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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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# Book Reviews

AMPHIBIAN SPECIES OF THE WORLD - A  
TAXONOMIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE  
edited by DARREL R. FROST

Published by Allen Press Ltd and Association  
of Systematics Collections, Lawrence, Kansas,  
USA.

The book sets out to provide an up-to-date  
and complete checklist of all known amphibian  
species. For each of the 4014 species  
recognised by the book, the following data are  
provided:

1. Current name, authority, citation
2. Original name
3. Current location and museum collection  
number of type specimens (where known)
4. Type locality
5. Distribution
6. Comments

Whilst most of this information is standard  
for checklists, I found the comments in  
particular most interesting. These include  
information on synonymy, sub-generic  
affinities, further references to distribution  
records, and where relevant, protected status.

Similar details are supplied at generic,  
sub-family and family levels throughout the  
text. At these higher taxonomic levels, names  
of all contributors and reviewers for that  
particular section are given. A full list of  
contributors and reviewers and their addresses  
is given before the main text, thus allowing a  
source of contact for those requiring extra  
information. This list reads like a  
herpetological "WHO'S WHO" of amphibian  
researchers - as the publishers justifiably  
boast, the publication involves 59  
professional herpetologists from 21 countries.

AMPHIBIAN SPECIES OF THE WORLD additionally  
includes two useful appendices:

- (i) Full titles for all the  
abbreviation of book and journal  
titles included in text.
- (ii) Full titles and addresses for all  
abbreviations of museums referred  
to in the text.

There is also a complete alphabetical index to  
all species listed in the text. I found this  
useful, because one can approach at either  
generic or specific level and still be  
successful, e.g. Bufo calamita is listed under  
both Bufo calamita and calamita, Bufo. Thus  
if one is working with a superceded name one  
has a reasonable chance of success.

It is easy to be critical of checklists - we  
all know they are out of date before they are  
published (nearly 33% of the 4000 species  
referenced have been discovered in the last 25  
years), and I found it very annoying that the  
notes on protected status referred only to

species listed by CITES and the United States  
of America Endangered Species Act. Surely  
when so many international authorities were  
involved, it would have been relatively easy  
to include major legislative measures on a  
world-wide basis.

The original intention to include synonyms,  
subspecies and their citations proved  
impractical in terms of sheer bulk, but this  
is no great drawback since much of this  
information is available in more manageable  
chunks elsewhere, e.g. in DAS TIERRICH.  
The nomenclature used in AMPHIBIAN SPECIES  
OF THE WORLD is that which has been adopted  
by CITES, and without doubt will be  
(deservedly) the standard world checklist  
until well into the next century.

The publication is certainly not cheap -  
current \$85 - and unlikely to be the sort of  
thing that the majority of museums will rush  
out and buy. However, those undertaking  
research on Amphibia will certainly be well  
advised to obtain a copy.

As one currently actively (?) engaged in  
producing a similar checklist for oriental  
lizards, I can wholeheartedly vouch for the  
colossal amount of work involved in  
publications of this nature, and thus the  
price (to me at least!) seems fair.

If it's good enough for CITES ....

Adam Wright  
Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry

BRITISH PYRALID MOTHS - A GUIDE TO  
THEIR IDENTIFICATION  
by BARRY GOATER.

Published by Harley Books. Price £18.95.  
ISBN 0 946589 08 9

The Pyralidae is one of the larger families of  
British Lepidoptera; the current total being  
208 species. This new book will certainly  
stimulate interest in them by providing an  
up-to-date identification guide. It is the  
first guide to this family to be published  
since BRITISH PYRALID AND PLUME MOTHS'  
by B.P. Beirne in 1952 and has far superior  
text and colour plates. Each species is  
illustrated with photographs of set specimens  
by Geoffrey Senior and a frontispiece  
illustrates the various subfamilies in resting  
poses; a very valuable plate for beginners.  
The availability (or rather, non-availability)  
of Beirne's work has always been a problem, as  
reflected in this work by the often vague  
distributional information. This will  
certainly be rectified in future years.

For the museum natural scientist the book has  
the added advantage in that it includes many  
regular enquiries. There are the big 'micros'  
such as the Garden Pebble and Mother of Pearl  
which "I can't find in South (or Skinner), but  
they must be in it 'cos they're very big!";  
the pest species of the genus Ephestia (flour