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A reappraisal of the rhacophorid bush frog *Raorchestes flaviventris* (Boulenger, 1882), with an evaluation of the taxonomic status of *R. emeraldi* Vijayakumar, Dinesh, Prabhu and Shankar, 2014

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Abstract

Raorchestes flaviventris, a species of rhacophorid bush frog described from the Western Ghats by George Albert Boulenger in 1882, has never been reported from the region since its description. However, we herewith report a record of the species after almost 132 years and redescribe the species and also clarify confusions that prevailed over the taxonomic status of the species and its closely-related congeners, along with shedding light on literature regarding its distribution. Also, the recently described *R. emeraldi* Vijayakumar et al., 2014, which we suggest to be the same species, becomes a junior subjective synonym of *R. flaviventris*.

Key words: *Raorchestes flaviventris*, rediscovery, Western Ghats, India

Introduction

The bush frog genus *Raorchestes* (Anura: Rhacophoridae) is a species-rich radiation of direct-developing frogs that ranges from Southern India to Indochina and continental Southeast Asia. Recent studies have been successful in discerning many novel species in this genus, and the Western Ghats can be credited as being the centre of diversity for this genus with 51 valid species (Biju & Bossuyt, 2009; Biju et al., 2010; Zachariah et al., 2011; Vijayakumar et al., 2014). However, in the comprehensive lists prepared for the bush frogs of the region, one particular species, i.e., *Raorchestes flaviventris* (Boulenger, 1882), has been repeatedly reported as not being sighted or located (Biju & Bossuyt, 2009; Vijayakumar et al., 2014) since its description. Vijayakumar et al. (2014) recently described several new species from the Western Ghats, of which their description of *Raorchestes emeraldi* very closely matches with the descriptions of *R. flaviventris* provided by Boulenger (1882) and Bossuyt and Dubois (2001). Although Vijayakumar et al. (2014) provided many relevant diagnostic characters, they have not accommodated some key characters in their description of *R. emeraldi*, nor have they compared their specimens with either the descriptions or lectotype of *R. flaviventris*. Herein, we update the taxonomic status of *Raorchestes flaviventris* and also provide additional data on the holotype of *R. emeraldi* and present evidence for the consideration of *R. emeraldi* as a junior subjective synonym of *R. flaviventris*.

Methods

Collection of field data of *Raorchestes* were carried out in the Western Ghats of India as part of a larger documentation exercise, during the period 2008–2014, and specimen collections were made from 2012 to 2014.