

1. Vasudevan, K., Chaitra, M. S. and Aggarwal, R. K., *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **92**, 281–282.
2. Kuramoto, M. and Joshy, S. H., *Curr. Herpetol.*, 2003, **22**, 51–60.
3. Biju, S. D. and Bossuyt, F., *Copeia*, 2005, **1**, 29–37.
4. Biju, S. D. and Bossuyt, F., *Curr. Sci.*, 2005, **88**, 175–177.
5. Boulenger, G. A., *The Fauna of British India including Ceylon and Burma. Reptiles and Amphibians*, Taylor and Francis, 1890.
6. Kuramoto, M. and Joshy, S. H., *Curr. Herpetol.*, 2001, **20**, 85–95.
7. Kurabayashi, M. et al., *Zool. Sci.*, 2005, **22**, 525–534.
8. Jerdon, T. C., *J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal*, 1853, **22**, 522–534.
9. Bossuyt, F. and Dubois, A., *Zeylanica*, 2001, **6**, 1–112.
10. Biju, S. D. and Bossuyt, F., *Amphibia-Reptilia*, 2006, **27**, 1–9.

MITSURU KURAMOTO<sup>1</sup>  
S. HAREESH JOSHY<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>3-6-15, Hikarigaoka,  
Munakata Fukuoka,  
811-3403, Japan

<sup>2</sup>Rondano Biodiversity Research  
Laboratory,  
St Aloysius College,  
Mangalore 575 003, India  
\*e-mail: labens.sac@gmail.com

### Response:

It is unfortunate to see the response of Kuramoto and Joshy to our critique of the description of a new species of *Philautus* from the Western Ghats. Instead of taking the issues raised by us as a valid criticism, they contest the same with frivolous arguments. Interestingly, they rebut that our 'arguments were based on misunderstanding, groundless doubt, and excessive demands, which are practically impossible to fulfil due to the serious lack of comparable data', but end up providing new information in their response in support of the species described by them. This clearly establishes that there were inadequacies in their earlier descriptions of the new species and that our comments were not based on groundless doubts. Demands on scientific rigour by peers are only to enhance the quality of scientific output. This becomes more important when dealing with tough problems, such as the

complex anuran taxonomy, where there is a real need of high standards of reporting with reliable and accurate data. Through our comments<sup>1</sup> we hoped that in future, reviewers, authors and readers will exercise more caution and care while assessing new frog species descriptions; and definitely not to discourage the future studies as implied by Joshy and Kuramoto in their response.

Kuramoto and Joshy provide additional information on the validity of the species, which should have rightfully found its place in the original descriptions of *P. luteolus* and *P. tuberohumerus*<sup>2</sup>. Even this new information is full of ambiguity. It is mentioned that 'the range of colour variation in *P. luteolus* was rather narrow', exemplifying two colour morphs. Such a judgment can only be made if a number of individuals have been examined, but again there is no mention of how many individuals were examined to arrive at this finding. They provide a clarification that the calls were described based on the specimens that were later assigned as types of *P. luteolus*. If this information had been incorporated in the description itself, it would have avoided some of the concerns in our commentary. Similarly, their argument that 'practically there were no other molecular data available for comparison' is rather preposterous, because a number of sequences existed in the NCBI GenBank database, which has now grown to >300 (GenBank release 158 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>) for *Philautus* alone.

Further, they rebut that comparisons with all extant-type specimens are not only impossible but also unnecessary, which only reinforces our concerns about the poor-quality control in reporting and eagerness on the parts of authors to publish even partly validated inferences. Such mindset only weakens the cause of taxonomy, and rather gives an impression that it is an esoteric subject pursued by impulsive biologists. We have suggested methods that bring robustness to taxonomic work, wherein any new species once described, can be verified unambiguously by other investigators.

While we agree that researchers dealing with the taxonomy of *Philautus* should be encouraged to publish, their mistakes should also be pointed out, so that they refrain from erroneous and inaccurate reporting. It is a well-known fact that there are more undescribed species than described

ones<sup>3,4</sup>. Therefore, it is not surprising that many frogs from the Western Ghats are being described. But we are of the strong opinion that progress in *Philautus* taxonomy should not be merely measured as the number of new species described, but measured as the sum of information that has been collected, the number of young biologists inducted to deal with the task, the number of successful collaborations, the number of commentaries and finally the number of species described. These are the thoughts that motivated us to write the critique, and we sincerely hope that it would help strengthen the taxonomy of the group.

Kuramoto and Joshy question, 'When will the work finish? Who judges the completeness or validity of the revision work?' At this point in time it is not possible for us to comment on how long it would take to finish the work for a comprehensive review, but we can certainly say that this task would take much longer if erroneous and incomplete descriptions continue to trickle in the group. Further, to our understanding, the judge(s) of completeness or validity of the revision work should first be the authors themselves, followed by peers who review the manuscripts, and then the final adjudicators will be the researchers who would use the descriptions. Lastly, in our perception, even our critique of species descriptions and this present debate is indeed an indication of the progress in *Philautus* taxonomy.

1. Vasudevan, K., Chaitra, M. S. and Aggarwal, R. K., *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **92**, 281–282.
2. Kuramoto, M. and Joshy, S. H., *Curr. Herpetol.*, 2003, **22**, 51–60.
3. Erwin, T. L., *Conserv. Biol.*, 1991, **5**, 330–333.
4. Arvind, N. A., Tambat, B., Ravikanth, G., Ganeshiah, K. N. and Uma Shaanker, R., *J. Biosci.*, 2007, **32**, 781–790.

KARTHIKEYAN VASUDEVAN<sup>1,\*</sup>  
RAMESH KUMAR AGGARWAL<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Wildlife Institute of India,  
PO Box #18, Chandrabani,

Dehradun 248 001, India

<sup>2</sup>Centre for Cellular and Molecular  
Biology,

Uppal Road,

Hyderabad 500 007, India

\*e-mail: karthik@wii.gov.in