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Amietia angolensis and *A. fuscigula* (Anura: Pyxicephalidae) in southern Africa: A cold case reheated

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Abstract

A study combining DNA sequences of the mitochondrial 16S rRNA gene, advertisement calls and morphology of some southern African river frogs confirms *Amietia vandijki* (Visser & Channing, 1997) as a good species. The form presently referred to as *Amietia angolensis* in southern Africa is shown to comprise two species: *Amietia angolensis* (Bocage, 1866) known from Angola, and *Amietia quecketti* (Boulenger, 1895) known from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. Junior synonyms of *A. quecketti* include *Rana theileri* Mocquard, 1906 and *Afrana dracomontana* Channing, 1978. The form presently known as *Amietia fuscigula* is shown to consist of two distantly related taxa: *Amietia fuscigula* (Duméril & Bibron, 1841) from the south-western Cape and an undescribed species that we here name *Amietia poyntoni* **sp. nov.** Channing & Baptista, known from the rest of South Africa and Namibia. These five species have large differences in 16S sequences, as well as differences in morphology and advertisement call. Call and molecular data are both diagnostic, while morphology shows some overlap between taxa. An extended study of the genus across Africa is in preparation.

Key words: Amphibia, Anura, Pyxicephalidae, *Amietia*, taxonomy, southern Africa, *Amietia quecketti*, *Amietia poyntoni* **sp. nov.**

Introduction

The last comprehensive revision of the taxonomy of southern African amphibians (Poynton 1964) drew attention to the long-standing debate on the status of *Amietia angolensis* (Bocage, 1866) and *Amietia fuscigula* (Duméril & Bibron, 1841). Poynton (1964) separated these two species on body proportions, with *A. angolensis* possessing a narrower head and less mottling of the ventral surface.

Concerning *A. angolensis* Poynton "attached a certain amount of doubt" to the recognition of *Rana delalandii* Duméril & Bibron, 1841 from South Africa as a synonym of *Rana angolensis* by Boulenger (1882). The name *Rana delalandii* became a secondary homonym of *Pyxicephalus delalandii* Tschudi, 1838 (= *Tomopterna delalandii*) in *Rana* (Frost 2013), and is now an unavailable name according to Article 59.3 of the Code. Poynton agreed with the status quo that *Rana theileri* Mocquard, 1906 from Nelspruit in South Africa was a junior synonym of *A. angolensis*.

Concerning *A. fuscigula*, Poynton (1964) recognised *Amietia fuscigula* as distributed across South Africa, with *Rana quecketti* Boulenger, 1894 from Pietermaritzburg, as a junior synonym following Boulenger (1910). In a later paper Boulenger (1918) placed *Rana quecketti* in the synonymy of *Rana angolensis*. Current taxonomy follows Poynton (1964) in respect of the contents of *A. angolensis* and *A. fuscigula* (e.g. Channing 1979, Frost *et al.* 2006).

Other southern African species of *Amietia* include *Amietia dracomontana*, which was described from the Drakensberg in South Africa (Channing 1978) and *A. vandijki* (Visser & Channing 1997) known from three mountain ranges in the Western Cape Province of South Africa (IUCN SSC 2010). The identification of *A. umbraculata* and *A. vertebralis* on the mountains of Lesotho has been reviewed (Tarrant *et al.* 2008, Clarke & Poynton 2012), and these species will be included in the extended study.