

## RIBOSOMAL DNA AND THE PHYLOGENY OF FROGS

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**ABSTRACT:** Phylogenetic analysis of 1656 aligned sites in the 28S ribosomal RNA gene of frogs supports some of the recently recognized higher groups of anurans but provides counter-support for others. The 28S rDNA data support the monophyly of the recently recognized Pipanura (mesobatrachians plus neobatrachians), which in turn indicates paraphyly of archaeobatrachians. Mesobatrachians (pelobatoids plus pipoids), which are either considered paraphyletic or weakly supported as monophyletic in morphological analyses, also receive support as a monophyletic group from the 28S rDNA data. Hyloidea (= Bufonoidea), which is widely recognized but lacks morphological support, receives some molecular support as being monophyletic. However, Ranoidea, which is supported by morphology, is counter-supported by ribosomal DNA. In particular, dendrobatids do not group with ranids (but sometimes group with hyloids). A combined analysis of the molecular data with the morphological data of Duellman and Trueb (1986: *Biology of Amphibians*) supports Pipanura, Mesobatrachia, Neobatrachia, and Hyloidea, but shows the ranoids as paraphyletic (with Dendrobatidae related to Hyloidea). The agreement between molecular and morphological data in several regions of the anuran tree indicates an approaching stabilization of traditionally labile higher frog classification.

*Key words:* Anura; Frogs; Phylogeny; Systematics; Ribosomal DNA

THE higher phylogenetic relationships of anurans are so poorly resolved that the major competing hypotheses share little common ground. Twenty years ago, the major subdivisions within frogs were the subject of considerable debate (e.g., compare the classifications of Starrett, 1973, to those of Lynch, 1973). Today, although some progress toward stabilization of frog classification has occurred, there still appears to be little consensus among systematists about relationships among the major groups of frogs (e.g., compare Hedges and Maxson, 1993, to Ford and Cannatella, 1993). Although a few major groups of anuran families are widely recognized, some families (such as Dendrobatidae, Sooglossidae, and Pelobatidae) are regularly shifted back and forth among the higher categories by the various authorities. In short, there is no widely accepted classification of anurans because the inferred phylogenies have shown few signs

of stabilizing as new data have been brought to bear on the problem.

To date, most of the relevant data have come from morphological analyses of adult and larval frogs (summarized in Duellman and Trueb, 1986; Ford and Cannatella, 1993). Contributions from cytogenetics and molecular biology have been comparatively minor (see Hedges and Maxson, 1993; Hillis, 1991a; Morescalchi, 1973). The reasons that frog phylogeny has been such a difficult problem probably include all of the following:

(1) The major lineages of frogs probably diversified over a relatively short span of time in the Mesozoic (Milner, 1988), so the frog tree is one of long terminal branches leading back to small internodes. This shape of tree is the most difficult type to reconstruct correctly, and is the most likely to lead to misleading or ambiguous results (see Swofford and Olsen, 1990).

(2) Most phylogenetic studies of frogs (and especially molecular studies) have tended to include single exemplars to represent major monophyletic groups, which compounds the problem identified in (1) above. Unlike (1), however, this problem can be corrected by expanding published

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databases to include more taxa. As more taxa are added to the analyses, the long, unbroken branches will be divided and thereby shortened. Hopefully, such approaches will gradually result in better estimates of relationships.

(3) Morphological and cytogenetic variation in frogs is surprisingly slight compared to other vertebrate groups of a similar age and species diversity. This leaves systematists with relatively few morphological or cytogenetic characters that are informative about higher frog relationships, despite the fact that the taxa have been sampled far more intensively for morphological and cytogenetic studies than for molecular studies.

(4) Although there is considerable molecular variation among major groups of frogs, molecular studies of frog relationships have tended to focus on far too few potentially informative characters to achieve any kind of robust support for or against a particular phylogenetic hypothesis. For instance, Hillis and Davis (1987) examined restriction site and length variation in the 28S rRNA gene of 54 species representing 17 families, but were unable to make any robust conclusions about higher frog phylogeny because of the small number of changes. More recently, Hedges and Maxson (1993) examined 333 aligned sites in the mitochondrial 12S rRNA gene among 20 frogs, and found no nodes that they considered significantly supported. A major problem with molecular studies continues to be the tradeoff between sampling intensity among taxa and sampling intensity among sites in the genome. Examination of few taxa for many characters can lead to the problem noted in (2) above, whereas examination of many taxa for few characters produces poor resolution. Hopefully, this problem will also be temporary as more complete gene sequences accumulate for larger numbers of taxa.

Because of these limitations, there are no strongly supported phylogenies that relate most of the families of frogs. The purpose of this paper was to examine a relatively long and evolutionarily conservative gene in enough frogs to determine its po-

tential for estimating higher anuran relationships. Although we are aware of the need to add additional taxa, our sample of species includes enough diversity to test some of the widely recognized (although poorly supported) anuran groups. While previous studies of frog phylogeny have varied considerably in their conclusions, the following higher taxa have been recognized the most consistently:

*Archaeobatrachia*.—This name is applied by different authors to several different groups of taxa. However, the group usually includes Ascaphidae, Bombinatoridae, Discoglossidae, Leiopelmatidae, and the Mesobatrachia (see below) (cf. Cannatella, 1985; Duellman, 1975; Hedges and Maxson, 1993; cf. Laurent, 1979, 1986; Reig, 1958). When it has been considered to be a monophyletic group, *Archaeobatrachia* usually has been viewed as the sister taxon of the remaining anurans (e.g., Hedges and Maxson, 1993). However, the monophyly of this group appears highly doubtful (Cannatella, 1985; Ford and Cannatella, 1993); in fact, the part of the anuran tree that shows the strongest resolution from previous morphological analyses indicates the paraphyly of *Archaeobatrachia* (Hillis, 1991a).

