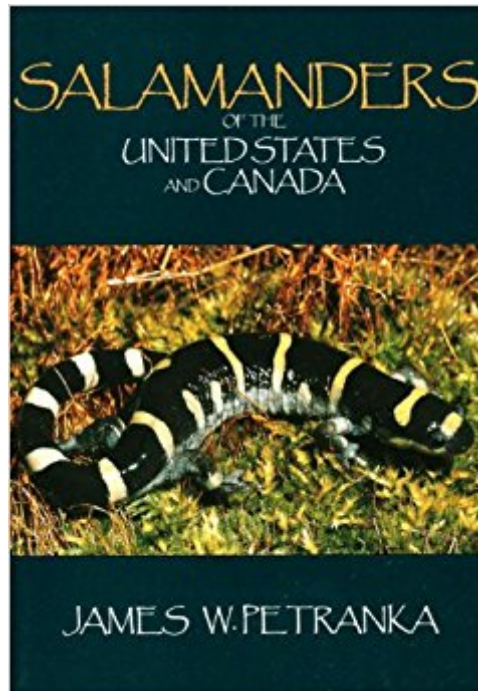




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Salamanders Of The United States And Canada



Synopsis

Secretive, nocturnal, and little known, salamanders are often the most abundant vertebrates on the forest floor. This comprehensive volume, the first survey published since 1943, describes the ecology, evolution, biodiversity, behavior, and natural history of 127 recognized species of salamanders found in the United States and Canada, from newts and sirens to waterdogs and hellbenders. Drawing on more than 2,100 research publications, the book includes detailed life history accounts, nearly 500 color and black-and-white photographs, identification keys for larvae as well as adults, and up-to-date distribution maps. James W. Petranka presents a wealth of information on each species: identification, systematics, courtship and breeding, diet and predation, and the ecology of larval and adult stages are all described. He summarizes major patterns of geographic variation within species to emphasize differences between local and regional populations and to provide a realistic view of intraspecific life history diversity. With its comprehensive coverage and extensive references, this volume is an indispensable guide not only for herpetologists but also for teachers, naturalists, conservation biologists, environmental planners, and anyone who needs detailed information on the diverse salamander fauna of the United States and Canada.

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Customer Reviews

The last major reference on North American salamanders was Sherman C. Bishop's *A Handbook of Salamanders*, published in 1943 and reissued by Cornell University Press as a natural history

classic in 1994. Now comes this totally new reference from Petranka (biology, Univ. of North Carolina, Asheville), who has published numerous articles on salamanders and is on the editorial board of two herpetology journals. His preface indicates that over 30 new species have been described since Bishop's classic was first published. Petranka's comprehensive work covers the identification and natural history of 127 recognized species and includes references to the recent literature; over 2000 publications are cited. Hundreds of black-and-white photographs accompany the text, and a center section of 172 color plates will further aid in identification. A distribution map is shown for each species. Essential for herpetology collections. ?William H. Wiese, Iowa State Univ. Lib., Ames Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Salamanders are one of the least familiar groups of animals, because they are both secretive and nocturnal--two strikes against being noticed by the general population. This survey of North American salamanders is the first since the 1940s and presents the most up-to-date research on every species. Beginning with two keys to help the reader identify an animal in the hand, whether it is an adult or a larva ("tadpole"), the book then discusses each species individually. The species accounts are illustrated with photos of both adults and larvae and cover such subjects as distribution (with excellent range maps), habitat, breeding and courtship, ecology, and conservation status. The latter is important as these animals are very sensitive to environmental disturbances and many forms are declining. A section of colorplates is provided for each species. The large glossary of often-specialized terms used when discussing salamanders, plus a genuinely massive list of literature cited, complete an excellent book that is recommended for all libraries. Nancy Bent

fabulous book for people in the hobby who like to collect these fantastic creatures

Definitely the best book about salamanders! Very useful!

Great book for the Salamander lover and or researcher. Lots of photos, some color some black and white. A great reference for anyone doing research that might involve salamanders.

