

Review: Amphibians, Reptiles, and Their Habitats at Sabino Canyon

By David Wentworth Lazaroff, Philip C Rosen and Charles H Lowe

Reviewed by William Ted Johnson
Scottsdale Public Library, Arizona, USA

David Wentworth Lazaroff, Philip C Rosen and Charles H Lowe. *Amphibians, Reptiles, and Their Habitats at Sabino Canyon*. Tucson : University of Arizona Press 158 pp. ISBN: 0816524955 (paper) \$US 17.95.

Timely, passionate, and well-documented, this text portrays the battle faced by natural habitats on civilization's door step. Illustrated with over 45 black and white photographs, 16 color plates, and 28 species distribution maps, the 57 species of reptiles and amphibians of Sabino Canyon come alive as you move through the text. The structure of the book and the writing style of the authors give you the sense of being in the heart of Sabino Canyon and empowered to make a difference in this battle.

Beginning with a brief lesson on safety when in the company of herptiles, the authors quickly get to the heart of the matter, laying the foundation of ecological understanding with a detailed description of the topographic and geographic features of Sabino Canyon. Climate, vegetation zones, and aquatic environments are subsequently described. Riparian habitats are naturally prone to dramatic changes in stream flow, vegetation cover, and animal activity. The authors do not neglect this vital aspect of life in Sabino Canyon. It is a dynamic place, made all the more interesting by its proximity to a growing metropolitan area, Tucson, Arizona. As if this was not complicated enough, the impacts of fire, drought, invasive plants, and released pets are all discussed.

Species accounts begin with salamanders, followed by toads and frogs, turtles, lizards, and snakes. This is the largest section of the text, running from page 55 to 140. Each listing includes tabular information on abundance, habitat, localities where found, how to identify the species followed by a discussion of the animal's activities, behavior, relative frequency, and distribution outside Sabino Canyon. Four appendices conclude the text: scientific names of plants and non-herptile animals (fish, birds, and mammals), the location where the photographs used in the text were shot, a natural history timeline running from 1906 to 2005, and a checklist of amphibians and reptiles in Sabino Canyon. The references document the research behind the text, consisting of print field guides, species accounts, weather and ecological data published from 1907 to 2003. A detailed index allows you to find topics of interest quickly.

Though the geographic coverage of the text is rather narrow (one small canyon in the Southwest) the information shared is applicable to many similar habitats across a vast region - central Arizona to eastern California, south into central Mexico. It was meant to provide a snapshot of life in this canyon but it does much more. It provides a living picture of a disappearing habitat and the struggle to remain wild under the pressure of recreational use, drought, and fire. It is highly recommended for wilderness enthusiasts; natural history students; and the special, public, and academic libraries in this region.

William Ted Johnson <TJohnson@ScottsdaleAz.Gov>, Senior Coordinator, Scottsdale Public Library - Palomino Branch, 12575 E. Via Linda Suite 102, Scottsdale, AZ 85259-4310 USA.