

extirpated species; a Clapper Rail caught in a mink trap in January was the farthest inland record, the nearest being Tennessee; several hundred Buff-breasted Sandpipers followed a farmer working a field; a Cliff Swallow colony contained 3700 nests. There is a useful warning about reliance on vocalizations to separate the Eastern from the Western Wood-Pewee. The authors also mention a population of chickadees in the Wildcat Hills that resembled Black-capped Chickadees morphologically, but sang Mountain Chickadee songs.

Regrettably, lower priority is given to nest records as compared to sightings, although the latter are of lesser biological importance. Only a relatively few species have data from the Cornell Nest Card Program, with detailed numbers and dates of nests. For some other breeding species, dates and localities of nests, eggs or flightless young are not provided; we can only guess that in some cases they were not available, but surely for at least the Mourning Dove and Yellow-headed Blackbird they were simply omitted. No list of host species for Nebraska is provided for the Brown-headed Cowbird.

It would have been helpful to place unaccepted records within square brackets and add abbreviations for journals at the top of the list of references. The

subspecies account for the Great Horned Owl is incorrect since the wapacuthu race of the Great Horned Owl has been discredited. The account of the Poorwill is misleading, implying that the Flint Hills are in Nebraska, whereas they are in Kansas. Mention is made of a Golden Eagle nest with four young without comment that this may be the first such record in the North American literature, though observations of two Golden Eagle nests with four eggs have been published previously.

My minor criticisms aside, this is an excellent summary of what is known about Nebraska birds. The state is important for the number of its bird species (415 with a specimen or recognizable photograph, 13 with a description acceptable to the state committee, and 5 extinct or extirpated), and because it is the meeting place for many closely related species which overlap in range and sometimes interbreed. Birds of Nebraska is a substantial and welcome addition to ornithology in general and to state bird books in particular.

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Canadian Skin and Scales: A Complete Encyclopedia of Canadian Amphibians and Reptiles

By Pat E. Bumstead. Illustrated by Norman H. Worsley. 2003. Simply Wild Publications Inc., 100 Lake Lucerne Close SE, Calgary, Alberta T2J 3H8 Canada 161 pages. \$24.95.

Although subtitled "a complete encyclopedia" this book obviously was never intended to be so pretentious, but instead to serve young naturalists' as a "first book". The cover, with bright colour photos of a Horned Lizard (Stephen Glendining), Plains Garter Snake, Western Painted Turtle, Northern Leopard Frog, and Tiger Salamander (Brian Woltski), will attract them. Any suspected western bias is soon dispelled by the content, which is spread evenly across Canada. Black-and-white sketches by Norman H. Worsley depict all Canadian species and a selection of extra-limital representatives of families. Many are adequate, some good, but others are barely recognizable (e.g., the wrinkled Spotted Salamander on page 25 and Black Rat Snake on page 124), and one is clearly the wrong selection (the *Ensatina* on page 32 of a southern pattern not occurring in Canada).

The pedagogical style begins with "Canadian Creatures", covering communal activities, wintering, being dark, food resources and hibernating sites, and advantages for those reptiles bearing young (in Canada, two lizards and 13 snakes) rather than laying eggs. Province-by-province species lists follow. Chapters 2-9 deal with amphibians in general, salamanders and newts (21 species), frogs and toads (25), reptiles in general, turtles and tortoises (14), lizards (5), and snakes

(24). Each family and each species which occurs in Canada is an individual account. Those for families give world and Canadian species totals, world range, characteristics, and reproduction. The species accounts include common and scientific name, a paragraph of introduction, colour, reproduction, "where do they live" (habitat and provinces), and a "did you know" section. A series of questions with reference to the page where an answer can be found are at the bottom of many of the pages in this section. Chapter 9 deals with Conservation and includes definitions for status categories and species thought to be extirpated in Canada (Timber Rattlesnake, Pacific Pond Turtle, Pygmy Horned Lizard, Pacific Gopher Snake, Eastern Tiger Salamander). Nine threats to others are listed from habitat loss to introduction of exotic species. A "you can help" section presents ideas for group and individual participation. A final chapter, "Etcetera", covers diagrams of forms and features, the availability of a teachers guide, and a list of Canadian internet wildlife links, words to know, published and internet resources used, and a five-page index. Finally, there is a note from the author and a short biography of the illustrator.