*Pipanura*.—The grouping of mesobatrachians plus neobatrachians has been recognized by several recent authors (e.g., Cannatella, 1985; Duellman and Trueb, 1986; Ford and Cannatella, 1993; Hillis, 1991a; Sokol, 1975, 1977). Ford and Cannatella (1993) explicitly defined this group and named it *Pipanura*, although they noted that the name *Ranoidei* had been proposed for this clade by Sokol (1977). The latter name is usually used in a more restricted sense (see Dubois, 1984). Recognition of the *Pipanura* is obviously in conflict with the recognition of *Archaeobatrachia*, if the latter group is considered to include *Mesobatrachia* (i.e., in the sense of Duellman, 1975; Hedges and Maxson, 1993; or Reig, 1958). Among those who have recognized the *Pipanura* as a monophyletic group, opinion is divided as to whether the remaining taxa (*discoglossoids*) form a monophyletic sister group (e.g., Duellman and Trueb, 1986; Sokol,

1975) or are paraphyletic with respect to Pipanura (e.g., Cannatella, 1985; Ford and Cannatella, 1993; Hillis, 1991a; Lynch, 1973).

*Mesobatrachia*.—Mesobatrachia (Cannatella, 1985; Laurent, 1979) or Pipoidei (Dubois, 1984) has been less consistently recognized, and the support of this group from morphological data is weak (Ford and Cannatella, 1993; Hillis, 1991a). Mesobatrachia consists of the last common ancestor of Pipidae, Rhinophryinae, Pelodytidae, Pelobatidae, and Megophryidae (the latter two families are often combined into one) and all of its descendants (Ford and Cannatella, 1993). The monophyly of the pipids and rhinophrynids (usually grouped together with the extinct Palaeobatrachidae as the Pipoidea) is well supported by both adult and larval morphology (Cannatella, 1985; Ford and Cannatella, 1993), although other relationships have been suggested (Maxson and Daugherty, 1980). The remaining families are often grouped together in the Pelobatoidea, but the support for the monophyly of this taxon is not strong (Hillis, 1991a).

*Neobatrachia*.—This is the most consistently recognized group of frogs, and is supported by five morphological synapomorphies (see Ford and Cannatella, 1993). It is defined by Ford and Cannatella (1993) as “the most recent common ancestor of living hyloids (myobatrachids, leptodactylids, bufonids, hylids, centrolenids, pseudids, sooglossids, *Heleophryne*, brachycephalids, *Rhinoderma*, and *Allophryne*) and Ranoidea . . . and all of its descendants.” Among recent classifications, only that of Starrett (1973), which was based on Orton’s (1953, 1957) tadpole types, has not recognized a monophyletic Neobatrachia.

*Hyoidea*.—This group, for which the junior synonym Bufonoidea was formerly used (Dubois, 1986), has been widely recognized but is unsupported by morphological synapomorphies (Ford and Cannatella, 1993). Despite the widespread recognition of a primary division in Neobatrachia between hyloids and ranoids in anuran classifications, there are several families that have been shifted between these two groups by various authors. In

particular, the families Dendrobatidae and Sooglossidae have been the most problematic (see Ford, 1989; Nussbaum, 1980). Sooglossids have been placed within the ranoids (e.g., Duellman, 1975; Griffiths, 1959), within the hyloids (see Ford and Cannatella, 1993), or in the sister group to hyloids plus ranoids (e.g., Duellman and Trueb, 1986; Lynch, 1973). Dendrobatids have been considered hyloids by many (e.g., Laurent, 1979, 1986; Lynch, 1971, 1973; Noble, 1922, 1931), despite the fact that they seem to have a full suite of ranoid synapomorphies (e.g., Duellman and Trueb, 1986; Ford, 1989, in press; Ford and Cannatella, 1993; Griffiths, 1963).

*Ranoidea*.—This group of neobatrachians traditionally has been united on the basis of a firmisternal pectoral girdle [but see Ford and Cannatella (1993) for additional synapomorphies]. Firmisterny is thus viewed as the derived condition, with an arciferal girdle seen as the ancestral condition. Firmisternal girdles are also found in some pipids, where the condition is widely regarded as convergent. Dendrobatids also have firmisternal pectoral girdles, which is part of the evidence used to place Dendrobatidae in this group (Ford, in press). As defined by Ford and Cannatella (1993), Ranoidea includes “the common ancestor of hyperoliids, rhacophorids, ranids, dendrobatids, *Hemisus*, arthroleptids, and microhylids, and all of its descendants.”

