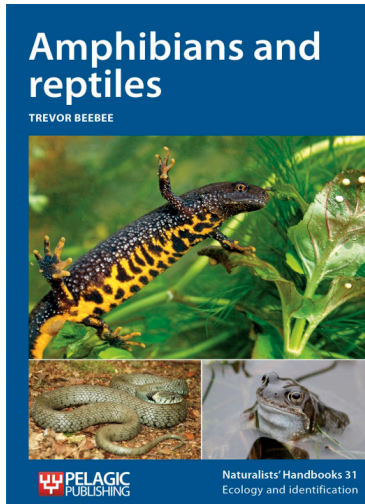


Amphibians and Reptiles (Naturalists' Handbook 31)

Trevor Beebee (2013)

Exeter, UK: Pelagic Publishing. 170 pp. ISBN 978-1-907807-45-9 (softcover).



This book is the thirty-first in the Naturalists' Handbook series, recently revived and revitalized by Pelagic Publishing having been published previously by a number of other stables (including Cambridge University Press). It is a comprehensive guide to all the UK's native and established non-native species.

There are effectively three sections. The first (divided into different chapters) covers biology, ecology, conservation, surveying and studying amphibians and reptiles, and also has a very useful chapter on *How Schools Can Help*, which I think will be popular. Educators will glean ideas for class study of these taxa and, perhaps more importantly, a few pupils might begin to find tadpoles more interesting than *Grand Theft Auto 5*. The earlier chapters are just as interesting though - written to be accessible to a wide audience, cynical herpetologists and novices alike will find something of interest. For the latter, terms such as oviparous are explained with periodic marginal notes (so no need to continually turn to a Glossary) and textual points are well illustrated with clear colour photos. A full list of native and established UK species is given and so are diagrams showing the family (taxonomic) relationships of amphibians and reptiles, and where British genera sit within them. The chapters on surveying and studying are particularly informative, and Trevor doesn't shy away

from technical terms, supported by appropriate graphs and diagrams where these are required. This overall approach is one that fosters understanding and interest.

The middle section of the book is devoted to identification. There is a colour photo of just about everything and these are divided by life-stage (eggs, tadpoles, adults etc.), rather than by species, to allow comparison! I haven't seen that for a while. The only illustrations lacking appear to be those of frog and toad metamorphs... so good job there's a clear and simple key to all species and stages and which refers directly to the photographs. Phew. Is this the first book in which I've seen a picture of a natterjack tadpole's chin patch? Well, yes, it is. You can find distribution maps and habitat information here too. The final section contains advice on working with amphibians and reptiles, and again I think it will be popular. There's common sense here but also useful information for those craving a career or course of study involving herpetofauna (including a bit on statistics, don't be scared!).

We can usually expect two things from a new book by Trevor Beebee - the benefit of a lifetime's experience and, of course, clear, well-written text. I think both are delivered here. A non-UK colleague of mine told me he found this book "inspiring"... add to that the fact that the author royalties are being donated to *Amphibian and Reptile Conservation* and there's really no reason not to buy it! Unless of course you're lucky enough to have been sent a review copy...

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