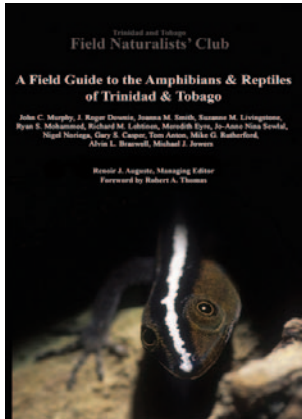


A Field Guide to the Amphibians & Reptiles of Trinidad and Tobago

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This field guide is a user-friendly, detailed, step-by-step guide to the herpetofauna of Trinidad and Tobago. The foreword gives a warm welcome with tales from Robert Thomas's own experiences starting with, "I bounded into the dark woods towards a chorus that included Milky Treefrogs (*Trachycephalus typhonius*)". Thomas draws the reader in with, "Such encounters

with tropical amphibians imprint nature lovers with the wonder of herpetofaunal biodiversity that is brought to life in the excellent book that follows". This leads into a guide which is primarily aimed at field naturalists and researchers and is fully documented by a collaboration of numerous specialists including three who are members of the British Herpetological Society. Content includes waifs and questionable species in Trinidad and Tobago. Expect to find approximately thirty-five frog and toad species, nine turtles, two tortoises, two caimans, eight geckos, eight anoles, sixteen lizards, fifty-two snakes and a plethora of photographs to compliment them.

There are detailed descriptions of each animal, including morphometrics, habitat descriptions, ranges and climatic information. The layout of the book is clear and easy to understand. It breaks down into multiple sections with an easy to use index at the back for readers who want to just look at a few species. There are six appendices giving information regarding amphibian life stages, handling, chytridiomycosis, and museum specimens. Also there is an appendix with useful information including multiple guides and tips such as contact details for research stations and lodgings. The photos show the interior and exterior of these lodgings. Details are provided such as facilities to expect including how many individuals can be housed, location details, travel and, for example, the best location to see turtles. This makes contact for field trips easier and potentially less time consuming. Hopefully, reducing the need to locate lots of places and explore which are the best for the purpose of your trip. Appendix five gives details regarding museum specimens, locations, what was collected and when. It even provides information about how the specimen has been stored which is useful if you are looking to examine or process stored specimens for research purposes. There is another appendix covering

health and safety, both for humans and animals. This covers snakebite and amphibian handling to reduce the risk of spreading disease, all essential information for field workers. The writing in these appendices is simple, straight to the point, explaining advice in layman's terms.

Extensive referencing and a glossary are included to give further understanding and explanation if not gained in the main text. The book is not a mini pocket guide but due to it including all herpetofauna for both Trinidad and Tobago, the size makes sense considering the illustrations and photographs. Anyone interested in amphibians and reptiles could pick up this book and enjoy the pictures and information. Herpetoculturists would find it of interest but it is obviously aimed at a more specialised reader with regards to field research or scientific exploration of the animals identified.

There are already varied sources for the herpetofauna of Trinidad and Tobago, amphibians and reptiles (Murphy, 1997) or just snakes (Boos, 2001), but this book collates it all. Detailed animal drawings/sketches have been used from Murphy (1997) but many have been redrawn, assuming to update or give more detail. Similar maps have also been used for distribution of species but are much more compact compared to the previous book.

The photographs are generally excellent, match up to the text and in several cases there are multiple pictures of one species, with different angles and colourations. A few of the photographs could have been made smaller to make more space and lack some sharpness but are better than no photographs at all. Both adults and juveniles are illustrated which is very helpful when there are significant colour differences between them. An example of useful comparative photographs is seen with the *Typhlonectes* and the synbranchid eel on p.49 showing that they could be easily mistaken for each other. Additionally, different life stages such as tadpoles and eggs are shown which again are useful in aiding identification.

All photos and illustrations are labelled clearly. Photographs of habitats are given which are a useful addition as they illustrate where these animals reside and where they can be found, e.g. Tobago glass frogs eggs on the underside of leaves over streams.

The sketches show excellent detail of scale patterns, locations and body parts e.g. Plate 20 & 21. These are labelled well with correct terminology and morphometric information for data collection. Some of these illustrations are colour coded to illustrate different scale patterns seen in different species e.g. Windward skinks.

Distribution maps are given for most species identified

and the terrain is colour coded giving a simple, easy to read, distribution visual. The maps are small, leaving more room for written information.

Having carried out field research myself, this guide would be a wonderful aid. The information included would save time and make anyone's trip a lot easier. This is a huge positive regarding further research in these areas and having read this, I can only say it is a book that encourages more research to be done. The book does have areas where it readily admits information is lacking for example *Mannophryne olmonae*, where "eggs are presumably laid in forest leaf litter". But, this again identifies that although there is a massive amount of knowledge here, there is still more research to be done. Although this guide is not flawless in presentation, there are minor issues with bold writing and font size inaccuracies, altogether it is a wonderful read with up to date information and a great aid for anyone researching herpetofauna on these islands.

This guide is only currently available to buy from The Trinidad & Tobago Field Naturalists' Club website and has been priced for \$TT290 (= £32). At this price it is excellent value for money.

REFERENCES

- Murphy, J. C. (1997). Amphibians and Reptiles of Trinidad & Tobago. Krieger, Malabar. 245pp.
Boos, H. E. A. (2001). The Snakes of Trinidad & Tobago. Texas A&M University Press. 270pp.

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