We chose at least two of what are considered to be among the most divergent taxa from each of these groups to have minimal tests of monophyly of the widely recognized clades of frogs. We examined the large subunit, nuclear ribosomal RNA gene (encoding 28S rRNA) because this gene shows considerable promise for examining phylogenetic relationships across the Mesozoic (Hillis and Dixon, 1991), when the major groups of anurans presumably diverged.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

High-molecular-weight DNA was isolated from muscle tissue from *Latimeria chalumnae* (Actinistia), *Leiopelma hamiltoni* (Leiopelmatidae), *Spea multiplicata* (Pelobatidae), *Rana catesbeiana* (Rani-

dae), *Allobates femoralis* (Dendrobatidae), *Ceratophrys ornata* (Leptodactylidae), *Gastrotheca pseustes* (Hylidae), and *Nesomantis thomasetti* (Sooglossidae) following the protocol of Hillis and Davis (1986). Each sample of DNA was cleaved with the restriction enzyme *Eco* RI and ligated into a lambda vector ( $\lambda$ gt10 for *Rana* and *Gastrotheca*, Lambda Zap II [Stratagene] for the others) to produce a subgenomic library (Hillis et al., 1990). The *Rana* and *Gastrotheca* libraries were screened by filterlift hybridization with a cloned mammalian 28S rRNA gene (see Hillis and Davis, 1987); the remaining libraries were screened with the isolated 28S rRNA gene of *Rana catesbeiana* (pE2528). Positive plaques were selected and the inserts were subcloned into the vector pBluescript (Stratagene). Subclones were verified by restriction digestion, Southern blotting, and sequencing.

Plasmid DNA was purified using the protocols described by Hillis et al. (1990), denatured in alkali, and sequenced by the base-specific dideoxynucleotide chain termination method (Sanger et al., 1977) using modified T7 DNA polymerase (Tabor and Richardson, 1987). Sequencing primers and their locations are given in Hillis et al. (1991) or Hillis and Dixon (1991). Reaction products were separated on 4–6% polyacrylamide gels and visualized by autoradiography. DNA sequences were aligned using the alignment subroutines described by Pustell and Kafatos (1982, 1984, 1986). In addition to the taxa listed above, we aligned the published 28S rDNA sequences of *Xenopus laevis* (Pipidae; Ware et al., 1983; as corrected by Ajuh et al., 1991) and *Mus musculus* (Amniota; Hassouna et al., 1984). Regions of questionable alignment were excluded from phylogenetic analyses.

To compare the results from the 28S rDNA data to morphology, we re-analyzed the data of Duellman and Trueb (1986) for the same families that we examined. We also combined the molecular and morphological data to evaluate the relative strength of phylogenetic support from the two data sets.

All possible tree topologies were evaluated under the parsimony criterion using

Swofford's (1990) Phylogenetic Analysis Using Parsimony (PAUP) program, version 3.0s. The amniote (*Mus*) and coelacanth (*Latimeria*) sequences were treated as outgroups. All changes among character states were weighted equally, and gaps were treated as a fifth character state. Regions of the gene that pair during secondary structural folding were not weighted by one-half as suggested by Wheeler and Honeycutt (1988) because this overcompensates for non-independence of the data (Dixon and Hillis, 1993). However, we recognize that equal weighting could introduce bias resulting from the weak interdependence among paired sites. The presence of phylogenetic signal in the sequences was evaluated by examining the skewness of the resulting tree-length distributions (Hillis, 1991b; Hillis and Huelssenbeck, 1992). The skewness statistic  $g_1$  can be used to evaluate whether or not a data matrix contains more structure than is expected from variation that is random with respect to phylogenetic history. We did not use non-parametric bootstrapping (Felsenstein, 1985) because interpretation of bootstrapping results is not straightforward and bootstrap proportions are not comparable among branches on a tree or among studies (Hillis and Bull, in press).

## RESULTS

We aligned 1656 base-positions across the ten taxa (Fig. 1), of which 336 positions were variable. Our sequences spanned three sections of the 28S gene: *Mus* positions 110–425, 1132–1789, and 3342–4134. Parsimony analysis of this data matrix resulted in three most parsimonious trees, which differed only in the placement of *Allobates* (Fig. 2). These three trees were 375 steps long, with a consistency index of 0.622 (excluding uninformative characters).

The skewness analysis indicated a significant amount of phylogenetic signal in the 28S rDNA data matrix ( $g_1 = -1.34$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ). Not surprisingly, the best supported internal branch separated the ingroup and outgroup taxa (Fig. 2). The tree-length distribution of the possible resolutions within frogs was also strongly left skewed ( $g_1 = -0.57$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ), indicating

