

## Biological Notes on an Old Farm: Exploring Common Things in the Kingdoms of Life

By Glenn B. Wiggins. 2009. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto Ontario M5S 2C6. xvii + 359 pages

I eagerly opened this book because, like Glenn Wiggins, I am a museum biologist who bought an old farm in eastern Ontario years ago. Also, I had identified tadpole samples for him when he was writing a benchmark contribution on the life of temporary ponds, a habitat which features prominently in this book.

Our perspectives, however, differed. Wiggins found his farm in rocky elevation of the Canadian Shield outcropping of the Frontenac axis northeast of Kingston. In contrast, we bought on the limestone plain former Champlain seabed southwest of Kemptville. Wiggins is an invertebrate zoologist and I am a vertebrate one. But we shared intense interest in and study of the fauna around us and by reflex compiled inventories of our properties. Wiggins has produced this book from his experience. It is focused, as one would expect from his career in invertebrate studies, on these animals.

Throughout it is illustrated by black-and-white drawings of both vertebrates and invertebrates, from a variety of artists and including some by Charlie Douglas from my *Introduction to Canadian Amphibians and Reptile* reproduced with permission. But the bulk were the work of the late staff artist of the Royal Ontario Museum, E. B. S. Logier and others.

Wiggins' text approach is unique. The book combines an invertebrate textbook account of significant features of the invertebrate groups covered and a local inventory of them. The result is a readable account of often overlooked life by the majority of naturalists who focus almost exclusively on vertebrates, with birds being the primary group of choice. Wiggins shows that the fascinating diversity and roles of invertebrates are as worthy of the attention of naturalists and provides a background survey as a starter kit for their further study.

No book is flawless, and for a herpetologist a minor jarring note was the reference to "Cricket Frogs" calling in the area in spring. The frog meant is the Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*), which was formerly known as the "false cricket frog" after its generic name. The true Cricket Frog (*Acris gryllus*) was formerly restricted, in Ontario, to Pelee Island and Point Pelee, but is now apparently extirpated at both.

The book is a classic that deserves to be on every naturalists shelf. Its relevance is far beyond Ontario and will serve to dip into for occasional reference or as the inspiration for a new direction in study.

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