

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor's Note: We are continuing to use the current currency codes. Thus Canadian dollars are CAD, United States dollars are USD, Euros are EUR, China Yuan Remimbi are CNY, Australian dollars are AUD and so on. You will find these are the codes now used by financial institutions and internet currency converters. I will include an updated note for the next few issues as a reminder.

ZOOLOGY

The Ecology & Behavior of Amphibians

By Kentwood D. Wells. 2007. University of Chicago Press, 1427 East 60th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637. 1148 pages. 75.00 USD.

This massive volume synthesizes knowledge gained through researcher Wells' extensive field experience and total immersion in the literature focussed on habitats and habits of a generous sampling from the approximately 6000 species of amphibians now recognized in the world. Its extended gestation time began with conception and partial drafts in the early 1980s. The period since has been one of ever-increasing research and publication by a growing number of researchers resulting in exponential additions to the number of species recognized and, especially, the volume of information on them. But simultaneously, it has been a time of realization of the fragility of the world's amphibian fauna and the decline, sometimes the extinction, of many species in many parts of the world ascribed to a variety of causes. Wells has been long-recognized as one of the most productive and original researchers on amphibians of this period.

His book has 16 chapters, the first on phylogeny, classification, and morphological evolution, followed by ones on water relations, temperature relations, respiration, metabolism and energetics, movements and orientation, anuran vocal communication, mating systems and sexual selection in anurans, communication and social behavior of urodeles and caecilians, the natural history of amphibian reproduction, parental care, ecology and behavior of amphibian larvae, complex life cycles and ecology of amphibian metamorphosis, amphibians and their predators, the ecology of amphibian communities, and, finally, the conservation of am-

phibians. The reference section well reflects the vastness of the information in the volume itself – the two-column format occupies 238 pages, the length of many books. Included are many, but by no means a comprehensive selection of relevant papers by Canadian herpetologists. Finally, a 64-page index concludes the text. It is unfortunate that the initial chapter summarizing classification was completed before Frost and his colleagues (2006 American Museum of Natural History Bulletin 297) published their extensive reassessment of amphibia relationships which proposed many changes in nomenclature that could not be evaluated for possible inclusion here. This is not a serious flaw as the book's overall emphasis is not on systematics.

Wells has deftly managed both a detailed and a readable reference and primer for study of amphibians in nature. Its price and mass (approximately 11×8.5×2.2 inches or 286×220×60 mm) will doubtless keep it from many a naturalist's library shelves, except for the few primarily focussed on amphibians who have ample disposable income (perhaps not a common combination), but it is a must for every university biology and federal and provincial government environment department and should be read by all biology students and conservation-charged public servants. Graduate students focussed on amphibians or vanishing habitats in particular, will find this a treasure of the research to date, and a gold mine of background information to inspire future research projects.

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The Amphibians and Reptiles of New York State: Identification, Natural History, and Conservation

By James P. Gibbs, Alvin R. Breisch, Peter K. Ducey, Glenn Johnson, John L. Behler, and Richard C. Bothner. 2007. Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016. 422 pages. 34.50 USD.

Lack of an authoritative field guide to the herpetology of the state of New York has been a glaring vacuum in texts on the northeastern United States through-

out the last century. This, despite its relatively large size for a northeastern state (49 108 square miles or 127 189 km²), and being the home of many exceptionally prominent herpetologists over the last century. The state had been among the earliest to be given a comprehensive scientific treatment when James DeKay (for whom the snake *Storeria dekayi* is named)