

Cyprus so future editions of the book can address this shortcoming. The writing is clear and accessible to a broad audience, and the text is supplemented with effective and interesting photographs selected to attract the attention of its readers. In a few photographs, human-made objects (e.g., a pool or vehicle) are more evident than the habitats of the species. These small details have been overlooked. The price is reasonable compared to the market for similar books and the publication quality. This book, which will make great contributions to the promotion of the amphibians and reptiles of Cyprus, is a handy reference that will be of interest to scientists as well as curious naturalists and interested islanders. Such publications play an important role in introducing amphibians and reptiles, raising awareness, and launching initiatives for conservation studies. I enjoyed reading this book and reflecting on the faunal richness of Cyprus. I hope it will encourage similar studies of other forms of natural beauty on this island.

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- Amphibians of Ohio.** R. A. Pflingsten, J. G. Davis, T. O. Matson, G. J. Lipps, Jr., D. Wynn, and B. J. Armitage. 2013. *Ohio Biological Survey*. ISBN 9780867271645. 916 p. \$90.00 (hardcover).—You may have noticed while driving along rural highways that automobile traffic is never evenly spaced; cars bunch into clusters of three or four or half a dozen, with big gaps in between. Pioneer ecologist Ed Ricketts noted this pattern and offered a metaphor for excellence in scholarship. He said (paraphrasing), you may think that centers of excellence tend to persist, the old duffer passing on his knowledge to his disciples and so on, but it almost never happens this way. Excellence arises like a mutation, peaks, then slowly dies out as the founder ages and disciples either move away to establish their own centers or fail to reach their intellectual potential.
- There are, of course, as many examples of this phenomenon in herpetology as there are in any other field, and that's why exceptions prove so interesting. Roger Conant (based at the Toledo Zoo) and Charles Walker (University of Michigan) kick started the modern era of herpetology in Ohio with statewide surveys (often accompanied by Reeve and Joe Bailey) in the 1930s and 40s. Their successors—second-generation, mid-twentieth century Ohio herpetologists—are now so familiar to US herpetologists that I only have to cite their last names: Bishop, Netting, Mittleman, Duellman, Ashton, Brandon, Seibert, Adler, Dennis, and Collins. A subset of these gentlemen—the “Ohio Mafia”—transformed the Ohio Herpetological Society into the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR), with Adler serving as its first President.
- Amphibians of Ohio* continues this legacy of excellence into a third generation—Conant and Walker would be proud. The editors, Pflingsten, Davis, Matson, Lipps, Wynn, and Armitage have assembled, in a massive 900+ page volume, almost everything we know about the 25 or 26 species (depending on how you treat unisexual *Ambystoma* taxonomically) of salamanders and 14 species of frogs and toads found in Ohio. Ohio's amphibians are curiously representative of North America, hosting roughly one eighth of all salamander species and about one eighth of all frog and toad species found north of the Rio Grande.
- Amphibians of Ohio* has 33 contributors and is organized into 12 sections, two appendices, a glossary, literature cited, and two versions of a township map, one divided into quadrants bound into the volume and a complete map included as a separate. The 12 sections include a history of herpetology in Ohio, ecosystem features, systematics, salamander species accounts, frog and toad species accounts, possible species inclusions and exclusions, conservation priorities, field techniques, and methods for specimen preparation. Each account contains a representative color photograph of the species plus numerous additional color photographs representing habitats, life-history stages, and/or color variants. Each account also contains a color topographic relief map divided into counties with species occurrences—separated into pre-1952, 1952–89, and post-1989 timeframes—represented at the township level. Narratives include taxonomic information such as etymology, synonyms, type specimen, taxonomic status, common names, a formal species description, species distribution, Ohio distribution, natural history, age at first reproduction, social behaviors, reproductive behavior, growth, conservation, and locality records. Information specific to species, such as food habits, life-history parameters, or special distribution features, is depicted in additional tables, figures, and maps. The conservation sections following the species accounts include threats to amphibians such as habitat loss, disease, invasive plant and animal species, variations in weather patterns being driven by climate change, and priority listings. It's a spectacular book reflecting a deeply impressive effort, and credit must not only go to the authors, but also to the Ohio Biological Survey, which has made big, buck-stops-here books about natural history its trademark.
- The species accounts are the heart of the *Amphibians of Ohio*, comprising two-thirds of its pages. They are written in an easy-to-understand narrative style and are uniformly pitched (not an easy task in a multi-authored volume); they will, therefore, be useful to people of all backgrounds and levels of experience. The accounts are big, comprehensive, accurate, and individualized in such a way that represents the distinctiveness of each species. There are roughly 70

pages of citations with 50 citations/page. Divide 3500 (70 × 50) citations by 40 accounts, and the average of slightly fewer than 90 citations/account will give you some idea of the level of detail contained in this book. The choice of using a general account format modified to represent the unique features of each species subconsciously communicates to the readers the idea that each of these species is different—not cookie-cutter variations on some salamander or frog theme—and that these species are therefore important and worthy of occupying a secure place in the world. To add perspective to the size and detail of these species accounts, if the authors of *Amphibians of Ohio* had chosen to tackle each of the ~300 species of US amphibians using the same narrative approach with the same level of detail, their effort would have comprised six 1000-page volumes.

