

Amphibians of the Península de Paria: a pocket field guide

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This is a very attractive and informative field guide to an area of considerable biogeographic importance—the northern coast of Venezuela and the submerged land bridge that once united Tobago and Trinidad to South America. Their accounts document 25 species and mention the presence of an undocumented species of *Gastrotheca*. For each species, there is a brief morphological description and a more extensive description of coloration in life. Natural history information and known distributions are also provided, emphasizing the level of endemism to the peninsula. Lastly, the authors offer their impressions of the conservation status of each species. No fewer than 10 spe-

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cies are known from the slopes of Cerro Humo. Some hints of the number of visits made by the authors are available in the sections discussing conservation status. It would have been helpful to have a more detailed account of the amount of field work done prior to preparing the field guide.

Determining conservation status of a species requires more than a species list compiled from a few visits. Such data as person/nights for each locality and for each visit begin to offer some relevant data to conservation status. As a person having invested thousands of nights in Andean forests of Colombia and Ecuador, I believe (or know) it crucial to detect the preferred microhabitat of each species (so as to collect an adequate series). “Impressions” are merely that, they do not constitute relevant data for the task.

Before they consider a second edition, they need to develop their strategy to evaluate conservation status for each endemic species and then execute that strategy or abandon commentaries (aside from the trivial, habitat destruction) about conservation status. That said, this is a beautiful little field guide that can facilitate most identifications. Whether or not it is complete (which I doubt), it is a very useful tool for ecotourists and a useful summary for those of us concerned about biogeography.

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