



XIII Congresso de ECOLOGIA

III International Symposium of Ecology and Evolution

Múltiplas ecologias: evolução e diversidade

08 a 12 de outubro de 2017 • UFV - VIÇOSA | MG

NON-VOLANT SMALL MAMMALS (DIDELPHIMORPHIA AND RODENTIA) FROM MATO GROSSO, BRAZIL: A BIOGEOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

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Tema/Meio de apresentação: Biogeografia/Oral

Mato Grosso state presents portions of Amazon, Cerrado and Pantanal biomes; hence this great vegetation diversity may be responsible for harboring high mammalian species richness. However, Mato Grosso is facing increasing levels of anthropic pressures leading to vegetation fragmentation and deforestation. One of the reasons for incipient conservation policies in the state is the lack of knowledge about its biodiversity. Regarding small mammals, the poor taxonomic and biogeographic knowledge are the basic constraints. The present study characterizes richness and geographical distribution of marsupials and small rodents from Mato Grosso based on the analyses of specimens housed in zoological collections, as well as published previous records. A total of 3.292 specimens were examined resulting in the record of 85 species (28 marsupials, 44 sigmodont and 13 hystricognath rodents), including yet undescribed taxa and several new records leading to expressive range extensions. The richest biome was the Cerrado (62 species), followed by the Amazon (48), both with a large number of endemic species, represented mostly by open-area inhabitants in the Cerrado and by forest dwellers in the Amazon. Pantanal presented 34 species, with a large proportion of open-area inhabitants and generalist species. Two transitional areas were also studied: Chiquitano Dry Forest (CDF) and Mato Grosso Dry Forest (MTDF), both presenting high richness: 50 and 48 species respectively. Cluster analyses reveals that faunal composition varied among these vegetation physiognomies, as well as between the two transitional areas, with Cerrado and Pantanal sharing a great number of species, CDF sharing more species with Chaco, Pantanal and Cerrado, and the MTDF with the Amazon. The distinctiveness of small mammal communities found across the state points to a complex biogeographical scenario, with areas harboring rich and endemic assemblages. We stress that establishments of conservation priorities concerning each phytophysiognomy at Mato Grosso are essential for its conservation.

This study was supported by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (grant: FAPESP, #2010/03969-4).