ANURAN FAUNA OF THE HIGH-ELEVATION AREAS OF THE PARQUE NACIONAL DA SERRA DOS ÓRGÃOS (PARNASO), SOUTHEASTERN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT
There is a lack of knowledge regarding the diversity of anurans in high-elevation areas of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest. In order to improve the knowledge about the diversity of this group in this kind of environment, we present a list of anuran amphibians recorded in high-elevation areas (above 1,200 m) of the Parque Nacional da Serra dos Órgãos (PARNASO), in southeastern Brazil. The list was compiled based on primary data (from fieldwork) and on secondary data (from surveys of institutional collections). Twenty-eight species belonging to seven families were recorded: Brachycephalidae (6 species), Bufonidae (3 spp.), Cycloramphidae (4 spp.), Hemiphractidae (5 spp.), Hylidae (8 spp.), Hylodidae (1 sp.), and Odontophrynidae (1 sp.). According to the IUCN Red List, eight of those species are classified as “Data Deficient” and two species have not been assessed yet (i.e., Dendrophryniscus organensis and Fritziana sp. nov.). Ten species are classified as “Least Concern” but with populations in decline, although six of them (Bokermannohyla carvalhoi, B. circumdata, Ischnocnema parva, Proceratophrys appendiculata, Scinax albiloricus and Zachaeus parvulus) were frequently found during fieldwork at PARNASO and seem to be locally abundant. The other eight species classified as “Least Concern” have stable populations. We add three species to the list of anurans endemic to the high-elevation areas of Serra dos Órgãos (Cycloramphus organensis, D. organensis, and Fritziana sp. nov.), raising to 14 the number of endemic taxa in the area.

Keywords: Anura; Atlantic Forest; altitude; survey.

INTRODUCTION
The Brazilian anuran fauna is currently represented by 1,026 species, corresponding to 16% of the global anuran diversity (Segalla et al. 2014, Frost 2016). The Brazilian Atlantic Forest (sensu Ab’Saber 1977) has been labeled as one of the 34 biodiversity hotspots in the world (Mittermeier et al. 2011), harboring about 430 species of anurans, of which 80% are endemic to that biome (Cruz & Feio 2007, Lemes et al. 2014). Nevertheless, due to anthropogenic action, the Atlantic Forest is nowadays composed by only 12% of its original area (Ribeiro et al. 2009, SOS Mata Atlântica 2014), and most of the remnant patches are found in the mountains of the Serra do Mar and Serra da Mantiqueira ranges in southeastern Brazil (Eterovick et al. 2005). Only a small portion of what currently remains of the Atlantic Forest is known to occur within legally protected areas (Laurance 2009, Lemes et al 2014).

The Atlantic Forest biome encompasses the vegetation that occurs along the Brazilian coast (extending some distance inland), from the state of Rio Grande do Norte to the state of Rio Grande do Sul (Delabie et al. 2000). The vegetation mainly consists of dense ombrophilous forest, mixed ombrophilous forest and seasonal forests, including associated ecosystems, such as mangroves and salt marshes (Veloso 1992, Joly et al. 1999). It also encompasses areas of high-elevation, including the montane grasslands called campos de altitude (Safford 1999). Campos de altitude are composed by open vegetation habitats present above 1,900
m of altitude in the Serra do Mar and Serra da Mantiqueira ranges that are relatively poorly studied (Safford 1999). There are few studies so far conducted in this ecosystem, focusing mainly on plants (Safford 1999), birds (Mallet-Rodrigues et al. 2010, Vasconcelos & Rodrigues 2010) and mammals (Geise et al. 2004).

Currently, there are a few studies comprising the amphibian composition in areas above 1200 m a.s.l. in the Atlantic Forest. Most studies about the anuran fauna from highlands consist of descriptions of new species (e.g., Pombal et al. 1998, Alves et al. 2006, Weber et al. 2011). Nevertheless, Cruz & Feio (2007) reviewed the diversity and endemism of anuran species from “mountain areas” of Serra do Mar and Serra da Mantiqueira, and Siqueira et al. (2011) surveyed the anuran species present in two high-altitude sites in the Serra dos Órgãos region, inserted in the Serra do Mar state of Rio de Janeiro.

