

A Pocket Guide to Lizards and Turtles of Pennsylvania

By Walter E. Meshaka, Jr., and Joseph T. Collins. 2012. The Pennsylvania Heritage Foundation, 225 State Street, Suite 302, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101 USA. 40 pages. 4.71 USD.

This 15.2 by 9.5 by 0.3 cm guide is ideal for field use. It will easily fit into most pockets/ in pants, jackets or backpacks. It is printed on heavy glossy stock which should stand up well to field use in a multitude of weather conditions.

Its authors have excellent credentials. Walter Meshaka is a senior curator of zoology and botany at the State Museum of Pennsylvania and the late Joe Collins, who died in January 2012, was founder of the Center of North American Herpetology and junior co-author of the third edition of the Peterson Series *Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America* as well as author or coauthor of numerous herpetological papers. The *Pocket Guide* is illustrated by colour photographs by Suzanne L. Collins. An initial statement also credits an impressive multi-sponsorship list: The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission; Wild Resource Conservation Program, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources; Dickinson College Biology Department; Forgotten Friend Reptile Sanctuary; Friends of Wildwood Lake Nature Center, Inc.; Liberty Environmental, Inc.; Powdermill Nature Reserve; Shippensburg University; and The Center for North American Herpetology.

On the inside of the front cover there is a dedication to Carl H. Ernst for his studies of turtles. An initial table of contents page is followed by an introduction

and acknowledgements and 17 pairs of facing pages which cover each native species. One has a brief text and the other two (three for one lizard) photographs in colour. Text covers English name, scientific name, brief selected representative details of body size, range (in Pennsylvania), habitat, habits, breeding, diet, and conservation considerations. One instance insufficiently edited for clarification occurs on page 12 which concludes “Common Snapping Turtles are harvested for human consumption, and the harvesting practices of these turtles should be approached cautiously in light of their delayed maturity”.

The state range maps presented for each species are based on information from the *Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas* web site and *Amphibians and Reptiles of Pennsylvania and the northeast* by Arthur C. Hulse, C. J. McCoy, and Ellen J. Censky. The maps are minute but by depicting counties present in green makes the distribution patterns stand out. The photographs generally show typical animals sufficient to identify each species but many are perhaps too dark and their value would be enhanced if the locality was included for each particularly for the Painted Turtle whose morphology varies across the state between two hybridizing subspecies.

The guide concludes with four pages covering a checklist, notice of three additional pocket guides in the series which cover snakes, frogs and toads, and

salamanders of Pennsylvania, sources of further information on herpetology on websites, and publications relevant to Pennsylvania, comments on herpetoculture including addresses for information on current state regulations. The inside back cover has capsule biographies of the authors and artist and a quote from Archie Carr's *Handbook of Turtles*. The outside back cover gives information on the sponsors of the guide.

The English and scientific names understandably follow Collins and McTagert 2009 *Standard Common and Current Scientific Names for North American Amphibians, Turtles, Reptiles, and Crocodylians* published by the Center for North American Herpetology rather than that edited by Crother (2012) for committee formed by the Society for Study of Amphibians and Reptiles and more generally adopted by professional

herpetologists and journals (see Cook review of the latter *in press*).

This pocket guide is useful for all naturalists to carry with them in eastern Canada. It is especially ideal for junior naturalists as a "starter" guide. The only lizard and all eight of the native freshwater turtles that occur there are included in the 17 accounts presented. Also included is the Box Turtle which apparently is recorded in Canada from escaped captives. The only missing species of those recorded from eastern Canada is the non-native Red-eared Slider, *Pseudemys scripta elegans*, which frequently has escaped or been deliberately released in southern Ontario and Quebec.

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