A note about the maps: It's been my observation that there are people who make species distribution maps and people who criticize species distribution maps, and these two populations are nearly mutually exclusive. Once you realize the amount of information necessary to make a good, reliable distribution map, you never again question decisions underlying anyone else's good, reliable, distribution map. Scale matters, landscape matters, and if conservation is involved, political boundaries matter. Here, the distributions of Ohio species are depicted at the township (subcounty) level superimposed on a color, shaded relief map. They are perfect for the task at hand, which happens to be the same presentation, albeit at a finer scale, used in our North American amphibian atlas (Green et al., 2013).

There is an arms race occurring among our state-level herpetology books. In the past few decades, we have experienced the evolution from single-authored, instruction-manual type presentations with black-and-white line drawings, through intermediary types, to the present-day multi-authored tomes with detailed and very much appreciated fact upon fact upon fact, and color plate after color plate, of which *Amphibians of Ohio* is perhaps the best example. The authors have met, in spades, their goal of putting between two covers most of what is currently known about the biology of Ohio's amphibians. My history with big amphibian species account volumes and book reviews compels me to note that *Amphibians of Ohio* is not a field guide—it was not designed and never meant to be thrown into a backpack and taken out to a wetland. But, because it is big and comprehensive, workers over a broad geographic region including much of the Upper Midwest, Central Appalachians, and the Northeast, extending into Canada will find much of value here. At \$90 *Amphibians of Ohio* will not be something everyone can afford, but librarians in and around Ohio may be convinced to acquire a copy for their holdings. The editors should consider a follow-up, laminated pocket field guide using the color photographs on the title page of each account. Such a portable and affordable derivative would generate additional interest in the parent book.

Much to the credit of the editors of *Amphibians of Ohio*, they do not see their job as completed. Wrapping up his section on the history of herpetology in Ohio, Armitage writes, with a great deal of pride and only slight hyperbole (p. 11–12):

“Ohio's herpetological knowledge is not complete. This book represents the most thorough and up-to-date treatment so far for amphibians. It is hard to imagine a state, province, or country in the Western Hemisphere with a more extensive documentation of amphibians

than Ohio. We've been at it longer, with more repetitive consistency and with more industry and leadership than anyone else. Yet, there are still things to learn and gaps to fill. Alas, given the additions of new habitats we will never reach an endpoint. However, this compilation provides a very solid and comprehensive base from which to gauge our future progress and success.”

To this, I can only add: “Amen, brother.”

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Lissemys punctata. The Indian Flap-shelled Turtle.

D. Gramentz. 2011. Chimaira. ISBN 9783899734966. 278 p. €49.80 (approximately \$67.00) (hardcover).—Quick, what turtle is the scientifically best-known species in the world—the model from which we have derived the most basic morphological, physiological, and ecological knowledge? Does the Slider (*Trachemys scripta*) come to mind, or perhaps the Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*)? Certainly, the extensive research conducted on these two ubiquitous North American species has resulted in a great deal of attention and scientific literature. For these reasons their contribution to our knowledge of turtle biology is indisputable. But who thought first of the Indian Flap-shelled Turtle (*Lissemys punctata*)? Not me, certainly, with my admittedly biased familiarity with the North American turtle literature (and, I presume, not too many of my North American colleagues). But, after reading this remarkable book by Dieter Gramentz, I have come to appreciate the Indian Flap-shelled Turtle as a contender, at least, for this honor. The author has done an excellent job of assembling and summarizing the surprisingly vast literature that exists concerning this turtle. In his Foreword, Gramentz states that he is reasonably optimistic that he has accounted for most of the essential works related to the Indian Flap-shelled Turtle. Based upon his skillful summarization of the various facets of the biology of this species (not to mention the voluminous Literature Cited section of the book), I believe he is right.

As a result of the author's thorough review of its biology, not to mention the myriad of scientists whose work served as his sources, a strong case for its important contribution to biological knowledge in general, and to turtle knowledge in particular, is also indisputable. This contribution is due in part to this turtle's appeal as a unique species unto itself, but also to a great extent its accessibility for study as a result of its abundance, widespread distribution across the Indian subcontinent, and traditional availability in the wild and in markets throughout this vast region. In addition, as Gramentz states, the Indian Flap-shelled Turtle happened to be in the right place at the right time to serve as a model for an explosion of research on endoparasites, which resulted from improvements in compound microscopes