

MISCELLANEOUS

Contributions to the History of Herpetology Volume 2

Edited by Kraig Adler. Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, Post Office Box 58517 Salt Lake City, Utah 84158-0517 USA. 396 pages. 65.00 USD Cloth.

This is volume 21 in the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles series *Contributions to Herpetology* begun in 1980. The first history contribution, number 5 in the series, was published in 1989 to commemorate the First World Congress of Herpetology held in Canterbury, England, that year. It contained biographies of 152 "Herpetologists of the Past" compiled by Alder using two criteria for inclusion: (1) significant contribution to herpetology and (2) deceased. Its scope was world-wide and included references for each biography, signatures, and 149 portraits. The book concludes with index to 2500 authors in taxonomic herpetology compiled by John S. Applegarth, and academic lineages of 1300 herpetologists by Robert Altig. It was 202 pages and priced at \$20. It is now out of print but it has been put on the web for public access at www.ssar-herps.org (click on "Publications"). The new volume extends the coverage of the first and has biographies of 285 additional Past Herpetologists (with signatures and 269 portraits) by Adler. Following sections are an index to 3604 taxonomic authors (again by Applegarth), and academic lineages of 3810 herpetologists (again authored by Altig). The price, in keeping with the times, has more than tripled. Like the first, this is also a commemorative volume, issued for the Society's 50th Anniversary Meeting, St. Louis, 2007.

The new biographies are comprised of both long-deceased herpetologists omitted in the earlier edition and recent ones who have died since the first was written. The accounts are grouped by 26 variable time periods from 1400-1500 to 1970-1990 with placement within each period based on when the person first became prominent in herpetology. Fortunately, there is an index (pages 259-273) covering both volumes that includes page numbers not only for the 437 subjects of individual biographies but also every mention of these and other herpetologists. The bibliographies in volume 2 begin with Leoniceno (1428-1524) and conclude with Slowinski (1962-2001). The most recent additions are John L. Behler (1943-2006) and Margaret M. Stewart (1927-2006). Canadians, represented by E. B. S. Logier (1893-1979) in the initial volume, have one more entry in the second, Stanley W.

Gorham (1917-1984). Stan's career was spent at the National Museum of Canada (now Canadian Museum of Nature) and the New Brunswick Museum and he authored, among other contributions, a checklist of amphibians of the world (1974). Its value is recognized here: "Even when a larger, more comprehensive checklist appeared in 1985, authored by a team of 59 specialists from 20 countries, Gorham's single-authored, simpler list still had the advantage of including synonyms and subspecies and remained a useful reference for many years". [See also 1991 tribute in *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 105: 592-596]. Adler continues to augment his files and there will be many more Canadians represented in a future volume 3 and beyond when the those so active from 1960 to the present are finally eligible for inclusion.

Interest in all corners of the history of biology has come of age and editor Adler is well suited to the task of documenting the herpetological research component. He is Professor of Biology and former Vice Provost for Life Sciences at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. He has been President of the SSAR and was founding Secretary-General of the World Congress of Herpetology. He has published extensively on behaviour and systematics of amphibians and reptiles in scientific journals and books. He has been, and remains, a driving force in the hyperactive Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles since its foetal days as the Ohio Herpetological Society and the publication of its first journal (1959-1966). He has promoted and edited both the Facsimile Reprints in Herpetology series (41 ranging from pamphlets to books) and the Contributions series as well as being a supporter of varied other publications of the Society: *The Catalogue of Amphibians and Reptiles* (840 accounts to date), *Herpetological Conservation* (2 volumes dealing with Canadian amphibians (1) 1997 and reptiles (2) 2007), *The Herpetological Review* (1967-, at volume 37 in 2006), *Journal of Herpetology* (1968-, at volume 40 in 2006) and *Herpetological Circulars* (1973-, 36 numbers to 2007).

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Science and Conservation of Vernal Pools in Northeastern North America

Edited by Aram J.K. Calhoun and Phillip G. deMaynadier. 2008. CRC Press Boca Raton, 6000 Broken Sound Parkway, NW (Suite 300), Boca Raton, Florida 33487. 363 pages. 97.80 USD Cloth.

Some time ago the public began to notice that urban and private development had started to encroach upon

lands which had traditionally been identified as wasteland, swamps and bogs. Habitat was being lost with the destruction of breeding grounds of birds, fish and many mammals to create shoreline, developed areas in subdivisions and agricultural lands where the previous condition of the land had been determined to be "too wet".

