

Boelens, B., M. Watkins, and M. Grayson. 2013.
The Eponym Dictionary of Amphibians.
xiii + 244 pp; Pelagic Publishing, Exeter,
U.K.

ISBN 978-1-907807-41-1 (Hbk)

ISBN 978-1-907807-42-8 (ePub)

ISBN 978-1-907807-44-2 (Pdf)

ISBN 978-1-907807-43-5 (Mobi)

Price: USD 49.99

<http://www.pelagicpublishing.com>

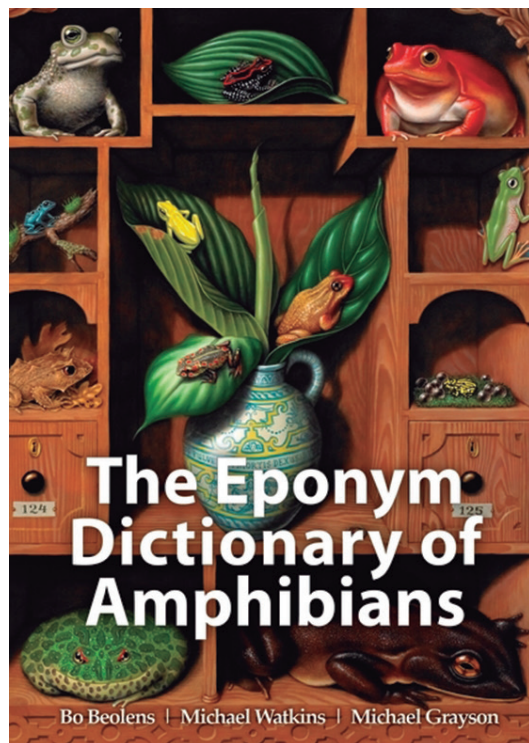
This book is a follow-up to the “Eponym Dictionary of Mammals” (2009) and “The Eponym Dictionary of Reptiles” (2011), both by the same authors. This series of books lists those species that were named for people, or in some cases for “a place that was itself named after a person”.

The book contains 2,668 amphibian names: 1,609 honour known individuals, while 83 relate to “indigenous peoples, conservation groups, guerrilla armies, chartered accountants and biblical and mythological references.” A further 128 names “sound like people’s names but in fact are not”. Lastly, 11 of the entries are for people whom the authors have been unable to identify.

The book begins with a three-page Introduction, in which the authors detail the underlying premises of the book. I find it interesting to read about the unforeseen decisions that authors must make when compiling books such as this. The authors state that “tracking down the provenance of eponymous names, and finding out about the individuals responsible for them, proved to be fraught with difficulties.”

The remainder of the book consists of the entries of eponymous amphibian names. Only extant species are treated; no fossil names are included.

The book is organized alphabetically by the names of persons for whom amphibians have been named. Each name is followed by a chronological list of the genera or species named



for the person. English common name, scientific name, authority and year are provided for each species. Describers who appear more than once are in boldface. Each entry concludes with a biographical sketch of the person for whom the species is named.

Sometimes a new species will be described more than once, under different names, by different authors. In these cases, there are entries for both names, with the synonymy noted.

Taxonomy is based on AmphibiaWeb, and is quite up-to-date, although given the recent rate of amphibian taxonomic change, many names will soon be superseded. In cases where location names have changed, both the current name and the original name are provided.

The authors point out in the Introduction that published descriptions in the literature often do not include a common vernacular name, and that these names are often added later, by persons

other than the describer. Only the names of describer(s) are provided in the entries.

I was surprised by the number of species for which common names do not reflect the specific epithet; for example, Ahl's Toad is *Duttaphrynus himalayanus*; Ford's Robber Frog is *Craugastor daryi*. This illustrates the often capricious origin and use of common names. In some cases the species was named in honour of a person, but the person's name is not part of the species' scientific name (eg. *Pristimantis librarius*).

Some biographies are quite brief, the only source a short Etymology section in the original description. Others are longer, over 200 words. The latter deal mostly with the professional (usually herpetological) accomplishments of the namesake, including appearances in the authors' previous eponym dictionaries. Some biographies, however, catalogue the varied and interesting lives of their subjects, and in some cases invite a reader to investigate further (eg. Denhardt, Eyre, Humboldt, Lemaire).

The book ends with a Bibliography of 1.5 pages. Most entries here are journals from which descriptions were obtained. The list of journals is not exhaustive; although not explicitly stated, presumably the authors relied on AmphibiaWeb as a source for species described in journals that may not have been accessible. Phyllomedusa is not included in the bibliography; some species described in Phyllomedusa (*Allobates granti*, *Pristimantis woranii* and *Litoria kuduki*) are in the book, whereas others (*Allobates algorei* and *Mannophryne orellana*) are not.

I searched for some eponymous amphibian names that I described. *Stefania coxi* is included,

but *Stefania ackawaio* (named for an indigenous people) is not, even though it was described in the same paper as *S. coxi* (Herpetologica, 2002). *Adelophryne patamona*, another species described for an indigenous people (Zootaxa, 2008), was also excluded, whereas *Anomaloglossus kaiei* (named for a Patamona chieftan) was included. I was surprised by the inclusion of *Stefania ayangannae*, which was named for the type locality, Mount Ayanganna in Guyana, not for a person.

I would have liked to see the type locality for each species included, but this is a minor quibble. I found no typos.

I found the book captivating. I enjoyed reading the short capsule biographies, many of which contained details that I found fascinating, and encourage further reading. I would also have liked to read more details about the "difficulties" alluded to in the Introduction. I realize, however, that space is limited.

The book is available in print, ePub, PDF and Mobi formats. My review copy was in PDF format, so I was unable to evaluate the paper, printing and binding.

Ross D. MacCulloch

Department of Natural History
Royal Ontario Museum
100 Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C6
Canada
E-mail: rossm@rom.on.ca