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Review of "Reptiles and Amphibians of the Cimarron National Grasslands Morton" by Joseph T. Collins and Suzanne L. Collins

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Reptiles and Amphibians of the Cimarron National Grasslands Morton County, Kansas. Joseph T. Collins and Suzanne L. Collins. Lawrence, KS: U. S. Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, printed by University of Kansas Press, 1991. vii + 60 pp. Color photographs, figures, bibliography. \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0-89338-012-1).

This small book (pamphlet) provides information about the amphibians and reptiles for the general reader or casual visitor to the Cimarron National Grasslands in southwestern Kansas. Some of the information derives from a brief field trip by the authors in 1987 or from museum specimens and technical literature, but most of the information is not new.

Much of the material (some verbatim) comes from J. T. Collins' previous semipopular books on Kansas herpetiles.

After a short introduction and a brief discussion of the history of herp collections in the county there is a checklist of the 31 species, a note about threatened and endangered species in Kansas, and comments on how to observe amphibians and reptiles. The remainder of the booklet consists of accounts of species that provide details of identification, size, distribution, and an assortment of natural history information ranging from food to breeding to predators. There are excellent color photographs (seven of these can be found in black and white in Collins' previous book) of all the species as well as selected major habitats of the Cimarron Grasslands. The style is readable and although no glossary of terms is provided, a minimum of technical terms is used without definitions (e.g., cloaca and spermatophore). Most accounts have comments that reinforce the importance of amphibians and reptiles as a component of the environment which blend well with the overall theme of environmental awareness. The section on "how the species accounts are organized. . ." would be better placed immediately before the accounts rather than being interrupted by other sections. The lay reader may be puzzled about why some technical names in the checklist consist of three names and others are binomial but the authors are careful to use the appropriate common name that is applicable to either the binomial or trinomial scientific name.

There is some speculation about the impact of the drought of the 1930s on the existence of certain species that Collins and Collins did not find in their brief 1987 survey that is premature and worthy of more intensive fieldwork to assess. Given the general environmental awareness flavor of the book, I am surprised that comments on locating specimens by turning cover in the field were not balanced by a note that all material turned should be carefully returned to its natural position to minimize disturbance to the environment. Beyond occasional anthropomorphic language (e.g. mammals "like" to eat such and such species), some broad generalizations that obviously apply to the species as a whole rather than to the specific herps of Morton County, and the imprecision introduced by common rather than technical terms, I found few errors. However, suggestions that the eastern hognose snake has a dark-

colored belly (p. 27) will make it difficult for the amateur to distinguish it from the plains hognose snake which has the distinctly darker belly.

Although there is very little if any new information here and much of it has been previously summarized by Collins, the pamphlet may well serve as a useful roadside guide for visitors to the Cimarron National Grasslands. Such interfaces between science and the lay public are an increasingly important component of environmental education. Royce E. Ballinger, *School of Biological Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.