

### **The Amphibians and Reptiles of the Honduran Mosquitia**

James R. McCranie, Josiah H. Townsend, and  
Larry David Wilson

Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida. 2006.

ISBN 1-57524-270-2; US\$63.50. x + 291 pp.

The Mosquitia of Honduras forms one of the largest remaining tracts of tropical lowland forest in Middle America. In herpetological terms, while not a significant area of endemism, it is also one of the most diverse. Almost half of the entire compliment of amphibian and reptile species known from Honduras occur in this region and its coastal waters (156 out of 347), distributed among some 91 genera and 38 families. As more of the area is explored it is likely that still others will be revealed – until comparatively recently the Mosquitia was mostly inaccessible, and travel in the region today is still largely by foot or traditional dugout canoe.

As outlined in its introduction, the purpose of this book is to discuss the composition, distribution, natural history, biogeography, conservation status, and wellbeing of the Mosquitia herpetofauna within Honduras (the boundary of this region extends for some considerable distance into eastern Nicaragua). In all of these objectives it succeeds admirably, and given the clear ecological importance of the Mosquitia we can only hope that it also triumphs in achieving its other stated goal – to increase awareness of the value of amphibians and reptiles in maintaining this unique complex of ecosystems, both among the indigenous peoples of the region and the policy makers on whose decisions its future ultimately depends. The book's three authors are well known specialists in Middle American herpetology. McCranie and Wilson in particular have a long and distinguished record of herpetological research in Honduras, between them spanning almost 70 years, and much of what is known today regarding the amphibians and reptiles of this country stems directly from their efforts.

A large part of the book is devoted to descriptions of the actual species. These are sufficiently detailed for identification purposes without being overly technical, and are complemented by fully illustrated keys, drawings, and colour photographs. The remaining chapters

provide a wealth of other useful information on the herpetofauna of the Mosquitia (history of survey work, distribution patterns, ecological and biogeographic relationships of species, conservation status of species, future of the Mosquitia herpetofauna, and species of probable occurrence) as well as the region itself, including the environment, its peoples and social history, and protected areas. *The Amphibians and Reptiles of the Honduran Mosquitia* is thus much more than a standard account of amphibian and reptile diversity in this area – rather a framework for the conservation and welfare of its herpetofauna. Accordingly, it deserves the highest recommendation.

### **The Amphibians and Reptiles of El Salvador**

Gunther Köhler, Milan Veselý and Eli Greenbaum

Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida. 2006.

ISBN 1-57524-252-4; US\$49.50. ix + 238 pp.

Produced in the same vein as the Honduran title, this is an equally authoritative account of the amphibians and reptiles inhabiting El Salvador – the most comprehensive since Mertens' original checklist published in 1952 (*Abh. Senckenb. Naturf. Ges.* 487). The book opens with an introduction, materials and methods section, a description of the environment of El Salvador, and chapter on its herpetofaunal composition. Accounts follow of the 130 recorded species (many with type localities in the country), their descriptions based entirely on Salvadorian specimens examined personally by the authors, each accompanied by a colour photograph and excellent distribution map. The species accounts are first class; in addition to descriptions of morphological variation and colour pattern, they include detailed notes on synonymy, geographic and ecological distribution, vocalisation (anurans), taxonomy, natural history, and conservation status. Dichotomous keys to the identification of species (duplicated in Spanish) and a literature cited section are also provided. *The Amphibians and Reptiles of El Salvador* is the definitive modern work on the herpetofauna of this country and will be an invaluable addition to the library of anyone interested in neotropical herpetology.

*Peter Stafford, Editor*