

## Book review

Heatwole, H. and J. W. Wilkinson (eds.). 2015. **Amphibian Biology. Volume 11, Part 4: Status of Conservation and Decline of Amphibians: Eastern Hemisphere. Southern Europe and Turkey.** 158 pp. Pelagic Publishing, Exeter, UK.

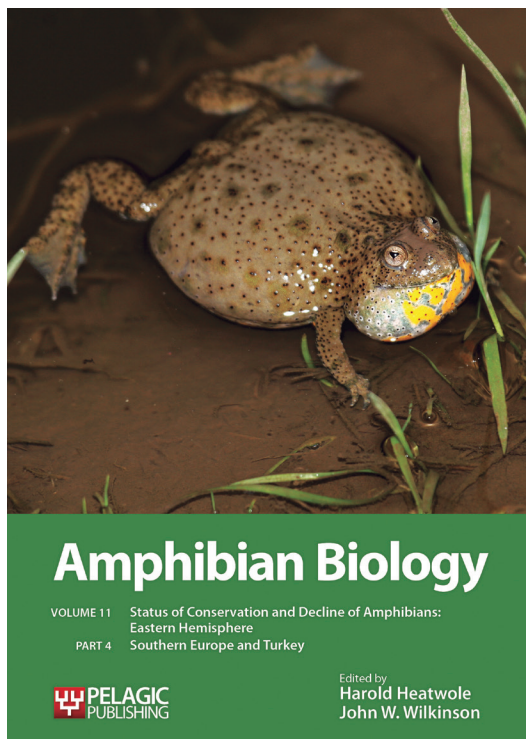
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More than 20 years ago, Harold Heatwole and collaborators started publishing a series of volumes aiming at cover all the aspects of amphibian biology, from morphology to conservation. So far, ten volumes have been completed (see Brattstrom 2013 for a more complete review or previous volumes): 1: Integument (1994). 2: Social behaviour (1995). 3: Sensory perception (1998). 4: Paleontology (2000). 5: Osteology (2003). 6: Endocrinology (2005). 7: Systematics (2007). 8: Amphibian decline: diseases, parasites, maladies and pesticides (2009). 9: Status and decline of amphibians in the Western Hemisphere. For the Western Hemisphere, to date, three separate parts have been published, covering: Paraguay, Chile and Argentina (2010); Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador (2011); Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana (2013). 10: Conservation and decline of amphibians: ecological aspects, effect of humans and management (2012).

Given the broadening interest toward amphibian conservation, many amphibian biologists were waiting for more volumes, increasing the global coverage of volumes on amphibian conservation. In 2013, a new volume, on the status of conservation of decline of amphibians in the Eastern Hemisphere (volume 11) has started the publication, with three parts published from 2013 to 2014: Asia (2014), North Africa (2014), Western Europe (2013).



The most recent volume of the series (Volume 11, Part 4) is the “Status of Conservation and Decline of Amphibians: Eastern Hemisphere: Southern Europe and Turkey”, which covers amphibian conservation across 15 countries in the Southeastern side of the Mediterranean Basin. Within the Western Palearctic, this is among the areas with the highest richness and endemism of amphibians. This region suffers a high human impact since many centuries, making detailed information on amphibian conservation essential. In the last decades, a growing number of amphibian specialists are working on amphibian conservation in this areas, boosting our knowledge on how amphibians react to threats, and on which strategies may improve their status. For these reasons, a volume summarizing the knowledge in the areas is really welcomed, as the information is currently jeopardized over hundreds of papers in multiple journals, and in

many volumes published by the very active regional herpetological associations.

The volume is organized in 15 chapters, each covering one country / region: the Italian region, Malta, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey and Cyprus. Each chapter has been written by local experts, and this allows readers to have easy access to local information, that may be of very difficult access given the fragmentation of herpetological literature. Each chapter is subdivided in multiple parts, and generally i) introduces the ecological and biogeographical background of the region; ii) summarizes the species present in the country, evaluates their status and identifies the most threatened species at the national scale; iii) identifies the main pressures threatening amphibian species; and iv) describes the main conservation measures ongoing or necessary in the country.

Each chapter is a summary of the information in one country, based on literature reviews for countries where more studies have been performed, but also on the long experience of the authors for countries where less published studies are available. Chapters are highly heterogeneous among them. For instance, the chapter on Italy by Franco Andreone offers a very wide and in-depth analysis of the threats acting in this country, while other chapters remain vaguer, and only present general information on amphibian threats and conservation actions. Only a few chapters also explicitly analyze original data. The chapter on Hungary by Judity Voros *et al.* is striking as, for each species, it reports a great amount of new data on distribution and population trends, thus making this chapter a unique resource for amphibian conservation in the country.

Overall, this last volume offers a unique collection of information, and can be an important source of data for all people interested to amphibian biology, but also for management agencies. In my view, the high heterogeneity among chapters is both the strength and a

limitation of a volume integrating the work of many authors over multiple countries. A reader may prefer a more homogeneous book structure, with a similar amount and typology of information for all the countries, and with more data for the less studied areas. However, such heterogeneity is probably natural in a volume covering a range of territories in which the tradition and intensity of herpetological studies is so variable.

A final comment on the overall structure of volume 11, which, as I have said before, is being published in multiple parts. Gathering experts from many countries together is a major challenge, and therefore it is not surprising that the parts on different regions are published separately. On the other hand, each part does not have huge size—for instance, this last part on Southern Europe is 158 pages. In my view, keeping volume 11 divided in so many small parts, published in different years and by different publishers, reduces the overall accessibility of the book. Personally, I would have preferred less parts, with broader scope. For instance, the two parts on Europe plus the one on Northern Africa altogether just have 400 pages. Perhaps one single book, putting together all the information on this biogeographically coherent region, would have helped to limit the jeopardization of information and increased the interest for readers.

In any case, amphibian biologists are still waiting for more volumes, and we all hope volumes covering the whole globe will be published soon.

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### Reference

- Brattstrom, B. H. 2013. Book reviews. *Amphibian Biology*, Volume 10. *Integrative and Comparative Biology* 53: 535–537.

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