**Reappraisal of the Javanese Bullfrog complex, *Kaloula baleata* (Müller, 1836) (Anura: Microhylidae) reveals a new species from northwestern Peninsular Malaysia**

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**Abstract**

A new species of *Kaloula* is described based on genetic and morphological divergence. The new species is closely related to the newly described *K. indochinensis* from eastern Indochina and *K. baleata* from Java and Bali in Indonesia, from which it was previously confused with and can be distinguished from other congeners by the following combination of characters: (1) SVL 49.2–56.2 mm in adult males; (2) finger tips expanded into large, transversely expanded discs; (3) inner metatarsal tubercle large, oval, distinctly raised, slightly shorter than first toe; (4) three subarticular tubercles on fourth toe; (5) small, yellow to orange, irregularly shaped patch on the axillary, inguinal and posterior region of thigh.

**Introduction**

Recent re-evaluations of wide-ranging species complexes in Sundaland have revealed a staggering amount of hidden diversity. Many of these previously widespread species’ have been shown to comprise distinct lineages with more restricted distribution ranges (Chan *et al. in press*; Wood *et al*. 2009; Chan & Grismer 2010; Mcleod 2010; Matsui *et al*. 2010; Chan *et al.* 2011; Grismer *et al.* 2012a,b; Johnson *et al*. 2012; Sumontha *et al.* 2012). The *Kaloula baleata* complex is one such group that includes multiple species masquerading under a single name. This species has been reported to occur in Vietnam (Orlov *et al.* 2002; Nguyen 2009), Laos (Teynié *et al.* 2004), Thailand (Pauwels *et al.* 2000), Peninsular Malaysia (Berry 1975; Chan *et al.* 2010), Borneo (Inger & Stuebing 2005; Das & Kraus 2007), Indonesia (Iskandar 1998), and Palawan Island in the Philippines (Taylor 1920; Brown 2007; Diesmos and Brown 2011), with a subspecies *K. baleata goshi* reported from Little and South Andaman Islands, India (Das & Dutta 1998). In the most recent study of this species complex, populations from eastern Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) that were previously referred to as *K. baleata*, were shown to form a distinct species (Chan *et al*. in press). Building upon the molecular phylogeny presented in Blackburn *et al*. (2013), we re-assessed the taxonomic placement of *K. baleata* from northwestern Peninsular Malaysia, using multivariate statistics to demonstrate that it is not only genetically but also morphologically distinct from the true *K. baleata* from Java and therefore deserves specific taxonomic recognition.

**Materials And Methods**

The following characters were measured with a Mitutoyo digitmatic caliper to the nearest 0.1 mm and on the left side of the body for symmetrical characters: snout–vent length (SVL), from tip of snout to vent; head length (HL), from posterior margin of mandible to tip of snout; head width (HW), measured at the level of the jaw articulation; snout length (SNL), from anterior corner of eye to tip of snout; eye diameter (ED), length between anterior and posterior corners of eye; interorbital diameter (IOD), distance between medial margins of palpebrae at its closest point; internarial distance (IND), measured from medial, inner margins of nostrils; third finger disc width (Fin3DW), widest horizontal diameter of third finger disc; femur length (FL), measured from the midventral line to the knee articulation in line with femur; tibia length (TBL), from knee inflection to tarsal inflection; inner metatarsal tubercle length (MTTL), from base to tip of inner metatarsal tubercle. Toe webbing formula follows Savage and Heyer (1997). The type series was deposited at the La Sierra University Herpetological Collection (LSUHC), La Sierra University, Riverside, California, USA.

Multivariate analyses were performed and visualized in the statistical software environment R (version 2.15.1). Data were first tested for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test. Morphometric characters were analyzed with ANCOVA using SVL as a covariate to adjust for differences in body size (García-Berthou 2001). To determine whether body size itself was a contributing factor, a *t*-test was performed on SVL. Operational taxonomic units (OTU’s) were designated according to geography and phylogeny (Blackburn *et al*. 2013) into the following groups: 1) *indochinensis* from eastern Indochina (Chan *et al*. in press); 2) *baleata*, the true *K. baleata* from Java; and 3) PM, from northwestern Peninsular Malaysia. A Principle Component Analysis (PCA) on the covariance matrix was performed to find the best low-dimensional representation of morphological variation in the data and to further determine whether the variation could form the basis of distinct, detectable group structure (Leps & Smilauer 2003). Components with eigenvalues 1.0 and above were retained in accordance to Kaiser’s criterion.

