

Secretive, nocturnal, and little known, salamanders are often the most abundant vertebrates on the forest floor. Common to freshwater and moist terrestrial habitats throughout most of the world, they are of increasing importance as biological indicators because of their sensitivity to environmental disturbance. North America is especially rich in salamanders; indeed, the southeastern United States, including the Appalachians, has the greatest diversity of salamander species in the world.

This comprehensive volume, the first survey published since 1943, describes the ecology, evolution, biodiversity, behavior, and natural history of 127 recognized species of salamanders found in the United States and Canada, from newts and sirens to waterdogs and hellbenders. Drawing on more than 2100 research publications, the book includes detailed life history accounts, nearly five hundred black and white and color photographs, identification keys for larvae as well as adults, and up-to-date distribution maps. James W. Petranka presents a wealth of information on each species: identification, systematics, courtship and breeding, diet and predation, and the ecology of larval and adult stages are all described. He summarizes major patterns of geographic variation within species to emphasize differences between local and regional populations and to provide a realistic view of intraspecific life history diversity.

With its comprehensive coverage and extensive references, this volume is an indispensable guide not only for herpetologists but also for teachers, naturalists, conservation biologists, environmental planners, and anyone who needs detailed information on the diverse salamander fauna of the United States and Canada.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James W. Petranka is an associate professor of biology at the University of North Carolina at Asheville and is on the editorial boards of *Copeia* and the *Journal of Herpetology*.

On the cover: Ringed salamander (Plate 1).



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