

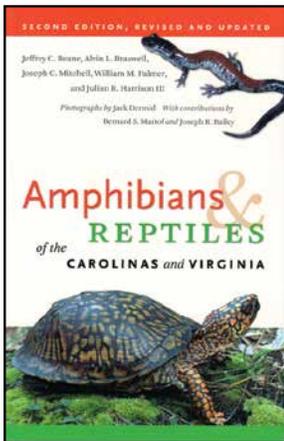
# BOOK REVIEWS

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## Amphibians and Reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

Jeffrey C. Beane, Alvin L. Braswell, Joseph C. Mitchell, William M. Palmer, and Julian R. Harrison III, with photographs by Jack Dermid. 2010. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill ([www.uncpress.unc.edu](http://www.uncpress.unc.edu)). 274 pp. US \$26.00. Softcover. ISBN 978-0-8078-7112-6/ Hardcover. US \$56.00. ISBN 978-0-8078-3374-2.



### JEFF BOUNDY

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, PO Box 98,000, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70898-9000, USA  
e-mail: [jboundy@wlf.la.gov](mailto:jboundy@wlf.la.gov)

The sight of an amphibian or reptile manifests a curiosity that is usually expressed through two questions: “what is it” and “what does it do?” For the person who knows what “it” is and does, the sighting raises other questions about whether or not the observation is normal regarding its appearance, location, seasonal activity, reproduction and other aspects the

animal’s natural history. Rarely is an informed individual present to answer those questions. Instead, guides that summarize the fauna of geographic regions and provide summary natural history data serve as vicarious experts to a state’s citizenry, and to that purpose *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia* is exemplary.

The book’s format is standard for a regional summary. The introduction is only eight text pages long, without subheadings, but manages, in that short space, to inform the reader about the scope of the book. It outlines the herpetofaunal diversity of the covered area in a passionless two-page summary of taxonomy and nomenclature and continues with discussions of introduced species and conservation (with an unfortunate emphasis on “listings”). There is an admonition to be careful and conservation-minded when searching for and collecting animals, laws regulating take are mentioned (although no specific rules are detailed), and there is a reserved discussion of pet-keeping. The format and arrangement of species accounts are presented, clues useful in identifying animals are provided, and there is a solicitation of new records. Finally, there is a caution about snake bites (but no suggestions about what to do when bit).

The physical characteristics of the Carolinas and Virginia are described (eight pages of text, a map, and seven photographs of habitat) through discussion of physiographic provinces, characteristic vegetative associations, and climate. Another eight pages discuss the history of herpetology in the region. This section has the liveliest prose in the book. It begins with 16<sup>th</sup> century reports of the fauna, the serendipitous advent of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century resident naturalists, followed by the arrival in each state of one

or more individuals whose observational skills and prolific writing form the foundation for continued research in the Carolinas and Virginia.

A list of the native and non-native species of amphibians and reptiles separates the introductory material from the species accounts. Classic generic assignments are retained, with current generic names listed in parentheses (e.g., *Eumeces (Plestiodon) fasciatus*). Each class, order, and suborder receives about one page of descriptive material that characterizes each from a global perspective. Each species account is likewise brief. The amount of text for each account, with few exceptions, appears to be governed by the amount of space available on a single page that also must accommodate a color photograph and range map. Where additional space is required for text, the size of the photographs suffer (e.g., *Bufo americanus*). The species text includes a description, comparison with similar species, description of geographic range and habitat, food (for some species), reproductive data, and conservation status. Description of calls are provided for anurans. All of the information is provided in a little over 200 words per species. Few species are illustrated by more than one photograph, and there is rare mention of subspecies. Species accounts are followed by a thorough glossary, 52 literature references, and a dozen websites for private organizations, museums and universities.

A notable inconsistency in the book is the difference in which species distributions are displayed on the maps. Those for North Carolina are the most precise, portraying a minimal known range, but those of South Carolina and Virginia often appear over generalized and stop abruptly at the North Carolina borders (e.g., *Plethodon cinereus*, *Lampropeltis triangulum*). I was curious about the discontinuity in ranges of some species (e.g., *Hyla gratiosa*, *Pantherophis guttatus*) in northern North Carolina, but found no explanation. The color photographs are excellent. Characteristic markings and morphological features for most species are evident, highlighted for example by photographer Dermid’s clever means of showing the color pattern of the inner thigh on *Hyla femoralis*, and his positioning of *Rana catesbeiana* and *R. grylio* to compare extent of the hind-foot webbing between the two species. For a few, however, diagnostic markings are not portrayed, such as the long neck, broad forearm bands and striped “pants” of *Deirochelys*.

