A new newt of the genus *Cynops* (Caudata: Salamandridae) from Fujian Province, southeastern China

YUNKE WU1,4, YUEZHAO WANG2, KE JIANG3 & JAMES HANKEN1
1Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138, USA.
2Chengdu Institute of Biology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Chengdu, Sichuan 610041, China
3College of Life Sciences, China West Normal University, Nanchong, Sichuan, 637002, China
4Corresponding author. Email: yunkewu@fas.harvard.edu

Abstract

A new species of fire-bellied newt, *Cynops fudingensis*, is described from northeastern Fujian Province, southeastern China. This species forms a well-supported clade with *C. orientalis* and *C. orphicus* based on molecular phylogenetic analysis of nucleotide sequences from mitochondrial DNA subunit two of NADH dehydrogenase and its two flanking tRNAs. Further, its genetic distance to each of the two previously described species is large. Principal-components analysis of external linear measurements differentiates the new species from *C. orientalis* and *C. orphicus* in morphological space. Geographically, *C. fudingensis* occupies the distribution gap between *C. orientalis* and *C. orphicus*.

Key words: Molecular phylogeny; taxonomy; Amphibia; salamanders; new species

Introduction

The genus *Cynops*, commonly known as the fire-bellied newts, is a member of the “modern Asian newts” clade, which also includes *Pachytriton* and *Paramesotriton* (Zhang et al. 2008). These three genera do not have a close relationship with other Asian salamandrids but instead are sister taxa to European newts, such as *Triturus*, *Mesotriton* and *Lissotriton* (Weisrock et al. 2006; Steinfartz et al. 2007; Zhang et al. 2008). Seven species of *Cynops* are recognized at this time, which constitute three species groups based on external morphology and osteology: the first group includes *C. ensicauda* Hallowell and *C. pyrrhogaster* Boie, which are restricted to a few Japanese islands; the second group comprises *C. chenggongensis* Kou and Xing, *C. cyanurus* Liu, Hu and Yang, and *C. walterstorffii* Boulenger, three highland species that inhabit pools and lakes on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau of China; the third group consists of *C. orientalis* David and *C. orphicus* Risch, both from the foothills and mountainous regions of southeastern China (Zhao & Hu 1984; Dubois & Raffaëlli 2009; Frost 2009). The taxonomic status of *C. walterstorffi*, a neotenic species that may represent a separate genus, is an ongoing controversy (e.g., Freytag 1962; Zhao & Hu 1984; Fei et al. 2006; Dubois & Raffaëlli 2009). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (2009) lists two species, *C. ensicauda* and *C. orphicus*, as endangered and a third, *C. chenggongensis*, as data deficient; *C. walterstorffii* may already be extinct (Zhao 1998).

*Cynops orientalis* remains abundant and has a broad geographic distribution that is centered at the lower reaches of the Yangtze River in China (Fig. 1). Based on molecular phylogenetic analysis of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) sequence data, *C. orientalis* is closely related to *C. orphicus* (Weisrock et al. 2006; Zhang et al. 2008), which differs morphologically by the presence of a conspicuous vertebral ridge and a bright ventral longitudinal stripe (Fei et al. 2006).

For a long time *C. orphicus* was known only from its type locality in the Shantou region in eastern Guangdong Province. Recently, however, a population of *C. orientalis* from Mt. Daiyun, Dehua, in central...