

Twenty years after: What larval characters are still telling us about the phylogeny of frogs (Amphibia: Anura)

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XLI Annual Meeting of the Willi Hennig Society

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DJM: UNC Charlotte, Dept. of Bioinformatics and Genomics & CIPHER Research Center.





ACTIONS

MARIE CURIE



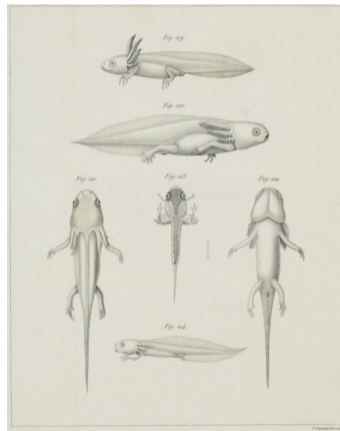
Muito obrigado!
¡Muchas gracias!
Thank you!

Scan for the slide
deck and digital
materials



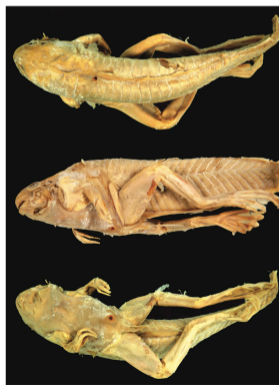
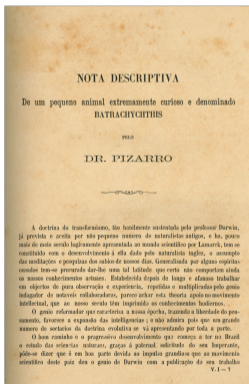
Antoine Dugès (1834) and William Parker (1871, 1876, 1881)

- ▶ Dugès (1834) described the first anuran chondrocranium while studying the development of the musculoskeletal system in amphibians.
- ▶ William K. Parker published a series of monographs on the vertebrate skull (e.g., 1871, 1876, 1881) and included detailed descriptions of the chondrocranium of several anurans, such as *Pseudis* and *Rana* tadpoles.



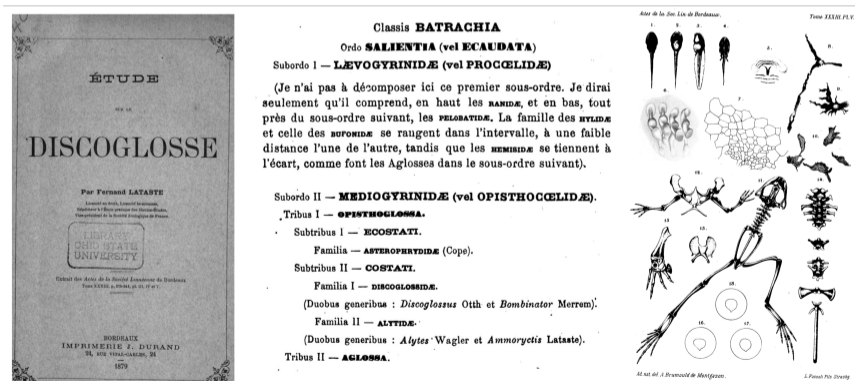
Pizarro (1876)

One of the first taxonomical and systematic papers using larval morphology as evidence was that of **Pizarro (1876)**, who proposed the erection of the genus *Batrachychthis* to the weird-looking tadpole of *Pseudis platensis*.

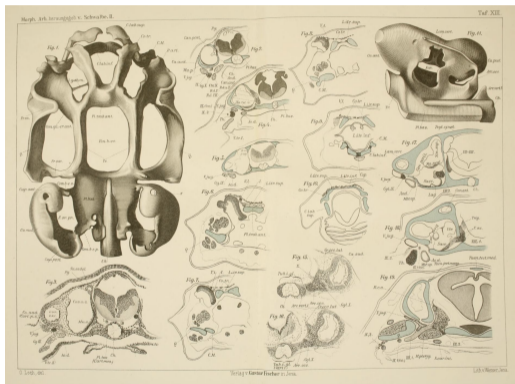
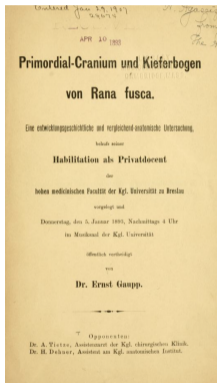


Lataste (1879)

French zoologist Fernand **Lataste** was the first one to use larval characters in the anuran systematic. He used the position of the spiracle to propose an ordinal classification of frogs. He suggested the groups Laevogyrinidae, for the frogs with a left spiracle, and Mediogyrinidae for frogs with a medial spiracle.



Ernst Gaupp (1893)



Shout-out to Ernst Gaupp (1893), who studied the chondrocranium of *Rana temporaria* and launched a very elaborate terminology.

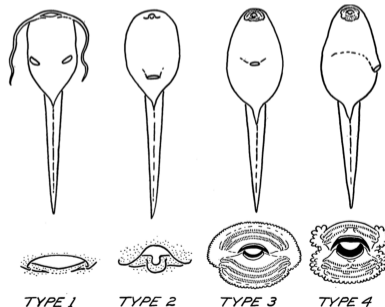
Grace L. Orton (1953)

Grace L. **Orton** (1953) was revolutionary to propose that frogs should be grouped into four major lineages according to their tadpole types. **Type 1** would lack mouthparts and possess a paired ventral spiracle; **Type 2** would also lack mouthparts but have a single, medial spiracle; **Type 3** tadpoles have mouthparts, but a single, medial spiracle; **Type 4** have mouthparts and a lateral spiracle.



