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Review of *Catálogo de la Colección Nacional de Helmintos* by Rafael Lamothe-Argumedo, Luis Garcia-Prieto, David Osorio-Sarabia, Gerardo Pérez-Ponce de León (UNAM, 1996)

Daniel R. Brooks

University of Toronto, dan.brooks@utoronto.ca

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## BOOK REVIEW . . .

**Catálogo de la Colección Nacional de Helminthos**, by Rafael Lamothe-Argumedo, Luis García-Prieto, David Osorio-Sarabia, Gerardo Pérez-Ponce de León. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Biología, UNAM, Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad, Mexico City, Mexico. 1996. ISBN-968-36-6088-6.

Established in 1932, Mexico's Colección Nacional de Helminthos is one of the world's premier helminthology collections. Its core is the material collected by the legendary Eduardo Caballero y Caballero and his collaborators and students. The current director, Dr. Rafael Lamothe-Argumedo, has continued building the collection during his career. A new generation of junior colleagues, including those who serve as coauthors on this volume, as well as Guillermo Salgado-Maldonado and Virginia León-Régagnon, are testimony to a strong continuing commitment by Mexico to this important resource.

These are paradoxical times for museums and their research collections. There appears to be steadily declining public and governmental support for museums and especially for research collections, while at the same time there is increasing call for taxonomic expertise to help deal with the biodiversity crisis. The United Nations biodiversity watchdog group, Diversitas, for example, has stated that the "taxonomic impediment" caused by the global decline in the number of taxonomists is the single most serious roadblock to dealing with the biodiversity crisis. The taxasphere (the world's taxonomists) and the biosphere thus share 1 important thing in common—both are facing imminent extinction. Survival of the taxasphere depends in large part on making the cultural change from seeing ourselves in the traditional mode of "collectors of things" to being "managers of information." It is no longer important, or even relevant, to have more specimens of a particular

species in your collection than are found in any other collection; rather, it is important to know how much information you have about each species. Society at large is no longer willing to invest in everexpanding museum collections serving only as repositories of material accessible to an everdecreasing number of specialists.

This catalog represents a strong commitment on the part of this collection to make that cultural change. Covering specimens accessioned into the collection through 1996, this volume begins with a listing of each parasite species. Included for each species are the host, site of infection, accession number, geographic distributions, literature citations pertaining to those specimens, and a notation of the person(s) who determined the identity of the species. This is followed by a host-parasite listing for those who wish to see a snapshot of the helminth assemblages in different host species.

This is followed by the bibliography for the literature references cited in the parasite listings. Appendix A gives the precise longitude and latitude coordinates, as well as the altitude, for all localities. Appendix B lists the species of parasites in the collection that lack adequate host determination. The catalog closes with an alphabetical taxonomic index.

As important as this publication is, it represents something even more significant. The information in this publication now exists as an electronic database, and in the near future this information, with daily updates, will be available on the worldwide web. We owe this group of authors a debt of gratitude not only for sharing their information with us but also for leading us into the future.

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**Daniel R. Brooks**, Centre for Comparative Biology & Biodiversity, Department of Zoology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 3G5.