For those familiar with the first edition of *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia* (Matof et al. 1980), I provide the following comparisons. The number of species has increased from 159 to 189, nearly all through the discovery of cryptic salamander species. Except for three plethodontid species complexes, the second edition provides equal coverage for the new species that have been added during the span of 30 years, and the new species are illustrated by high quality, diagnostic photographs. The range maps show greater detail of distribution, primarily by reducing the broad-brush display of the first edition. The text size is smaller in the second edition, and is presented as two columns, allowing more text to be packed in per page. Some wording is changed (e.g., hellbenders are described as “ugly, slimy and large” in the first edition, vs. “impressive” in the second). The

second edition introduces the term “biodiversity” and has eliminated the first edition’s statement that amphibians and reptiles “do well in captivity and make amusing pets.” Standard photograph size is 10.5 × 7 cm in the first, vs. 10 × 6 cm in the second edition. Most of Dermid’s photographs are retained in the second edition, including some new ones. However, several dozen have been replaced, I suppose to better portray diagnostic features. The new *Rana palustris* photo shows the bright yellow undersurface of the tibia, but the paired, square dorsal blotches are better featured in the first edition. The new *Rana sphenocephala* photo is more typical in coloration of the species, though the characteristic white tympanic spot is obscure.

Except for the history chapter, the book is devoid of personality despite (or perhaps because of) being authored by seven individuals. The text has been masterfully crafted to eliminate all excess wording, and is concisely informative about each topic the authors have elected to cover. It presents a lesson in being succinct—descriptive biology in the form of “one-liners.” The citizens of the Carolinas and Virginia can now arm themselves with an updated, highly portable means of identifying and learning about that which creeps or slithers into their comfort zone.

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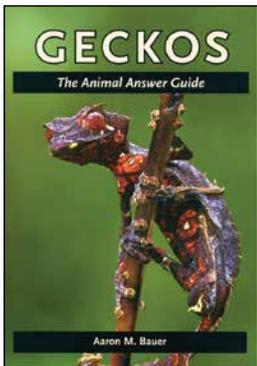
MARTOF, B. S., W. M. PALMER, J. R. BAILEY, AND J. R. HARRISON III. 1980. *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. 264 pp.

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### Geckos: The Animal Answer Guide

Aaron M. Bauer. 2013. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland. Softcover. xiv + 159 pages. US \$26.95. ISBN 978-1-4214-0852-1.



JOSEPH R. MENDELSON III

Department of Herpetology, Zoo Atlanta

800 Cherokee Ave SE,

Atlanta, Georgia 30315, USA

e-mail: [jmendelson@zooatlanta.org](mailto:jmendelson@zooatlanta.org)

This is a fantastic book. Anyone who has had the pleasure of hearing author Aaron Bauer give a lecture will find here that he can write in the same manner—eloquent, clear, easy to understand, yet packed with information. I could hear Aaron’s voice in my head while I read this

book. As the introductory pages make clear, this book is not a husbandry guide for pet enthusiasts because there are plenty of those available. Nonetheless, there are frequent mentions of topics central to the interests of pet enthusiasts and this book will be well valued by the burgeoning ranks of people keeping geckos as pets, as well as any general naturalist, and all persons interested in herpetology at any level. Honestly, I don’t personally know a whole lot about geckos and I learned quite a bit from this book. For example, I have worked a bit with *Thecadactylus rapicauda* in the field for about 20 years, and learned from this book that they parachute between branches, using their extensively webbed feet. Bauer has a gifted approach here that is fully readable by enthusiasts of almost any age and background, yet he includes depth in his text that will inform the practicing

comparative biologist. That is not an easy balance to achieve in writing, and Bauer got it impressively right in this book.

