

**ON THE PRECEDENCE OF THE NAME
SCINAX FLAVIDUS LA MARCA, 2004,
TO ESTABLISH SENIOR SYNONYMY**

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Scinax flavidus La Marca, 2004, and *Scinax manriquei* Barrio *et al.*, 2004, are recently described taxa from the Andes of Venezuela and Colombia. Given the striking similarities of both taxa, the possibility arose that both referred to the same species. Examination of primary type specimens is, in accordance, necessary. Since the type material of the later has not been available to me for study since the time of its publication, I have to rely on the original published account for this taxon. The original description of *Scinax manriquei* was probably based on its types and referred specimens, but we rest unsure because the material upon which it was based was not specified. Description of *Scinax flavidus* (Fig. 1) was based on its onomatophore holotype, with additional data on variation complemented with paratypes and additional specimens. Both descriptions are as detailed and complete as to allow for comparisons to ascertain their taxonomic identities. The comparisons of the descriptions of these nominal taxa revealed the sharing of so many diagnostic features, that we can state beyond doubt that we are dealing with a single species.

To establish which one of these names is the oldest available name to be applied for the species, and to comply with the "principle of priority" in the Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999: article 23), we need to ascertain which the oldest name to be applied for is. Both original descriptions appeared in journals with issues print-dated "March 2004". Such a coincidence will call for determination applying the "principle of the first reviser" (ICZN 1999: article 24), but such an action is deemed unnecessary because the precedence of names can be determined.

Description of *Scinax manriquei* appeared in the Journal of Herpetology volume 38, number 1, dated "March 2004". According to the ICZN (1999: article 21.3), in the absence of evidence, the date of publication to be adopted would be the last day of the month. This action is, perhaps, unnecessary, since this issue is stated to be published on 26 March 2004 (J.R. Mendelson, editor, *in e-litt.*, 2 November 2004); statement that can objectively be demonstrated. Description of *Scinax flavidus* appeared in the journal *Herpetotropicos*, volume 1, number 1, dated "1 March 2004"; this issue being deposited in a public library, the Venezuelan National Library (B. Araque, Jefe de División, Biblioteca Nacional, *in official-stamped litt.* 18 March 2004). The time-priority deposition action in a public library (and a logically deducted earlier printing date, also supported by invoice) renders *Scinax flavidus* La Marca, 2004, a senior synonym of the name *Scinax manriquei* Barrio *et al.*, 2004, with the later becoming a junior objective synonym of it.

How these nominal taxa ended up described by colleagues working in the same country calls for an explanation. My first involvement with the species dates back to April 1989, when, in the company of several friends, secured a small collection of specimens of *S. flavidus*; a second herpetological party in October 1992, that I lead in conjunction with J.D. Lynch, managed to obtain additional specimens (La Marca 2004:5). I was directly involved with the collection of all, but four, of the 30 type specimens of *Scinax flavidus*, as well as the four additional specimens reported in the original description. These animals were treated in an unpublished doctoral dissertation (La Marca 1998) dealing with the biogeography of the amphibians from the Venezuelan Andean Cordillera de Mérida that was publicly discussed in December 1998.

In contraposition, none of the five type specimens of *Scinax manriquei* were collected by its authors, as appears to be also the case for their referred specimens, although collectors for the later were not explicitly indicated. I clarify that none of the specimens involved in the description of *Scinax flavidus* were collected by the authors of *Scinax manriquei*, either. This is mandatory to state, since one of the coauthors of the later species, the entomologist A. Orellana, accompanied us in our herpetological party of October 1992 (*sup. cit.*), a fact that I acknowledged in the original description (La Marca 2004:9). None of the records (e.g. field notes by E. La Marca, plus others by J.D. Lynch) deposited in the Collection of Amphibians and Reptiles of the University of Los Andes (ULABG), document his participation as collector of any specimens of this hylid frog. It is not clear what was meant by Barrio *et al.* (2004:110) when they stated that "In 1992, one of us (AO) also discovered the species near the Parque Nacional Chorro del Indio southeast of San Cristóbal (Táchira state) at an elevation of 1400 m". That was the year of our expedition to that National Park, and we supposed that was the first herpetological collection in the area.

Duplication of effort in describing a pair of similar herp species in Venezuela was last seen with the description of *A. matthewi* Markezich *et* Barrio-Amorós, 2004, and *Atractus nororientalis*

- Taxonomy / *Taxonomía*
- Biogeography / *Biogeografía*
- Ecology / *Ecología*
- Natural History / *Historia Natural*



FIG. 1. Adult female of *Scinax flavidus* from via Canaguá-Guaimaral, Mérida State. ULABG 2430. Photo by E. La Marca.

Hembra adulta de *Scinax flavidus* de via Canaguá-Guaimaral, Estado Mérida. ULABG 2430. Fotografía por E. La Marca.

Sánchez *et al.*, 2004, as documented by Kok *et al.* (2007). In this case, *A. matthewi* was described employing, in part, material collected by some of the authors of *A. nororientalis*; the first of which lead studies in the area, heading towards completion of a University dissertation that was defended in public (D. Sánchez, pers. com.). The authors of *A. matthewi*, on the contrary, did not rely on specimens collected by them. In cases like these, it is advisable that researchers communicate with active colleagues that may seemingly be working with the same species. Being this difficult in some cases, museum curators must exert careful screening of possibilities to avoid taxonomic instability. A stronger position for the later is to stick to precise norms for loans, as some organized museums do (their experience sometimes built upon similar cases in their own countries and abroad).

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