

***Leptodactylus fragilis*, the valid name for the
Middle American and northern South American
white-lipped frog (Amphibia: Leptodactylidae)**

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Abstract.—*Leptodactylus fragilis* (Brocchi 1877) is the valid scientific name for the species of the white-lipped *Leptodactylus* that occurs from Texas, USA to Venezuela. *Cystignathus labialis* Cope 1877 is not conspecific with *L. fragilis* and is a junior synonym of *L. mystacinus* (Burmeister 1861).

While creating graphics for nomenclatural changes in the genus *Leptodactylus*, I discovered that I had published a significant and embarrassing error. I find no justification for my error; the best recourse is to outline the facts and correct it.

In a treatment of the systematics of the *Leptodactylus fuscus* species group (Heyer 1978), I concluded that the types of *Cystignathus labialis* Cope 1878 were conspecific with *Leptodactylus mystacinus* (Burmeister 1861) and relegated them to the synonymy of *L. mystacinus*.

In 1992, Dubois and Heyer stated that *Cystignathus labialis* Cope represented the same species as *Cystignathus fragilis* Brocchi, 1877, which occurs from Texas in the United States throughout Mexico and Middle America to northern Colombia and Venezuela. Dubois and Heyer (1992) documented that Cope's paper was actually published in 1877 and predated Brocchi's publication.

The critical and incorrect statement in Dubois and Heyer (1992:584) is:

"In a revision of the *fuscus* group, *C. fragilis* Brocchi was shown to represent the same species as *C. labialis* Cope (Heyer, 1978:31-32)."

Actually, I (Heyer 1978:31-32) argued that *C. labialis* Cope did not represent the same species as *C. fragilis* Brocchi.

I have re-examined the holotype and par-

atypes of *Cystignathus labialis* Cope and re-read Cope's type description. I find that my 1978 statements are correct and supported by the specimens and Cope's description, including provenance of the types. Among other features, the taxon for which the appropriate name is *Leptodactylus fragilis* does not have a pair of distinct, continuous dorsolateral folds, whereas the types of *C. labialis* have such folds. The types of *C. labialis* Cope, 1877 certainly did not come from Central America, as discussed previously (Heyer 1978:32).

Leptodactylus fragilis (Brocchi 1877) is, thus, the proper name to apply to the white-lipped *Leptodactylus* occurring from Texas to Venezuela. *Cystignathus labialis* Cope 1877 is a junior synonym of *Leptodactylus mystacinus* (Burmeister 1861).

Revalidation of *Leptodactylus fragilis* (Brocchi 1877) is certainly an inconvenience. However, the impact will be felt primarily by the professional herpetological community, which has successfully endured usage changes for the taxon involved. Between at least 1881 and 1933 most herpetologists considered the Middle American taxon to be conspecific with the West Indian species *L. albilabris*, which was the older name (see Smith and Smith 1976). From 1934 until 1978, the name *L. labialis* was used for the taxon, *L. fragilis* was used

from 1978 until 1992, and *L. labialis* from 1992 until the present.

Literature Cited

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