

Studies on Freshwater Decapods in Latin America

The invertebrates of the rivers and streams of some regions of the world, *e.g.*, North America and Europe, have been relatively well studied compared to those of Latin America. Yet the biodiversity of freshwater environments of Latin America (Mexico south to the tip of South America) is much higher and the faunal composition is quite different. This might be expected of landmasses encompassing tropical, temperate, and high austral latitudes. A growing cadre of Latin American invertebrate zoologists are rectifying this discrepancy with the result that collaboration and sharing of information with the world's scientific community is increasing. A reflection of this information sharing is the organization of meetings and congresses devoted to Latin American faunas.

One such congress, devoted specifically to freshwater invertebrates, was held at the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR), San José, from February 6-10, 2012, organized by Monika Springer (UCR), Alonso Ramírez (Universidad de Puerto Rico), and Blanca Ríos (Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador). In light of the importance of decapod crustaceans in the rivers and streams of Latin America, one of us (Ingo S. Wehrmann, UCR) organized a symposium, "Decapoda de Agua Dulce", which occupied a full day of the congress and brought together participants from seven Latin American countries as well as the USA. Their presentations covered all the major freshwater decapod groups found in streams and rivers of the Americas: caridean shrimps, cambarid and parastacid crayfishes, anomuran (aeglid) crabs, and brachyuran crabs. In organizing the symposium, IW realized that the quality and breadth of the presentations merited publication in a special volume to be made available to the international scientific community. Accordingly, an agreement was made, appropriately, with the Latin American Journal of Aquatic Research (*LAJAR*) to publish the special volume, with IW and Raymond T. Bauer (University of Louisiana, Lafayette, USA) as guest editors. Manuscripts were sent out to expert referees who helped polish manuscripts with comments and suggestions, and we sincerely thank these referees for their time and sharing their expertise. The result of these efforts is this special volume on freshwater decapods of Latin America, and we would like to acknowledge the tremendous support received by the editor of *LAJAR*, Dr. Sergio Palma, and his team during the process for editing this volume.

There are a large number of carcinologists working on freshwater decapods in Latin America but many of their excellent studies have not received sufficient attention and recognition by the international scientific community. The 16 articles in this special volume represent a variety of topics on the biology of freshwater decapods, with papers on taxonomy, phylogeny, behavior, ecology, physiology and aquaculture. We believe that the publication of this diversity of subjects in an international journal such as *LAJAR* will alert the world research community to the important research on freshwater decapods taking place in Latin America. We believe it will stimulate needed research in freshwater habitats of Latin America and facilitate an increased collaboration between Latin American scientists and the rest of the international scientific community.

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