The Parque Nacional da Serra dos Órgãos (PARNASO) is inserted in the Atlantic Forest biome and contains some of the highest peaks of the Serra dos Órgãos mountain range, such as Pedra do Açu (2,245 m a.s.l.) and Pedra do Sino (2,275 m a.s.l.; ICMBIO 2008). Relatively little is known about the ecology, biogeography, or developmental history of these “sky island” formations (Safford 1999). PARNASO has a high diversity of habitats, which in turn promotes a high diversity of animal species (ICMBIO 2008). It harbors a great part of the overall diversity and endemic species of the Atlantic Forest, including around 100 species of anuran amphibians (ICMBIO 2008). It also represents the type locality for at least 20 species of anurans, of which seven are endemic of this mountainous massif (Carvalho-e-Silva et al. in prep.). The Serra dos Órgãos was identified by the ministry of the environment as an area of extreme biological importance (Cronemberg & Viveiros de Castro 2007). The PARNASO thus protects an important part of the Atlantic Forest’s biodiversity.

Worldwide amphibian declines have been reported and several factors are suggested to be responsible for it, such as habitat loss and fragmentation; contamination of water and soil by chemical pollutants; climate change; and introductions of exotic species (Blaustein et al. 1994, Alford & Richards 1999, Lips et al. 2005, Hamer & McDonnel 2008, Laurance 2008). In the Atlantic Forest, some amphibian populations that were once abundant have decreased dramatically, mainly in the regions of Serra do Mar and Serra da Mantiqueira (Heyer et al. 1988, Weygoldt 1989).

Experimental studies, monitoring and inventories are useful in reporting amphibian declines (Biek et al. 2002). It is also important to conduct studies that provide support for amphibian conservation, especially in areas without previous knowledge of the local anuran fauna (Rocha et al. 2003, Diniz-Filho et al. 2004). Therefore, here we present a list of anuran species recorded in high-elevation areas (above 1,200 m a.s.l.) within the PARNASO, in the Serra dos Órgãos mountain range.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study area

The Serra do Mar mountain range complex is located at the Atlantic Forests morphoclimatic domain (Ab’Saber 1977) of the coast of the states of Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Cruz & Feio 2007). The Parque Nacional da Serra dos Órgãos (PARNASO) is a national park located in the mountains of the Serra dos Órgãos range in the central part of the Serra do Mar complex, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. This conservation area (The headquarter of Teresópolis is at 22°24’ and 22°32’ S; 42°69’ and 43°06’ W) encompasses part of the municipalities of Teresópolis, Petrópolis, Magé and Guapimirim, totaling an area of 20,024 ha of dense ombrophilous forest and highland forest. High-elevation areas (above 1,200 m a.s.l.) are present only in Teresópolis and Petrópolis (ICMBIO 2008; Figure 1), representing around 60% of the park’s area (Cronemberg & Viveiros de Castro 2007). PARNASO has an average annual temperature of 19°C, and rainfall varies between 1,500 mm and 3,000 mm per year (ICMBIO 2008).

Fieldwork was conducted in high-elevation areas along the Pedra do Sino trail, municipality of Teresópolis. The altitudinal range chosen for sampling in the present work (1,200 – 2,250 m a.s.l.) was based on the altitudinal range of the Pedra do Sino trail, which starts at 1,200 m a.s.l.
and ends near the mountain’s peak at 2,250 m a.s.l. (Cronemberg & Viveiros de Castro 2007).

The area presents altitudinal variation of the vegetation and soil characteristics. Therefore, we used the altitudinal classification found in Mallet-Rodrigues et al. (2010), and present a quick description based on the management planning for PARNASO (ICMBIO 2008):

- **Montane Forest ("Floresta Montana")** – from 500 m to 1,500 m a.s.l.: formation with extensive vegetation stratification. Its structure varies according to the specific conditions of each area. Large trees reaching up to 40 m high dominate the tree layer and there are deep soils of composite crystalline rocks.

- **High Montane Forest ("Floresta Pluvial Alto-Montana"; Figure 2A)** – from 1,500 m to 1,900 m a.s.l.: it is a typical humid forest, often enveloped in mist. Shrubs and small trees between 5 m and 10 m in height dominate the vegetation. Trees typically have crooked trunks covered by moss and epiphytes.

- **Campos de altitude** (Figure 2B) – above 1,900 m a.s.l.: dominated by shrubby and herbaceous vegetation that grows among rocky outcrops. There is low input of organic matter and the vegetation is more xeric-adapted. The soil is shallow and solar radiation is intense. In areas with steep slopes and greater exposure to wind and rain, the rock is bare with almost no vegetation coverage.