The question-and-answer format of the Johns Hopkins Press *Animal Answer Guide* series veers this book refreshingly away from a standard textbook format, yet the organization and well prepared index make information easy to find. The book has handy internal references, to guide readers to related topics appearing in other sections of the book. The style of the book does not allow for traditional academic in-line literature, but a suitably complete bibliography appears at the end. An unusual chapter entitled “Geckology” reviews the history of scholarly study of geckos. This is a very nice nod to the tradition of science that could well encourage a young herpetologist to explore the academic literature. Similarly, an appendix includes the names of virtually all relevant professional societies and journals. I would have greatly benefitted from a list like this when I was first trying to navigate the academic world while in high school. Another scholarly nod is the index including the current taxonomy of geckos, nicely including their IUCN Red List rankings. The chapter on geckos in human culture has far more depth than the after-thought feel that similar chapters in other books often have. Similarly, I greatly appreciated the double perspective approach used to treat the topics of “influences of geckos on humans” and “influences of humans on geckos” as I found it refreshingly original and perfectly balanced. These sorts of attentions are testament to Bauer’s evident attempts to positively encourage gecko enthusiasts toward the basic academic efforts that inform this very book. Bauer is being inclusive here, and clearly wants everybody to feel like they can join and contribute to the fascinating world of discovering the mysteries of geckos. This is a gracious approach that really allows this book to bring very technical information across to every interested reader. A particular jargon-packed sentence here or there may serve to make the reader want to learn more, rather than dissuade anyone. As a singular example, I will point to the concise and perfectly accurate summary of the different types of squamate chromatophores and pigments presented on page 42. I’ve never seen this admittedly complex topic better simplified and summarized, with no loss of basic information; very impressive. I nominate Aaron Bauer to write an *Animal Answer Guide* for every major clade of reptiles and amphibians, and then we will collectively have the ultimate useful textbook for our herpetology courses, and one that the students will actually read.

The production values are generally excellent. I found no spelling typos, and only a handful of awkward spacing/justification issues. Assumedly to keep prices affordable, most images appear in black-and-white, with two sets of well-chosen color plates to highlight certain appropriate taxa. Images are credited to many photographers, but those by Tony Gamble and Lee Grismer really stand out as especially well composed. A few of the black-and-white images are a bit dark and the image discussing the camouflage value of green coloration in *Nautilinus grayi* does not work well in black and white imagery. The image of the inverted hemipenis is well lit, but its close-in perspective makes it a bit disorienting; a related image of the cloacal spur in males of some species (described well in the text) would have been a useful addition. But overall, the black and white images are perfectly suitable to their task. The only information gap I found was in the excellent section describing vision and structure of the eye. I fully thought we were leading into a description of the functional difference between circular and elliptical pupils, but I didn’t see it. But I did see a great summary of the function of rod

and cone cells in squamates, and I learned for the first time that geckos see in color at night!

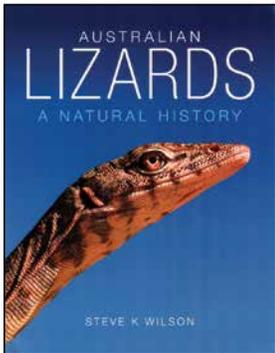
What really permeates this book is Bauer's life-long passion and experience with the geckos of the world. No one else could have written this book with both the top-tier academic authority and also the in-hand love of geckos that Aaron Bauer has. His first-hand experiences, his knowledge, and his admiration for the incredible animals make this book ultimately readable for the broadest range of audiences. This is a fine piece of work and I am really glad I read it in its entirety. While Bauer works on the companion volumes for the remaining clades, I strongly recommend this book for everyone, at any level of interest. No matter which taxa you claim to study, go read this book.

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### Australian Lizards—A Natural History

Steve K. Wilson. 2012. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria, Australia (in USA and Canada distributed by Stylus Publishing; www.styluspub.com). x + 196 pp. Softcover. AUS \$49.95 (approx. US \$46.00). ISBN 9780643106406.



#### AARON M. BAUER

Department of Biology, Villanova University,  
800 Lancaster Avenue,  
Villanova, Pennsylvania 19085, USA  
e-mail: aaron.bauer@villanova.edu

“Lizards are juicy and nutritious” begins Chapter 6 of this new book on Australian lizards. Not since Edgar Waite’s (1929) description of geckos as “soft and flabby to handle” have I appreciated a herpetological turn of phrase this much!

This may look like a picture book, but

it is so much more. Steve Wilson is known for his excellent photographs of reptiles and amphibians (e.g., Wilson and Knowles 1988; Wilson 2005; Wilson and Swan 2010) and this book does not disappoint. More than 400 color photos strikingly capture the diversity of the Australian lizard fauna. In addition to standard portraits, there are many “action shots” of lizards eating arthropods, arthropods eating lizards, lizards hatching and being born, threatening, thermoregulating, and mating. Throughout the photos are of good to excellent quality. There are great photos of *Pygopus* feeding on a spider (p. 116), various lizards copulating (p. 143–145), a Central Military Dragon (*Ctenophorus isolepis*) caught in the act of defecation (p. 133), and a Garden Skink (*Lampropholis delicata*) with an unimaginable mite load (p. 100).