The Systematics of Vertebrate Larvae

GRACE L. ORTON



Grace L. Orton (1953)

“For many years, studies on early developmental stages were guided by the idea that larval characters have an ancestral, recapitulative significance, or by the belief that they are secondary adaptations with little or no evolutionary importance. Neither theory is adequate from the standpoint of systematics, and together they have somewhat hampered effective use of larval data by taxonomists” (p. 63).



Kluge & Farris (1969)

Kluge & Farris (1969) started the quantitative phylogenetic era with a seminal paper, which included a character about the spiracle morphology. Also, they dedicated several lines to discuss the homology and evolution of that system.

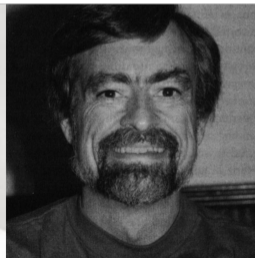
QUANTITATIVE PHYLETICS AND THE EVOLUTION OF ANURANS

ARNOLD G. KLUGE AND JAMES S. FARRIS

1969



Arnold Kluge



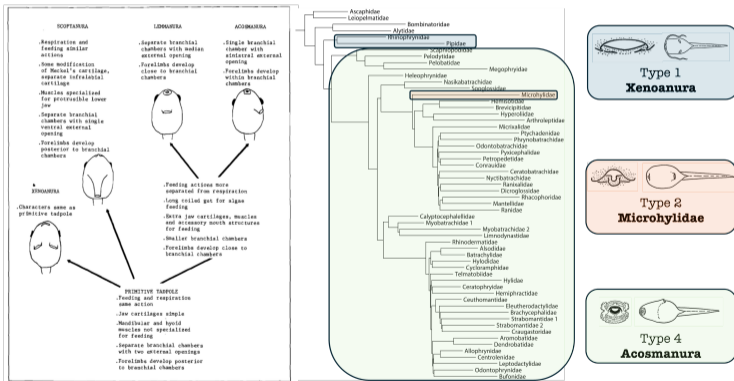
James S. Farris

1969 was when the Apollo 11 landed on the moon.



Starrett (1973)

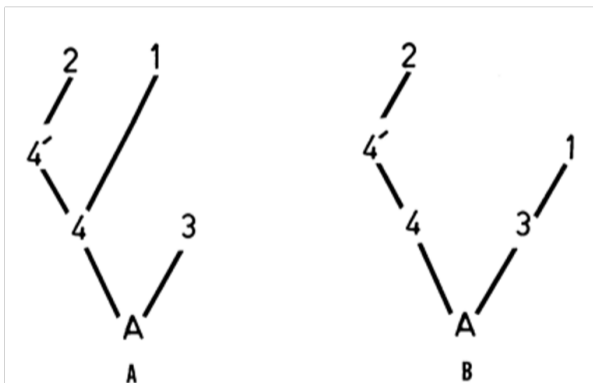
Later, **Starrett (1973)** would formally name tadpole's types as **Xenomanura**, **Scoptanura**, **Lemanura**, and **Acosmanura**. Some of these are still naming (partially) monophyletic clades nowadays.



Topology from Portik *et al.* (2023).

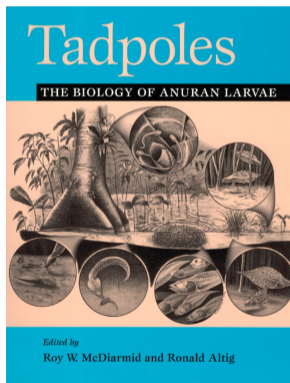
Sokol (1975)

Sokol revised the classification of Orton and Starrett and suggested that type 1 tadpoles were not the most “basal” ones but instead highly modified.



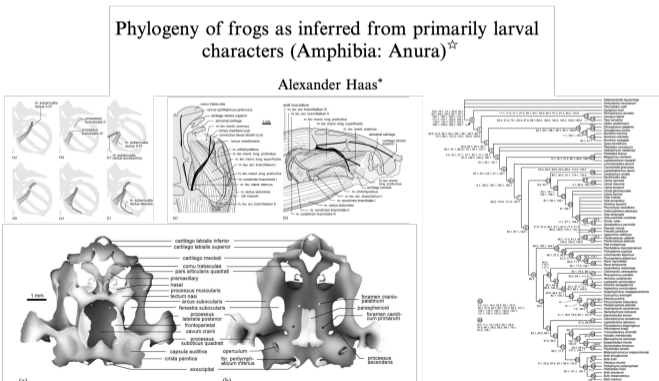
Cannatella (1999)

By the way, the aforementioned works were compiled by Cannatella (1999), in his review of the musculoskeletal system published in the book “Tadpoles.”



