists of our time. It is the most ambitious scientific expedition ever mounted into this remote region, venturing into the foothills of the Himalayas. The bold undertaking is brought to a dramatic halt by the bite of the many-banded krait, the deadliest serpent in Asia. In the moment he pulled his hand from the specimen bag and saw the krait, Joe knew that his life was in grave and imminent peril. Thus began one of the most remarkable wilderness rescue attempts of modern times, as Joe's teammates kept him alive for thirty hours by mouth-to-mouth respiration, waiting for a rescue that never came.

A daredevil obsessed with venomous snakes since his youth, Slowinski was a modern-day adventurer who rose quickly to the top of his field, discovering many previously unidentified snake species in his brief yet exhilarating career. *The Snake Charmer* is at once brilliant biography and exotic travel literature, blended with an accessible introduction to the bizarre, fascinating-and sometimes controversial-world of snake science. The narrative transports the reader into primeval wilderness, from the Everglades to Peru to Burma, in search of rattlesnakes and boa constrictors, kraits and cobras.

Joe Slowinski's career was fast and exciting, his tragic final expedition a pulse-pounding struggle between man and nature. In *The Snake Charmer*, renowned journalist and author Jamie James captures the life and death of this charismatic, endlessly fascinating man. Exhaustively researched in interviews with Slowinski's colleagues and family, and the author's own trek into the wilds of Burma, this is narrative nonfiction in the tradition of *Into the Wild* and *The Perfect Storm*.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

James (*The Music of the Spheres*) tells the gritty and sad story of Joe Slowinski, a flamboyant and well-known herpetologist who died in Burma in 2001, aged 38, from the poisonous bite of a krait snake. Different snakes—from the first black rat snake he encountered at age five to the cobras on which his professional success was built—anchor different phases in Slowinski's life, as James paints a portrait of a man filled with ambition, intelligence, passion and recklessness. The account of the expedition into an unexplored region of northern Burma is chilling—it set a new standard of misery for scientific expeditions. After Slowinski was bitten by the krait, he was kept alive for 30 hours, through his companions' heroic efforts, with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. But the snake's potent neurotoxin did its work, and Slowinski died deep in the jungle. In the end, this book is both a tribute to Slowinski's spirit and scientific accomplishments, and a cautionary tale about the dangers of an overly passionate ambition. 8 pages of color and 8 pages of b&w photos. (*June*) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Like the more famous wildlife adventurer Steve Irwin, biologist Joe Slowinski, an expert in snakes, died as a result of his professional passion. On a 2001 expedition into the Burmese jungle to locate rare snakes, Slowinski was bitten by a many-banded krait, a reptile with a paralyzing neurotoxin venom that spells near-certain death for the victim. This book, which falls firmly into the same true-life tragedy genre as *Into the Wild* or *Into Thin Air* (also about people who died doing the thing they loved), tells us about Slowinski's life and career and the frantic efforts, after he was bitten, to keep him breathing until he could be rescued. At the end, we feel as though we knew Slowinski, that we understand what made him tick. It's a dramatic and moving story, told by an author who clearly understands that his subject is not simply about a man's cruel and ironic death but also about his life, his spirit, and his dreams. --David Pitt

About the Author

**Jamie James** is the author of eight books, including *Music of the Spheres*, *Other Origins*, and *Eccentrics: A Study in Sanity and Strangeness*. He has lived in Indonesia since 1999, where he continues to write for top American newspapers and magazines, including the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*.

### Users Review

From reader reviews:

**Joanne Starks:**

The Snake Charmer: A Life and Death in Pursuit of Knowledge can be one of your nice books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but still delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to get every word into joy arrangement in writing The Snake Charmer: A Life and Death in Pursuit of Knowledge nevertheless doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information could drawn you into new stage of crucial considering.

### **Carol Ray:**

This The Snake Charmer: A Life and Death in Pursuit of Knowledge is great book for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who else always deal with world and get to make decision every minute. This kind of book reveal it information accurately using great manage word or we can claim no rambling sentences within it. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole information in it. Doesn't mean it only provides you with straight forward sentences but difficult core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having The Snake Charmer: A Life and Death in Pursuit of Knowledge in your hand like finding the world in your arm, details in it is not ridiculous one. We can say that no publication that offer you world inside ten or fifteen small right but this e-book already do that. So , this really is good reading book. Hey Mr. and Mrs. hectic do you still doubt which?

### **Micheal Mata:**

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### **Vickie Duke:**

As a pupil exactly feel bored in order to reading. If their teacher requested them to go to the library as well as to make summary for some book, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's heart and soul or real their passion. They just do what the trainer want, like asked to go to the library. They go to at this time there but nothing reading really. Any students feel that examining is not important, boring in addition to can't see colorful photographs on there. Yeah, it is being complicated. Book is very important for you personally. As we know that on this period of time, many ways to get whatever we would like. Likewise word says, many ways to reach Chinese's country. So , this The Snake Charmer: A Life and Death in Pursuit of Knowledge can make you experience more interested to read.

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