

2004

# Snakes of the United States and Canada: Natural History and Care in Captivity

Alan H. Savitzky  
*Utah State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/biology\\_facpub](http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/biology_facpub)

 Part of the [Biology Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Savitzky, Alan H. 2004. Snakes of the United States and Canada: Natural History and Care in Captivity [review]. *Quarterly Review of Biology*, 79(4):437.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Biology at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Biology Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact [dylan.burns@usu.edu](mailto:dylan.burns@usu.edu).





---

Snakes of the United States and Canada: Natural History and Care in Captivity. *By John V Rossi and Roxanne Rossi.*

Snakes of the United States and Canada: Natural History and Care in Captivity by John V Rossi; Roxanne Rossi

Review by: Reviewed by Alan H Savitzky

*The Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (December 2004), p. 437

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/428212>

Accessed: 04/04/2014 16:21

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*The University of Chicago Press* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Quarterly Review of Biology*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

and provides information on body sizes reported for Florida specimens. Another section gives the origin of the species, when and how populations became introduced (if known), and where in the state the species is known to occur. Natural history features (including habitat preferences, reproduction, diet, and predators) are discussed. Each account is accompanied by a color photograph and map of the state indicating counties from which the species has been documented. A missing component of the accounts is a discussion of the impact each exotic species may be having on native species and natural ecosystems.

Meshaka's thoughtful afterword on exotic species introductions to Florida offers some achievable solutions for controlling the influx of more herpetofauna.

J WHITFIELD GIBBONS, *Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, University of Georgia, Aiken, South Carolina*

**SNAKES OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA: NATURAL HISTORY AND CARE IN CAPTIVITY.**

By John V Rossi and Roxanne Rossi. *Malabar (Florida): Krieger Publishing*. \$145.00. xxxvi + 520 p; ill.; subject index. ISBN: 1-57524-031-9. 2003.

This book is a curious hybrid, part manual for the husbandry of captive snakes and part compendium of the ophidian fauna of the United States and Canada. Written by a veterinarian with a long-standing interest in herpetology and his wife and herpetocultural collaborator, the book succeeds in the first part but falls short in the second.

The useful section on general husbandry (about 15% of the book) is followed by species accounts organized into separate sections for nonvenomous and venomous taxa, respectively. Within each of the latter sections, the accounts are simply alphabetized by scientific name, regardless of taxonomic family, which results in a confusing mix of accounts for up to four families within a single section. Furthermore, amateurs unfamiliar with scientific names must consult an appendix of common names to assist in navigating the text. Inexplicably, a table listing the cage requirements of each species (pp 4-5) lists taxa only by their common names. Although the authors provided some of the photographs, the best are those credited to David G Campbell, whose depictions of many species are as good as any available in print. The few line drawings are of astonishingly poor quality.

Although the species accounts include many citations, the literature certainly is not exhaustively reviewed, and in some cases important studies go unmentioned (such as recent papers rearranging North American populations of *Elaphe*). Outright

errors are generally minor, but among them is a photograph of *Storeria occipitomaculata* misidentified as *S. dekayi* (p 331). The species accounts contain numerous suggestions regarding the keeping of native species, often drawn from the experience of the authors and their colleagues, but much of that information lacks sufficient documentation. Two issues likely to disturb professionals are the discussions of releasing captive snakes in the wild and of keeping venomous snakes in captivity. Both discussions include extensive caveats concerning their respective hazards, but the book ultimately lends tacit approval by providing details for their execution.

This costly volume largely fulfills its goal of serving as a guide for amateurs interested in keeping native snakes, but it will be of limited interest to professional biologists.

ALAN H SAVITZKY, *Biological Sciences, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia*

**REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY AND PHYLOGENY OF URODELA. *Reproductive Biology and Phylogeny, Volume 1.***

Edited by David M Sever. *Enfield (New Hampshire): Science Publishers*. \$126.00. vii + 627 p; ill.; index. ISBN: 1-57808-285-4. 2003.

The first book in this series on reproduction and phylogeny sets the standard for upcoming volumes with an impressive breadth of topics, despite what might seem a rather narrow taxonomic focus. The world boasts approximately 500 species of urodeles, and one might ask, how much is there *really* to know about reproduction and phylogeny in this group? The answer is a tremendous amount! The authors provide in-depth coverage of diversity in salamander reproductive biology, some summarizing previously published data and others presenting novel findings. Many chapters are sufficiently synthetic to provide a framework for scholars contemplating future research on this topic. The 14 chapters can be separated into three categories: classification and phylogeny (Chapters 1 through 3), morphology and physiology (Chapters 4 through 9, and 11), and behavior and life history (Chapters 10 and 12 through 14).

Many chapters in each category are noteworthy because of their synthetic nature. Chapter 2 (Larson et al.) is a thorough discussion of salamander systematics, with reviews of earlier works and more recent efforts within all lineages. This chapter can be overwhelming for those not conversant in phylogenetic methods, but will serve as a valuable reference for anyone interested in salamander evolutionary relationships. The chapters on spermatozoan structure (Chapter 7, by Scheltinga and Jamieson) and courtship and mating glands