A photo of fighting male *Nebulifera robusta* (p. 142) dramatically shows off the gekkotan ability to withdraw the eye deep into the socket and examples of geckos (*Diplodactylus conspicillatus*, *D. tessellatus*) using their tails in defensive postures (p. 107) are striking. Of special note are a series of photos illustrating camouflage in geckos and agamids (pp. 94–96); that of *Phyllurus platurus* shows one of the best color matches to substrate I have ever seen (p. 94). I am especially impressed by the photos of limbless and reduced-limbed taxa. These can look like so many pieces of spaghetti, but Wilson has brought out their character, and the diversity of these forms, especially *Lerista*, can really be appreciated.

Come for the photos, stay for the text; it is well-written, detailed without being off-putting to non-specialists, and it serves

as a crash course in Australian lizards, their diversity and biology. Although the title of the book is rather similar to Greer’s (1989) *The Biology and Evolution of Australian Lizards*, Wilson’s book has much more in common with Greene’s *Snakes*, *The Evolution of Mystery in Nature* (1997) or Pianka and Vitt’s *Lizards, Windows to the Evolution of Diversity* (2003). Greer’s book is a treasure trove of information for herpetologists, a concise summary of data on Australian lizards, but this book is aimed at a more general audience. It is a “gateway” book—the kind that can really spark the interest of budding herpetologists, or even convert the non-herpetologically inclined. I defy anyone with even the slightest interest in the natural world not to be interested in Australian lizards by the time they finish the book.

The book is organized topically rather than taxonomically. After “Meet the Lizards,” an introduction to diversity, the book is arranged into chapters such as “Senses: sight, scent and sound,” “How lizards manage their water,” and “The fate of Australian lizards.” The last of these discusses the effects of cane toads and fire ants on lizards, as well as the more familiar and universal issues of changing land use and habitat loss. A series of somewhat more detailed sidelights are presented as “boxes.” One deals with the rediscovery of the Pygmy Blue-tongue skink, *Tiliqua adelaidensis*, in 1992 and another with the Pedra Branca Skink, *Niveoscincus palfreymani*, Australia’s southernmost totally terrestrial vertebrate, which lives on a tiny rock in the Southern Ocean. Yet another is devoted to the origin of the names “wood adder” and “stone adder” for certain species of *Diplodactylus* geckos. I will leave it to readers to discover the source.

Although the emphasis is definitely Australian, there are a few non-Australian taxa shown or discussed (e.g., *Phrynosoma* and *Furcifer* to illustrate lingual feeding). Taxonomy is as up to date as can be for the local taxa—several new Australian genera that were proposed in 2011 and 2012 (*Uvidicolus*, *Nebulifera*, etc.) are used. However it is less current for some extralimital taxa. For example, *Cnemidophorus uniparens* is used instead of *Aspidoscelis* (p. 147). Typos and misstatements are few and far between in this book. I noted only a few instances each: *Sceloporus poinsettia* is misspelled *poinsettii* (p. 64), Mertens’ Water Monitor is rendered as Merten’s (p. 167), the number of Australian varanid species, given as 27, is said to be “about half of the world’s total” (p. 8), but the current tally for varanids is actually 73, *Rhacodactylus* (now *Correlophis*) *ciliatus* can regenerate their tails (contra p. 98), although they often do not, and, in the glossary, the term “pleurodont” is incorrectly defined as an attachment type in which teeth are “set in sockets.”

Unfortunately for those whose interests are piqued by particular topics, there are no citations in the text itself, making it difficult to track sources for specific information. However, the references section contains about 215 entries representing a diversity of sources up through 2011, so there is an access point into the literature. Interestingly, although some more general works are included among the technical papers listed, the ultimate classic of Australian herpetology, Cogger’s *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia* (2000) is not. The book concludes with a single index combining common names, scientific names and major subjects.

This book is an ideal gift for any novice herpetologist—in Australia or not. It is also appropriate for any Australian or visitor to Australia who wants to better understand the natural world. Even seasoned herpetologists, familiar with all of the topics discussed, will find new appreciation for Australian lizards through the stunning images.