**Sampling**

From 2009 to 2013, we conducted six surveys in the area (one or two per year) during both the rainy and dry seasons, totaling 15
sampling days. We used three complementary methods for sampling adult anurans: active search, acoustic search, and pitfall traps (see Calleffo 2002); and one method for sampling tadpoles: active search.

We performed the active and acoustic searches randomly along the Pedra do Sino trail. In addition, four Y and I-shaped pitfall traps (consisting of 60 L buckets five meters far apart, with drift fences) were set in campos de altitude at Pedra do Sino: the first three were located in different sites close to the “Pedra da Baleia” (22°27′37.0″S / 43°01′40.0″W; 2,131 m a.s.l) with five, seven, and eight buckets, respectively; the last one, with four buckets, was located in the “Vale das Orquídeas” (22°27′26.5″S / 43°01′10.4″ W; 1,975 m a.s.l) (Figure 2C). The pitfall traps remained open during the survey period (between two and four days) and were checked daily. For the capture of tadpoles in the streams and in the bromeliads we used hand sieves and an entomological aspirator, respectively.

Adults and tadpoles were collected and photographed. Adults were anesthetized and killed with lidocaine injection (with insulin syringe needles) and tadpoles were immersed in a solution of lidocaine as specified in the Brazilian laws (Diretriz Brasileira para o Cuidado e a Utilização de Animais para Fins Científicos e Didáticos – Concea). Specimens were deposited at the Amphibian Collection of the Departamento de Zoologia, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (ZUFRJ) according to authorization (18155) provided by ICMBIO.

We obtained additional data from the zoological collections of the Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Coleção de Anfíbios da Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – UNIRIO), Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (Coleção Eugenio Izecksohn – EI), and Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (ZUFRJ), which encompass more than 20 years of fieldwork in the area. We only included in our inventory specimens from PARNASO that have been sampled within the altitudinal range used in the present work (1,200 – 2,250 m a.s.l.). The list of examined specimens is given in Appendix 1. Taxonomic nomenclature used throughout the text follows Frost (2016).

RESULTS

We report twenty-eight anuran species from high-elevation areas of PARNASO, belonging to seven families (Table 1 and Figure 3): Brachycephalidae (6 species), Bufonidae (3 spp.), Cycloramphidae (4 spp.), Hemiphractidae (5 spp.), Hylidae (8 spp.), Hylodidae (1 sp.), and Odontophrynidae (1 sp.). Fourteen of these species were sampled during the field expeditions (2009-2013).

*Dendrophryniscus* cf. *brevipollicatus* (ZUFRJ: 11275 – 11276) and *Ischnocnema* cf. *nasuta* (ZUFRJ: 9661) could not be identified at the specific level due to the morphological differences observed in the recorded specimens compared to the known and described species of each genus, even though the former is very similar to *D. brevipollicatus* and the latter is very similar to *I. nasuta*.

*Ischnocnema* aff. *guentheri* is supposed to be a new species according to Gehara *et al.* (2013); these authors restrict the name *Ischnocnema guentheri* to only one population in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Therefore, any other population previously associated with this species name, as the others populations in the state of Rio de Janeiro and the states of Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Minas Gerais are actually four undescribed species.

