



A new species of *Litoria* (Amphibia: Anura: Hylidae) from the foothills of the Foja Mountains, Papua Province, Indonesia

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Abstract

Litoria gasconi sp. nov. is described from low, forest-covered ridges on the southern edge of the Foja Mountains, Papua Province, Indonesia. It is most similar to *Litoria multiplicata* (Tyler, 1964) but can be differentiated from that species and all other described *Litoria* by a unique combination of characters including moderate size (males 39.3–41.6 SVL), green dorsum with yellow spots in life, relatively large eyes (EYE/SVL 0.12–0.15), dermal ridges below the vent and on the posterior edge of both fore and hindlimbs, complete absence of blue thigh and lateral colouration, and its unique advertisement call consisting of a single soft, distinctly pulsed chirp. New data on the morphology and ecology of the superficially similar and poorly known species *Litoria multiplicata* are also presented. Recent surveys in the Foja Mountains have revealed a diverse frog fauna with numerous unrecognised or poorly known taxa; these ranges are likely to be a previously unrecognised and largely unexplored centre of tropical vertebrate endemism.

Key words: *Litoria*, Indonesia, New Guinea, new species, Papua

Introduction

The Foja Mountains are a series of steep rainforest-covered peaks in northern Papua Province, Indonesian New Guinea. Isolated from New Guinea's central cordillera by the extensive lowland forests and swamps of the Mamberamo Basin, the rugged, inaccessible and uninhabited slopes of the Fojas remain one of the most poorly explored tropical regions on earth (Diamond 1982). In November 2005 a Rapid Assessment Program biological survey by Conservation International and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) in this isolated range revealed a wealth of undescribed taxa including the first new bird species discovered in New Guinea for nearly 70 years (Beehler *et al.* 2007). Prominent amongst the new taxa were a large number of frog species new to science.

One of the most distinctive new frogs was a moderately sized, predominantly green treefrog of the genus *Litoria* that was found at two sites on the lower slopes of the range. The most similar described species is *Litoria multiplicata* (Tyler, 1964), a poorly known taxon from moderate altitudes on the slopes of the central cordillera in Papua New Guinea. In order to adequately compare the new *Litoria* from the Fojas with *L. multiplicata* we gathered new data on the latter species based on pre-existing museum specimens, and on new collections made by the senior author. Presented herein is a formal taxonomic description of the new species from the Foja Mountains and new data on the morphology and ecology of *Litoria multiplicata*.