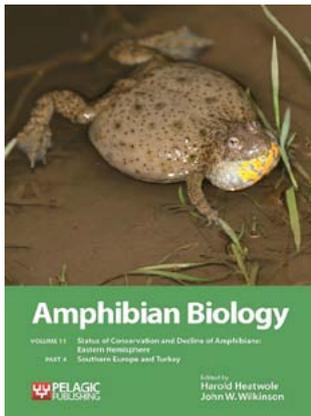


Amphibian Biology, Volume 11: Status of Conservation and Decline of Amphibians: Eastern Hemisphere, Part 4: Southern Europe and Turkey

Harold Heatwole and John W. Wilkinson, Editors (2015)

Exeter, UK: Pelagic Publishing. 158 pp. ISBN 978-1-907807-53-4 (softcover)



The Amphibian Biology series has had a long and slightly chequered history. Originally conceived in the mould of the classic *Biology of the Reptilia* series, with different volumes covering different subjects, new volumes have appeared at irregular intervals since the first publication on *The Integument* in 1994. Although there has been a change in both publisher and format over the years, Harold Heatwole

has steered the series as the editor since the outset, and this has ensured consistency in style, direction and philosophy. In recent years the series has responded to the growing concern in amphibian declines and conservation through the publication of a number of detailed treatises covering different conservation issues and geographical areas. With John Wilkinson enrolled as co-editor of these volumes since 2009, the editorial team have ensured that the series maintains a truly international perspective on the issues that the volumes cover.

This slim, but very comprehensive volume, comprises part 4 of volume 11 of the series, and covers a region of high amphibian diversity within the eastern hemisphere. Amphibian taxonomy and systematics for species in this region remains in a state of flux and debate, so the editors point out at the outset that they have made no attempt to standardise the names used in this volume. This is probably a wise decision. The book comprises 15 chapters (chapters 39–53 of the wider volume 11), each covering a different country within the region (or perhaps more accurately, a different politically delimited area within the region).

Although the chapters vary in structure and content, each contains a species list for the country concerned together with information on Red List status and/or Bern Convention listings. This is complemented by more detailed narratives concerning threats, protection, research and monitoring, and – in some chapters – individual species accounts. Some common themes emerge. Nine of the 15 countries covered are EU member states and therefore subject to EU legal instruments. These include the ‘Habitats Directive’ and Natura 2000 network, which (theoretically) place obligations on member states to carry out conservation and monitoring. Although most countries covered within the book have implemented legal protection for many of their species, it is clear that the

effectiveness – and enforcement – of such legislation varies widely. The overarching messages for the region are that – perhaps not surprisingly – habitat loss and fragmentation remain the most important threats to amphibians, and coordinated, long-term monitoring programmes are needed to provide the evidence needed to underpin conservation action. Many monitoring programmes are instigated on short-term grants provided to NGOs, and after a flurry of productive activity struggle to maintain their impact when the funds run out or are channelled towards other priorities.

The coverage in the book is well-balanced. Even small countries with few species (e.g. Malta – one species; Cyprus – three species), get their own brief but informative chapters. At the other end of the spectrum, the most comprehensive chapter is that dealing with Hungary, which contains population monitoring information on several species, maps and a very extensive bibliography. This chapter is a fitting epitaph to one of the co-authors – Miklos Puky – who very sadly died shortly after this book was published and made very substantial contributions to herpetological conservation in Hungary.

All of the chapters are well-referenced, and the tables and figures (mainly graphs and maps) generally clearly laid out. Pelagic publishing have a growing portfolio of herpetological publications, and the production quality is high. However, I can’t imagine many readers shelling out £69.99 for the paperback version when the e-book or PDF is £19.99. Overall, this book very usefully compiles under a single cover a large body of information that would otherwise be widely dispersed between specialist journals and regional literature. In this respect it serves as a very useful starting point for anyone seeking information on the conservation of amphibians in the countries within the region.

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