	01   20	01   40	01   60	01   80
Mus	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGCAGCGCCGACCCCTTTACACCGCATGCCTTCTGGGTGAGGGGCGCGG			
Xen	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGCCGCGCCCTGCACACCGCATGCCCTCTGGCTGGGGGGGCGG			
Spe	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGCC--CGACGCCCTTTACACCGCATGCCCTCTGGCTGGGGGGTGAC			
Ran	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGCCCTTTACACCGCATGCCCTCGGCTGGGTGGGCGG			
Gas	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGG			
Lei	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGG			
Nes	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGG			
Den	NNNNNNNGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGG			
Cer	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGG			
Lat	GGGTCGCGGCTTAGGGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGGCGG			
	02   00	02   20	02   40	
Mus	CGAGCACCCCGGGTTCAGGAAGACTAGCTCCGGG--TCGGGCACCTGCCACACTCCGGCCATCGCCGGGGG			
Xen	GCCGAGCCCC--GGTTCAGGAAGACTAGCTCCGGG--TCGGGCACCTGCCACAAATCCGGCCACCGCGGGG			
Spe	TGTGAGCCCTT--GGTTCAGGAAGACTAGCTCCGGG--TCGGGCACCTGCCACAAATCCGGCCATCGTTGGNT			
Ran	AGCGAGCCCCGGGTTTCAGGAAGACTAGCTCCGGG--TCGGGCACCTGCCACAAATCCGGCCATCGCCGGGG			
Gas	NANCNAGNNNNNGGTTTCAGGAAGACTAGCTCCGGG--TCGGGCACCTGCCACAAATCCGGCCATCGCCGGGG			
Lei	CAGCGAGCCCCGGGTTTCAGGAAGACTAGCTCCGGG--TCGGGCACCTGCCACAAATCCGGCCATCGCCGGGG			
Nes	CAGCGAGCCCC--GGTTCAGGAAGACTAGCTCCGGG--TCGGGCACCTGCCACAAATCCGGCCANCGCGGGG			
Den	CAGCGAGCCCCGGGTTTCAGGAAGATTATCAGCGGGTTCGGGCACCTGCCACCAATCCGGCCATCGCCGGGG			
Cer	CAGCGAGCCCCGGGTTTCAGGAAGACTAGCTCCGGG--TCGGGCACCTGCCACAAATCCGGCCATCGCCGGGG			
Lat	CAGCGAGCCCCGGGTTTCAGGAAGACTAAGTCCGAA--TCGGGTGCCTGCCACGCTCCGGCCATCGCCGGGG			
	02   60	02   80	03   00	03   20
Mus	CCG--CGCGGCCGAGCCAGAAGGGCTCAGCCCAACGAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Xen	CCG--CGCGCCCTGGGCCAGAGGAGCCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Spe	TNGTCGCNCCTGGGCCAGATGTGCCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Ran	GCCGCCGCCCTGGGCCAGAGGGCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Gas	CCG--CGCGCCCTGGGCCAGAGGGCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Lei	NCG--CGCGCCCTGGGCCAGAGGAGCCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Nes	GCCGCCGCCCTGGGCCAGAGGGCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Den	NCCGCGGCCCTGGGCCAGANGGGCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Cer	--CCGCGCCCTGGGCCAGAGGGCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
Lat	G--CCCCGCCCTGGGCCAGAAGAGCCTCAGCCCAACAAACCCTTACGTTCGGGTTTCGCCACCATTGAGG			
	03   40	03   60	03   80	
Mus	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCAGTTGTTTCATGGCATTCCCTTTCAACTTTTCTTGAAC			
Xen	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCGCCTGTTTCATGGCATTCCCTTTCAACTTTTCTTGAAC			
Spe	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCAGTGTTCATGGCATTTC--GGTCAACTTTTC--GAAAC			
Ran	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCGCCTGTTTCATGGCATTCCCTTTCAANNNNNNNNNNNN			
Gas	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCGCCTGTTTCATGGCATTTC--TTCAACTTTTCTTGAAC			
Lei	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCAGTGTTCATGGCATTCCCTTTCAACTTTTCTTGAAC			
Nes	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCGCCTGTTTCANGGCATTCCCTTTCAACTTTTCTTGAAC			
Den	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCGCCTGTTTCATGGCATTCCCTTTCAACTTTTCTTGAAC			
Cer	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCCGTGCT--CTGGCTATCGTCTGTTTCATGGCATTTC--TTCAACTTTTCTTGAAC			
Lat	TAGATTCGATTTATGGCC--TGCTGCTGCTATCAGTGTTCATGGCATTTC--TTCAACTTTTCTTGAAC			
	04   00	04   20	11   40	11   60
Mus	TTCTCTCAAGTT--CTCCGCACTTTGGCAA		AACTTTGTGCCTGGTTCCTCAGATTGCGCACGCGCTCA	
Xen	TTCTCTCAAGTT--CTCCGCACTTTGGCAA		AACTTTGTGCCTGGTTCCTCAGATTGCGCGCGGCTCA	
Spe	TTCTCTCAAGTTTCTCCGCACTTTGGCAA		AACTTTGTGC--TGGTTCCTCAGATTGCGCGCGGCTCA	
Ran	NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN		NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN	
Gas	TTCTCTCAAGTT--CTCCGCACTTTGGCAA		AACTTTGTGCCTGGTTCCTCAGATTGCGCGTGCCTCA	
Lei	TTCTCTCAAGTT--CTCCGCACTTTGGCAA		AACTTTGTGCCTGGTTCCTCAGATTGCGCGCGGCTCA	
Nes	TTCTCTCAAGTT--CTCCGCACTTTGGCAG		NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN	
Den	TTCTCTCAAGTT--CTCNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN		NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNTCA	
Cer	TTCTCTCAAGTT--CTCCGCACTTTGGCGA		AACTTTGTGCCTGGTTCCTCAGATTGCGCGCGGCTCA	
Lat	TTCTCTCAAGTT--CTCCGCACTTTGGCAA		AACTTTGTGCCTGGTTCCTCAGATTGCGCACGCGCTCA	

FIG. 1.—Aligned DNA sequences from *Mus* (Mus), *Xenopus* (Xen), *Spea* (Spe), *Rana* (Ran), *Gastrotheca* (Gas), *Leiopelma* (Lei), *Nesomantis* (Nes), *Allobates* (Den), *Ceratophrys* (Cer), and *Latimeria* (Lat). Numbers refer to the position in the mouse gene as reported by Hassouna et al. (1984). Sequences enclosed in square brackets were not aligned and were not used in the phylogenetic analysis.

