



## BOOK REVIEW

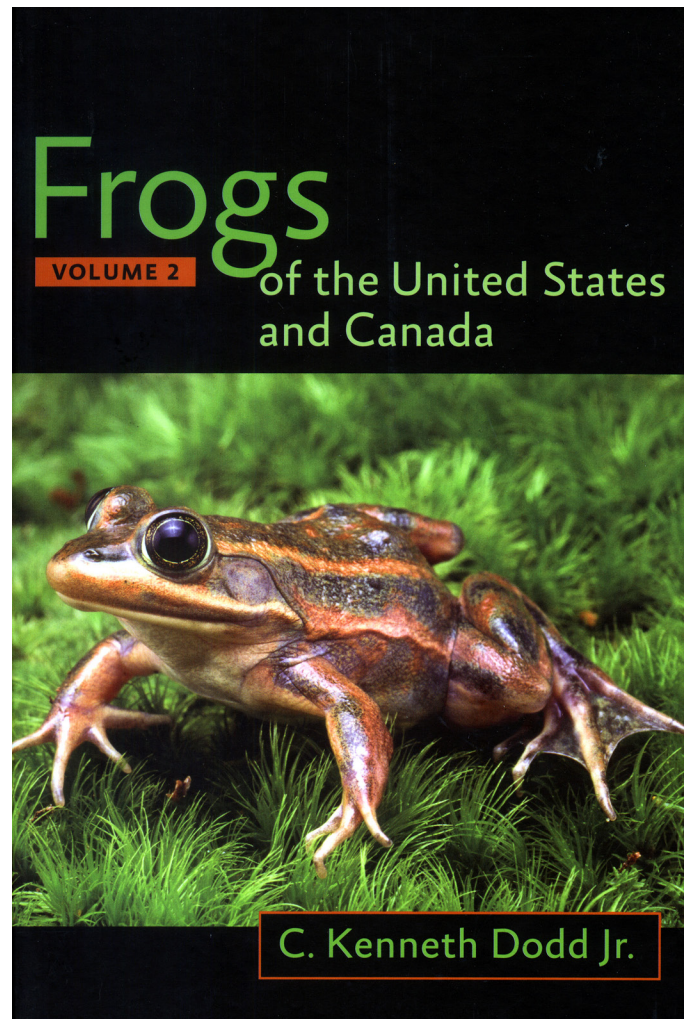
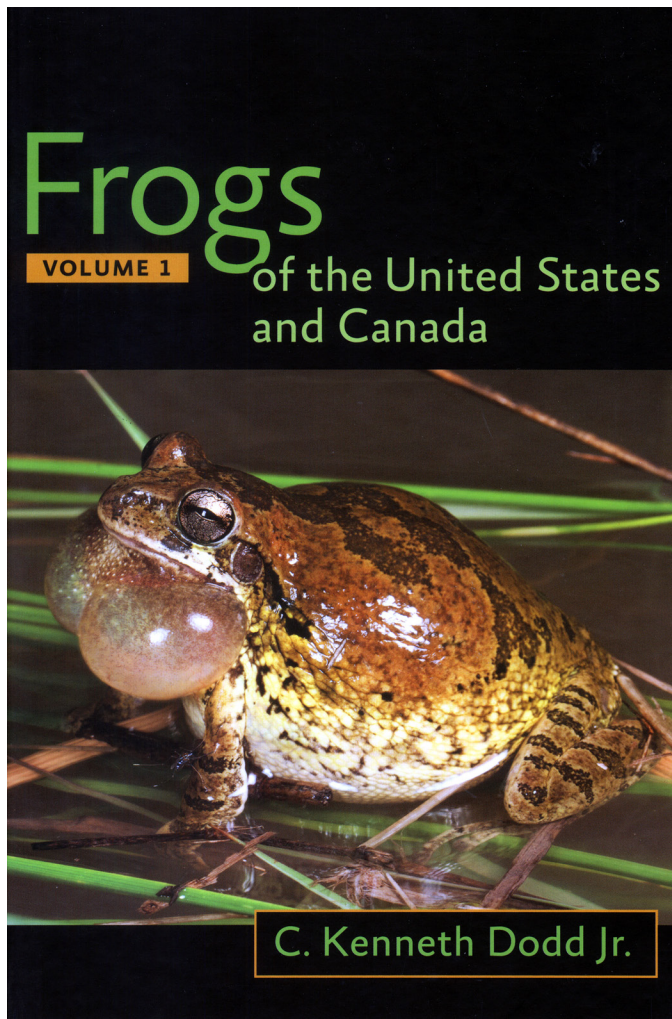
# Frogs of the United States and Canada

*Frogs of the United States and Canada*. 2013. C. Kenneth Dodd, Jr. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. 2-volume set. xxix + 1–460 pp. and vii + 461–982 pp. Hardback — ISBN-13: 978-1-4214-0633-6. ISBN-10: 1-4214-0633-0. \$180.00.

