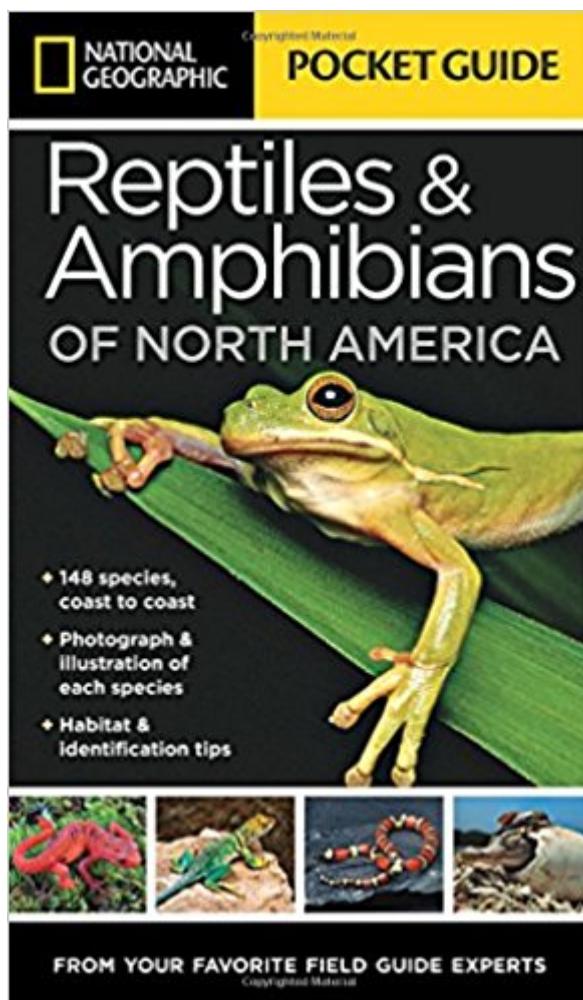


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# National Geographic Pocket Guide To Reptiles And Amphibians Of North America



## **Synopsis**

This basic beginner's field guide to our favorite animals that slither and swim is the latest in the growing National Geographic Pocket Guide series. Spot-on descriptive information and key facts about reptiles and amphibians are conveyed in a handy, colorful, easy-to-reference volume. More robust than any other beginning field guides, this book includes selected photography and newly commissioned art and graphics to illustrate and identify each species from every angle. With logical organization and bulleted information, this pocket guide is useful in the field or as in-home reference, for beginners, families, and new nature lovers alike.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

CATHERINE HERBERT HOWELL, a former National Geographic staff member, has written extensively on natural history. She explored the relationships between people and plants in *Flora Mirabilis: How Plants Have Shaped World Knowledge, Health, Wealth, and Beauty* and covered the importance of birds in culture in the National Geographic Bird Watcher's Bible. Howell serves as a master naturalist volunteer in Arlington, Virginia. JARED TRAVNICEK is medical illustrator with an MA in Medical and Biological illustration from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He is based in Indianapolis, IN, where he works as a neurosurgical illustrator.

Great "advanced" book for my soon to be 5 y.o. grandson. Doesn't have every creature in there but it has lots of interesting ones and he's ID'd quite a few from his daily New Orleans excursion to the

field across the street including a small gecko and a toad which provided a lesson for him when said toad ate said gecko!

A bit pricey, but also very handy. I purchased this guide for my grandson who loves the pictures and reading about each creature with his parents and grandparents.

Great resource. It would be 5 stars if the pages were water resistant like other field guides.

Great pocket guide for my son's school project. Very colorful & informative. Just enough information for a report.

Great pictures and info for my Grandchildren to take on their nature walks.

