

BOOK REVIEWS

The Amphibians and Reptiles of Costa Rica: A Herpetofauna between Two Continents, between Two Seas. JAY M. SAVAGE. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002, xx + 934 pp. (cloth, ISBN 0-226-73537-0).

Prior to starting graduate school (1966–7), I worked as a curatorial assistant in the Herp Lab of Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, UC Berkeley. My first challenge was to identify and catalog a collection of herps from Costa Rica. Having to rely on E. H. Taylor's monographs, I found the challenge traumatizing. The keys were sometimes confusing (at least to a neophyte herper), no photographs helped me evaluate my tentative identifications, and the paucity of ecological data depersonalized the species accounts.

From 2002 on, neophyte curatorial assistants (or even well-traveled Ph.D.s.) facing a similar challenge will have breath-taking experience when they heft and open Jay Savage's monumental opus on Costa Rican herps. Here in one huge (934 pages, >3 kg) and beautifully edited book are in-depth treatments of the 396 species of herps that occur in Costa Rica. Here are dichotomous keys (with notes on coloration in life and in preservative!), locality maps for each species in Costa Rica, line diagrams of diagnostic morphological characteristics, detailed morphological descriptions and comparisons with similar species, as well as useful notes on habitat, general biology, and even distributions beyond Costa Rica. Obviously, Savage knows these herps! Included also are chapters on being a herper in the tropics, on the Costa Rican environment, and on histories of Costa Rica and of herpetology in Costa Rica. The book ends with important chapters on ecological distributions and biogeography—areas to which Savage himself has made many fundamental contributions over the decades.

To describe this book as “a gold mine” or as “monumental” does not do it justice. For me, Savage's book sets the standard for regional faunal accounts. If you work on *any* aspect of neo-tropical herps including their conservation, you must have this book. If you just like to read about herps, you must have this book.

But this book is far more than an academic treatise. It is not exactly a coffee-table book, but anyone reading this book will inevitably spend hours gazing through the wonderful photographs by Michael and Patricia Fogden, who also illustrated Harry Greene's classic snake book. Set aside hours, because the book has 516 stunning, color plates of herps, generally in their natural habitats. Be sure to check out #483, and also #74–76 (the sadly extinct *Bufo periglenes*).

The worlds of tropical biology and of herpetology owe a debt to Jay Savage (no one else could pull off such a book), the Fogdens, the scores of other tropical biologists who made this volume possible, and the peoples of Costa Rica and Central America who shepherd this rich diversity of herps. Finally, we all owe a debt to the University of Chicago Press for publishing a scholarly, beautiful, and remarkably affordable book (only \$75!). Buy this one.

RAYMOND B. HUEY
Department of Zoology, Box 351800
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington 98195-1800
E-mail: hueyrb@u.washington.edu

during development is not required for normal sound production in insects and anurans. They also suggest that key observations and experimental data are missing from many current claims of satellite male behavior. Some readers will not agree with their assessments, but all readers will find that the book raises some provocative questions.

This book is not for the merely curious. It is densely written, and packed with technical details and complex figures. However, specialists and highly motivated beginners will find the wealth of information gathered here a tremendous resource.

REFERENCES

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ANN V. HEDRICK
Neurobiology, Physiology and Behavior
University of California, Davis
One Shields Avenue
Davis, California 95616
E-mail: avhedrick@ucdavis.edu