

# Book Reviews

**Book Review Editor's Note:** We are continuing to use the current currency codes. Thus Canadian dollars are CAD, U.S. dollars are USD, Euros are EUR, China Yuan Remimbi are CNY, Australian dollars are AUD and so on.

## ZOOLOGY

### The Eponym Dictionary of Amphibians

By Bo Beolens, Michael Watkins and Michael Grayson. 2013. Pelagic Publishing, P.O. Box 725, Exeter, UK, EX1 9QU. 244 pages, 49.99 CAD, Cloth.

“An *eponym* is a person or thing, whether real or fictional, after which a particular place, tribe, era, discovery, or other item is named or thought to be named” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

Whereas the majority of scientific and English names of animals highlight a characteristic morphological feature or the country or continent where it occurs, some are named for a person or place. This compendium of people or of places featured in scientific and common names will appeal equally to both amphibian students interested in the historical origin of names and casual readers seeking entertainment. The authors are no strangers to such a hobby project but have varied backgrounds. The senior author, Richard Crombet-Beolens (Bo Beolens, known on-line as “Grumpy Old Birder and “Fatbirder”) has spent much of his career in community work as the CEO of various charities, but has had articles published in a variety of birding magazines and co-authored three other eponym dictionaries, including *The Eponym Dictionary of Reptiles*, 2011, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland. Michael Watkins, a retired London shipbroker, and Michael Grayson who was at the British library and is a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London are coauthors of both the earlier reptile and the present amphibian volumes.

The introduction gives the abbreviations used. Each entry is alphabetical by taxon named (generally species) as well as very brief (and partial) notes on the person honoured and the number of taxa in reptiles and birds which also honour the person. Species described from fossils are not included. A total of 2868 presently or recently living world amphibians are included, only 11 of which the authors' failed to trace their origin. Those traced are named for 1609 individual people, 228 that sound like, but are not, real people's names, plus 83 miscellaneous names from a variety of sources. Places or geographical features are sometimes honoured. Some that appear to have been named for a person are not. The salamander *Ambystoma jeffersonianum*, for example, is named not after a person but for Jefferson College, Pennsylvania. A few eponyms are based on fictional or mythological characters. For example,

Bilbo's Rain Frog, *Breviceps bagginsi*, is named for the senior hobbit in J. R. R. Tolkien's histories of Middle Earth.

Often, but not necessarily, a taxon is named for a person or persons who collected the specimen or for the place it was collected. Although describers cannot name a new taxon after themselves, a vernacular name can be for the describer, though more often it simply repeats that in that in the scientific name. A few scientific names acknowledged a sponsor who had financed the expedition on which the new a new taxon was found. In recent years a buyer can purchase a name for a new taxon. The German society BIOPAT is singled out for promoting donations from people, organizations and companies for taxonomic research in exchange being named and thus obtaining immortality for as long as formal nomenclature exists and the taxon continues to be regarded as valid. (Some museums, including a few in Canada, shamelessly even advertise this commercialization to supplement scarce research funds).

Two amphibian species first named from Canadian specimens are included in the dictionary but are generally no longer considered valid taxa: *Bufo* [now *Anaxyrus*] *copei* after E. D. Cope by the Americans Henry Crecy Yarrow and Henry Wetherbee Henshaw 1878 from James Bay, Ontario, and *Ambystoma tremblayi* from Cape Rouge, Quebec, by a Canadian, Wesley Comeau, 1943 for Jean-Louis Tremblay. Species that range into Canada that were first named from collections outside Canada include the Coastal Tailed Frog, *Ascaphus truei*, named for Frederick William True by Leonard Hess Stejneger, Fowler's Toad, *Anaxyrus fowleri*, for Samuel Page Fowler by M. H. Hinckley, Bullfrog *Lithobates* (formerly *Rana*) *catesbeianus*, named for naturalist Mark Catesby by George Shaw, and Blanchard's Cricket Frog, *Acris blanchardi*, (the latter now eradicated from Canada) named for herpetologist Frank N. Blanchard by Francis Harper. A western salamander, *Ensatina eschscholtzii*, was named for Johann Friedrich von Eschscholtz by John Edward Gray.

Regrettably, there is no index to describers, so to find Canadian herpetologists who have created eponyms for species beyond Canada the entire book has to be

searched entry by entry. Even then, if original descriptions are multi-authored by more than two, only the first author is given in the entry's reference. Only a few Canadian herpetologists have created eponyms for recent amphibian taxa beyond Canada. Examples in this book are J. P. Bogart (University of Guelph) *Tomopterna tandyi* Channing & Bogart, 1996, Tandy's Sand Frog

from South Africa, and Robert Murphy (Royal Ontario Museum) *Leptotalax sungi* Lathrop et al. [Lathrop, Murphy, Orlov & Cuc] 1998, Sung Toad from Vietnam.

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