reflect the orders of the day for the coral reef biologist. This volume will stand the test of
time as well as its progenitor, and Peter Sale should be congratulated on the analytical
rigour and environmental insights he has fostered here.

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THE FRESHWATER FISHES OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA. Organized by R. E. Reis, S. O.
Kullander and C. J. Ferraris, Jr. 742 pp. Published by EDIPUCRS (Editora Pontificia Universidade
Católica do Rio Grande do Sul), Porto Alegro, Brazil, 2003. Price R$ 146.00 or US$ 48.00. ISBN 85-
7430-361-5.

This checklist of the freshwater fishes of South and Central America, including the
Caribbean islands, was prepared to meet two goals: to list all valid species for the region
and to provide the basis for future updates to this biodiversity inventory. The organizers,
or editors, met these goals by inviting the world’s specialists on the 71 included families
to provide current and authoritative data on the taxonomy and distribution of the entire
Neotropical freshwater fish fauna. Sixty-four scientists, mostly from South America, but
also from Europe and North America, ultimately participated in this extraordinary
effort. The three editors, Reis, Kullander and Ferraris, respectively, hail from these
three continents.

Four thousand four hundred and seventy five is the ‘exact figure of the known species
richness’ is given (p. 3) as 4475, and an estimated 1550 await description, bringing
the total richness of the Neotropical freshwater fish fauna to some 6025 species. This precise
accounting would not have been considered feasible without the pioneering
Catalog of Fishes, by William N. Eschmeyer, of the California Academy of Sciences. Eschmeyer’s
database, combined with the popular FishBase, organized by Rainer Froese and Daniel
Pauly, provided the backbone for the present volume. Froese precipitated collaboration
between the CLOFFSCA team and FishBase staff from the World Fish center, Penang
(then ICLARM, Philippines). Support was also received from the European Commission.

Neotropical freshwater fishes, as defined here, range from the southern tip of South
America, including the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas to Mexico, and include fishes of the
Caribbean islands. The northern extent of the continental range of the Neotropical
ichthyofauna is difficult to define precisely and is interpreted here as the Isthmus of
Tehuantepec. So-called North American families such as the Cyprinidae and Ictaluridae
are not included even though some species live in the region covered. Freshwater species
in families that have large marine components, such as the Gobiidae and Mugilidae, are
included. The editors anticipate that the marine species of such taxa will be treated
elsewhere.

Each family is covered in a separate section or chapter, including a common name
and brief family account that varies in quantity and depth of information depending on
how well a family is known. Entries for each species begin with citation of the original
description, type locality, museum catalog numbers of types where known, synonyms,
indication of maximum length, a summary of distribution by drainage basin and by
country, brief remarks, and common names, by country. A bibliography completes each
family account. The taxonomic index, in 57 pages, aids navigation through the volume.

Characins, catfishes, cyprinodontiforms and cichlids comprise the bulk of the species
diversity, attract the greatest numbers of students, and are reviewed in most detail. The
classification includes some radical re-alignments presented in the 1998 EDIPUCRS
volume on Phylogeny and Classification of Neotropical Fishes, edited by L.R. Malabarba
and colleagues. Thus, a large segment of the traditional catfish family Pimelodidae is
now classified in the Heptapteridae and Pseudopimelodidae. Four and a half pages of
systematics, taxonomy and biology introduce heptapterids. In contrast, family accounts,
written by the editors to ensure complete coverage, are given far less attention. For
example, the eel family Ophichthidae (p. 35, spelled Ophichthyidae in the Contents),
with one species in Brazil and Venezuela, is discussed in three sentences. The account
for the Engraulididae (pp. 39–42, spelled Engraulidae in the Contents) cites a 1988 publication as the source of information that over 4 million tons of anchovies were harvested worldwide in 1982, but this figure is surely of only historical interest for those fishery biologists and managers who would require more recent data.

This is a volume written by systematists and taxonomists on this extremely rich component of the world’s freshwater fish fauna. It is authoritative and generally well presented and will serve as the standard for all future reviews of the Neotropical freshwater fish fauna. Equally important, it demonstrates the high level of cooperation among ichthyologists who study this fauna, a mature degree of respect and collegiality that deserves the scientific community’s admiration and congratulations.

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