FOREWORD

The quest of most naturalists is for a hands-on book about a subject close to their hearts, usually a favorite species or group of species that they wish to learn more about. In Texas, this subject isn't easy to resolve. The state contains at least five biotic provinces and an almost equal number of biomes. Each formation contains a wealth of species, living, dying, day by day, year by year, leaving their legacies for some young naturalist to discover.

In such a diverse biological realm, those of us who study amphibians have a difficult task because we must travel from the swamps of Southeast Texas to the Chihuahuan Desert of West Texas, or from the grassy plains of the Panhandle to the tropics of South Texas to find a salamander or frog we wish to study. Each area of Texas has a particular set of species that have evolved over thousands of years. For example, the Edwards Plateau, where no less than 14–17 species of spring and cave salamanders have evolved, or southern Texas where remnants of Mexican tropical salamanders, frogs, and toads still survive un-

der the strong pressures of human population growth and crop applications of chemical herbicides and pesticides. Timber harvests in East Texas and grain harvests in the Panhandle have depleted the natural occurrence of humidity, water flow, and groundwater to the point of no return. With the continued depletion of land and water resources, along with natural drought conditions, we must ask ourselves, when will it end?

The five authors of this book, *Texas Amphibians*, have asked themselves the above questions and now invite readers to discover what they have learned about the natural history, conservation, and laws concerning the 72 species of Texas frogs, toads, and salamanders.

The authors also ask that concerned citizens be aware of their surroundings and work to save some species from extinction. The way we live our lives can either reflect the continued music of nightly choruses of spring peepers or the harsh reality of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

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