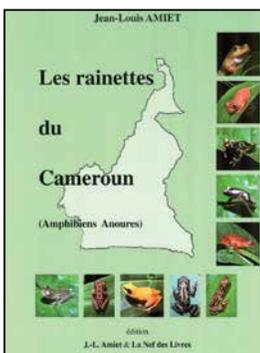
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## Les Rainettes du Cameroun (Amphibiens Anoures)

Jean-Louis Amiet. 2012. Edition J.-L. Amiet, Nyons & La Nef des Livres, Saint-Nazaire, France ([www.librairielanefdeslivres.fr](http://www.librairielanefdeslivres.fr)). 591 pp. Hardcover. 98,00 Euros (approximately US \$126.00). ISBN 978-2-7466-4413-7.



### OLIVIER S. G. PAUWELS

Département des Vertébrés Récents,  
Institut Royal des Sciences naturelles de  
Belgique  
Rue Vautier 29, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
e-mail: [osgpauwels@yahoo.fr](mailto:osgpauwels@yahoo.fr)

### RENAUD BOISTEL

IPHEP, CNRS, UMR 7262,  
Université de Poitiers  
6 rue Michel Brunet, 8602 Poitiers, France  
e-mail: [rboistel@gmail.com](mailto:rboistel@gmail.com)

Students working on amphibians of western Equatorial Africa have been spoiled in recent years. Right after the publication of an identification key to the amphibians of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea (Frétey et al. 2011), here is a remarkable book on the treefrogs of Cameroon. It is authored by the French biologist Jean-Louis Amiet, who vies with the Swiss Jean-Luc Perret the title of the best and most productive specialist on Cameroon amphibians. Jean-Louis Amiet is not only an amphibian specialist, he is a living encyclopedia with an extensive knowledge and active research activities on the flora and fauna of tropical Africa. This new, voluminous, solidly bound book, entirely in French, is divided into four main parts: general remarks (pp. 9–50, including a key to genera, an introduction to the physical geography of Cameroon with 26 beautiful landscape photographs, and a methodology section), hyperoliid treefrogs (pp. 51–431), the genus *Leptopelis* (pp. 433–562), and finally a chapter on

poorly known species and under-prospected geographical areas (563–569). The literature section (pp. 571–576) includes 150 references, 31 of them authored or co-authored by Amiet, the most recent dating from 2009. Taxa covered belong to the Arthroleptidae (*Leptopelis* Günther, 1859) and Hyperoliidae (*Acanthixalus* Laurent, 1944, *Afraxalus* Laurent, 1944, *Alexteroon* Perret, 1988, *Arlequinus* Perret, 1988, *Cryptothylax* Laurent & Combaz, 1950, *Hyperolius* Rapp, 1842, *Kassina* Girard, 1853, *Opisthothylax* Perret, 1966, and *Phlyctimantis* Laurent & Combaz, 1950). The rhacophorid treefrogs *Chiromantis* (represented in Cameroon by *C. rufescens* (Günther, 1868)) were not included “in order to preserve the taxonomic homogeneity of the opus.” In total, 62 species are covered, among them 24 *Hyperolius* spp. and 16 *Leptopelis* spp., i.e., a bit less than a third of the ca. 200 amphibian species currently known from Cameroon.

Species accounts systematically include references to the original description and sections on adult morphology, pattern and color, sexual dimorphism, eco-ethology, and distribution. Depending on the species, some accounts also include sections on tadpole morphology, parasitism, taxonomic issues, or phylogenetic relationships. Each species account is illustrated by one or two plates of color photographs taken by Amiet (with the exception of the photograph of *Afraxalus schneideri* [Boettger, 1889], in black and white and taken by Perret—this is the only species that is not illustrated alive in color in the book), one or two plates showing superb drawings made by Amiet (dorsal patterns, webbing, tadpole, vocal sacs, etc., depending on the species), activity cycle graphs, and a point locality distribution map. In all there are 667 photographs of live individuals, with up to ten individuals per photograph. The distribution maps, limited to Cameroon, also show the major vegetation zones and the areas above 600 m asl. Illustrated identification keys to *Hyperolius* and *Leptopelis* species are provided, as is comparative table for *Alexteroon* spp. that can be used as a key.