Just used it down on Snake Road very usefull also for study back home

Good book. Lots of good information.

This book is still, sixteen years after its original publishing, the very finest resource of its kind. For each species, there are nine sections for Identification, Systematics and Geographic Variation, Distribution and Adult Habitat, Breeding and Courtship, Reproductive Strategy, Aquatic Ecology, Predators and Defense, Community Ecology, and Conservation Biology. There is also a range map and one or more black and white photos for each species, as well as at least one color photo of each species in the color plates section. Of course, given the book's age, it has become slightly out-dated. Here are some of the newer things that are not in the book: 1. *Urspelerpes brucei*, the Patch-nosed Salamander, an entirely new species and genus of lungless salamander described from Georgia in 2009. 2. Several types of newly described slender salamanders, such as *Batrachoseps altasierrae*, *Batrachoseps bramei*, *Batrachoseps diabolicus*, *Batrachoseps gavilanensis*, *Batrachoseps gregarius*, *Batrachoseps incognitus*, *Batrachoseps kawia*, *Batrachoseps luciae*, *Batrachoseps minor*, *Batrachoseps regius*, and *Batrachoseps robustus*. Still others that are now recognized and accepted with full species-level status were not listed as such in the book, though still mentioned. 3. *Aneides vagrans*, the Wandering Salamander, which was described from the west coast the same year that this book was published. 4. A few Dusky Salamanders, such as *Desmognathus abditus*, *Desmognathus folkertsi*, and *Desmognathus organi*, had not yet been described when the book was published. 5. Several *Eurycea*, such as *Eurycea chamberlaini*, *Eurycea chisholmensis*, *Eurycea naufragia*, *Eurycea tonkawae*, *Eurycea waterlooensis*, and (very recently) *Eurycea subfluvicola*, were described after this book was published. 6. Of course, *Plethodon* has also changed. *Plethodon ainsworthi*, believed extinct, was described the year the book was published. *Plethodon amplus*, *Plethodon asupak*, *Plethodon cheoah*, *Plethodon electromorphus*, *Plethodon meridianus*, *Plethodon metcalfi*, *Plethodon montanus*, *Plethodon sherando*, and *Plethodon virginia* were also all described after the book was published. I would say that, given the recent explosion of knowledge of north american salamanders, the world is just about ready for a "Salamanders of the United States and Canada, 2nd edition." Until then, this book is still fantastic and still the best thing out there.

This is still, to my knowledge, the only complete handbook to North American species of salamanders since the 1943 classic Handbook by Sherman C. Bishop. It has all the latest scientific findings in the species accounts (as of the late 90s, but still quite up-to-date in most respects), as well as good photos of each species and a section with beautiful color plates. This book therefore has what it takes to satisfy both amateur naturalists and professional herpetologists who need a reference to these fascinating creatures. For amateur naturalists like this reviewer, a book like this

can help instill a sense of wonder at the unexpected variety of colorful fauna that lurks beneath logs and rocks in our woodlands, and helps to explain the unique survival strategies of each species. It is true that since the publication of this book, a lot of taxonomic changes have continued to occur, especially the discovery of many new cryptic species based on genetic analysis, as well as, apparently, the upgrading of almost every subspecies to the species level. (By way of example, when this book was written, the slimy salamander complex had already been split into 13 different species, and this was about to happen but had not yet occurred with the Appalachian woodland salamanders.) In my humble opinion, this trend does not necessarily always express the relationships of different forms in the clearest way, since some forms may be closer to the full species level than others and nature, being the irrepressible creative force that it is, does not always neatly conform to our precise notion of the species concept. The author of this book seems to feel that way himself in many instances and disagrees with some of the new revisions, for reasons that he clearly explains. Personally I, too, am rather baffled as to why two populations that look exactly the same and can only be distinguished in the lab would be considered to be completely different species; it seems to defy common sense! Nevertheless, if the current splitting trend has an upside, it may be that with more populations being recognized as distinct species, better protection might be given to those that require it. In summary, this book is a must-read for anyone with an interest in these obscure but fascinating creatures and how they fit into our natural world.

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