

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor's Note: We are continuing to use the current currency codes. Thus Canadian dollars are CAD, U.S. dollars are USD, Euros are EUR, China Yuan Remimbi are CNY, Australian dollars are AUD and so on.

ZOOLOGY

Amphibian Biology, Volume 11, Part 4: Status of Conservation and Decline of Amphibians: Eastern Hemisphere: Southern Europe & Turkey

Edited by Harold Heatwole, and John W. Wilkinson. 2014. Pelagic Publishing, PO Box 725, Exeter, UK, EX1 9QU. 158 pages, 69.99 GBP, Paper.

Studies of population declines have increasingly dominated global research effort on amphibians since the first World Congress on Herpetology in 1989. As has been often pointed out, this now legendary meeting brought together specialists from many countries and when they compared their individual observations, they realized that amphibian declines were widespread in occurrence around the world. A search for a common cause examined many possibilities, among them the accelerating habitat alteration by ever-increasing human populations, increased human harvesting for food and the pet trade, effects of introduced species, pollution, parasites, the spread of the chytrid fungus, and the effects of ultraviolet light and global warming.

Volume 11 tackles aspects of regional declines as the latest in a wide-ranging comprehensive series of volumes on amphibian biology. Each of volume's 4 parts, issued separately, is devoted to regional causes of amphibian declines and the conservation measures attempted. Part 4 contains chapters 39 to 53 authored by one to three of the 25 regional researchers concerned with Southern Europe and Turkey, who contributed to chapters on Italy, Malta, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Cyprus. The cover features a male *Bombina* floating on the surface of a breeding site in Hungary. Each chapter summarizes, for the included country, amphibian habitat, species present, their population status, and the extent of studies to date. Many have useful tables and graphs. Also included are the existing protection, major threats, monitoring schemes and conservation programmes and action recommendations. Each country account has its own references section, the majority of included titles are in English but contributions in several other languages add to their comprehensiveness. Virtually all references were published in the 1990s and 2000s. An index to species in all accounts concludes the book.

The editors have solid credentials for assembling the many contributions. Their wide contacts are reflected by their positions and experience. Harold Heatwole is an ecologist and herpetologist currently Professor of Biology at North Carolina State University and Adjunct Professor of Zoology at the University of New England. He is Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Integrative and Comparative Biology* and a Fellow of the Explorers Club. John W. Wilkinson is a conservation biologist specializing in monitoring amphibians and reptiles. For eight years he was International Coordinator of the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force and is currently Science Program Manager for the charity Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

This collection is a welcome contribution to help balance the dominance of current northern research output from North America. They provide additional and broader context to the perspective of the problem and comparison of the study approaches underway in a different continent. Although the western and eastern northern continents have no amphibian species in common, they share many similar genera and habitats available to them. Not surprisingly the most dominant threats to amphibians are common to both: habitat loss due to human activities, over harvest, and introduced species. Increasingly, the chytrid fungus is being detected, likely spread by human introductions from contaminated areas. Even in relatively lesser developed countries, highway mortality and poaching are also concerns. Present ongoing studies will at least provide a baseline for future measurement of the success, or lack of it, of current conservation measures that are being attempted to assure a sample of the biodiversity of their region survives.

FRANCIS R. COOK

13078 Land O'Nod Road, RR #3 North Augusta, ON,
Canada, K0G 1R0