Amphibians and Reptiles in Minnesota


This new survey of the Minnesota herpetofauna comprehensively updates Amphibians and Reptiles Native to Minnesota by Barney Oldfield and John J. Moriarty (1994; reviewed by FRC 1998 Canadian Field-Naturalist 112(1): 170–171). The extent of new information now available is reflected in a Resources section which includes 6 Minnesota, 6 Regional (Upper Midwest), 12 North American, and 8 General references published since the earlier treatment. This is further emphasized in the Literature Cited, which has 144
post-1994 entries in its 20-page coverage (included are
some duplications from the more general Resources
listings).

Minnesota lies to the south of the boundaries of west-
ern Ontario and Manitoba. It has a primarily north-
eastern and east-central North American herpetofauna
so it is not surprising that of the 53 species recorded
for the state, 48 are shared with Canada. The represent-
tion of the two classes is unbalanced as there are more
shared reptiles but many barely enter Canada whereas,
in contrast, many of the fewer shared amphibian species
present have moved extensively into the north. In all,
22 amphibians (14 frogs and toads and 8 salamanders),
and 26 reptiles (2 lizards, 16 snakes and 8 turtles) re-
corded also occur in Canada. For seventeen (1 frog, 1
toad, 3 salamanders, 1 lizard, 8 snakes, 3 turtles) that
are shared with Canada the Minnesota occurrences are
not linked to Manitoba or northeastern Ontario but to
populations south of the Great Lakes. Three of the spe-
cies now included have been added to the state list from
the eastern part of Minnesota since 1994 and it is sug-
gested that three additional species (1 frog, 1 toad and
1 spadefoot) that occur near the western border of the
state may yet be found within it. One of these occurs in
Manitoba.

The contents open with a map of Minnesota counties
with arbitrary divisions of the large northeast counties
(this map is copied for quick referenced on the inside
back cover). A forward stresses the varied interests
which this book serves. A preface and acknowledg-
ments deal with the herpetological activity in the state
and the growth of interest in conservation. An intro-
duction covers the definition of “herp”, the history of
herpetology in Minnesota, the Minnesota Department
of Natural Resources Nongame Wildlife Program, Min-
nesota Herpetological Society, and other herpetological
efforts, amphibian and reptile habitats (with coloured
maps of ecological provinces, sections, and subsec-
tions), natural vegetation of Minnesota, average pre-
cipitation, temperature, and a table of amphibian and
reptile distributions by ecological section. Watersheds
are discussed and mapped. A table presents amphibian
and reptile distributions by habitat type. Aquatic habi-
tats are lakes and ponds, marshes, prairie wetlands, and
peatlands. Terrestrial habitats are flood-plain forest-
coniferous-northern hardwood forest, and prairies. Dis-
turbed areas are discussed separately as agricultural
lands and urban and suburban habitats. Next come sug-
gestions for observing and studying amphibians and
amphibians and reptiles encompassing ethical field
methods, field study and care of captives. A conserva-
tion section, divided between habitat loss and pollution
is followed by amphibian declines, diseases, harvesting
pressures, and persecution. Common amphibian and rep-
tile problems covers snakes in house, garage, and yard
invasions, salamanders in basements, turtles nesting in
the yard, snapping turtles eating ducklings, and sala-
manders, frogs, on the road or yard.

A checklist gives the original describer(s), the year
named for each genus, species and subspecies. System-
atics and taxonomy follow Frost et al. 2006. Bulletin of
the American Museum of Natural History, and English
names follow Crother, editor, 2012, SSAR Herpeto-
logical Circular 39.

Species accounts are grouped by class and, within
each, by family, each prefixed by summaries of fea-
tures. Each individual species account starts with cur-
rent English (common) and scientific name, and con-
tinues with description, and distribution in United
States and Canada (but statements for the latter are
vague and often omit actual extent apparently in an
effort to be concise). A small map of Minnesota coun-
ties shows museum records indicated by half-filled
(pre-1960) or solid (post-1960) circles and literature
or sighting records as open circles. Habitat, and life
history, and remarks (including legal status) complete
each account.

Species of possible occurrence include mention of
released exotics and abbreviated species accounts for
three species that further field studies in the state may
yet find. Concluding the book is a glossary giving defi-
nitions from amelanism to ventral, resources (refer-
ences and organizations), literature cited, and index to
genera, species and subspecies.

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