

## Miscellanea

**Reviews**

Steven L. Stephenson. 2013. *A Natural History of the Central Appalachians*. West Virginia University Press, Morgantown, WV. 260 pp. \$29.99 (soft cover).

Those of us who belong to a natural history society are naturalists and as naturalists we have broad interests in the world around us. This book takes a broad look at a specific region which happens to be where many of us reside, work, and do our research. The Central Appalachians are defined by the author by latitude and longitude and include parts of Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. The 14 chapters include topics on the geology and palaeofauna of the region, its plants, fungi, and animals. The author is a botanist and a mycologist so it is not surprising that five chapters are devoted to “plants” in a broad sense and another to fungi. Invertebrates are under-represented with a chapter each on insects and another on non-insect invertebrates. The vertebrates of the region are covered in two chapters. Although humans are only very recent inhabitants of the Central Appalachians, their history and effects on the environment are an important part of the story.

The book is visually delightful with more than 130 color photos (I counted them). Many of them are of iconic organisms or environments representative of the Central Appalachians. In addition to the usual forest types, some unusual non-forested environments such as bogs, shale barrens, and grass balds are discussed. There are a few typos and the amphibian and reptile nomenclature is out of date but the book is authoritative and a pleasant read. Readers who are specialists in a particular taxon or ecological area may not learn much about their specialty, but the book is so broad in scope that there is much that can be learned and appreciated. A glossary of common and scientific names and suggestions for further reading will be useful for the amateur naturalist and the professional biologist.

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