

Announcing Marty Crump's new book to be published by The University of Chicago Press

Martha L. (Marty) Crump, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Biology and the Ecology Center, has a forthcoming book to be published by The University of Chicago Press in 2014. The working title of Marty's book is "Amphibians, Reptiles, and Humans: Cultural Perceptions and Conservation Consequences."

Who doesn't love a heartwarming story about an ugly toad turning into a handsome prince, or an inspiring tale of a hero slaying an evil snake guarding treasure? But have you ever wondered about the biology behind the stories—or how folklore and traditional beliefs influence our perception of animals? What fuels our love or hate, respect or disgust for amphibians and reptiles? How does our perception of animals influence our willingness to protect them? These questions are the focus of Marty's book. To address the questions, Marty examines humans' perceptions of amphibians and reptiles in symbolism, folklore, traditional beliefs, worship, and use for folk and modern medicine. The book is aimed for readers interested in folklore, natural history, conservation, and amphibians and reptiles.

To set a framework, the first chapter discusses interactions between humans and animals in general, and then introduces folklore and amphibians and reptiles. The following 12 chapters address the role of amphibians and reptiles in creation myths; our 2-sided perception of snakes; the role of frogs, crocodilians, and turtles in human spirituality and religious beliefs; association of frogs and snakes with rain, agricultural fertility, and resurrection; use of amphibians and reptiles in traditional medicines, folk magic, witchcraft, and modern medicine; our perception of amphibians and reptiles as reflected in folk tales of the origin of death, trickster stories, tales of love, how/why stories, explanations for natural/unnatural phenomena, and stories with a moral/lesson. The final chapter ties together biology, folklore, and conservation implications.

The book will be illustration-rich, from spectacular images of amphibians and reptiles to our interactions with these animals. As one goal is to improve people's attitudes about these animals, color will go a long way to encourage readers to view amphibians and reptiles in a more positive light.

The book's interdisciplinary nature—folklore and other cultural beliefs and human attitudes toward nature, biology, and conservation—ties in with the mission of the Ecology Center to support programs in the ecological and environmental sciences and to have "interdisciplinary conversations." Marty hopes that if we can understand our perceptions of amphibians and reptiles, we can act on our love/respect and dismiss our feelings of hate/disgust. By doing so, we can help ensure the future of these animals and enrich our own lives.

***Photos by Dante Fenolio.**