DISCUSSION

The highest species richness was observed at 1,200–1,500 m with 26 species, of which 13 were exclusive to that altitudinal range (Table 1). Between 1,501–1,900 m we observed 14 species, of which none were exclusive to that range. Above 1,900 m we observed seven species of which only one was exclusive to that elevation (Figure 4). Species richness decreased with elevation above 1,500 m a.s.l. This pattern, known as a “diversity bulge” has been described by Grytnes & Vetaas (2002). The species richness found was inversely proportional to the altitudinal increase. This result may be due to the type of vegetation found at the lower altitudes (montane forest), as the taller and more closed tree canopy in those sites would not only provide shelter to different species of...
Table 1. List of anurans from high-elevation areas of the Parque Nacional da Serra dos Órgãos (PARNASO), their status of conservation according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and altitudinal ranges (meters above sea level – m a.s.l.) within the study area. The altitudinal ranges of each species are categorized according to our records from fieldwork, zoological collections and literature data (Duellman & Gray 1983, Weber et al. 2011, Frost 2016). Vegetation was classified according to Mallet-Rodrigues et al. (2010) and (ICMBIO 2008): Montane Forest (MF), High Montane Forest (HMF) and campos de altitude (CA). IUCN status categories are: Least Concern (LC); Data Deficient (DD); Stable population (St); Declining population (Dc); Unknown status (Un); * Data collected in the fieldwork.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxa</th>
<th>Status in IUCN</th>
<th>Altitudinal range (m a.s.l.)</th>
<th>Preferred microhabitats</th>
<th>Sampling method</th>
<th>Vegetation</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>1200–1500</td>
<td>1501–1900</td>
<td>&gt;1,900</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brachycephalidae</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Brachycephalus ephippium</em> (Spix, 1824)</td>
<td>LC – St</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Leaf-litter</td>
<td>Visual, Acoustic, Pitfall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ischnocnema aff. guentheri *</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Leaf-litter</td>
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<td><em>Ischnocnema gualteri</em> (Lutz, 1974)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td><em>Ischnocnema holti</em> (Cochran, 1948)*</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Shrubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ischnocnema cf. nasuta</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td><em>Ischnocnema parva</em> (Girard, 1853) *</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Visual, Acoustic</td>
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<td><strong>Bufonidae</strong></td>
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<td><em>Dendrophyryniscus cf. brevipollicatus</em></td>
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<td><em>Dendrophyryniscus organensis</em> Carvalho-e-Silva, Mongin, Izecksohn &amp; Carvalho-e-Silva, 2010</td>
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<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td><strong>Cycloramphidae</strong></td>
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<td><em>Cycloramphus eleutherodactylus</em> (Miranda-Ribeiro, 1920)</td>
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<td>Forest floor</td>
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<td>Leaf-litter</td>
<td>Visual, Acoustic</td>
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Continue...
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<td>Visual, Acoustic</td>
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<td>Fritziana ohausi (Wandolleck, 1907)*</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Visual, Acoustic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aplastodiscus musicus (Lutz, 1949)</td>
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<td>Visual, Acoustic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bokermannohyla carvalhoi (Peixoto, 1981)*</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Rocks near streams</td>
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<td>Bokermannohyla circumdata (Cope, 1871)*</td>
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<td>Hylodes charadranætes Heyer &amp; Cocroft, 1986</td>
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<td>Proceratophrys appendiculata (Günther, 1873)*</td>
<td>LC – D</td>
<td>X</td>
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Figure 3. Anuran specimens from high-elevation areas of PARNASO, RJ, Brazil; A) *Ischnocnema holti*; B) *Brachycephalus ephippium*; C) *Zachaenus parvulus*; D) *Proceratophrys appendiculata*; E) *Cycloramphus eleutherodactylus*; F) *C. organensis*; G) *Dendrophryniscus organensis*; H) *Fritziana* sp. nov.; I-J) *Gastrotheca ernesti*; K) *Aplastodiscus musicus*; L) *A. flumineus*; M) *A. arildae*; N) *Bokermannohyla circumdata*; O) *B. carvalhoi*. Photos A and H by Felipe Quintarelli Machado; Photo C by Daniel de Góes; Photo G by Cyro de Luna-Dias; All other photos by Sergio Potsch de Carvalho-e-Silva.
treefrogs but also keep the leaf-litter layer humid and deep along the forest floor, where the anuran fauna is abundant (Rocha et al. 2004). On the other hand, the difficulty in accessing higher elevation sites, such as campos de altitude, and the limited knowledge about the fauna found in this ecosystem may have influenced the sample size, showing the necessity of continuing to do fieldwork in these high-elevation areas.

Seven endemic species were previously reported for the altitudinal region in the Serra dos Órgãos Mountains (Cruz & Feio 2007, Weber et al. 2011) and were also recorded for the high-elevation areas at the present study: Aplastodiscus flumineus, A. musicus, Bokermannohyla carvalhoi, Cycloramphus organensis, C. stejnegeri, Hyloides charadraanaetes and Ischnocnema gualteri. We also recorded 14 species that have been reported for high-elevation areas within the Parque Estadual dos Três Picos (PEPT) (Siqueira et al. 2011): Aplastodiscus arildae, Bokermannohyla carvalhoi, B. circumdata, Dendrophryniscus cf. brevipollicatus, Fritziana fissilis, Gastrotheca ernestoi, Hylodes charadraanaetes, Ischnocnema aff. guentheri, I. holti, I. parva, Rhinella icterica, Scinax albicans, S. obtriangulatus and Zachaenus parvulus. The similarity of the anuran fauna assemblages in PARNASO and PETP may be due to them being located within the same mountain range and connected by a continuous habitat corridor and having similar environmental influences. Despite the similarities found in the high-elevation areas of both sites, several species are apparently exclusive to one of the two localities: PETP (21 species) and PARNASO (14 species).