Nope, I just couldn't like this one. It's just not possible to get all of the information that should be in a field guide into one this size. Physically, it looks nice. It has great pictures, and a little information about a few species. BUT... I'm a biologist, and well acquainted with Petersons fantastic 'real' field guides, and I'd strongly recommend those instead (links at the bottom of my review). Here's what I found lacking in this one:  
\* Too few species. If you want to use this to identify something you find, good luck. This book covers 148 of the 700+ reptile and amphibian species in the US and Canada. The real field guides? They've got all of them. This book leaves out several important ones, too. Gopher snakes? Not here. Slender salamanders? Nope. And more.  
\* There are no range maps in this book. While there are text descriptions of the regions and states an animal is distributed within, a range map (and the Peterson guides have some great ones) makes things \*SO\* much easier to figure out at a glance, especially for identification (the "Does it live here" criteria).  
\* There are mistakes in this book. Some are small and minor. For instance, in the description of the Tiger Whiptail lizard, they use the old genus abbreviation instead of the new one that's at the top of the page. The size of the California Giant Salamander is listed too small. And some are big. Open the front cover. There's a nice visual index to different groups of amphibians and reptiles. Including the one Amphisbaenian in North America. Except they accidentally put a picture of a skink there instead. Oops. Good luck finding the one page with the Amphisbaenian in the book now.  
\* The book doesn't contain nearly as much information about each animal as the Peterson guide does. It leaves out so much useful and interesting natural history information about the lives of each species, as well as good general introductory material (there's some, but much less in this book). So... if you

absolutely must have a 'pocket' book, I guess this is it. But the real, nice field guides are not much more expensive, not that much bigger/thicker/heavier, and so much more comprehensive, that they're worth getting instead for almost everyone. And yes, that includes children. Get your kids the real book, not a stripped-down version. The photos are still lovely in the Peterson one (and there are more of them), the info is better, it's not harder to read or use, and it will actually be useful in identifying the other 75% of animals you'll find, which aren't in this book. And if you (or your kids) are really interested in these animals, eventually you'll end up getting the real field guide anyway. This one is just too limited. The one disadvantage (I guess) to the Peterson field guides is that there's two of them instead of one. There's one for the Western US, and one for the Eastern and Central parts. Get the one for your area. It won't cover the entire continent, but it will have EVERYTHING in your area, and will do a much better job helping you (and your kids) learn about them. Oh, and get one of those two for Reptiles and Amphibians. Other publishers field guides (Audubon, National Geographic, etc) just aren't nearly as good.

One criteria of a good field guide is ease of identification. While this little pocket guide categorizes 148 of the most common reptiles and amphibians, it isn't convenient for quick ID. There's only one animal per page. It's no fun fumbling page after page looking for a match while that mysterious discovery quickly slithers away. Worse yet, it might not even be found because there are so many omissions in this book (there are over 500 amphibians/reptiles found in the US). Pick a more comprehensive and local field guide to help identify nature quickly. For example, I live in the Midwest, and use Kaufman Field Guide to Nature of the Midwest (Kaufman Field Guides) to identify anything found outdoors. It not only covers reptiles and amphibians, but also includes birds, mammals, trees, wildflowers, insects, spiders, mushrooms, ferns, grasses and even rocks and constellations. It has so many desirable features, all for about the same price as this pocket guide--compact traveling size (8" x 5"), beautiful and clear photographs accompanied with concise information on opposite pages and easy color tabs for quick ID access. Comparing similarly grouped animals on one page and having state ranges in picture form is much more helpful (see picture). After returning home from the field, I look at other guides and sources for additional information, but at least my discoveries are all quickly and correctly identified. I still like this National Geographic book because it's filled with interesting facts and has nice pictures and drawings. Catherine Herbert Howell is a well-respected and very established natural history author. Our kids still enjoy reading her earlier (1993) juvenile book titled Reptiles & Amphibians. As a pocket ID guide, though, there are better sources. I recommend looking for more local and comprehensive guides

like Kauman's, or if more specific subject matter with broader US ranges is desired, try A National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Reptiles and Amphibians (National Audubon Society Field Guides) A or either Peterson eastern or western field guide. They cover more material and make it so much easier to find what you're looking for.

Just to be sure ... this is a beginners book. My daughter fell in love with salamanders at age 4 and this would have been perfect for her. The production values are exceptional; excellent photographs, coated paper, full color, nice facts about each animal. The book I bought my daughter was very small, used drawings, not photos. About the same price too ... but that was 20 years ago. Drawbacks... covers only a few common species. And the whole US. So there are some species which are west coast only, etc. so if you can't find the picture of an animal I hand, it just may not be in there. There are no range maps to help with this. Still, great value for money as a first book on reptiles and amphibians. If popular with your child, a better regional can be obtained. If not, not much lost.

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