	11 80	12 00	12 20
Mus	G--TCCCCGAGCAG-GCTTTCGGCGGCACCCGTTACTTCCACT	[TCCCCGGGGCGGGCCCCCG]	
Xen	GCCTCCCTGAGACGCGCTTTGGG--ACACCGGTTACTTCCACT	[CCCCGCCCGCGGGGCC]	
Spe	GCCTCCC-GAGCGTCGCTTTGGG--ACACCGGTTACTTCCACT	[CCCCCCGCTGGGGCC]	
Ran	NN	[ ]	
Gas	GCCTCCC-GAGCGTNGCTTTGGG--ACACCGGTTACTTCCACT	[ACCCGGGTCTGGGGCC]	
Lei	GCCTCCCGGAGA---GCTTTGGG--ACACCGGTTACTTCCACT	[CCGCCCNCGGGGCC]	
Nes	NN	[ ]	
Den	NCCTCCNNNNNGT-GCTTTCGGGCGNNNNNGTTACTTCCACT	[CCCGCCGNC]	
Cer	GCCTCCC-GAGCGT-GCTTTGGG--ACACCGGTTACTTCCACT	[CCCGCCCCCGGGGC]	
Lat	GTCTCCCGTCNNNTCGCTTTCCGGG-GTACCGGTTACTTTCACT	[CCGCGCCCGGCC]	

	12 40	12 60
Mus	GGCTCCACCCTAGGG	[CTCCGGAGAGGTACAGCGGCTCCCG]
Xen	GACTCCACCCTAGGG	[CGCGGGGAGGGAGGCGGGGGGGCCCCCGCCCCCGGGCCCGG]
Spe	GACTCCACCCTAGCG	[CGCGCGCGCCCGCGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGCCGTGGCAGGCCTCCAT]
Ran	NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN	[CGGCCGCCCG]
Gas	GACTCCACCCTAGGG	[CCGAGCAAGCCNGGACGGCGCG]
Lei	GACTCCACCCTAGGG	[CGCGCGCGCCCGCTG]
Nes	NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN	[ ]
Den	GACTCCACCCTAGGG	[CTCCGGGCTNNTGCCTCCCG]
Cer	GACTCCACCCTAGCG	[CGCGGGGACGGGCCAGTNNNTGCCGCCCG]
Lat	GACTCCACCCTAGGG	[GTGCGGAGCACGCCCCCCG]

	12 80	13 00	13 20	13 40
Mus	CGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGGCGGGCGGCCCTCCACTCGTGTCTGCGATGCGCAATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Xen	CGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGGCGGGGAGCCCTCCACTCGCCTCGCGCGCGTATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Spe	GGTG-----CGGGCAGAGCGG-CGTGGCAGGCCCTCCACTCGTCTCGCGCGCGTATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Ran	CGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGGCG--GCGGCCCTCCACTCGTACTCGCGCGCACCGTCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Gas	CGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGG-CGAGGCAGCCCTCCACTCGTACTCGCGCGCGCNATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Lei	CGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGGCGAGGCAGCCCTCCACTCGTACTCGCACGCATATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Nes	CGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGGCG-GCGGCCCTCCACTCGTACTCGCACGCATATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Den	CGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGGCG-GCAGCCCTCCACTCGTACTCGCGCGCACGATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Cer	CGTGGTGGCCGGGAGAGCGGGCG--GCAGCCCTCCACTCGTACTCGCGCGCGTATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			
Lat	CGTGGTGGTGGGAGAGTGGGCGTCCAGCCCTCCACTCGTACTCGCACGCATATCCTGGGCTTTCTA			

	13 60	13 80	14 00
Mus	CCACTTGATACGAACCCGTTCCCGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCAGGCATCGCCAGGACTGCACGTT		
Xen	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTTCCCGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCAGGCATCGCCAGGACTGCACGTT		
Spe	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTC-CGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCAGGCATCGCCAGGACTGCACGTT		
Ran	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTTCCCGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCAGGCATCGCCAGGACTGCACGTT		
Gas	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTTCCCGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCAGGCATCGCCAGGANTGCACGTT		
Lei	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTTCCCGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCAGGCATCGCCAGGANTGCACGTT		
Nes	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTTNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNTGAGAC-ACCTCCAGGCATNNNNAGGANTGCANGTT		
Den	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTTCCCGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCANNNNNCGCCAGGACTGCACGTT		
Cer	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTTCCCGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCAGGCATCGCCAGGACTGCACGTT		
Lat	CCACTTGATACGGACCCGTTCCCGCTTCGGTCTCCTTTGAGACCACCTCCANGCATCGCCAGGACTGCACGTT		

	14 20	14 40	14 60	14 80
Mus	TAGCCAGCAGGCT-GGACCCATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			
Xen	TAGCCAGCAGGCT-GGACCCATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			
Spe	TAGCCAGCAGGCT-GGACCCATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			
Ran	TAGCCAGCAGGCT-GGACCCATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			
Gas	TAGC-AGCAGGCT-GGACCCATATCCCCGNTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			
Lei	TNNNNNNNAGGCT-GGACCCATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			
Nes	TAGC-AGCAGGNT-GGNNNNATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGNTTCA			
Den	TNNNNNNNAGGCT-GGACCCATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			
Cer	TAGCCAGCAGGCT-GGACCCATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			
Lat	TAGCCAGCAGGCTTGGACCCATATCCCCGCTTTCTGATTAGCTTGGTAGATCATCGACCAAGGGAGGCTTCA			

FIG. 1.—Continued.