**Results**

*Multivariate Statistics*

Results from the Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test showed that the data conformed to normality, hence no transformation was needed. Compared to *baleata*, the ANCOVA showed that PM was significantly different for all morphological characters except ED and IOD and all characters except IOD and Fin3DW when compared to *indochinensis*. Between PM and *baleata,* Fin3DW showed the highest statistical significance whereas compared to *indochinensis*, HL, HW, SNL, IND, CL and MTTL were the most significant (Table 1). Scatterplots of these characters show the separation in morphospace between OTU’s (Fig. 1).

We retain and discus the first three principle components which had eigenvalues of 1.0 and above and accounted for 92.8% of the total variance. Loadings for the first principle component (PC I) were negative for all variables except Fin3DW and loaded heavily on SVL, FL, and HW. Loadings for PC II were all positive except for SVL and IOD and heaviest on SVL and FL whereas PC III loaded heavily on SVL, HL, HW, FL, and TBL and positively on SVL and FL. These results show that body, head size, and hindlimb length accounted for most of the variation between OUT’s (Table 2). A three dimensional visualization of the first three principle components scores show the clear distinction between PM and *baleata*/*indochinensis* (Fig 2).

**Systematics**

The molecular phylogeny from Blackburn *et al.* (2013) and our morphological analyses demonstrate that the *Kaloula* from northwestern Peninsular Malaysia is not conspecific with *K. baleata* and represents a genetically and morphologically divergent lineage that can be diagnosed from all other known congeners. Under the framework of a Unified Concept of Species (de Queiroz 2005), we consider this separately evolving lineage as a new species and is thus described herein.

**Species description**

*Kaloula kedahensis* **sp nov.**

Kedah Narrow-mouthed Frog

Fig. 3

**Holotype.—** Adult male (ZRC XXX/LSUHC 5077), SVL 56.2 mm, collected by XXX on XXX at Gubir, Kedah, Peninsular Malaysia (GPS; elevation).

**Paratypes.—**Adult males LSUHC 5074–76 have the same collection data as the holotype.

**Diagnosis.—**A large sized *Kaloula*, SVL 49.2–56.2 mm (x̅=53.5 ± 3.0) in adult males; finger tips expanded into large, transversely expanded discs, Fin3DW 2.8–3.1 mm (x̅=3.0 ± 0.1) in males; inner metatarsal tubercle large, oval, distinctly raised, slightly shorter than first toe, MTTL 3.3–3.5 mm (x̅=3.4 ± 0.1) in males; three subarticular tubercles on fourth toe; small, yellow to orange irregularly shaped patch on the axillary, inguinal and posterior region of thigh.

**Comparisons.—** Due to the lack of female specimens, all comparisons are based on male specimens only.

*Kaloula kedahensis* **sp. nov.** is genetically and morphologically most similar to *K. baleata* and *K. indochinensis* (Blackburn et al. 2013; Chan et al in press). From *K.* *baleata*, it can be distinguished by having larger HL (13.7–15.5 mm vs. 11.9–13.4 mm), HW (17.7–19.9 mm vs. 15.0–16.8 mm), SNL (5.9–6.3 mm vs. 4.4–5.4 mm), IND (3.8–4.1 mm vs. 2.7–3.5 mm), FL (20.6–23.2 mm vs. 15.9–19.6 mm), CL (18.6–19.6 mm vs. 14.6–17.3 mm), Fin3DW (2.8–3.1 mm vs. 1.4–2.2 mm), and MTTL (3.3–3.5 mm vs. 2.6–3.3 mm). From *K. indochinensis*, it differs by having larger SVL (49.2–56.2 mm vs. 44.1–53.7 mm), HL (13.7–15.5 mm vs. 10.1–12.9 mm), HW (17.7–19.9 mm vs. 13.0–17.4 mm), SNL (5.9–6.3 mm vs. 4.3–5.6 mm), IND (3.8–4.1 mm vs. 2.4–3.6 mm), FL (20.6–23.2 mm vs. 13.8–19.3 mm), CL (18.6–19.6 mm vs. 14.8–18.3 mm), MTTL (3.3–3.5 mm vs. 2.1–2.9 mm), and three subarticular tubercles on fourth toe as opposed to two.

