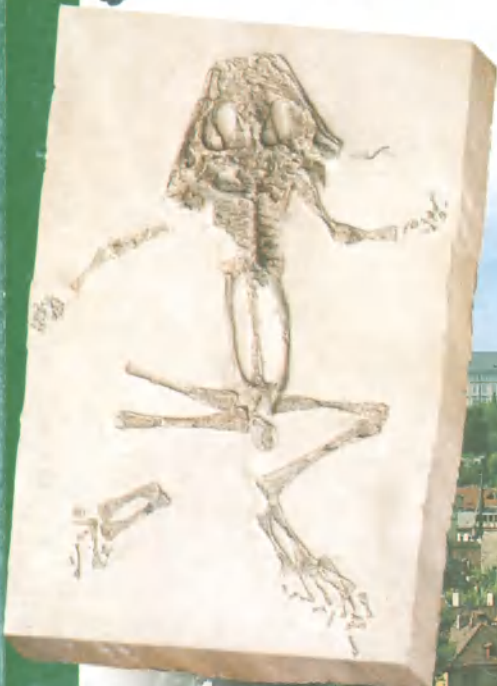
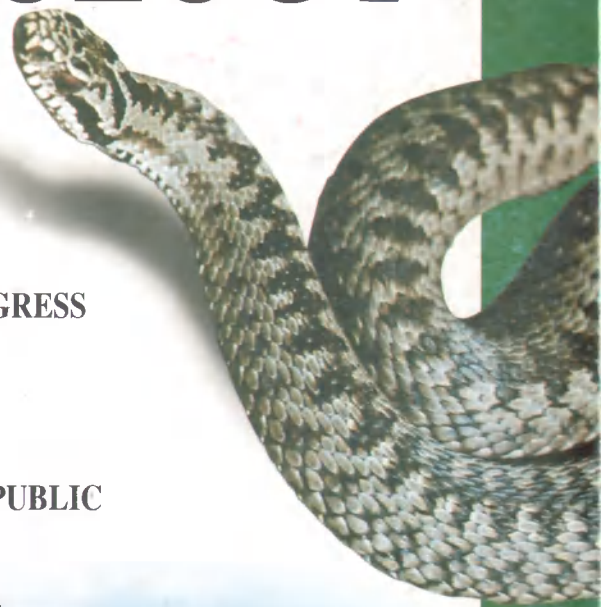




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THE BEARING OF THE PALEOGENE FROG *SHELANIA PASCUALI* ON THE RELATIONSHIPS OF FOSSIL AND RECENT PIPOID ANURANS

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KEY WORDS: *Pipoidea*, *Shelania*, *Palaeobatrachus*, *Eoxenopoides*, *Saltenia*, phylogeny

The living pipoid taxa (*Rhinophrynus* and the pipids) represent a well-corroborated monophyletic clade. However, the relationships of these taxa to the Palaeobatrachidae (Eocene–Miocene of Europe) and various pipoid fossil taxa have remained unresolved. A phylogenetic analysis of rhinophrynids, palaeobatrachids, *Shelania* (Paleogene of South America), *Saltenia* (Upper Cretaceous of South America), *Eoxenopoides* (Upper Cretaceous of South Africa) and living pipids (South America and Africa) based on 46 osteological characters reveals that the Rhinophrynidae, Palaeobatrachidae, and *Shelania* are successive sister groups of a clade that includes *Saltenia*, *Eoxenopoides*, and the living pipids; the rhinophrynids are the most basal. The topological variation in the two equally parsimonious trees obtained reflects the effect of missing data and involves the relationships of *Eoxenopoides* and *Saltenia* to one another and the living pipids. Support for the nodes uniting the palaeobatrachids and *Shelania*, respectively, to their more derived sister taxa is identical in both topologies and involves changes in the maxillary arcade, shape of the vertebral centra and pelvic girdle, configuration of the endocranium and nature of the anterior palatal region of the skull.

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RECENT STATUS, REHABILITATION AND CONSERVATION OF RARE SNAKE SPECIES IN CONDITIONS OF MOLDOVA

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KEY WORDS: Serpentes, distribution, rehabilitation, diversity, protection

Snake distribution dynamics and changes of regional areas and its causes were revealed as a result of long-term research. At present, six (*Coluber jugularis*, *Elaphe longissima*, *E. quatuorlineata*, *Coronella austriaca*, *Vipera berus*, and *V. ursinii*) of eight species living in Moldova are rare and exist as locally isolated populations. Recommendations on rehabilitation, including reintroduction and conservation of species diversity in areas of Moldova where conditions provoke extinction (predominance of agrolandscapes and a low

percentage of natural habitats) were developed on the basis of experimental breeding in captivity and observations in nature.

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VIPERS OF THE CAUCASUS: TAXONOMICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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KEY WORDS: Caucasus, Viperinae, taxonomy, nomenclature

Viperinae snakes of the Caucasian Isthmus are represented by 10 taxa. A majority of them belong to the subgenus *Pelias* (*renardi*, *kaznakovi*, *lotievi*, *dinniki*, *ebneri*, *darevskii*, and *eriwanensis*), whereas only two species are from subgenus *Macrovipera* (*raddei* and *lebetina obtusa*) and *Vipera transcaucasiana* is the easternmost example of the subgenus *Vipera*. Five species are distributed along the Greater Caucasus and seven taxa occur within the Lesser Caucasus and the Transcaucasian (Armenian) Highland. Several taxonomic and nomenclature questions are still unresolved (e.g., *V. eriwanensis* - *V. darevskii* - *V. ursinii ebneri*, as well as *V. lebetina* from Dagestan).

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POSITIVE HUMAN RESPONSES FOR AMPHIBIAN POPULATIONS

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KEY WORDS: Amphibia, decline, conservation

The international concern about declining amphibian populations has focussed upon the nature and extent of declines, and upon a search for the causal factors. It is evident that there are many causes of decline and, equally, that some involve a variety of forms of pollution. To effect the changes needed to reduce the extent of global pollution requires the involvement of the general public, who collectively can put pressure on politicians, bureaucrats and companies. This address reports the way in which public awareness of environmental issues in Australia has created concern about the demise of frogs, linked to the interpretation of environmental issues. The message has been that the frogs are sensitive to aquatic pollution; if the frog populations are flourishing then the environment is satisfactory. Conversely, that the silence of the frogs indicates severe environmental problems. In Australia 120 conservation and wildlife organisations cooperated