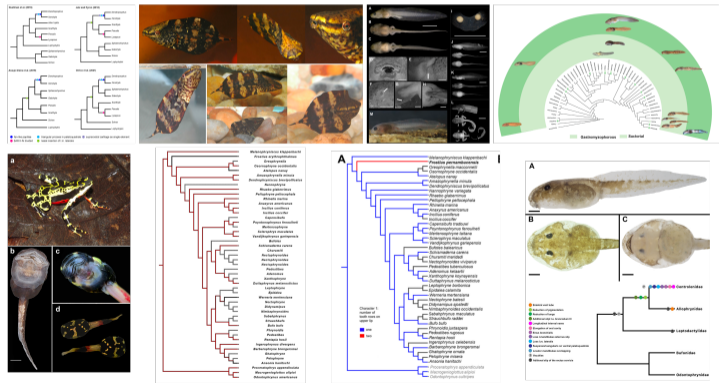
Phylogeny of frogs as inferred from primarily larval characters

Haas (2003) performed the most comprehensive study about larval morphology and evolution. He scored 141 phenotypic characters (mainly from the muscles and skeleton) for 85 amphibians species. In that study he was able to anticipate many phylogenetic and taxonomic patterns later recovered in large-scale molecular studies (e.g., Frost *et al.* 2006, Pyron and Wiens 2011; Jetz & Pyron 2018). Also, he proposed several novel synapomorphies at different levels of inclusiveness.



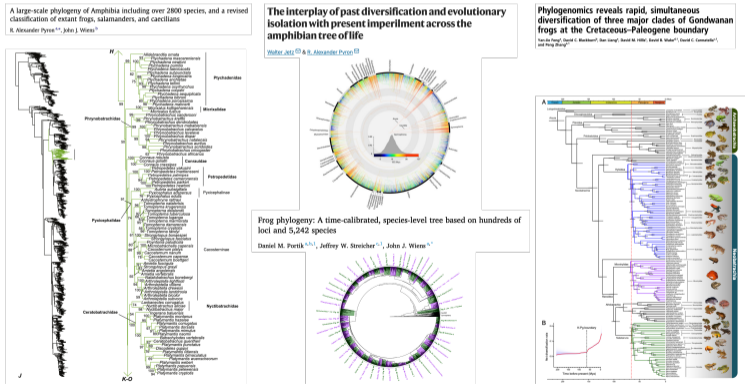
What is going on since Haas (2003)

Since Haas (2003), many authors discussed characters evolution, but information is scattered in the literature and focused on particular taxa. Nevertheless, many of those studies proposed novel synapomorphies, increasing the bulk of evidence that larval morphology can contribute positively for our understanding of phylogenetic relationships.



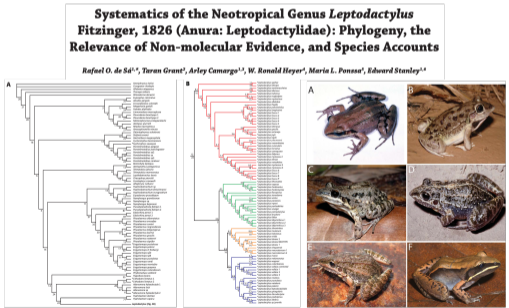
What is going on since Haas (2003)

Frogs phylogeny, however, have been largely dominated by molecular studies (e.g., Pyron & Wiens 2011; Feng *et al.* 2017; Jetz & Pyron 2018; Portik *et al.* 2023) and phenotypic evidence have been largely neglected.



What is going on since Haas (2003)

This is highly paradoxical, as many studies demonstrated the positive impact of phenotypic data in phylogenetic studies. For instance, **de Sá et al.** (2014) performed a separate analysis of partitioned data. In the molecular analysis, *Hydrolatere* was recovered and nested within *Leptodactylus*. When phenotypic characters were included, the recovered *Leptodactylus* as monophyletic, even though morphology was not scored for *Hydrolatere*. Aside from that, relative branch support increased.

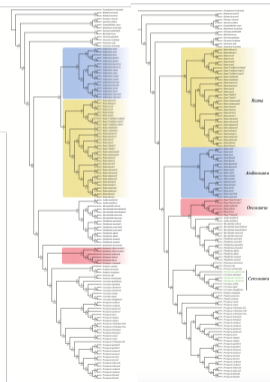
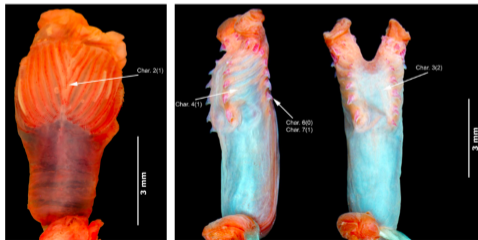


What is going on since Haas (2003)

Similarly, **Sanchez-Pacheco *et al.* (2018)** recovered very different topologies with and without morphology, which also increased branch support when added.

Phylogeny of *Riama* (Squamata: Gymnophthalmidae), impact of phenotypic evidence on molecular datasets, and the origin of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta endemic fauna

Santiago J. Sánchez-Pacheco^{a,b,c,*}, Omar Torres-Carvajal^d, Vanessa Aguirre-Peñafiel^d, Pedro M. Sales Nunes^{e,f}, Laura Verrastro^c, Gilson A. Rivas^g, Miguel T. Rodrigues^c, Taran Grant^c and Robert W. Murphy^{a,b}



What is going on since Haas (2003)

More impressive, **Neumann et al.** (2021) showed that in a genomic study with up to 400,000 molecular characters, the inclusion of as much as 275 phenotypic characters was able to change the sister group to all metazoans (SOM).

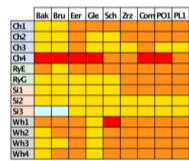
Morphological Characters Can Strongly Influence Early Animal Relationships Inferred from Phylogenomic Data Sets

JOHANNES S. NEUMANN^{1,2,3}, ROB DESALLE^{2,3}, APURVA NARECHANIA³, BERND SCHIERWATER^{2,3,4}, AND MICHAEL TESSLER^{2,3,*}

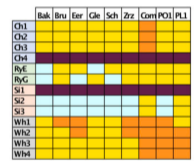
TABLE 1. Molecular data sets and individual analyses.