Attention should be drawn to some taxonomic points presented in the opus, especially because some of them might be overlooked by non-French speaking readers. Amiet describes a new subgenus of *Afraxalus*, *Laurentixalus* Amiet, 2012 with *Afraxalus laevis* (Ahl, 1930) as type-species. It is said to include, besides the type-species, *A. lacteus* Perret, 1976, *A. dorsimaculatus* (Ahl, 1930) and *A. uluguruensis* (Barbour & Loveridge, 1928). Amiet makes a detailed comparison between *Leptopelis aubryi* (Duméril, 1856) and *L. spiritusnoctis* Rödel, 2007, concluding that they are synonymous. He regards *Hyperolius dintelmanni* Lötters & Schmitz, 2004 as a subspecies of *H. tuberculatus* (Mocquard, 1897). He retains *Hyperolius pallidus* Mertens, 1940 as a subspecies of *H. nitidulus* Peters, 1875, and maintains *Chlorolius* Perret, 1988 as a subgenus of *Hyperolius*. He treats *Phlyctimantis boulengeri* Perret, 1986 as a subspecies of *P. leonardi* (Boulenger, 1906) and regards *Leptopelis occidentalis* Schiøtz, 1967 as a subspecies of *L. boulengeri* (Werner, 1898). In the species account of *Leptopelis brevirostris* (Werner, 1898), Amiet merely suggests that the tympanum-less *Leptopelis crystallinoron* Lötters, Rödel & Burger, 2005, which he says is known from a single female, might be just an aberrant specimen of the former species, while later in the book (p. 515) he unambiguously treats them as synonyms. The synonymy had already been noted by Frétey et al. (2011) who mentioned their resemblance and referred to a personal communication by Amiet who had informed them that he had seen a *L. brevirostris* that was missing a tympanum on one side of its head. Both Frétey et al. (2011) and Amiet (2012) seem to have been unaware of the additional morphological differences

explained in the original description and the rediscovery of that species by Bell et al. (2010; see Pauwels and Chirio 2012). Amiet regards *Leptopelis macrotis* Schiøtz, 1967 as a subspecies of *L. millsoni* (Boulenger, 1895). The book additionally makes corrections to mistakes made in the literature, by Amiet himself or by others, especially with respect to species identifications.

The text of this new book is fluid, pleasant to read, and there are few typographical errors. It has two exceptional qualities. First, it is abundantly illustrated with drawings (about 900!), graphs, and color plates. The drawings are exceptionally accurate. They represent a huge effort; for example, drawings of foot webbing each required about six hours of work (Amiet, pers. comm., May 2013). All photos are outstanding, and they were all taken in Cameroon (their localities and dates are provided in an appendix). Morphological and pattern variations are well represented. Unusually-patterned specimens are shown as well, but they are always clearly indicated as such in the figure captions (the exceptional nature of these specimens could be overlooked by non French speaking readers).

Second, the book suggests numerous directions for future research. Several populations potentially representing new species or subspecies are discussed in detail, with photographs of representatives of these (Manki *Hyperolius riggenbachi* (Nieden, 1910), Mount Cameroon *Kassina* cf. *maculosa* (Sternfeld, 1917), *Leptopelis* cf. *bocagii* (Günther, 1864), *L.* cf. *christyi* (Boulenger, 1912), Mwandong *L.* cf. *modestus* (Werner, 1898), Lena *L.* cf. *notatus* (Buchholz & Peters, 1875), and many others), and all the available information that could help to locate the additional specimens that will eventually allow their taxonomic status to be resolved. Under-prospected areas that might reveal interesting records are listed. Amiet has literally spoon-fed future batrachologists and professors in need of subjects for their students the descriptions of numerous frog taxa. Hopefully this will be capitalized upon.

Jean-Louis Amiet is currently working on botanical publications and will then work on butterfly publications before working again on amphibians (Amiet, pers. comm., May 2013); one will thus have to curb one's impatience to see the next publications of Amiet on Cameroonian amphibians. In the meantime, we encourage scientific libraries, batrachologists, and students to acquire and exploit this remarkable and beautiful book.

*Acknowledgments.*—We are grateful to Jean-Louis Amiet (Nyons) and Thierry Frétey (Médérac) for providing useful information and literature, respectively, and to Yves-Marie Allain of La Nef des Livres for sending a review copy of the book.

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**ERRATUM**—The geographic distribution note by Martins et al. concerning *Hydromedusa tectifera* in Brazil (2011. *Herpetol. Rev.* 42:389) contained inaccurate geocoordinates. The correct coordinates, based on Google Earth data, are: 20.25°S, 46.54°W; elev. 1400 m.

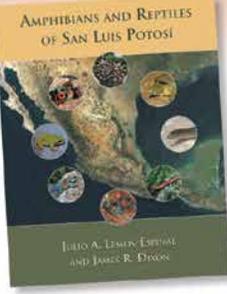


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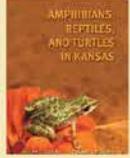


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