Over the years, many efforts have strived to summarize all that is known about the amphibians and reptiles of the United States and Canada. Notable among these was the series of “handbooks” published originally by the Comstock Publishing Co. of Ithaca, New York, in the 1940s and 50s. These are still being reprinted today, testament to their lasting value and the attention to detail by the authors of those

volumes. Efforts to update that series have languished, but more recent efforts include James W. Petranka’s *Salamanders of the United States and Canada* (1998. Smithsonian Books), *Snakes of the United States and Canada* by Carl H. Ernst and Evelyn M. Ernst (2003. Smithsonian Books), *Turtles of the United States and Canada* by Carl H. Ernst and Jeffrey E. Lovich (1994. Smithsonian Books; 2nd ed. 2009. The Johns Hopkins University Press), and now a two-volume treatise on the frogs.

Ken Dodd’s massive work dwarfs the 1949 *Handbook of Frogs and Toads of the United States and Canada* by Albert Hazen Wright and Anna Allen Wright, to whose memory the new volumes are dedicated. Although some new species



have been described and several more recently introduced species (including those introduced in Hawaii) are included, the main reason for the discrepancy in size is the vast amount of knowledge that has accumulated since the publication of Wright and Wright's handbook. Although Dodd notes that "an initial impression of a great amount of information quickly fades to a realization about how little is known about the basic natural history of North American frogs" and he acknowledges that he did not strive to include every "paper, note, thesis, or dissertation ever published on North American anurans," he did attempt to cite "all pertinent papers." The more than 4,500 references suggest that he was successful in meeting that goal.

Volume 1 begins with a short preface dominated by acknowledgments of the many colleagues who helped in various ways, an introduction, and a list of abbreviations followed by species accounts. Volume 2 contains the remaining species accounts, a glossary, a 137-page bibliography, and indices of common and scientific names and of potential stressors, the latter reflecting the sad reality that many amphibians throughout the world are threatened by stresses imposed on their habitats by human activities.

The introduction begins with my all-time favorite quote (a copy of which hangs framed in my office):

I have always liked frogs ... I like the looks of frogs,  
and their outlook, especially the way they get together  
in wet places on warm nights and sing about sex.

Archie Carr, *The Windward Road*

That auspicious beginning leads to an overview of frog biology (e.g., number of species, basic body plans of frogs and toads) followed by sections on evolution, life history, conservation, etymology (the meaning of names), the organization of the book, notes on measurements, precision, and generalizations, and ending with sources of further information that include books, internet sites, herpetological atlases, sound recordings, and professional herpetological societies. Species accounts are organized by family and arranged alphabetically

by scientific names. Accounts include information as available and applicable on nomenclature (including abbreviated synonymies), etymology, identification (although readers are referred to an upcoming book on larval amphibians by R. Altig and R.W. McDiarmid for details necessary for identifying larvae), distributions, fossil records, systematics and geographic variation, adult habitats, terrestrial and aquatic ecology (omitting the latter for species with larvae that develop in eggs laid on land), calling activity and mate selection, reproduction, larval ecology, diets, predation and defenses, population biology, community ecology, diseases, parasites, and malformations, susceptibility to potential stressors, and status and conservation. All accounts include a range map and photographs (of adults and frequently of eggs, larvae, and habitats), and many include line drawings illustrating diagnostic features. Accounts range in length from about two (Spotted Chirping Frog, *Eleutherodactylus guttillatus*) to nearly 30 pages (American Bullfrog, *Lithobates catesbeianus*).

The amount of information, despite Dodd's introductory disclaimer, is nothing short of amazing. What we do not know about a particular species (which often is just as important as what we do know) is sometimes evident, but for anyone wanting an answer to questions about a particular species of frog, this is the place to begin that quest. I conducted spot checks on accounts of species with which I have some experience and found no missing references. The production quality of these books is impressive, paper quality is high, and the price is reasonable for what you get. My only quibble is the somewhat uneven quality of photographs. A few are overly dark (especially some of the images of larvae and habitats), which obscures potentially important details, and some are very small (e.g., the tadpole of the Green Toad, *Anaxyrus debilis*). Nevertheless, this set has become my first stop when I seek information about anurans, and it is a must-have for anyone interested in frogs.

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