Herpetofauna de Madre de Dios

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Abstract

Within the Madre de Dios region of Peru, we observed and classified species of herpetofauna, focusing on habitat and location of the individual. Tropical ecosystems have a higher abundance of herpetofauna, housing lizards, frogs, snakes, turtles, and caiman. Some of the species that we identified include: Ameiva ameiva, Leptodactylus bolivianus, Dipsas catesbyi, and Podocnemis unifilis. While most of the species observed are relatively abundant, we did find an endangered species - Melanosuchus niger. Our week-long observational study contributed to the biodiversity profile of the Madre de Dios region by adding to a citizen science database, iNaturalist.

Conclusion

By contributing to specimen data collection, 26 specimens that include frogs, lizards, caiman, snakes, and turtles have been geotagged in the iNaturalist application. The identification of these specimens will further aid in species and neotropical ecosystem research, as well as conservation efforts.

Discussion

The herpetofauna found in the Madre de Dios region consisted of different species of frogs, lizards, caiman, snakes, and turtles as presented in the table above. All species were found to be in habitats specific to their family. Habitats observed were described as:

- **Frogs**
  - moist and shady conditions; generally found leafy and woody detritus
  - Anoles: elevated, shady surfaces; typically on bark of trees
  - Caiman: along river bank resting within vegetation such as woody brush, logs, or grasses

- **Lizards**
  - exposed, dry, sunny, grassy areas; hide in bushy areas

- **Snakes**
  - shady, canopy floor

- **Turtles**
  - in the sun on logs exposed near the bank of a river/lake

Furthermore, most species of frogs were identified after sunset suggesting that most frogs are most active at night. The only frog that was observed only at night was the Trachycephalus venulosus, as its green color limits its camouflage abilities in the day. Caimans were also identified in the evening, as most are nocturnal. Herpetofauna identified specific to the day time were lizards and turtles. Mostly snakes were present in both day and night time.

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