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Reptiles of Venezuela: an updated and commented checklist

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Abstract

We update the list of reptiles of Venezuela, reporting a total of 370 species from the country (four of these exotic), arranged in 122 genera (one exotic), 30 families and three orders. Introduced species and dubious or erroneous records are discussed. Taxonomic, nomenclatural and distributional comments are provided when required. Considering species of probable occurrence in the country (known to occur in Colombia, Brazil and Guyana at localities very close to the Venezuelan border) and still undescribed taxa, we estimate that the total number of species in Venezuela could exceed 400.

Resumen

Se actualiza la lista de reptiles de Venezuela a un total de 370 especies (cuatro de ellas exóticas), pertenecientes a 122 géneros (un exótico), 30 familias y tres órdenes. Se discuten las especies introducidas, los registros dudosos o erróneos y se proporcionan comentarios taxonómicos, nomenclaturales o de distribución en casos necesarios. Después de considerar las especies de probable presencia en el país (registros conocidos cercanos a la frontera con Colombia, Brasil y Guyana) y los taxones aun no descritos, se estima que el número total de especies en Venezuela podría superar las 400 especies.

Key words: Diversity, Reptiles, South America, Venezuela.

Introduction

South America harbours some of the most species-rich regions of the world (*e.g.* the Amazon Basin and the Andes). Venezuela is located at the northernmost portion of the continent and is considered the ninth most reptile diverse country in the world (Aguilera *et al.* 2003). Partial lists of Venezuelan reptiles have been published using taxonomy-based (Roze 1966; Donoso-Barros 1968; Lancini 1979; Medem 1983; Pritchard & Trebbau 1984) or distribution-based approaches (Roze 1964b; Staton & Dixon 1977; Rivas & Oliveros 1997; Gorzula & Señaris 1999; Markezich 2002; Mijares-Urrutia & Arends 2000; Molina *et al.* 2004; Rivas Fuenmayor & Barrio-Amorós 2005), but few studies have focused on complete checklists of the Venezuelan herpetofauna (Péfaur 1992; La Marca 1997; Péfaur & Rivero 2000). Among these, only the publication by Péfaur and Rivero (2000) is considered a comprehensive analysis of all Venezuelan bioregions, but their contribution is currently outdated, especially considering all the new species that have been described over the last 10+ years.

Venezuela has a considerable diverse reptile fauna. Knowledge of the country's reptiles has improved considerably in the last two decades, thanks to research conducted by both Venezuelan and foreign herpetologists. Most recent research has been carried out in the Venezuelan Guayana, the Andean region, and the Coastal Ranges. The number of reptile species currently known from Venezuela increased to 370, which is fewer than in Ecuador (414