

are among the countries with included species. There are full top and side views of adults, but transforming juveniles, tadpoles and eggs and particular features such as eyes or skin are also included.

Marent emphasises in his introduction that there are some 6300 recognized species of amphibians, of which about 2000 are currently threatened with extinction due to habitat loss through human use expansion, exacerbated by co-increasing pollution, disease, collection for food or pets, and climate change. The text is sidebar photo captions inset throughout the book. Topics covered are identity (habitats, tree frogs, glass frogs, poison dart frogs, species variation: strawberry poison dart frogs, mantellas, other frogs, toads, newts and salamanders), body form (eyes, ears, nostrils, feet and legs, skin), survival (feeding, methods of movement, night versus day, camouflage, using poisons, last line of defense, unwanted competition) and reproduction (life

cycle, attracting mates, mating, sexual differences, spawn, tadpoles, froglets, newt reproduction).

The text concludes with a three-page listing of a conventional division into amphibian families, with common name, distribution, size (number of species) and brief description. Finally, there is a comprehensive index of both common and scientific names and topics, and brief acknowledgments.

This is a beautiful and superbly produced book full of interesting facts which bring the reader closer to an appreciation of the uniqueness and colourfulness of living amphibians more quickly than any field guide or textbook on them, though the latter have vastly more detail.

FRANCIS R. COOK

Emeritus Curator and Researcher, Canadian Museum of Nature, P.O. Box 3443, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6P4 Canada

Rattlers, Peepers & Snappers

By Vince Franke and Jim Andrews. 2008. Peregrine Productions LLC at www.rpsdvd.com. DVD. 24.95 USD,

Subtitled "The first complete DVD guide to all the amphibians and reptiles that breed in New England", one disc covers 52 species in these groups dynamically and with immediacy not possible in a static book format. Included are the majority of the species that occur in eastern Canada and it is relevant for herpetologists and naturalists over all of northeastern North America.

It is an ideal learning or teaching tool. The subject is covered effectively and in depth in some three hours and includes, in individual sections, identification and life history of each species through diagnosis by live-action outings to view habitat and behaviour with discussion by a varied lot of researchers. As well there are fact sheets, quizzes, "resource pages" and the calls of each frog species. The amphibian program covers varied topics: spring migration, road crossings, vernal pools, stream salamanders, finding frogs, and Wood Frog research while the reptile program includes, snakes and skinks, Box Turtle research. Timber Rattlesnakes, worm snakes, tracking Racers, Copperheads, fall migration, turtle tunnels, and nesting turtles.

For this production Jim Andrews is joined by Vince Franke of Peregrine Productions whose superb field photography day or night, terrestrial or aquatic, is a

perfect companion for the commentaries by Andrews and others. Andrews has long established himself as Vermont's premier promoter of herpetology and spear-headed *The Atlas of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Vermont December, 2001* by James S. Andrews and 1400 dedicated volunteers and organizations (see book review *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 116(4): 666-667).

The accuracy and immediacy of the new DVD is a model for any future efforts elsewhere. It promotes a greater understanding of these creatures, the immediate need and means for their effective conservation, and for the accurate recording of further observations to augment our understanding of their distribution and behaviour. Viewed in total or as short topical segments (individually readily accessible from the menu), the visual quality, the enthusiasm for the subject portrayed, and the accuracy and scope of the material presented are truly outstanding. From the casual to the serious, beginner to veteran naturalist, every viewer can gain from this production a greater understanding of the diversity and the conservation imperative of these fascinating animals and of the people who are their dedicated observers.

FRANCIS R. COOK

Researcher Emeritus and Research Associate, Canadian Museum of Nature, Box 3443, Postal Station D, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 6P4

BOTANY

Aromatic Plants in China

By Wang Yumei. 2008. Science Press, Beijing, China. 1069 pages, 180.00 CNY.

Aromatic plants are plants whose vegetative or reproductive organs are able to secrete or accumulate essen-

tial oil, volatile aromatic oil, or spice substances or volatilization-difficult balata used as the raw materials for daily life or industrial production. The majority of aromatic plants are seed plants. Volatile aromatic sub-