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Resolving a mammal mystery: the identity of *Paracoelops megalotis* (Chiroptera: Hipposideridae)

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Abstract

Paracoelops has been regarded as monotypic and an endemic bat genus of Vietnam. In the original description of 1947, *P. megalotis* was characterised by its exceptionally large ears and well developed interfemoral membrane without a tail. The status of this taxon remained uncertain since the species and genus descriptions were based on the single, badly damaged holotype. Recently, we re-examined the holotype and found discrepancies between its features and those described in the diagnoses. Its measurements and characteristics are entirely identical to those of a small species of *Hipposideros*. Having compared its features with those of other hipposiderids, we show here that *Paracoelops megalotis* was incorrectly classified both in terms of genus and species and should be considered a synonym of *Hipposideros pomona*.

Key words: *Hipposideros*, Mammalia, nomenclature, taxonomy, Vietnam

Introduction

To date, the family Hipposideridae comprises 90 species belonging to 18 genera (Vu Dinh Thong 2011; Vu Dinh Thong *et al.* 2012a; Vu Dinh Thong *et al.* 2012b). Prior to this study, hipposiderids of the Indomalayan region were thought to belong to six genera (*Asellia*, *Aselliscus*, *Coelops*, *Hipposideros*, *Paracoelops*, *Triaenops*), and all species of *Hipposideros* were classified into five groups: “*bicolor*”, “*pratti*”, “*armiger*”, “*speoris*”, and “*diadema*” (Corbet and Hill 1992; Simmons 2005). Following this classification, hipposiderids of Vietnam currently belong to four genera: *Aselliscus*, *Coelops*, *Hipposideros*, and *Paracoelops*, and the *Hipposideros* consists of 16 species (Corbet and Hill 1992; Hendrichsen *et al.* 2001; Borrisenko and Kruskop 2003; Simmons 2005; Vu Dinh Thong 2011; Vu Dinh Thong *et al.* 2012a; Vu Dinh Thong *et al.* 2012b).

Based on the characteristics of the original description, *Paracoelops* differs from all other genera of the family Hipposideridae (Corbet and Hill 1992; Borrisenko and Kruskop 2003; Hand and Kirsch 2003; Simmons 2005). However, the taxonomic status of *Paracoelops megalotis* has been in some doubt on account of the incomplete and badly damaged specimen (Corbet and Hill 1992; Csorba and Bates 2008). Between November 2006 and July 2010, we re-examined the holotype and conducted a series of field surveys throughout Vietnam with emphasis on hipposiderids to assess the status of *Paracoelops megalotis*. This paper provides a detailed description with a reclassification of that holotype and its taxonomy.