Study	#Taxa "Full"	#All Ch "Full"	#PI Ch "Full"	#PI Ch 11 taxa	#PI Ch 6 taxa	SOM par6	SOM ML6	SOM par11	SOM ML11	Original
Ch1	77	51,940	35,010	19,655	8681	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
Ch2	77	51,940	23,144	10,871	5058	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
Ch3	77	51,940	23,950	11,303	5228	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
Ch4	77	51,940	26,353	12,935	6822	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
RyE	61	88,384	52,793	31,988	13,168	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
RyG	15	104,840	54,142	54,911	18,215	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
SI1	90	102,464	89,636	39,775	16,776	CT	CT	CT	CT	PO
SI2	90	268,032	219,632	95,825	34,477	CT	CT	CT	CT	PO
SI3	97	401,632	310,886	144,147	47,803	CT	CT	CT	CT	PO
Wh1	70	46,542	36,525	17,247	4122	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
Wh2	70	46,537	28,022	12,743	3615	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
Wh3	70	46,542	30,598	13,661	4112	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT
Wh4	70	46,542	28,667	12,914	3626	CT	CT	CT	CT	CT

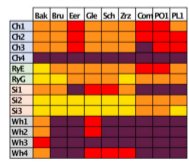
A Likelihood, N = 6



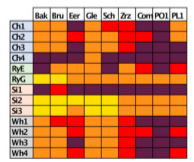
B Likelihood, N = 11



A Parsimony, N = 6



B Parsimony, N = 11



The impact of phenotypic evidence in largely DNA-dominated matrixes

- ▶ An increasing body of evidence suggests that phenotypic characters can improve clade resolution, affect the positioning of specific taxa, and increase the relative branch support of phylogenetic hypotheses.
 - ▶ For example, Haas (2003) anticipated several phylogenetic trends that the following generation of large-scale molecular studies has since supported.
- ▶ Moreover, fossils can only be placed in trees if morphological characters are included.



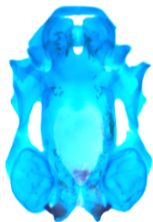
Twenty years after

- ▶ Here, we revisited Haas' work and compiled all the literature information published after 2003.

- ▶ We also analyzed several other tadpoles.

- ▶ Our goals are twofold:

1. To test the impact of larval morphology on largely DNA-dominated matrices; and
2. To summarize the phenotypic variation in larval morphology reported in the last 20 years in a phylogenetic framework.



Choice of phylogenetic method

My personal view on total evidence:

- ▶ “We consider the results of the total evidence analysis to be the phylogenetic hypothesis that best explains the evidence, because the analysis of all available evidence maximizes explanatory power (Kluge, 1989; Grant and Kluge, 2003), and all discussion of character evolution and phenotypic synapomorphies is based on the results of total evidence analysis” (Araujo-Vieira *et al.* (2019), *Cladistics* 35: 469-486, p. 472)



Choice of phylogenetic method

My personal view on weighted vs. unweighted parsimony:

- ▶ Phylogenetics minimizes the character transformations needed to explain the observations.
- ▶ Unweighted (equally weighted) parsimony analysis minimizes hypothesized transformations globally (this follows a “Kluge-an” reasoning, of course).
- ▶ The assumptions (expressed as differential probabilities or costs) about the evolutionary process or perceived importance of different classes of transformations employed in maximum likelihood, Bayesian inference, and weighted parsimony methods minimize certain classes of transformations at the expense of others (and I present this as an observation, not a criticism).
- ▶ Operational considerations aside (e.g., treespace searching capabilities), disagreements between the results of unweighted parsimony analysis and the other methods are due to the increased patristic distance required to accommodate the additional assumptions (which is a “Grant-ean” point of view).



Choice of phylogenetic method

To sum up:

- ▶ Here, we use unweighted parsimony for a total evidence analysis.
- ▶ An advantage is that thorough analysis can be done “fast” (not that weighted parsimony is much slower), and I find this approach much clearer and straightforward.
- ▶ Also, I need a few more months to understand Phylogenetic Minimum Description Length (PMDL) and become proficient in PhyG before I can confidently use PMDL instead of parsimony.



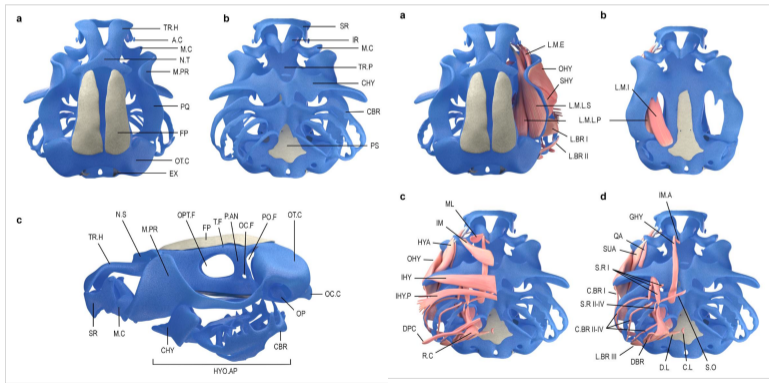
Data overview (detail explanations next)

