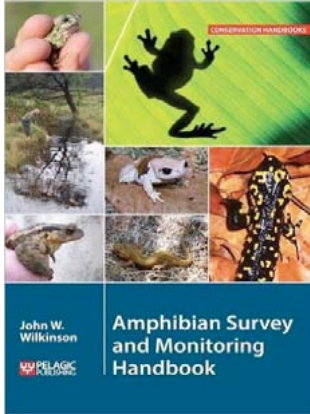


# Amphibian Survey and Monitoring Handbook

John W. Wilkinson

Pelagic Publishing, Exeter, 2015, 120 p. ISBN 978-1-78427-003-2



After a brief introduction to amphibians, this handbook comprises three main chapters, covering before, during and after survey work, followed by a resources chapter. The book is short (the three main chapters are less than 90 pages), but packed full of information. It is written in a chatty, often jocular style (much use of interjections with exclamation marks), and is

easy to read. However, I wonder who it is aimed at. The general style seems aimed at people who have never surveyed amphibians, nor who have ever written a scientific report before, but the content ranges from extremely basic advice to much more complex matters such as radio-tracking. Another issue is geographical scope. Wilkinson admits that his main experience is in the UK and the book's main emphasis is on the kinds of surveying that could be done in Britain; for example, he gives considerable attention to Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment for great crested newts (I am not aware of HSI's for other species). However, he does try to internationalise by referring to amphibians found elsewhere and by mentioning resources needed to work in other countries, but the level of detail provided is too little and too selective to be of much use. My guess is that a young UK amphibian researcher planning survey work abroad might find the book a helpful introduction, but not much more, and that a researcher in, say Brazil, would find it of very limited use.

I found myself listing unexpected omissions and points I would take issue with: here are some. For 20 years, the main sourcebook for amphibian survey work has been Heyer et al. (1994); this is listed under 'other useful textbooks' in chapter 5, but ought surely to be in the early preparations chapter; more surprisingly, Dodd's recent book (2010: Amphibian Ecology and Conservation),

which provides an authoritative update on methodology, is not even cited. IUCN is not in the index and the IUCN Red List for amphibians is not mentioned in the text (though some photographs of amphibians have their IUCN status mentioned). In addition, the two main websites on amphibian diversity, taxonomy and conservation (Amphibian Species of the World; Amphibia Web) are not mentioned. This is very surprising, and is not because of lack of space: they could fill the dead space in Box 1.1 on page 8. The section on great crested newt surveying does not mention the requirement to demonstrate training when applying for a licence. The discussion of risk assessments says that many organisations will have a lone worker policy; I feel this is unsatisfactory for a book aimed at beginners, and including working outside the UK, especially when considering lone female workers; my institution would simply not allow this. Chapter 4 includes a substantial section on report writing; this is not specific to amphibian surveying at all, and many books and courses cover how to do this, so I wonder on its inclusion here; the section surprisingly omits any advice to have the draft report read over by a knowledgeable person before submitting it. Chapter 4 also briefly goes into mark-recapture methods, including toe-clipping, but only superficially mentions the ethical issues: should we really be encouraging newcomers to the field to use this controversial method?

Overall, the author's enthusiasm and encouragement is refreshing, and I learned some useful pieces of information, but I feel there is considerable room for improvement, especially in a short book priced at £29.99.

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*Accepted: 25 November 2015*