

EDITORIAL

6th WORLD CONGRESS OF HERPETOLOGY: DOMINANCE OF NEOTROPICAL HERPETOFAUNA CONTRIBUTIONS AT THE FIRST WCH IN AMERICA

A city in the middle of the Amazon, with a past splendor hardly rivaled by other South American cities, hosted the sixth edition of the World Congress of Herpetology (WCH), from 17 to 22 August 2008. What a better place to hold the jewel of the meetings congregating herpetologists from around the World, than a city in the heart of the country that houses the largest diversity of amphibians and reptiles on Earth?



The square and the Amazonas Theater or Opera House in Manaus. Photo by E. La Marca.



View of the Tropical Hotel in Manaus, next to the Rio Negro, housing the 6th WCH in its Conference Center. Photo by E. La Marca.

The 6th WCH was the first to be held on tropical continental land, and the first on American soil (Brazil is in the southern part of the American continent, most often called South America). Herpetologists from all over the World congregated there to divulgate their most recent research, gathered simultaneously in printed and electronic formats by means of more than 500 abstracts (available at www.worldcongressofherpetology.org). Compared to the 2005 congress in South Africa, this number represents about 1.4 times more proposed contributions than the compendium of abstracts presented in the last WCH.

As in its previous version, and in accordance to the place of gathering and the richness of its biota, most of the abstracts (63%) dealt with tropical herpetofauna. 51% of these abstracts treated with amphibians and reptiles from Neotropical countries, and 13% on other tropical countries (at least 42% of which were dominated by Southeast Asian countries). The non-tropical countries were represented by little more than a quarter of the total abstracts presented at the meeting, albeit some 10% of the abstracts did not have specifications on country or were geographically broader in scope.

Within the tropical countries, the anuran amphibians alone dominated the herpetological contributions by about 40% of the total, followed by turtles (24%), lizards (10%), snakes (8%) and crocodilians (5%). This amphibian anuran dominancy came about, most appropriately, in the Year of the Frog, as it was called the globally coordinated campaign proposed for 2008 by Amphibian Ark, aimed to generate public awareness and understanding on the global amphibian crisis (www.amphibianark.org).

Paralleling the recent trends seen in published scientific journals, now coping with more environmental-issues related contributions, the issue of conservation was also a major one in the 6th WCH. The later accounted for more than a quarter of the total abstracts. Little less than half of the abstracts having conservation as a theme were on amphibian taxa. Likewise, recent issues on amphibian conservation have probably boosted the number of published papers on this matter. Nonetheless, the last World Congress of Herpetology was also important in presenting contributions with an emphasis on conservation of reptilian taxa alone (40%).

We cannot foresee what will happen in the next WCH; however, the tropical herpetofauna, as usual, will probably play a major role as well. The next WCH will be hosted by the University of British Columbia, and is scheduled to occur from 8 to 14 August 2012, in Vancouver, Canada. As with the seemingly logical trend seen in past editions of the WCH, with the majority of contributions related to the region of influence of the country housing the event, it is expected that this meeting will gather more contributions from the North American continent. We invite, well in advance, to keep at high standards the tropical herpetofauna representation for that meeting.

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