

Foreword

Moldavia is a region of Romania in which the herpetological fauna has been very poorly studied until the present. The most convincing arguments in this perspective are the discoveries made in recent years which have extended the knowledge regarding the range of certain species in the region. Thus, we must mention the finding of *Zootoca vivipara* in the lowlands from Botoșani and Suceava counties. Also, the rediscovery after several decades of *Dolichophis caspius* or *Eremias arguta* in Galați County, a region where the species reach their northern range limit in Romania must be mentioned.

The most recent data upon the herpetofauna of Romania in general refer only to the protected species (Iftime 2005), few of these being present in Moldavia. Previously, comprehensive data regarding the herpetofauna of the region could be found in the two monographs about the amphibians and reptiles of Romania (Fuhn 1960, Fuhn & Vancea 1961) or the monograph about the amphibians of Romania (Cogălnicanu et al 2000) and, except for these, only sporadic data existed in different articles.

The idea for the present volume appeared following the union of several groups of authors which initially started independent studies in different regions of Moldavia. As a consequence of

the scarcity of previous data on the topic, we consider that it is best to reunite all the articles dedicated to this topic in a single volume. Thus, the present volume comprises of four articles dedicated to the knowledge of the composition and distribution of the herpetofauna of several areas from Moldavia: northern Moldavia (Suceava and Botoșani county), the hydrographical basin of the Bistrița river, Iași county and the lower Prut river basin.

Amongst the most important contributions of these papers which comprise this volume we mention the first record of *Salamandra salamandra* in the Central Moldavian Plateau. This is not a simple new finding for Iași county or Moldavia but is an important contribution with regards to the species' general range. The finding of a new *Vipera ursinii* population and of several new lowland *Zootoca vivipara* populations in northern Moldavia are also important.

The present volume especially wishes to be an incentive and an updated base for future studies and should not be considered able to elucidate the problem of the Moldavian herpetofauna. Thus, several areas continue to remain insufficiently studied from a herpetofaunistic view point, such as Vaslui and Vrancea counties or the southern part of Botoșani county. Also, studies regarding the ecology of biology of the species are in a much more

incipient stage than the faunistic ones. Consequently, we hope that the present volume will reach its objectives and will be an incentive towards the realizing of further herpetological studies in Moldavia.

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