	33 80	34 00	34 20	34 40
Mus	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTACGGAGCAGT			
Xen	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTACGGAGCAGT			
Spe	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTACGGAGCAGT			
Ran	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTACGGAGCAGT			
Gas	NN			
Lei	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTNNNNNNNNNN			
Nes	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTACGGAGCAGT			
Den	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTACGGAGCAGT			
Cer	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTACGGAGCAGT			
Lat	TCTTTAAGTTACTTCGCGCCCATTTGCCGCCCTCATTGATACTGAGAGAATTCCATCGGTTTACGGAGCAGT			
	34 60	34 80	35 00	35 20
Mus	AGATTAATCACTGCGCGTACTTACCTACTTGCTCTAAGGGTGACAGGGATGGATGATAGATCGCTTTGGTGT			
Xen	AGATTAATCACTGCGCGTACTTACCTACTTGCTCTAAGGGTGACAGGGATGGATGATAGATCGCTTTGGTGT			
Spe	AGATTAATCACTGCGCGTACTTACCTACTTGCTCTAAGGGTGACAGGGATGGATGATAGATCGCTTTGGTGT			
Ran	AGATTAATCACTGCGCGTACTTACCTACTTGCTCTAAGGGTGACAGGGATGGATGATAGATCGCTTTGGTGT			
Gas	NN			
Lei	NN			
Nes	AGATTAATCACTGNNNCTACTTACCTACTTGCTCTAAGGGTGACAGGGATGGATGATAGATCGCTTTGGTGT			
Den	AGATTAATCACTGNNNCTACTTACCTACTTGCTCTAAGGGTGACAGGGATGGATGATAGATCGCTTTGGTGT			
Cer	AGATTAATCACTGCGCGTACTTACCTACTTGCTCTAAGGGTGACAGGGATGGATGATAGATCGCTTTGGTGT			
Lat	AGATTAATCACTGCGCGTACTTACCTACTTGCTCTAAGGGTGACAGGGATGGATGATAGATCGCTTTGGTGT			
	35 40	35 60	35 80	
Mus	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACCGTG			
Xen	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACCGTG			
Spe	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACCGTG			
Ran	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCGAGTCGCCTTTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGNNNNNN			
Gas	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACCGTG			
Lei	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTAGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACCGTG			
Nes	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACCGTG			
Den	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACNNNN			
Cer	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACCGTG			
Lat	CGGTTCCCTTGCCCGAACCGCCTTAGTCGCCCTTTTC--TTCTGGGACAACCTCGAAGTGGATCAGACCGTG			
	36 00	36 20	36 40	36 60
Mus	CCACTTCTCTGTACTCTCCACATCTTATTACCCTCCGGG	[GGCCGCGGGCCGGGGCAGGAGCGCAGCCC]		
Xen	ACACTTCTCTGTACTCTCCACATCTTATTACCCTCCGGG	[GGCGCGAGCAGCGTTTCCCGG]		
Spe	ACACTTCTCTGTACTCTCCACATCTTATTACCCTCCGGG	[GGNAGCGAGCAGCAC]		
Ran	NN	[CCCTCCGGGTGCGGGAGCGCCACCCCG]		
Gas	ACACTTCTCTGTACTCTCCACATCTTATTACCNNNNNNNN	[ ]		
Lei	ACACTTCTCTGTACTCTCCACATCTTATTACCCTCCGGG	[GGCAGGCGCCCT]		
Nes	ACACTTCTCTGTACTCTCCACATCTTATTACCCTCCGGG	[GGCGGGCGCAGGGGAGTGGGCCCGGGCC]		
Den	NN	[CGGG]		
Cer	ACACTTCTCTGTACTCTCCACATCTTATTACCCTCCGGG	[GGCGAGTCAGGGGAGCGCCAGCCGCTT]		
Lat	ACACTTCTCTGTACTCTCCACATCTTATTACCCTCCGGG	[GGCAGCNAGGACCGATCCGACT]		
	36 80	37 00	37 20	
Mus	[CAGCCCCGTGCGGCCGAGCGCC]	CGGCGGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		
Xen		CGGCGGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		
Spe		GGACGGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		
Ran		CGGCGGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		
Gas		NN		
Lei		CGGCGGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		
Nes	[GTGGCCT]	CGGCGGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		
Den		CNNNGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		
Cer	[TCCCGG]	CGGCGGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		
Lat		CGGCGGCCACTTTATGGTGATGAGAATAGCAAAAAGTGAATGGGC		

FIG. 1.—Continued.



	41   00	41   20
Mus	CGAAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGCCGAGAAGGATAGTAACACTTCGTCTTAAG	
Xen	CGAAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGCCGAGAAGGATAGTAACACTTCGTCTTAAG	
Spe	NN	
Ran	CGAAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGCCGAGAAGGATAGTAACACTTCNTCTTAAG	
Gas	CGAAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGCCGAGAAGGATAGTAACACTTCGTCTTAAG	
Lei	CGAAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGCCGAGAAGGATAGTAACACTTCGTCTTAAG	
Nes	NNAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGNNNAGAAGGNTAGTAACACTTCGTCTTAAG	
Den	CGAAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGCCGAGAAGGATAGTAACACTTCGTCTTAAG	
Cer	CGAAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGCCGAGAAGGATAGTAACACTTCGTCTTAAG	
Lat	CGAAAAACTAGGAAGCTACAGCCGAGAAGGATAGTAACACTTCGTCTTAAG	

FIG. 1.—Continued.

the additional presence of phylogenetic signal among the frogs. The data matrix continued to show significant structure as the next four branches were resolved: these branches provided support for the monophyly of the pipanurans, the two mesobatrachians, the ranid plus the two mesobatrachians, and the hylid plus sooglossid.

Of the six commonly recognized higher groups of frogs described in the introduction, our analysis of 28S rDNA provided independent support for three taxa: Mesobatrachia, Pipanura, and Hyloidea. In agreement with recent morphological analyses (see Ford and Cannatella, 1993), our data suggest that Archaeobatrachia (sensu Duellman, 1975) is not monophyletic. However, our data also do not support some of the groups that are supported by morphological analyses, namely Neobatrachia and Ranoidea (if Dendrobatidae is included in the latter group).

