



REVIEW OF MONOGRAPHS

PYSANETS YE. AMPHIBIANS OF THE EASTERN EUROPE. PART I. ORDER CAUDATA

Kyiv: Zoological museum NMNH NAS Ukraine, 2012. — 208 p.

PYSANETS YE. AMPHIBIANS OF THE EASTERN EUROPE. PART II. ORDER ECAUDATA

Kyiv: Zoological museum NNPM NAS Ukraine, 2014. — 192 p.

Given the growing world-wide concern for amphibians of all sorts, it is timely that the Zoological Museum of the National Museum of Natural History in Kyiv, Ukraine, should publish a comprehensive review of the amphibians of Eastern Europe in a 400 page, two volume set divided logically enough into Caudata (Part I) and Eucadata (Part II). Part one covers salamanders to newts, while Part II starts with firebellied toads and finishes with the iconic klepton species, the edible frog, *Pelophylax kl. esculentus*, which is a classic example of hybridogenesis. These volumes provide the most up-to-date information available concerning the systematics and ecology of these animals for Eastern Europe and will likely serve as the standard English language reference for these taxa for some time to come.

In addition to detailed keys for the identification of adults, these books provide general information concerning the basic biology of amphibians, their evolutionary history, reproductive behavior, and many other points of interest. Of particular note, is a biographical history of many well-known zoologists who have made significant contributions to the study of Amphibia, a subject that speaks to the knowledgeable ability of the author, Yevgen Pysanets, the current Head of the Zoological Museum in Kyiv, who has assembled a series of short vignettes on these contributors that gives an enlightening historical context for the growth of this field over the past centuries.

Perhaps the greatest value of this series stems from the collections that were used to provide estimates of geographic distribution and morphological variation within groups. The author draws upon the extensive collections available at the National Museum of Natural History in Kyiv, as well as collections at the Museum of Nature at V.K. Karazin's Kharkiv National University, the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Zoological Museum of M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, and the Institute of Zoology of National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, as a basis for range distributions and characterization of variation in size, shape and color variation within taxa. Collectively, these collections provide for a very extensive representation of the amphibians in this region and these volumes thus provide the very best possible coverage of these groups in Eastern Europe and Eurasia and this is likely to be essential information for any future studies of these animals in this part of the world.

Given the critical role played by amphibians in many ecosystems and their apparent sensitivity to many environmental threats (e.g. climate change), it is essential that baseline information concerning their taxonomy, systematics, morphology and ecology be compiled and made available to those who wish to examine changes through time. These important new contributions by Ye. Pysanets fill a large void in the currently available English literature for this region of the world.

Timothy A. Mousseau,
Professor of Biological Sciences,
University of South Carolina,
Columbia, SC, USA