

CHELONIA RICHNESS AND ABUNDANCE AT THE SÃO FRANCISCO DRAINAGE BASIN

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This study is the compilation of the activities for characterizing of chelonia richness and abundance at the São Francisco drainage basin, as a part of the Project of Diagnosis of the São Francisco's Herpetofauna, accomplished by the Brazilian National Center for the Conservation and Management of Reptiles and Amphibians / Chico Mendes Institute for the Biodiversity Conservation (RAN/ICMBio), in partnership with Biodiversitas Foundation (FBIODIVERSITAS), in 2006 and 2007. The aim was to evaluate the preservation condition of the chelonia species, equitably cataloguing areas in the high, medium, under medium and low São Francisco, embracing the following States: Minas Gerais, Bahia, Sergipe and Alagoas, according to the sample places selection criteria in fitofisionomics, geographic and fauna aspects appropriated to the occurrence of the aimed species. The collecting methodology consisted on daily and nightly active search, passive search through funnel trap, fishing, diving, and per interviews with environmental agencies technicians, fishers and riparian communities (Table 2). 15 towns placed at São Francisco River and its tributaries were sampled, totalizing 29 principal referential points researched. It were captured 31 *Phrynops geoffroanus* individuals, nine *Batrachemys tuberculata*, three *Geochelone carbonaria*, three *Kinosternon scorpioides*, two *Acanthochelys radiolata* and one *Bufocephala vanderhaegei*. 54 individuals of *P. geoffroanus* were visually sampled; six specimens of *G. carbonaria* and one of *B. tuberculata* were recorded by interview, totalizing 110 chelonia individuals (Table 1). *P. geoffroanus* and *G. carbonaria* had the higher occurrence in the basin and they are widely disposed in the Brazilian Savannah (Cerrado) and Caatinga. *B. tuberculata*, *A. radiolata*, *A. spixii* and *K. scorpioides* are the most restricted disposed species. The sexual ratio of the *P. geoffroanus* throughout the basin was 1:1 (Table 3). This study contributed for the São Francisco Basin herpetofauna knowledge through the distribution and abundance data of some chelonia species. The investment on chelonian research is necessary for dynamic population knowledge and its related habitats, vital for chelonia conservation through gathering prioritarian areas and performing long lasting monitoring programs.

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