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The taxonomic status of *Oligoryzomys brendae* Massoia, 1998 (Rodentia, Cricetidae), with comments on the availability of this name

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Abstract

Oligoryzomys brendae was poorly described by Massoia in 1998 to include populations of the large form of *Oligoryzomys* that inhabits the Yungas and high altitudinal grasslands of northwestern Argentina, which were previously referred as *O. longicaudatus*, *O. stolzmanni*, *O. destructor* or *Oligoryzomys* sp. Contrary to some interpretations, we state that the name *O. brendae* is available, given that it fully accomplishes the requirements of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. We also present morphologic and genetic evidence showing that this taxon represents a distinct species and provide an emended diagnosis and re-description of it. In addition, the evidence at hand indicates that *O. brendae* is the only large-sized species of *Oligoryzomys* inhabiting northwestern Argentina.

Key words: Brenda's pigmy rice rat, Oryzomyini, Sigmodontinae, Tucumán, Yungas

Introduction

The genus *Oligoryzomys* Bangs, 1900 includes at least 19 species of small-sized, long tailed mice, widely distributed in the Neotropical Region (Musser & Carleton 2005). The alpha taxonomy of this genus is complex, being subject of constant changes in the taxonomic status of some nominal forms (e.g., Francés & D'Elía 2006; González Ittig *et al*. 2010; Agrellos *et al*. 2012) and descriptions of new species being moderately frequent (e.g., Weksler & Bonvicino 2005). At the same time, the alpha taxonomy of *Oligoryzomys* is full of dubious statements about the taxonomic status of several nominal species, especially those from forested tropical and subtropical areas. A clear example of the latter scenario is that concerning populations of a large-sized form that inhabits the Yungas and high altitudinal grasslands of northwestern Argentina (Cirignoli *et al*. 2006; Jayat *et al*. 2008, 2009; González Ittig *et al*. 2010). At first, these animals were included within the concept of *O. longicaudatus* (Bennet 1832) (e.g., Cabrera 1961; Mares *et al.* 1981; Ojeda & Mares 1989). However, morphological, karyological and phylogenetically analyzed molecular data clearly separate northwestern Argentinean populations from *O. longicaudatus* (e.g., González Ittig *et al.* 2002; Rivera *et al*. 2007). Espinosa & Reig (1991), mostly based on karyological analysis, provisionally referred these populations to *O. stolzmanni* (Thomas 1894), a form included under *O. destructor* (Tschudi 1844) by Carleton & Musser (1989). In consequence, subsequent authors have used the name of *O. destructor* to allocate these large-sized populations of *Oligoryzomys* from northwestern Argentina (e.g., Capllonch *et al*. 1997; Díaz & Barquez 2007). An additional quote of complexity was established with the description of a new species to encompass these populations. The binomial form *Oligoryzomys brendae* was

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