The morphological data of Duellman and Trueb (1986) conflict with our results by supporting Neobatrachia and Ranoidea, but not Mesobatrachia or Hyloidea (Fig. 3). The morphological tree is 12 steps long and has a consistency index of 0.917. The two data sets agree that Pipanura is monophyletic and that Archaeobatrachia is not. A combined analysis of our molecular data and the corresponding morphological data from Duellman and Trueb (1986) produces a single most parsimonious tree that supports the monophyly of Pipanura, Mesobatrachia, Neobatrachia, and Hyloidea, but not Archaeobatrachia or Ranoidea (Fig. 3). This tree is 395 steps long and has a consistency index (excluding uninformative characters) of 0.797.

## DISCUSSION

The only higher clade of frogs that is strongly supported by both the morphological and molecular data sets is Pipanura. The morphological and our 28S rDNA data therefore agree that Archaeobatrachia (sensu Duellman, 1975) is not monophyletic, in contrast to the analysis of Hedges and Maxson (1993). There is also support of the Mesobatrachia from both the 28S data and some morphological studies (e.g., Cannatella, 1985; Ford and Cannatella, 1993), although other morphological (e.g., the data of Duellman and Trueb, 1986) and molecular (e.g., Hedges and Maxson, 1993) studies do not support this group.

Other comparisons between morphological and molecular studies show little agreement in the relationships among families. The Hyloidea has no known support from morphology, and yet appears to

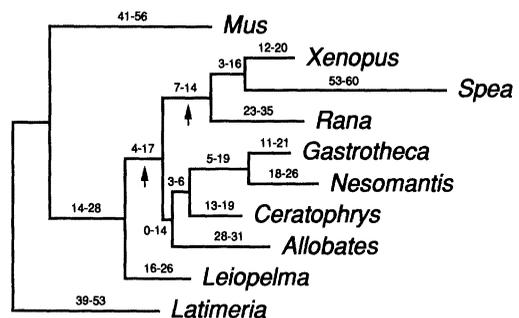


FIG. 2.—One of three most parsimonious trees for the 28S rDNA data. The two arrows indicate the alternative placement of *Allobates* in the other two trees. The numbers along the branches show the minimum and maximum number of changes that can occur across all most parsimonious character reconstructions.

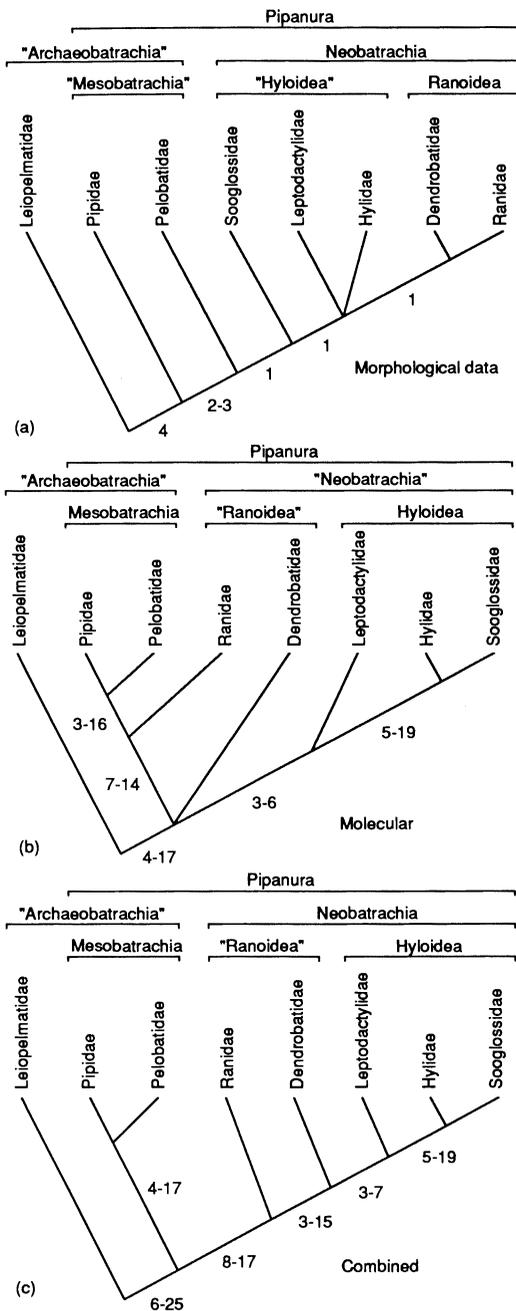


FIG. 3.—Comparison and combination of molecular (28S rDNA) and morphological (from Duellman and Trueb, 1986) data sets. The two outgroup taxa in the molecular study were used to root the trees but are not shown here for the sake of simplicity. For the morphological data, the outgroups were scored as having all ancestral states. The content of the six major groups of frogs follows common usage, and non-monophyletic groups on each tree are enclosed in quotation marks.

receive some support from the ribosomal genes. Hedges and Maxson (1993) also found some support for a modified Hyloidea (their Bufonoidea), but only if Rhaconophoridae (which has all the morphological synapomorphies of Ranoidea) was included in the group. Neither the 12S nor the 28S rDNA data support the inclusion of Dendrobatidae in the Ranoidea. If dendrobatids are considered ranoids, then ranoids are either paraphyletic or polyphyletic in our analysis, and in the tree of Hedges and Maxson (1993) Dendrobatidae is embedded within the hyloids. If we limit our analysis to the frog taxa, the shortest tree that would place ranids and dendrobatids together would require six additional steps (although there are fewer steps between the alternatives if various combinations of outgroup taxa are added). Morphologists have long disagreed about the relationships of this family, and have been divided about whether or not Dendrobatidae belonged with ranoids (e.g., Duellman and Trueb, 1986; Ford, 1989; Ford and Cannatella, 1993; Griffiths, 1963) or hyloids (Laurent, 1979, 1986; Lynch, 1971, 1973; Noble, 1922, 1931). We see the molecular data (i.e., this paper and Hedges and Maxson, 1993) as too weak to resolve this controversy satisfactorily, although they do provide some support for a hyloid relationship of dendrobatids.