As we have spent research time, money and bureaucracy on the identification and preservation of wetlands, biologists have begun to see the further encroachment on lands which are seasonally flooded but do not have the distinction of being wetlands.

Pools of water and the retention of water in a protected setting often occurs in the springtime in many places in forested areas as well as shallow ditches both altered by humans or left by glaciation. With the presence of water, different habitats are created which provide breeding grounds for many invertebrates as well as amphibians, reptiles and birds, become present since the spring is breeding season and the above need habitat which will allow them to go through parts of their life cycles in standing water. Many plants are also associated with pools of water or the moist depressions which are left after the water evaporates. Many of us recognize these plants as common weeds but weeds provide seeds for food, shelter for nesting, and habitat for a variety of fauna to move and live beneath.

Conservation is one stated purpose of the book. Some states have already identified the shallow pools of water present in the spring, and other provinces and states could easily identify similar regions using the criteria outlined here. People who wish to live in country settings often have to alter the natural setting which they have selected in order to build upon it. Developers build according to formulae which sell houses, not rustic settings where the best interests of nature are preserved. Builders choose level versus low-lying ground which leads to bulldozing depressions into lawns and woodlots into open areas. Environmental laws now define the

wetlands but the woodland depressions which form vernal pools have neither been identified nor are builders inclined to further limit the buildable space by looking for areas to preserve.

All researchers and professionals in the field who work in areas which are populated by vernal pools can benefit from this rich source. The available literature of flora, fauna, conservation and identification of vernal pools is shown for naturalists and conservationists alike. It has also built upon an earlier work by Elizabeth Colburn, *Vernal Pools: Natural History and Conservation* (Colburn 2004) and borrows heavily from her further research.

This book is a valuable resource in the identification and ecology of seasonal pools which support many amphibians, insects and invertebrates. Reptiles, birds and mammals are also occasional visitors and sometimes breeders. Human building pressures, pesticides, and conservation opportunities are all parts of the study forming the most comprehensive work I have seen on this topic to date. I was only able to read this book slowly because it contains so much research but found myself going back to sections for reference around related topics. It is well researched, carefully prepared and a valuable resource for conservationists.

Literature Cited.

Colburn, E.A. 2004. *Vernal Pools: Natural History and Conservation*. The MacDonald and Woodward Publishing Co., Blackburg, Virginia USA.

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YOUNG NATURALISTS

Amazing Animal Journeys

By Liam O'Donnell. 2008. Tourmaline Editions Inc./DK Publishing Canada. 48 pages. 4.99.CAD Paper.

Snow Dogs! Racers of the North

By Ian Whitelaw. 2008. Tourmaline Editions Inc./DK Publishing Canada, 662 King Street West, Suite 304, Toronto, Ontario, M5V 1M7. 48 pages. 4.99 CAD Paper.

Amazing Animal Journeys and *Snow Dogs! Racers of the North*, both by Canadian writers, are books about animals and travel. *Amazing Animal Journeys*, rated at DK Publishing's Level 3-Reading Alone, is the story of four long-distance wildlife migrations. *Snow Dogs! Racers of the North*, rated at Level 4-Proficient Readers, is about dogs and people travelling together in the north.

Of the two books, *Snow Dogs! Racers of the North* is the most coherent, mainly because it focuses on a single story line: dog sledding. The book is divided into 10 chapters covering topics that include the history of dog sledding, human-dog teamwork, descriptions of high-profile sled-dog races, and profiles of sled-dog racers. The information provided is comprehensive and interesting. The sentence structure is dynamic, flowing, and

appropriate to the reading level. And the illustrations, mainly photographs, as well as maps of dog-sled race routes, are plentiful and colourful.

All things considered, *Snow Dogs! Racers of the North* is an interesting, well-written book. My only complaint is with the title, which suggests a book about sled dogs. Yet the content of the book concentrates on sled-dog racing, races, and mushers. While dogs are depicted in most of the photographs, and mentioned on every page, the spotlight is not shone on them very often, and then only briefly.

Two of the book's 48 pages deal with breeds of sled dogs. One paragraph is dedicated to the roles played by dogs positioned at different points along the gangline. One photograph and three sentences portray Balto, the famous lead dog who guided the sled in the last leg of the heroic journey that inspired Alaska's renowned Iditarod Sled Dog Race. Oh yes, the name of another lead dog involved in that journey, Togo, was also mentioned.

The book's title led me to hope for at least one chapter on the various breeds of sled dog developed in differ-