

## Firefly Encyclopedia of Reptiles and Amphibians

Edited by Tim Halliday and Kraig Adler. 2002. Firefly Books, Willowdale, Ontario. 240 pp., Illus. \$40

All of the world's more than 13 000 species of amphibians and reptiles are profiled in this clearly written and wonderfully illustrated book. Well, not every species is mentioned, but every family and representative species from each family are portrayed.

The book is divided into two main parts, with the first half of the book dedicated to amphibians and the second half to reptiles. Each part begins with an introductory essay discussing the biology of the group as a whole. A series of brief (1-2 pages) essays then covers key issues. The amphibian section includes essays on taxonomy, metamorphosis, parental strategies, amphibian decline, and conservation. The reptile section features essays on dinosaurs, thermoregulation, conservation, and temperature dependent sex determination. Following these essays there are sections of various lengths on each of the main taxonomic groups (generally orders). For amphibians there are features on caecilians (unfortunately only 4 pages in length), salamanders, and anurans. The reptile part has sections on turtles, lizards, worm-lizards, snakes, tuatara, and crocodylians. Many of these sections feature other short essays on key topics. For example, there are essays on salamander courtship, the Asian turtle crisis, lizard adaptations to deserts, and snake bites.

Within every section there are profiles of each of the families. Each profile provides handy tidbits on each of the families including a map of the global distribution of the family, the number of species and genera, a list of representative species, range of size within the family, as well as the number of species which are globally at risk. The book concludes with a detailed glossary and bibliography.

In order to have the most up to date information Halliday and Adler have solicited contributions from

36 experts on various topics and species groups. While most of the contributors are from the USA there are experts from a total of 7 different countries. This brings a greater depth of knowledge about the subjects in general, but occasionally results in minor contradictions. For example, on page 27 we correctly learn that female Mudpuppies guard their eggs, while on page 52 it is stated that the male guards the eggs.

The book is also profusely illustrated with exceptional colour photos on almost every page. The editors should also be commended for their use of colour illustrations. For example, pages 48-49 illustrate 12 different species of salamanders from 7 of the 10 families. The grouping of so many species together brilliantly displays the diversity of form and colour within salamanders.

There are a few minor things to gripe about: while the editors are generally good about providing both common and scientific names, they don't always do this. The editors have also adopted an odd habit of only capitalizing the first word of common names of species. They do this whether it is a proper noun or not. And occasionally they don't capitalize any part of the common name. They also sometimes switch back and forth from the species name (e.g. Eastern Newt) to the subspecies name (e.g. Red-spotted Newt). These are minor quibbles when considering the daunting task of summing up the global knowledge on such diverse life forms. Overall, this is a highly readable and thoroughly fascinating introduction to the biology, diversity, and conservation of amphibians and reptiles.

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## Enjoying Moths

By Roy Leverton. 2001. T & A D Poyser Ltd, London, GB. 276 pp., illus.

This book is a comprehensive introduction to the fascinating world of moths, and general guide to the moths of Britain. Filled with intriguing and useful information, stunning colour photographs, and plenty of illustrations, maps, and drawings, *Enjoying Moths* is a valuable addition to the library of any Lepidoptera enthusiast.

Author Roy Leverton covers an impressive range of information, including, among other things, a general introduction to moth life cycles, colours, and shapes, and details on moth identification, moth lures and traps,

moth photography, and moth conservation. His writing is amiable, easy to read, and enjoyable.

What makes this book a delight the author's personal touches. These include anecdotes about, for example, his experiences with cannibalism among moth caterpillars he orders by mail, and his successful efforts to revive an adult moth trapped in a pool of frozen melt water. Leverton also shares private feelings like an instinctive, scalp-prickling sense of danger at approaching a pair of mating Lunar Hornet moths (which look and behave like large wasps) although he knows them to be harmless. And he reveals humorous quirks like his tendency to consume nutritious moth sugar lure