

HOLOTIPUS

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MAGAZINE



ADVANTAGES OF HOLOTIPUS FOR TAXONOMIC HERPETOLOGY

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This is an open letter to researchers in specimen-based taxonomic herpetology, to bring to your attention a new open-access peer-reviewed journal which emphasizes the importance of type material and voucher specimens in taxonomy and systematics.

Currently, the study of amphibians and reptiles is experiencing an increasing (and at times overwhelming) number of studies and publications not only proposing new phylogenetic arrangements within and among taxa, but also reporting an increasing number of previously undescribed species. This leads to the description of a noteworthy number of new species, especially in the Neotropics. Recently, newly described reptile species surpass those of birds.

Systematic theory and practice, including taxonomic descriptions, are active pursuits within most animal taxa, and are mainly due to the recent rapid development of molecular technology. Molecular biology has proven useful to taxonomists for some time, and recently the methods have become inexpensive and thus accessible to most researchers around the world. Molecular characters are important because they help elucidate evolutionary lineages and relationships. However, it is important to emphasize that taxonomists usually also seek to identify morphological characters to describe the species, because the real challenge for a field research biologist is to identify a species merely by physical examination. Morphology is critical because:

“a new open-access peer-reviewed journal which emphasizes the importance of type material and voucher specimens in taxonomy and systematics.”

se: (1) it can indicate reproductive barriers, (2) it may be the product of an adaptation or coevolution with the environment, and (3) it is useful for the recognition and identification of species.

Taxonomists normally seek high-quality journals in which to publish their contributions, but these journals are often inaccessible due to publication fees or open access charges. Additionally, several journals accept the description of a new species only in the context of a more comprehensive revision, or even require that the description of new taxa should be provided as supplementary information.

Unfortunately, this neglects the fundamental importance of new species descriptions in particular, and specimen-based taxonomy in general, thereby losing the roots of taxonomy and disregarding the impressive taxonomic knowledge base accumulated by our predecessors.

Now there is a new option: a journal that encourages taxonomic works, highlighting the importance of studies of type-bearing vouchers through pure taxonomy.

I am confident that this initiative will be welcomed enthusiastically by the scientific community. I invite herpetologists around the world to submit their taxonomic contributions to Holotipus journal, which is open access, and imposes no article processing charges. This is also a particularly good opportunity for countries with high-quality scientists but insufficient economic support for their work.