

Kok, P. J. R. and M. Kalamandeen. 2008. **Introduction to the taxonomy of the amphibians of Kaieteur National Park, Guyana.** ix + 278 pp; numerous color photographs; *Abc Taxa, Volume 5*. Brussels, Belgium.

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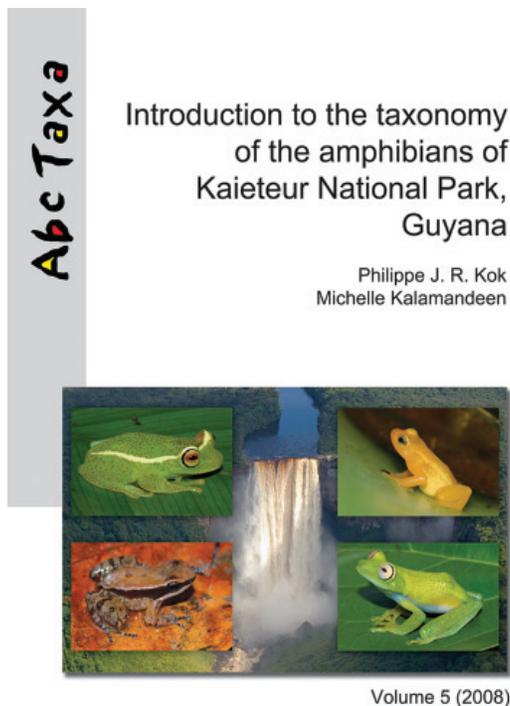
Guyana's Kaieteur National Park (KNP) is centered around the spectacular Kaieteur Falls. Located in the eastern foothills of the Pakaraima Mountains, the park encompasses a variety of habitats which support important biodiversity. Very few biological inventories of the Pakaraima region have been undertaken. This book represents the first intensive inventory of the herpetofauna of an important location in the region.

This book is the culmination of numerous visits to KNP, over several years, by the authors. The book is useful as both a field guide to amphibians of KNP and as a "how to" book on herpetological taxonomy and surveys.

The book begins with a 16-page description of the park area and its varied habitats. This is followed by an extensive introduction to amphibian orders and families.

The next section, 30 pages in length, covers the planning, organization and execution of a field study. Subjects include living in the field, food, collection methods, note taking, photography, call recording, sampling methods, and permit requirements. This is a very detailed and useful resource; although it is written with respect to Guyana and KNP, it will be applicable to other locations. Information of this type is very valuable because it encourages comparability of results by advocating standardized methods of collection and documentation.

The systematic section of the book commences on page 61. It begins with a



summary of characters that are used to identify and classify amphibians. Characters such as morphological features, skin texture, webbing, palm and sole features, tongue and teeth, measurements and colour patterns are defined and briefly described. The text is supplemented by photos and drawings. Caecilians are dealt with in three pages, while 26 pages are devoted to the many useful anuran characters. Keys to genera follow the character summaries. A seven-page segment deals with tadpole morphology, although a tadpole key is absent (I am informed that this was omitted because of page limitations). Methods of recording and analysis of frog calls occupy ten pages; a series of illustrations helps to convey the complexities of this procedure.

The bulk of the book is taken up with accounts of the 47 species found in KNP. The accounts are preceded by a three-page explanation of the arrangement and use of the accounts. Species are grouped by family and

genus. Each genus is introduced by a two-page spread containing a photo, generic description and a key to the species of that genus.

Each species account also covers two pages. One page contains text, most of which is characters for field identification in point form. Also included are brief notes on life history, call, tadpoles and distribution, as well as a few selected references for more detailed information. The other page is devoted to photos of adults and sonograms of the call. I appreciated the inclusion of photos of palm and sole of each species; these are quite useful for identification. In many photos, small arrows point out important morphological characters that are explained in the text. The arrows are of different colours, and the relevant points in the text are similarly colour-coded. This is a good idea, although the arrows are small, and I found it difficult to distinguish among some of the colours (eg. black and dark blue). This is a minor quibble, in a book that has few flaws.

The book ends with an extensive glossary of terms, 15 pages of references and an index.

I found the book well-organized and easy to use. The authors and editors have invested considerable time in planning the sequence and layout of the sections. Genera and species are arranged alphabetically within families, making it easy to find any species account quickly. The book is lavishly illustrated with many high-quality colour photos.

The book's shortcomings are very few. Although production restrictions precluded a tadpole key, I would have appreciated the inclusion of a tadpole photo (for those species whose tadpole is known) in the species accounts. I would have preferred spiral binding rather than the paper binding; spiral would allow the book to remain open at any page, to facilitate identification of a specimen. Also, the paper binding may deteriorate if used under field conditions.

In a book of this size, a few errors are inevitable. A PDF of corrigenda is available online (see below). Most errors are minor.

The herpetofauna of KNP is a mixture of species, some having restricted distributions, others found over a broad range. Because many of the species treated in this book are found outside KNP, the book will be useful as an identification guide for amphibians in much of Guyana, and even parts of neighbouring countries.

One of the most important parts of any expedition is planning and organization. Anyone planning a field expedition to the region, even those with extensive experience, will find this volume an important resource. Purchase it before planning a trip and use it as a step-by-step guide. The price is very reasonable.

The book can be ordered from www.abctaxa.be. Payment must be made by bank transfer. A low-resolution PDF may be downloaded at no cost from: www.abctaxa.be/downloads/volume-5-introduction-taxonomy-amphibians/abc-taxa_5-low4.pdf.

Corrigenda are available at www.abctaxa.be/downloads/volume-5-introductiontaxonomy-amphibians/abc-taxa_5-corrigena-1.pdf

Abc Taxa is intended as “a series of manuals dedicated to capacity building in taxonomy and collection management”. Such a series would have considerable value to systematics-oriented researchers.

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