- ▶ The starting phenotypic dataset contains 282 taxa and 137 phenotypic characters individualized from:
 - ▶ external morphology,
 - ▶ musculoskeletal system,
 - ▶ and visceral components of tadpoles.
- ▶ Additionally, we included up to 15 molecular markers, summing up to 13,982 characters for 206 taxa.
 - ▶ 5 mitochondrial: MT-CYB, MT-ND1, MT-ND2, MT-RNR1 (12S rRNA), and MT-RNR2 (16S rRNA)
 - ▶ 10 nuclear: BDNF, CXCR4, H3C1, POMC, RAG1, RHO, SIAH1, SLC8A1, SLC8A3, and TYR
 - ▶ Nervous functions: BDNF (Brain-derived neurotrophic factor), H3C1 (H3A histone), and POMC (Pro-opiomelanocortin)
 - ▶ Immune functions: RAG1
 - ▶ Cellular function: CXCR4, RHO, SIAH1, and SLC8A1 (NCX1)
 - ▶ Pigmentation: TYR (Tyrosinase) and SLC8A3



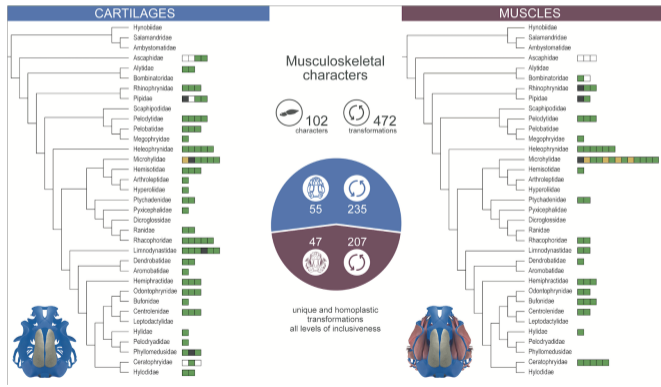
Vera Candiotti, Dias, and Haas (*in press*)

Recently, **Vera Candiotti**, Dias, and Haas did a review about the musculoskeleton system in the anuran larvae.

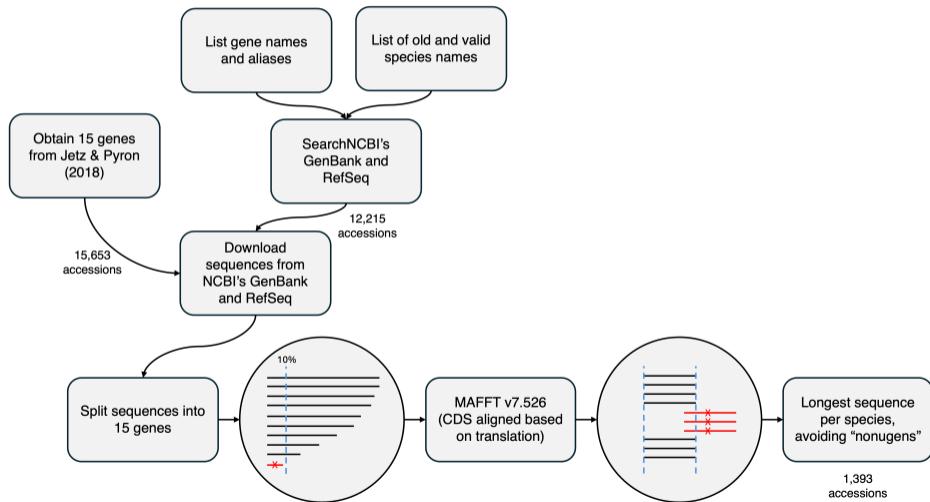


Vera Candiotti, Dias, and Haas (*in press*)

They revisited Haas (2003) matrix and optimize it into Jetz and Pyron (2018) topology, proposing some synapomorphies different from those in Haas (2003).



Molecular data collection



Tree search, clade metrics, sensitivity analysis, and character categorization

Tree search:

- ▶ **Step 1:** PhyG, 10 independent replicates, equal weights, search(hours:24, stop:10, instances:10, thompson:2, linear) followed by swap()
- ▶ **Step 2:** TnT, 10 independent replicates, equal weights, xmult= level 10 chklevel 5 rep 1000;

Jackknife and Goodman-Bremer calculations:

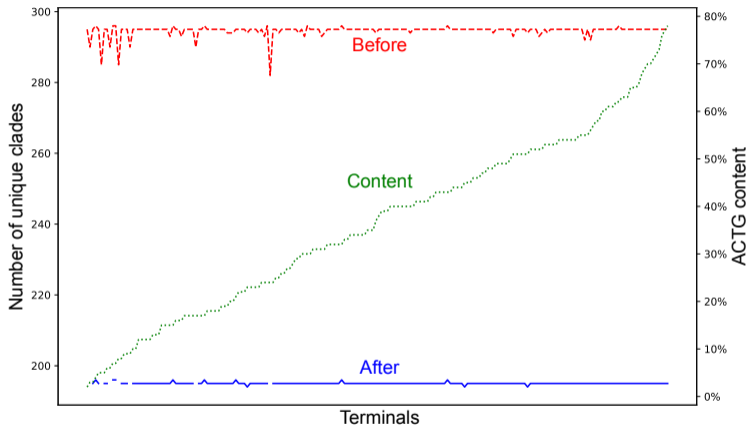
- ▶ **TnT:** command resample jak replications 1000;
- ▶ **TnT:** Bremer.RUN macro
- ▶ **TnT:** using PhylogenomicSupport.run