Although primarily concerned with Canada, the text erratically adds extra-limital filler statements such as that Mudpuppies "have been introduced in large New England rivers" or that Western Skinks have been found on islands off the coast of California. For the geographically challenged it is not made clear that species listed for "Newfoundland" are those for the political entity

that includes mainland Labrador (accounting for the salamanders included), or that the generally arctic Nunavut extends south to include islands in Hudson Bay (accounting for the occurrence of a frog and a toad in the territory).

The foreword, an endorsement by Carolyn and David Seburn, rightly extols the book for its overriding themes of excitement in observing amphibians and reptiles, the need to treat them with respect, and the importance of conserving their habitats. But they overlook, or were unaware of, problems precipitated by generalizations and simplifications while copying information from the literature apparently without personal experience with many forms. Particularly misleading in all frog and toad accounts is that the num-

ber of eggs is followed by an "adults appear" which actually refers to when tadpoles transform, the resulting froglets are not "adults" (mature) for months or another year or more later. For all toads, spadefoots, and treefrogs only the aquatic habitats where they breed are given under "where they live" whereas most are terrestrial much of the year. Unfortunately, such "information" is as easily absorbed by the unwary and uncritical beginner as fact, and detracts from the otherwise commendable concept and aim of the effort.

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Conservation and Ecology of Turtles of the Mid-Atlantic Region: A Symposium

Edited by Christopher W. Swarth, Willem M. Roosenburg and Erik Kiviat. 2004. Bibliomania! books@bibliomania.com. 122 pages. U.S. \$22.50.

The Mid-Atlantic region of the USA (from Virginia to New York) is an area of exceptional turtle diversity, with 22 species (including four sea turtles). It is also an area under exceptional development pressure. A two-day conference was organized to discuss the status and ecology of the species affected and held in October 1999.

This volume brings together 11 peer-reviewed papers and 18 abstracts from the conference. The book begins with an introduction by the editors and the text of a keynote address by Michael Klemens, who briefly summarizes the conclusions from his book *Turtle Conservation* (2000; Smithsonian Institution Press). The papers cover only six of the possible species occurring in the area, with three papers on each of the Diamondback Terrapin and the Box Turtle, two on the Red-bellied Turtle and one each on the Blanding's Turtle, Bog Turtle, and Spotted Turtle. The papers cover a wide range of topics including nest predation, head-starting, habitat change detection, and population

ecology. Although the papers are peer-reviewed, they are of varying quality. One of the papers is barely more than a page in length and is little more than a report on the number of turtles caught at one site. From a conservation perspective, the most interesting paper is by Erik Kiviat (one of the editors) and various collaborators and deals with the response of Blanding's Turtles to wetland and upland habitat creation as part of a wetland mitigation project. Although the results are still preliminary (three years) Blanding's Turtles made use of constructed nesting sites and wetlands. It is interesting, however, that the turtles did not choose to overwinter in constructed wetlands.

This collection is not the definitive statement on the conservation of turtles in the eastern U.S. There are no papers (although some abstracts) on many topics, such as traffic mortality, or the effects of toxins, or genetic isolation. Nonetheless, it is a valuable snapshot of the wide range of activities being undertaken and it will be of interest to anyone involved in turtle conservation.

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For Love of Insects

By Thomas Eisner. 2003. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England. 464 pages. U.S. \$29.95. Cloth.

Thomas Eisner is an entomological legend. His photo, on the dust jacket of this fine book, shows a middle-aged man cockily riding his bicycle, seated backward on the handle bars. Eisner is to entomology what Richard Feynman was to physics — brilliant, quirky, and full of good stories. If, for some reason, you need to be convinced of the fact that insects are among the most amazing creatures on earth, this is the book for you.

The preface to this book of insect tales compares Thomas Eisner to Jean-Henri Fabre, the pioneer writer on insect behaviour, who lived in the 19th century in the

south of France. E. O. Wilson, the preface's author, seems comfortable with this comparison, but to me they are two very different sorts of scientists. Fabre was a poor man, and a loner. His observations were conducted with no institutional support, and his genius (Darwin called him "the incomparable observer") was not recognized until Fabre was a very old man. Eisner, by contrast, is a hot-shot researcher at the top of his game, at what is probably the finest university for insect studies in North America (Cornell, in Ithaca, New York), surrounded by cooperative peers, graduate students, and lots of grant money. While Fabre's stories tell of hardship and isolation, Eisner's explore the life of a modern biologist in the publish-or-perish world of research science. (Publishing, by the way,