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On the taxonomic validity of *Pristimantis tepuiensis* (Schlüter & Rödder, 2007) and *P. stegolepis* (Schlüter & Rödder, 2007), with remarks on the type series of *P. guaiquinimensis* (Schlüter & Rödder, 2007)

PHILIPPE J.R. KOK^{1,2,4} & CÉSAR L. BARRIO-AMORÓS³

¹Biology Department, Unit of Ecology and Systematics, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2 Pleinlaan, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium.

E-mail: philippe.kok@vub.ac.be

²Department of Vertebrates, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, 29 rue Vautier, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium.

E-mail: philippe.kok@naturalsciences.be

³Instituto de Biodiversidad Tropical, Apartado Postal 220-8000, San José, Pérez Zeledón, San Isidro del General, 11901 Costa Rica.

E-mail: cesaralba@yahoo.com

⁴Corresponding author

Abstract

The type series of *Pristimantis guaiquinimensis* (Schlüter & Rödder, 2007), *P. tepuiensis* (Schlüter & Rödder, 2007) and *P. stegolepis* (Schlüter & Rödder, 2007) have been thoroughly examined. We highlight a number of discrepancies in the original descriptions that do not support the recognition of *P. stegolepis* and *P. tepuiensis* as valid species. We demonstrate that *P. stegolepis* should be considered a junior synonym of *P. vilarsi* (Melin, 1941), and that *P. tepuiensis* should be considered a junior synonym of *P. guaiquinimensis*. We also point out that the sex of the holotype and paratype of *P. guaiquinimensis* have been wrongly determined.

Key words: *Pristimantis*, sex determination, synonyms, taxonomy

Introduction

In a same article, Schlüter and Rödder (2007) described *Eleutherodactylus guaiquinimensis*, *E. stegolepis*, and *E. tepuiensis*, all from Guaiquinima-tepui, a sandstone “cerro” (massif) located in the Central Pantepui District (*sensu* McDiarmid & Donnelly 2005), Bolívar state, Venezuela. Soon after the three species were transferred to the genus *Pristimantis*, which was removed from the synonymy of *Eleutherodactylus* by Heinicke *et al.* (2007) based on molecular data.

Most of Guaiquinima-tepui lies below 1,500 m above sea level (hereafter abbreviated as asl), with a maximum elevation of 1,650 m asl (McDiarmid & Donnelly 2005). The presence of at least one undescribed *Pristimantis* species on Guaiquinima-tepui was first highlighted by Mägdefrau *et al.* (1991), under the name *Eleutherodactylus* spp. McDiarmid and Donnelly (2005) reported a single undescribed *Pristimantis* species from the area (under the name “*Eleutherodactylus* sp. S”), arguing that additional information was needed to assess the exact number of undescribed *Pristimantis* taxa on Guaiquinima-tepui.

Pristimantis stegolepis and *P. tepuiensis* were both described based on few specimens, an adult male (holotype) and a juvenile (paratype), and a single adult male (holotype), respectively. The most intriguing diagnostic character of these two new species was the large snout-vent length (hereafter abbreviated as SVL) reported in males: 34.7 mm in *P. tepuiensis*, and 46.2 mm in *P. stegolepis*, because males of most *Pristimantis* species from the Pantepui region (*sensu* Kok 2013) barely reach 25 mm SVL.