Siqueira et al. (2011) removed two species [Gastrotheca albolineata (Lutz & Lutz 1939) and Hyloides charadraanaetes] from the previous list of amphibians endemic to the high-elevation areas of the Serra dos Órgãos compiled by Cruz & Feio (2007), and added two species (Holoaden pholeter Pombal, Siqueira, Dorigo, Vrcibradic & Rocha, 2008 and Brachycephalus garbeanus Miranda-Ribeiro 1920), maintaining the list with currently 11 species. We add three more species to the list: Cycloramphus organensis, Dendrophryniscus organensis, and Fritziana sp. nov., raising to 14 the number of amphibian species considered endemic of high-elevation areas in the Serra dos Órgãos region.

Lemes et al. (2014) predict a decline of anuran species richness within protected areas in the Atlantic Forest under the change climate conditions by the year 2050. Additionally, the

Figure 4. Species richness observed at three different ranges: 1,200–1,500 m; 1,501–1,900 m and above 1,500 m a.s.l. On left the number of species, on right the number of endemic species for each range. Note species richness decreasing proportionally to elevation.
ranges of some of these species are predicted to shift toward higher elevations, where a large number of endemic Atlantic Forest species already occur. Based on these predictions, Lemes et al. (2014) suggested that new protected areas in higher altitudes would be more effective in alleviating the effect of climate change on this endangered fauna. In this predicted scenario, mountainous regions would become a refuge for amphibians. The risk of the declining populations and the high levels of endemism observed at high-elevation areas highlight the importance of preserving these habitats.

Cycloramphus organensis is endemic to the high-elevation areas (Weber et al. 2011). In addition, a new species, Fritziana sp. nov., is being described from the high-elevation areas of the park (Folly et al. in prep.) and is so far also restricted to such habitats. Gastrotheca ernestoi and Ischnocnema holli are also probably restricted to high-elevation areas in PARNASO, despite not being endemic to the Serra dos Órgãos region (Costa et al. 2008, Izecksohn & Carvalho-e-Silva 2008, Siqueira et al. 2011).

The lack of research on the biology and demography of tropical anuran faunas complicates the design of appropriate strategies for the conservation of amphibians (Silvano & Segalla 2005). This deficiency is more evident regarding the fauna of high-elevation areas where, historically, the rugged and mountainous terrain has hampered access (Kattan & Franco 2004). In addition, the anurans of those regions tend to have their reproductive activity limited to a few short periods each year due to the severe cold weather, making it harder to find and record individuals during the cooler season. Moreover, some trapping methods such as pitfall traps, might be less efficient in the campos de altitude as a consequence of the rocky soil, which hampers their establishment on the ground. Only thirteen percent (13%) of the species were collected in the pitfall traps during field surveys; the other 87% of the species were collected during visual and acoustic searches. Thus, high sampling efforts and the usage of more than one method are necessary for adequate sampling the studied area, mainly because of the different microhabitats found at those sites. Yet, it is crucial to conduct more studies in high-elevation areas to improve the knowledge about this important ecosystem.

Among the ten species classified as “Least Concern”, six (Bokermanohyla carvalhoi, B. circumdata, I. parva, P. appendiculata, S. albicans and Z. parvulus) are found in relatively high abundance at PARNASO, even though they are declining globally (IUCN 2015; Table 1). In addition, eight species are classified as “Data Deficient” (IUCN 2015). Despite the continuous fieldwork in the area, the species Aplastodiscus flumineus and A. musicus, both reported in this study, have not been recorded at PARNASO since 2003 and 1995, respectively. All these facts, in addition to the diversity and endemism found in the high-elevation areas of the park, highlight the importance of PARNASO for the conservation of the Atlantic Forest anuran fauna.

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APPENDIX 1