YBYRÁ:

- ▶ Sensitivity analysis with ybyra_sa.py
- ▶ Wildcard search with ybyra_wild.py
- ▶ Character categorization with ybyra_apo.py



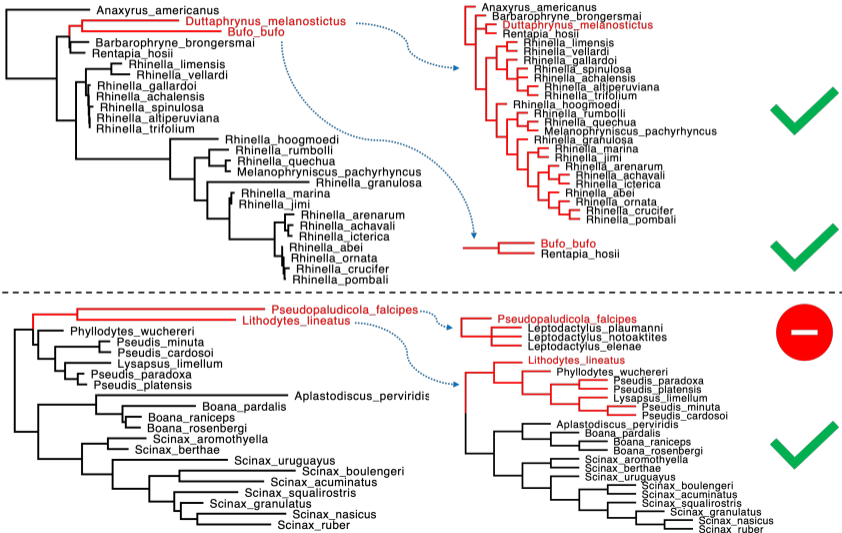
Handling “nonugens,” misannotation, and chimaeric terminals



We found and removed 7 putative wildcards considering the polytomies they caused but also their ACGT content and metadata:

Cycloramphus lithomimeticus, *Gastrotheca riobambae*, *Ikakogi ispacue*, *Leptodactylus latinasus*, *Leptodactylus pustulatus*, *Mannophryne herminae*, and *Peltophryne peltoccephala*.

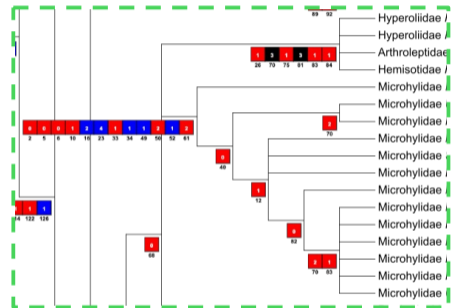
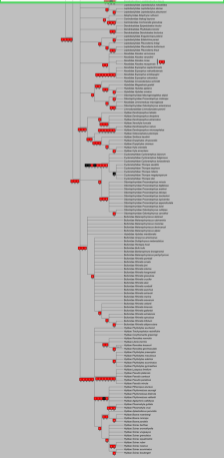
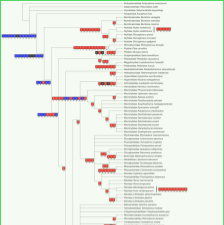
Long branch attraction



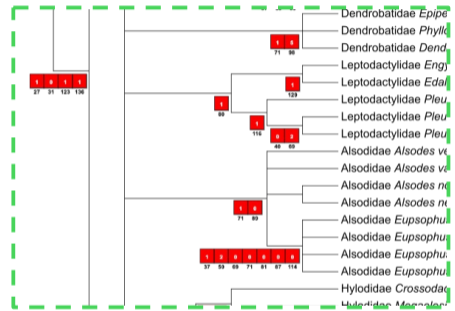
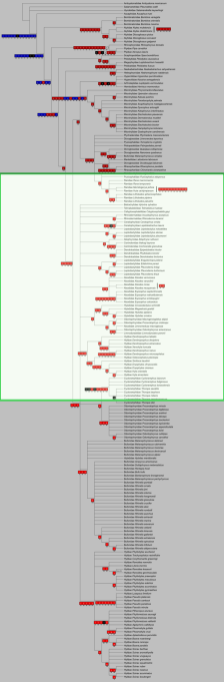
Resulting matrix and graphs