Perhaps the most surprising relationship suggested by the 28S rDNA data is the connection between the ranid and the mesobatrachians, which suggests that Neobatrachia (as usually recognized) is not monophyletic. For the 28S rDNA data, the shortest ingroup tree that contains a monophyletic group of taxa that are currently considered to be neobatrachians is 6 steps longer than the most parsimonious tree. Of course, if the tree shown in Fig. 2 is correct and the phylogenetic definitions of Neobatrachia, Pipanura, and Ranoidea used by Ford and Cannatella (1993) are followed, then all three of these names would be synonyms. Figure 2 also suggests that the possibility of firmisterny as the ancestral condition of the pipanuran pectoral girdle should be given consideration. However, the monophyly of Neobatrachia

appears to be well supported by morphological synapomorphies (Ford and Cannatella, 1993), and also is the group most strongly supported by 18S rDNA sequences (Hedges and Maxson, 1993).

As can be seen in Fig. 3, our tree is considerably different from the tree based on earlier morphological data. For the in-group taxa, the morphological tree would require 19 additional steps to explain the 28S rDNA data compared to the most parsimonious tree. In cases of conflict between multiple data sets, one option is to combine the data in a joint analysis (Hillis, 1987; Kluge, 1989; Miyamoto, 1985). Minimally, this permits discovery of which data set shows the strongest support for its respective conclusions. It is also possible that weak but compatible signal in the two data sets will reveal underlying historical patterns where none was visible in the separate analyses (Barrett et al., 1991). However, there is also the possibility that a noisy, misleading data set will overwhelm the phylogenetic signal in an otherwise informative data set. Despite these limitations, we believe the results from the combination of the morphological and 28S rDNA data sets are revealing (Fig. 3). The combined analysis shows elements of both the molecular and morphological trees, and is nearly consistent with the classification proposed by Ford and Cannatella (1993). The only deviations are that this tree provides support for the monophyly of the hyloid taxa (which Ford and Cannatella considered to be paraphyletic), and the two included "ranoids" appear to be paraphyletic. If this tree accurately reflects the phylogenetic history of frogs, then it suggests that firmisterny could be ancestral in Neobatrachia. However, a tree that unites *Rana* and *Allobates* is only three steps away from the shortest tree in this analysis, so the additional synapomorphies of Ranoidea discussed by Ford and Cannatella (1993) are probably sufficient to support the monophyly of this group.

Obviously, an expansion of the 28S rDNA data set to include additional taxa would be desirable; it appears that this gene contains information that will be useful in elucidating the relationships of frogs. We

are encouraged by the level of independent support by the 28S rDNA data for some groups that were suggested originally by morphological studies, and we expect that a continued parallel development of morphological and molecular studies eventually will result in a well supported phylogenetic hypothesis for frogs.

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## SYSTEMATIC STUDIES OF THE COSTA RICAN MOSS SALAMANDERS, GENUS *NOTOTRITON*, WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF THREE NEW SPECIES

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**ABSTRACT:** Study of allozyme variation, external morphology, and osteology reveals that there are more species of moss salamanders (genus *Nototriton*) in Costa Rica than the two currently recognized. The three species for which names are available are valid, and new diagnoses are presented for them; three additional species are described. The phylogenetic relationships and biogeography of the six species are investigated. The radiation of *Nototriton* in present-day Costa Rica has involved miniaturization accompanied by both morphological and ecological specialization. Costa Rican species inhabit moss-mats and leaf-litter; most of the remaining species in the genus are bromeliad-dwellers. The revised genus *Nototriton* includes two Mexican, one Guatemalan (another, detected in the present study, remains undescribed), two Honduran, and six Costa Rican species. The six Costa Rican species appear to form a monophyletic group, but the phylogenetic relationships of the two northern species groups to each other and to the southern group remain uncertain.

**Key words:** Salamanders; Plethodontidae; *Nototriton*; Costa Rica; Allozymes; Morphometrics; Systematics; New species

SALAMANDERS of the genus *Nototriton* (commonly known as moss salamanders) are inconspicuous components of cloud forest faunas from Oaxaca, Mexico, to central Costa Rica. Most of the species occur in moss mats hanging in trees or bushes, or in moss covering dirt banks, large boulders, or stumps. Others inhabit bromeliads. In a few places (such as on the northeastern slopes of the Cordillera Central in Costa

Rica), they can be found easily, but characteristically they are uncommon. Even species that have been known taxonomically for more than 40 years (e.g., *N. richardi*) are represented by fewer than 25 specimens in the museums of the world. Typically, species of *Nototriton* are small; none exceeds 40 mm in snout-vent length and several species are not known to exceed 30 mm. These salamanders have slender bodies, narrow heads, and long, tapering tails that exceed their snout-vent length. Their eyes are small and oriented anteriorly, and several of the species have

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