

## Book Review:

# PIETRO GIOVACCHINI, VALENTINA FALCHI, SERGIO VIGNALI, GIACOMO RADI, LUCA PASSALACQUA, FAUSTO CORSI, MARCO PORCIANI, FABRIZIO FARSI. *Atlante degli anfiabi della Provincia di Grosseto (2003-2013)*

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In the past twenty years there has been a great interest in the geographic distribution of amphibians and reptiles and considerable efforts have been spent to collect, analyze and publish these records. A careful evaluation of distribution data is of fundamental importance to establish the conservation priorities (e.g., Rondinini et al., 2013) and to develop correct conservation programs. For the Italian territory, herpetological atlases are available for most of the regions and a complete national atlas was published few years ago with a synthesis of records collected over two decades (Sindaco et al., 2006).

Tuscany has not been left behind and was the subject of specific herpetological researches that led to the publication of a regional atlas (Vanni and Nistri, 2006) and two provincial ones: Prato (Fancelli et al., 2005) and Siena (Piazzini et al., 2005, 2010). Tuscany is generally considered well-studied since there are several local researchers, but few gaps in the distribution maps still exist as it is proved by the publication of this atlas of amphibians of the Province of Grosseto.

The book has been realized by a group of zoologists coordinated by Pietro Giovacchini of the Provincial Office for Protected Areas and Biodiversity with the cooperation of a local ornithological group (Gruppo Ornitologico Maremmano - Studi Naturalistici "A. Ademollo"). The colophon sports the patronage of *Societas Herpetologica Italica*.

The atlas is completely written in Italian, consists of 113 pages and is a nice paperback edition in octavo (24×17 cm). The volume is hosted in the "Quaderni delle Aree

Protette" series which includes books that deal about monumental trees, protected areas and archeology. It opens up with general chapters about geology, hydrography, climate and vegetation which are covered in good detail. Next is the section about material and methods which describe how data have been collected and analyzed.

The grid used for the maps in this study is the widely adopted UTM 10×10 km. With such large grid map there is the risk of overestimating the presence of the species also in a large Province like Grosseto (4504 km<sup>2</sup>): a 5×5 km grid would probably be better even if research efforts required to ensure adequate coverage would be much higher (Sindaco et al., 2015).

It is interesting the approach used to collect data that is quite unusual (but is rather common on the ornithological ones), the maps have been based on a completely independent dataset (collected between 2003 and 2013) this is the reason why the distribution maps presented for some species are slightly different (e.g., *Rana italica*) or, sometimes, striking different (e.g., *Bombina pachypus*) from the atlas of Tuscany (Vanni and Nistri, 2006). I feel that this makes the book even more valuable and original as there is no risk to confirm old doubtful data that cannot be verified. At the same time, this approach has a few potential drawbacks. For example I am wondering why the common salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*) was not discussed at all in the book even if three bibliographic data are available for the Province (cf. Vanni and Nistri, 2006). Maybe those data are questionable, maybe they are just very old, I have no idea why and I will have to discover it by my own.

Each species account (12 species are listed) opens with a “General description” particularly useful for field identification which includes also few taxonomic remarks. Next is “Distribution in Italy” and “Ecological and biological notes” both well-written and supported by the essential citations. The “Distribution in the Province of Grosseto” is the core subject of this book and is a comprehensive evaluation of all the record collected by the authors together with altitudinal distribution and habitat types (for which maps and histograms are detailed in the opposite page). All in all the coverage of the data is excellent and apparently no areas have been overlooked. Sections about the “Status and conservation measures” and “Museum’s specimens” close each account.

The final chapters are dedicated to the “Conclusive insights” including wide area analyses, conservation status, laws protecting local amphibians and the action plans. Since in Italy the Provinces have legislative powers on the protection of biodiversity and the protection of the territory, these chapters have been written with care and competence.

Finally one special mention goes to the pictures of the book that, despite the fact that are quite small, are some of the best I have ever seen. They usually include a full picture, larval stages and a portrait for most of the species. Giacomo Radi, that realized them, not only is able to capture the essence of amphibians in their habitat, but also to create pleasing images that show the most important aspects of their biology.

The printed version of the book can be requested at the Province of Grosseto, whereas the e-book is available at no cost from several websites including the one of *Societas Herpetologica Italica*.

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