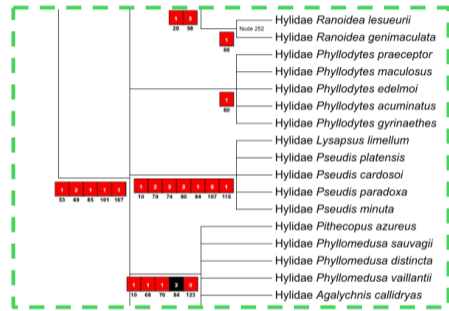
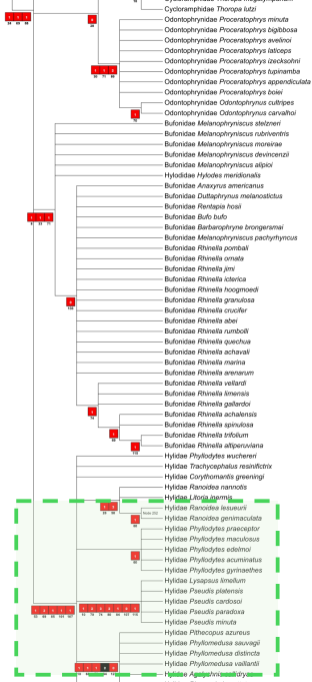
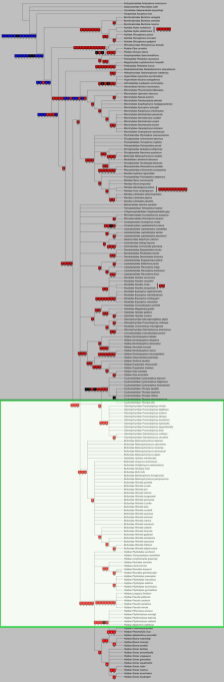
- ▶ 195 terminals
 - ▶ 195 species
 - ▶ 104 genera
 - ▶ 42 families
- ▶ 14,119 characters
 - ▶ 137 morphological
 - ▶ 13,982 molecular
 - ▶ 15 different molecular markers
- ▶ 1 PhyG graph and 2 most parsimonious trees from TnT
 - ▶ 71,365 steps
 - ▶ 1 polytomy caused by conflicting positions of *Rhinella achalensis* and *Rhinella spinulosa*

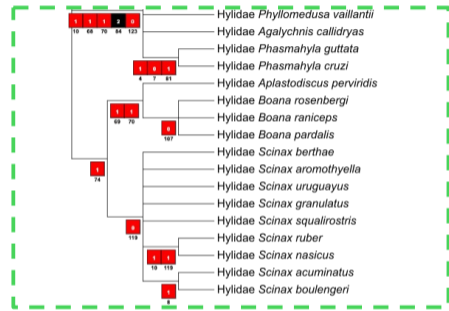
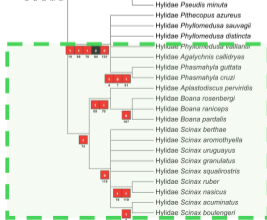
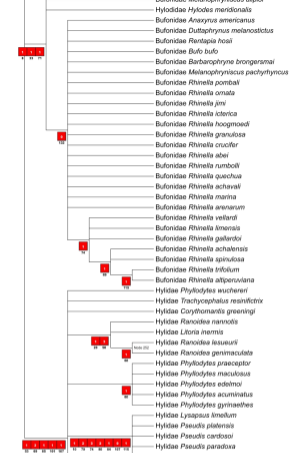
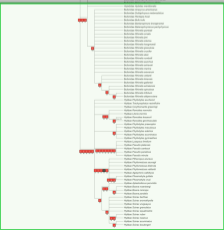
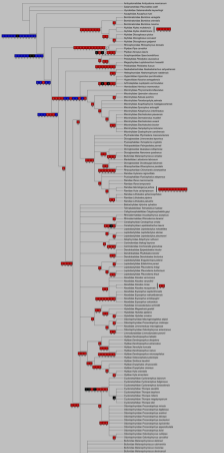




- Ambystomatidae *Ambystoma mexicanum*
- Salamandridae *Pleurodeles waltl*
- Hydrobiidae *Salmanodrillo keyserlingi*
- Ascaphidae *Ascaphus trui*
- Bombinatoridae *Bombina variegata*
- Bombinatoridae *Bombina orientalis*
- Bombinatoridae *Bombina maxima*
- Alydidae *Alytes muletensis*
- Alydidae *Alytes obstetricans*
- Alydidae *Discoglossus pictus*
- Alydidae *Discoglossus scovazzi*
- Alydidae *Discoglossus galganoi*
- Rhinophrynidae *Rhinophrynus dorsalis*
- Pipidae *Pipa carvalhoi*
- Pipidae *Xenopus laevis*
- Scaphiropidae *Spea bombylans*
- Peledyidae *Peledytes caucasicus*
- Megophryidae *Leptobranchium hasselti*
- Pelobatidae *Pelobates fuscus*
- Nasikabatrachidae *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*
- Heleophrynidae *Hadromophryne natalensis*
- Hyperoliidae *Hyperolius puncticulatus*
- Hyperoliidae *Rossia senegalensis*
- Arthroleptidae *Leptopelis vermiculatus*
- Hemisotidae *Hemisus mammillatus*
- Microhylidae *Phrynomantis bifasciatus*
- Microhylidae *Uperodon obscurus*
- Microhylidae *M. louti pulchra*
- Microhylidae *Paradoxophya palmata*
- Microhylidae *Strophophryne madagascanensis*
- Microhylidae *Dyscophus antongilii*
- Microhylidae *Katophrynus interlineatus*
- Microhylidae *Echistocleles piauiensis*
- Microhylidae *Dermatonotus muelleri*
- Microhylidae *Echistocleles cesarii*
- Microhylidae *Echistocleles bicolor*
- Microhylidae *Hemiphrone boliviana*
- Microhylidae *Strophophryne carolinensis*
- Psychadenidae *Psychadena mascareniensis*
- Dicroglossidae *Limnonectes leponinus*
- Physicophalidae *Zompterna cryptotis*
- Petropedidae *Petropedetes perreti*
- Dicroglossidae *Quasipaa exillipaposa*
- Dicroglossidae *Nansana quadrans*
- Bufoidea *Melanophryniscus simplex*
- Mantellidae *Lalostoma labrousam*
- Dicroglossidae *Ociodozogya baluensis*
- Rhacophoridae *Rhacophorus pardalis*
- Rhacophoridae *Chromantis xenampelina*
- Ranidae *Hylarana nigrovittata*
- Physicophalidae *Physicophalus adspersus*
- Ranidae *Rana macronemis*
- Ranidae *Rana temporaria*
- Ranidae *Meristogenys jiriboe*
- Ranidae *Hyla cavitymparum*
- Ranidae *Lithobates spinocephalus*
- Ranidae *Lithobates pipiens*
- Ranidae *Lithobates palustris*
- Batrachyidae *Hylorina sylvatica*
- Telmatobabidae *Telmatobius truebae*
- Calypsocephalidae *Calypsocephalella gayi*
- Rhinodermatidae *Rhinetophrynus acerpicus*
- Rhinodermatidae *Rhinoderma darwini*
- Ceratophryidae *Ceratophrys ornata*
- Ceratophryidae *Leptobatrachus laevis*







