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Foreword by Brian I. Crother, Ph.D.

Perhaps now more than ever, public understanding of the life we share Earth with needs to rise. Yes, there is some general awareness and understanding of the charismatic life forms like elephants, whales, lions, and condors, but what about insects, worms, salamanders, and lizards? The great bulk, the vast majority, of the diversity of life is poorly known and subsequently misunderstood and as such treated with various levels of disdain. Squash bugs. The only good snake is a dead snake. Toads give you warts. Kill weeds. Can't eat that fish: it's trash. Those attitudes somehow have to change, or all the magnificent diversity on our planet will vanish and humans will be the worse for it.

The present volume is a terrific effort to change those attitudes about some of those life forms. The *Primer on Reptiles and Amphibians* by Micha Petty seeks to pull back the veil of mystery and misunderstanding surrounding reptiles and amphibians and reveal what incredible life forms they are and why they are important.

Delivering science to the public is a challenging endeavor that requires a deft touch, a level of humility, and a thorough understanding of the subject. Without those qualities, the lay person is often presented with a quagmire they are forced to wade through with the hope of finding some nuggets within the sludge of jargon and extraneous detail. While all such volumes have their unique challenges, works on diverse groups of organisms, like reptiles and amphibians (snakes and frogs are **really different** beasts!), are perhaps especially difficult because of the breadth of the knowledge one must cover to bring life to the words. In *A Primer on Reptiles and Amphibians*, Micha Petty succeeds in delivering a quality, information filled volume on reptiles and amphibians, but he wants much more out of the volume than just being able to use it to identify a frog.

Petty considers it a "Conservation Through Education Project" and no doubt the best way to ensure conservation of our natural resources and biodiversity is through education at every level. This *Primer* does just that. It contains knowledge about reptiles and amphibians in comfortable, easily accessible language. Petty uses only common names and that surely makes the reading easy for the beginner, or anybody who does not want/need to be confronted with long, strange scientific names that are impossible to pronounce. Petty knows his stuff and his strong background in reptile and amphibian biology and natural history shines through. Besides the biology, The *Primer* explores our relationship with reptiles and amphibians, delves into various conservation topics, gives tips on observing animals in the wild and keeping a field notebook, and goes into keeping reptiles and amphibians as pets (although the sense you get from Petty is that the animals are better left in the wild, sometimes we just can't help it because the animal is sooo darn cool!). For those readers that get hooked on reptiles and amphibians, there is a Lagniappe section that gives advice on careers, photography, publication, and more. To me, this volume does a huge service for reptile and amphibian conservation, and for humanity. There is no better venue for international access than the Web, so I hope it stays there!

"A truly extraordinary and exceptional website and a most remarkable effort to put this amount of herpetological information together. I commend [the author's] thorough dedication to the teaching and welfare of herps." —Stan Trauth, Ph.D. Emeritus Professor of Zoology, Arkansas State University; Past President (2012-2013), Herpetologists' League



Eastern Musk Turtle photo by Justin Sokol



Racer photo by Rob Hunter