

diversification of the true frogs (genus *Rana*): a historical framework for a widely studied group of model organisms. *Syst. Biol.* 65: 824–842.

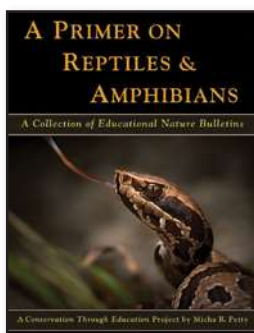
† Deceased

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A Primer on Reptiles and Amphibians, A Collection of Educational Nature Bulletins

Micha R. Petty. 2019. Louisiana Exotic Animal Resource Network, Elm Grove, Louisiana (<https://www.learnaboutcritters.org/>). 176 pp. Hardcover. US \$37.50. ISBN: 978-0-692-15712-1; also available for free download.



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Like many individuals, my non-major undergraduate students come to my classes with common misconceptions about reptiles and amphibians. Some believe all snakes are aggressive or that handling toads results in people getting

warts. The *Primer on Reptiles and Amphibians* by Micha R. Petty seeks to dispel such misconceptions and introduces readers to the beautiful, fascinating and important world of reptiles and amphibians.

This is a unique book in its form and purpose. It is evident from the onset that the primer is a passion project of Petty—a master naturalist, wildlife rehabilitator, educator, valued contributor to many herpetological organizations and President of the Louisiana Exotic Animal Resource Network (L.E.A.R.N.), a nonprofit wildlife rehabilitation and animal rescue organization focusing on herpetology. His intent is to educate the masses in an effort to conserve reptiles and amphibians. This book, edited by Joseph C. Mitchell with contributions by others in the field, fills a gap in the herpetological literature.

The primer is organized into eight parts with each comprised of the educational bulletins Petty developed over the years to educate and inspire audiences. It introduces a huge diversity of topics. Everything from the biology and classification of reptiles and amphibians to how to live more harmoniously with them is covered. People can read about herpetoculture, current threats, conservation practices and more. Each page of the primer contains one of Petty's bulletins presented in a graphically appealing and easy to read format. While some content is more advanced than others, audiences of all ages will enjoy the material and benefit from the information. Most references to species and groups of organisms are made using common North American names. The clear and concise text is joined with beautiful photographic images and a catchy banner that will leave readers remembering key points and also wanting to learn more. Those wanting additional information on particular topics can follow the links to relevant organizations made throughout the book and use the resources included in the Appendices. There is even a fun bonus section inviting viewers to find a camouflaged reptile or amphibian in photos of species in their natural habitats.

Considering each page is a standalone bulletin, Petty warns that some content is duplicated in multiple bulletins. I actually found it helpful to reinforce important topics, such as how to respond properly when you encounter a snake. However, what I did find a little challenging was the organization of pages. Some bulletins of the same general theme are included under different parts of the primer. For instance, *Part I: Living with Wildlife* contains bulletins related to observing reptiles and amphibians, and *Part VIII: Lagniappe* includes an example of an *Observation Record* form. Yet, *Part VI* is titled *Observation* and contains additional information related to this theme. There could also be a little more consistency in using common versus scientific names. In one instance, Petty writes about the “Goliath Frog” being the largest frog species, but then uses “*Paedophryne amauensis*” to refer to the smallest frog in the same sentence (p. 18). These particular comments, however, are inconsequential really and should not negate the immense value each bulletin brings to the reader.

I was extremely impressed with the range of topics covered, many of which are timely, relevant, and not addressed in other publications. The impacts of feral cats on reptiles and amphibians, illegal trade and releasing of exotic species, engaging in citizen science, decontaminating field gear to prevent spread of disease, and keeping locality data of protected species to yourself are just some of the important subjects covered. In many bulletins, Petty seamlessly intersperses basic facts with bits of current scientific information. His perspective about humans and their negative interactions with reptiles and amphibians, particularly snakes, is evident in some other bulletins. Overall, Petty has three key messages that resonate throughout the primer: (1) reptiles and amphibians are important components of the ecosystem and have fascinating adaptations, (2) people should be appreciative of these amazing creatures and act to live more in harmony with them, and (3) people have opportunities to conserve reptiles and amphibians.

Whether read by a family, someone apprehensive of reptiles, an aspiring herpetologist, or an individual looking for something new to learn, Petty's *Primer of Reptiles and Amphibians* is an interesting and worthwhile read. The primer makes a great contribution to achieving Petty's “Conservation through Education” mission. In fact, Petty has made this primer available free of charge in digital form on the L.E.A.R.N. website (<https://www.learnaboutcritters.org/>) and all proceeds from the sale of the hardcover book support L.E.A.R.N. Much of the material is also under Creative Commons, enabling individual bulletins to be used for non-commercial and educational purposes by others. This is extremely commendable! As an educator myself, I only wish more individuals, organizations, and publishers followed Petty's lead.