

Book Review:

FEDERICO CHACÓN, RICHARD DENNIS JOHNSON. Amphibians and Reptiles of Costa Rica.

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This field guide is available in two different editions, one only in English consisting of 172 pages and one in both English and Spanish of 215 pages. The format of both is 12 x 17 cm, and make them handy and valuable pocket friends. In this review I will comment only the English edition, but I verified that the bilingual book covers exactly the same topics and number of species.

The English guide begins with a four pages "Introduction" in which the biological richness and the national nature conservation policy are very briefly described. Few lines are dedicated also to the recent amphibian decline described for this region. Then a tree pages section describes the symbols used in the species description and in the species range maps. The pocket guide then illustrates the 191 amphibians and the 227 reptiles found within Costa Rica boundaries, comprising extinct species [e.g. the endemic Golden toad *Incilius (Bufo) periglenes*] and also introduced species (e.g., the Cuba treefrog *Osteopilus septentrionalis*). All species' are described by a very short text and a small (2 x 2 cm) but clear map illustrates the species' distribution. Almost all species are depicted by small (usually 3.5 x 6 cm) but good quality and bright colour photos. However, 22 of the 42 reported salaman-

ders are not illustrated. Dangerous snakes for humans are marked by a skull symbol. The guide ends with a useful glossary, a systematic index and with a short CV of the authors.

The variety of amphibian and reptile species and their extreme diversification is striking and gives to the reader interested in these animals a strong motivation to visit the country.

If the principal aim of this field guide was to allow tourists visiting Costa Rica to appreciate, get interested and try to recognize the hundreds of herps present in the different ecosystems, it was surely achieved. I also suggest that all parents visiting Costa Rica buy a copy this guide for their child, because this booklet will surely constitute an unforgettable souvenir for all future naturalists and herpetologists. I personally missed only the absence of further suggested readings concerning one of the most remarkable wildlife regions of the World.

The English pocket guide can be purchased at the cost of \$14.95 (about €11), the English/Spanish edition for \$19.95 (about €15), from the publisher's website (<http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/?GCOI=80140100952080>, ISBN 978-0-8014-7869-7).