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## Review of *The Smithsonian Book of North American Mammals* Edited by Don E. Wilson and Sue Ruff

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**The Smithsonian Book of North American Mammals.** Edited by Don E. Wilson and Sue Ruff. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999. xxv+750 pp. Photos, maps, references, index. \$75.00 cloth (ISBN 1-56098-845-2).

In his 1982 *Journal of Mammalogy* review of E. Raymond Hall's epic tome *The Mammals of North America* (1981), J. Knox Jones Jr. opined, "It is unlikely that any other American mammalogist would have undertaken, or will undertake again, such a gigantic task." That statement remains valid only because Hall produced useful maps.

*The Smithsonian Book of North American Mammals* is, in many respects, a companion volume to Wilson and Reeder's *Mammal Species of the World: A Taxonomic and Geographic Reference* (1993). That book, like the present one, was a collaborative effort with the American Society of Mammalogists and the Smithsonian Institution Press. The volume at hand incorporates taxonomic changes made since publication of the earlier volume.

I counted 229 contributors to the effort, the list reading like a who's who of mammalogy in North America. I especially enjoyed the preface, a well-written summary of the early history of mammalogy on the North American continent. The book includes an account for every native species of mammal known to occur in North America north of Mexico. Accounts of orders and families of mammals are arranged according to currently accepted evolutionary relationships. The sequence of genera within families of mammals is not explained but appears to be traditional. Species within genera of mammals are in alphabetic order.

Species accounts, each written by an authority for the species (or at least by a mammalogist with an interest in that species), are short but informative. They include the scientific name and recent synonyms, one or more common names, information on size, weight, and diagnostic features of the species, a general review of its natural history, a brief discussion of population or conservation status, and, for polytypic species, a list of subspecies. Almost all accounts include at least one photograph, most in color. In my judgement, the photographs alone are worth the price of the book. For each species there is also a tiny "map" (actually just an outline diagram of the countries of the Northern Hemisphere of the New World) that presumes to "give an indication of the general part of North America from which the species is known." This description acknowledges that the maps provide too little detail for technical use; moreover, because of the lack of points of reference in areas remote from coastlines and national borders, they are not even especially helpful for non-technical use. Persons needing additional information about the biology or distribution of species are referred to relevant *Mammalian Species* (a series published by the American Society of Mammalogists) and other publications. An appendix lists the scientific names for many of the plants mentioned in the text by common names. Finally, a glossary of technical terms used throughout the book will be helpful to lay readers and students of mammals. The list of literature cited is followed by a list of *Mammalian Species* accounts referred to in the text by number rather than author.

Given such a diversity of authors, some accounts obviously are better than others, notwithstanding the editors' efforts to maintain uniformity. Nonetheless, mammalogists should have this book handy as a quick reference, and non-mammalogists desiring one good book about mammals should buy this one. Had useful maps been included, this volume would (in my opinion) rank as the best ever published on the mammals of North America. **Jerry R. Choate**, *Sternberg Museum of Natural History, Fort Hays State University*.