*Kaloula kedahensis* differs from other congeners by the following opposing characters: *K. assamensis*, distribution in northeastern India, SVL up to 38.0 mm, dorsum pale brown with bright yellow vertebral stripe and broad dark brown lateral stripes, axillary and inguinal spots absent, and stratified coloration on flanks and thighs; *K. aureata*, distribution in southern peninsular Thailand (Nakhon Si Thammarat Province), SVL up to 65.0 mm, and dorsum golden with dark brown reticulations and dorsolateral stripe; *K. borealis*, distribution in eastern China and Korea, finger tips slightly dilated but not forming wide discs, inner and outer metatarsal tubercle distinctly large and raised, inner metatarsal tubercle longer than first toe, dorsum gray-brown with dark blotches forming a distinct network on the flanks; *K. conjuncta*, distribution in Philippines, SVL up to 47.0 mm, web reaching disc of fourth toe, stratified lateral flank coloration, and weak outer metatarsal tubercle; *K. kalingensis*, distribution in Luzon, Polillo and Palaui Islands, Philippines, SVL up to 39.3 mm, dorsal tubercles absent, weak outer metatarsal tubercle, axillary and inguinal patch usually absent, small and red when present, and light pericloacal ring present; *K*. *kokacii*, distribution in Catanduanes Island, Bicol Peninsula of Luzon Island, Philippines, SVL up to 44.3 mm; dorsal tubercles, axillary and inguinal spots absent, and light pericloacal ring present; *K. mediolineata*, distribution in mainland Thailand and Laos, SVL up to 63.0 mm, finger tips slightly dilated but not forming wide discs, web reaching disc of first toe and disc of postaxial side of second and third toe, inner and outer metatarsal tubercle extremely large and raised, inner metatarsal tubercle longer than first toe, and distinct dorsolateral and sacral stripes; *K. picta*, distribution in Philippines, SVL up to 56.1 mm, finger tips slightly dilated but not expanded into wide discs, dorsolateral stripes distinct, and stratified lateral flank coloration; *K. pulchra*, distribution in northeastern India, southern China, and Indo-Malaya, SVL up to 75.0 mm, inner metatarsal tubercle large, raised, and longer than first toe, dorsolateral stripes present, and axillary and inguinal spots absent; *K. rigida*, distribution in Luzon Island, Philippines, SVL up to 56.1 mm, finger tips slightly dilated but not expanded into wide discs, stratified lateral flank coloration, dorsolateral stripes distinct, and axillary and inguinal spots absent; *K. rugifera*, distribution in central and south-central China, dorsum olive brown with yellowish-olive chin and throat, and axillary and inguinal spots absent; *K. verrucosa*, distribution in southeastern China, SVL up to 61.0 mm, finger tips slightly dilated but not expanded into wide discs, dorsum without distinct markings, axillary and inguinal spots absent; *K. walteri*, distribution in south-central Luzon Island (Bicol Peninsula) and Polillo Island, Philippines, SVL up to 31.5 mm, finger tips slightly dilated but not expanded into wide discs; outer metatarsal tubercle absent or indistinct, stratified lateral flank coloration, and axillary and inguinal spots absent.

**Description of Holotype.—**Fig. 3. Adult male, SVL 56.2 mm; habitus robust; head wider than long (HW/HL=1.26; HW/SVL=0.35); snout slightly projecting beyond lower jaw, truncated in dorsal view, rounded and caudoventrally sloping in lateral view; eyes large, not protruding beyond labials in dorsal view, diameter less than snout length (ED/SNL=0.85) and interorbital distance (ED/IOD=0.86); canthus rostralis rounded, not visible; lores oblique, slightly concave; nares open laterally, slightly below canthus, nearly terminal on snout (IND/SNL=0.66); labial region not swollen; inter-orbital region flat; dorsal rostrum slightly convex; tympanum covered with skin, not visible; supratympanic fold present, extending from posterior edge if eyelid to just above and anterior of forelimb insertion and continuous with a distinct supraaxillary fold; choanae transversely oriented, tapered at both ends, separated by distance almost equal to their horizontal length; vomerine teeth absent; tongue wide, spatulate with a small posterior notch, posterior two thirds free; vocal slits posterior to rictus.

