



The Cuban Treefrog in Florida: Life History of a Successful Colonizing Species

Walter E. Meshaka Jr.

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"A wonderfully detailed account of an alien species in the U.S. . . . The author provides intriguing details of the natural history of the Cuban Treefrog in Florida and why it has been so successful in its new home."--Robert W. Henderson, curator of herpetology, Milwaukee Public Museum

"The abundance of data cited in this study not only characterizes the Cuban Treefrog but establishes it as a model of a successful colonizer. This latter feature vastly increases the importance of this work by providing wildlife biologists with a list of characteristics that can be applied to other introduced species to determine the likelihood of successful establishment and expansion in non-native habitats--particularly those severely altered by human activity."--Robert Powell, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, author of *A Key to the Amphibians and Reptiles of the Continental United States and Canada*

Florida has become a melting pot of invasive exotic species, especially those introduced from the Caribbean. Their expanding ranges and their impact on other species underscore a growing ecological problem faced in today's world of massive land-use changes and rapid transportation on a global scale. In one of the most detailed accounts of the ecology of an introduced species in the United States, Walter Meshaka presents the natural history of the Cuban Treefrog from the perspective of its phenomenal success, in terms of sheer numbers and geographic range, as a colonizer in South Florida and, in particular, the Everglades. For those interested in the natural history of the state and especially for herpetologists, ecologists, conservation biologists, and land managers, this work provides a readable and data-rich study on a timely issue.

Meshaka discusses all facets of the natural history of the Cuban Treefrog in detail as well as the correlates of its successful colonization—for example, it colonized an environment that was nearly competitor-free, it ate its potential competitors, and it exploited human habitats. In light of Meshaka's findings, any hope of eradicating the Cuban Treefrog looks dim.

The usefulness of this book extends well beyond mere description of the natural history of a single species. It supplies a methodology for evaluating and setting priorities for the threats facing Florida's amphibian and reptile populations and identifies the most vulnerable species, providing a base for management decisions. It also presents and interprets a large data set associated with patterns of colonization and predictions.

Walter E. Meshaka, Jr., senior curator of zoology and botany for the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg, was curator at Everglades National Park from 1995 to 2000. He has contributed numerous articles to *Journal of Herpetology*, *Copeia*, *Florida Scientist*, and other publications and is the coauthor of the forthcoming *Exotic Amphibians and Reptiles of Florida*.

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