Book Review

Peces del medio Amazonas – Región de Leticia. Germán Galvis, José Iván Mojica, Santiago R. Duque, Claudia Castellanos, Paula Sánchez-Duarte, Mariangeles Arce, Ángela Gutiérrez, Luz F. Jiménez, Marisol Santos, Silvia Vejarano, Fernando Arbeláez, Edgar Prieto, Mauricio Leiva. Serie de Guías Tropicales de Campo No 5. Conservation Internacional. Editorial Panamericana, Formas e Impresos. Bogotá, D. C., Colombia, 2006. 548 pp. ISBN 978-958-97690-6-5.

The Amazon forest is one of the most important ecosystems of the planet, because of its great diversity and our relatively little knowledge of its fauna and flora. The Amazon is the largest river basin in the world, and comprises more than 6.8 million km^2 (Goulding *et al*., 2003), and still there is not a consensus about its real fish species number. So, any study made in the Amazon is not only a simple research project, but also a big challenge.

The book is a complete and well-illustrated field guide to fishes of the middle rio Amazonas at Leticia region, and is the result of five years of study made by the researchers of the Instituto Amazónico de Investigaciones (IMANI) at Leticia, and Instituto de Ciencias Naturales de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia (ICN) and Departamento de Biología de la Universidade Nacional de Colombia at Bogotá. The aim of this book is to present to general public, students and ichthyologists useful information to identify the 344 species of fishes included in fourteen orders and forty two families that occur in the rio Amazonas in Leticia, Colombia.

The book presents a brief introduction about the rio Amazonas and its approximate number of fish species. Following, the features of the region such as geological formation of Amazon basin, biogeography, ichthyofauna, weather, temperature, water characteristics, biologic and trophic aspects, are presented and commented with color photos of the sampling stations. After, follows a short introduction with the number and percentage of species by order and family, and a table listing all species names and authorship.

In the next part, short descriptions are provided for each of the 344 species of fishes. Families are arranged in phylogenetic order, with included genera, and species within these genera, arranged in alphabetical order. A brief introduction is presented for each order and family. For each species the specific name with authorship, type locality, synonym, common names, conservation status in Colombia, list of examined material, characterization of external morphology and color pattern, and occasionally comments about biology and ecology are presented in this order. Drawings of fish or bone structure details are provided to facilitate the identification. Keys are presented only for two families, Pristigasteridae and Engraulidae. The absence of artificial keys makes more difficult the identification of species by general community or students, mainly for the recognition of orders or families. The literature cited contains approximately 200 references, with a few citations of the last five years.

In the last parts of the book are presented the color photos of all species. Both drawing and color photos are of great quality, some taken of alive specimens making easier the recognition of each species.

Although the book includes only the portion of the rio Amazonas in Colombia, it can be used for the entire Amazon basin, since most species are widely distributed in this basin. Therefore, the field guides is an important and significant contribution for the scientific community, and contribute significantly for knowledge of freshwater fish diversity. This is really a nice book, mainly in its format and content.

It is a small book: portrait format, 11.5 x 19.0 cm, on good quality paper, and weighting more than one pound (0.550 kg). The book was recently released in the II Congresso Colombiano de Zoologia in Santa Marta, Colombia, 26th of November to 1st of December 2006.

Literature Cited

Goulding, M., R. Barthem & E. Ferreira. 2003. The Smithsonian atlas of the Amazon. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D. C. 253p.

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