Forelimbs relatively long and robust; order of digits from shortest to longest: I≤II<IV<III; no webbing between digits; distal ends of fingers expanded into wide, transversely expanded discs lacking circummarginal grooves; subarticular tubercles distinct, large, round, numbering one on digits I and II, two on digits III and IV, proximal subarticular tubercles slightly larger than distal ones; inner metacarpal tubercle oval, larger than subarticular tubercles; outer metacarpal tubercle oval, subequal in size to inner, divided to form smaller tubercle medially.

Hindlimbs robust, relatively short (CL/SVL=0.34); order of digits from shortest to longest: I<II<V<III<IV; tip of toes slightly expanded into small, round discs; subarticular tubercles distinct, numbering one on digits I and II, two beneath digits III and V, and three on digit V, oval on digits I and II, elongate and connected on digits III–V; toe webbing formula: I 1–2 II 1–3 III 2–3.5 IV 4–2 V; inner metatarsal tubercle large, raised, oval, slightly shorter than first toe; outer metatarsal tubercle round, slightly raised, half the size of inner.

Skin on dorsal surfaces smooth, infused with low, well-spaced, broad, flat, tubercles that are most prominent on the temporal region; ventral surfaces slightly granular; throat distinctly granular; loose skin overlying median subgular vocal sac forming a sternal fold; nuptial pad absent.

Measurements for the type series are presented in Table 3.

**Color in preservative.—**Dorsal surfaces brown with a pale, narrow interorbital bar. Light brown, symmetrical, broad, wavy stripes from posterior end of upper eyelid, extending dorsolaterally to the scapular region and fading posteriorly. Back with small, irregular dark patches and even smaller white spots. Faint, thin, light colored band around the wrist. White axillary and inguinal patch and creamy, irregular patches on posterior region of thigh. Venter creamy, heavily stippled with brown. Gular blackish brown covered with small whitish spots.

**Variation.—**The paratypes LSUHC 5075–76 have a broader, more prominent interorbital bar between the anterior portion of the upper eyelids. LSUHC 5074 has an indistinct interorbital bar and faded post palpebrae stripes. Dorsal surfaces of limbs in LSUHC 5074 lighter in color with irregular, dark bordered light bands across the wrist, ankle, and hindlimbs.

**Distribution.—***Kaloula kedahensis* is currently known from Gubir, Kedah but is likely to occur in other parts of northern Peninsular Malaysia and possibly southern Thailand (Fig. 4).

**Etymology.—**The specific epithet “*kedahensis*” is in reference to the type locality of the new species in the northwestern state of Kedah.

**Natural History.—**

**Discussion**

The phylogeny presented in Blackburn *et al.* (2013) showed that the *baleata* clade consisted of at least five divergent lineages. Peninsular Malaysian populations were separated into two distinct lineages; one pertained to “LSUHC 5074 Peninsula” (described here as *K. kedahensis*), while the other comprised populations from southern Peninsular Malaysia and Borneo. The latter lineage was recovered as sister to the clade that consisted of *K. baleata* (Java and Bali) and undescribed populations from Palawan and Sulawesi. These data suggest that southern Peninsular Malaysian and Bornean populations may not be conspecific with either *K. baleata* or *K. kedahensis*. However, the taxonomic resolution of these populations is pending acquisition of additional specimens from other parts of Peninsular Malaysia.

**Acknowledgements**

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**Tables and Figures**

Table 1. Summary statistics for compared OTU's. Significance codes: \*\*\* = 0; \*\* = 0.001; \* = 0.05

Table 2. Summary statistics and loadings for PC 1 to PC 3

Table 3. Measurements for the type series. See Materials & Methods for abbreviations

Fig. 1. Scatterplots of significant morphometric characters with accompanying regression lines

Fig. 2. Three dimensional plot of the first three principle components

Fig. 3. Holotype

Fig. 4. Distribution of the *Kaloula baleata* complex in Peninsular Malaysia. Star denotes the type locality of *K. kedahensis* **sp. nov.** Circles denote localities for which *K. baleata* have been reported