- Hylodidae *Hylodes merlini*
- Hylodidae *Anaxyrus americanus*
- Bufoinae *Duttaphrynus melanostictus*
- Bufoinae *Rhinophrynus*
- Bufoinae *Bufo*
- Bufoinae *Barbarophryne*
- Bufoinae *Melanophryniscus*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella ornata*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella jimi*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella icterica*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella hoogmoedi*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella granulosa*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella crucifer*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella abei*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella rumbolli*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella quechua*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella achaval*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella marina*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella arenarum*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella veltardi*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella imensis*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella gallerdei*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella achalensis*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella spinulosa*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella infolium*
- Bufoinae *Rhinella interperuviana*
- Hylidae *Phyllodytes wuchereni*
- Hylidae *Trachycephalus resiniflax*
- Hylidae *Corythomantis greeningii*
- Hylidae *Ranoidea nannotis*
- Hylidae *Litoria inermis*
- Hylidae *Ranoidea isueuri*
- Hylidae *Ranoidea geminaculata*
- Hylidae *Phyllodytes praecipitor*
- Hylidae *Phyllodytes maculosus*
- Hylidae *Phyllodytes edmondoi*
- Hylidae *Phyllodytes acuminatus*
- Hylidae *Phyllodytes gymnæthes*
- Hylidae *Lyaspsus lineatum*
- Hylidae *Pseudis plelensis*
- Hylidae *Pseudis cardosoi*
- Hylidae *Pseudis paradoxa*
- Hylidae *Pseudis minuta*
- Hylidae *Pithecopus azureus*
- Hylidae *Phyllomedusa sauvagii*
- Hylidae *Phyllomedusa distincta*
- Hylidae *Phyllomedusa vittata*
- Hylidae *Agalychnis callidryas*
- Hylidae *Phasmahyla guttata*
- Hylidae *Phasmahyla cruzi*
- Hylidae *Aplastodiscus perviridis*
- Hylidae *Boana rosenbergi*
- Hylidae *Boana raniceps*
- Hylidae *Boana pardalis*
- Hylidae *Scinax berthae*
- Hylidae *Scinax aromothyella*
- Hylidae *Scinax uruguayus*
- Hylidae *Scinax granulatus*
- Hylidae *Scinax squalirostris*
- Hylidae *Scinax ruber*
- Hylidae *Scinax nasicus*
- Hylidae *Scinax acuminatus*
- Hylidae *Scinax boulengeri*

- Hylidae *Phyllomedusa vaillantii*
- Hylidae *Agalychnis callidryas*
- Hylidae *Phasmahyla guttata*
- Hylidae *Phasmahyla cruzi*
- Hylidae *Aplastodiscus perviridis*
- Hylidae *Boana rosenbergi*
- Hylidae *Boana raniceps*
- Hylidae *Boana pardalis*
- Hylidae *Scinax berthae*
- Hylidae *Scinax aromothyella*
- Hylidae *Scinax uruguayus*
- Hylidae *Scinax granulatus*
- Hylidae *Scinax squalirostris*
- Hylidae *Scinax ruber*
- Hylidae *Scinax nasicus*
- Hylidae *Scinax acuminatus*
- Hylidae *Scinax boulengeri*

Comparing matrices

Morphology:

- ▶ 137 characters
- ▶ 2 uninformative (1.46%)
- ▶ 979 transformations
- ▶ 26,716 character states
- ▶ 5,601 ambiguous states (20.96%)

Internal nodes with diagnostic synapomorphies:

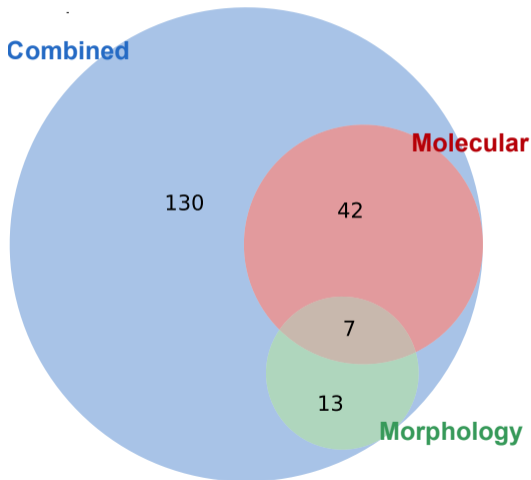
- ▶ Morphology only: 3
- ▶ Molecules only: 100
- ▶ Both: 84

Molecules:

- ▶ 13,982 characters
- ▶ 7,899 informative (56.49%)
- ▶ 70,387 transformations
- ▶ 2,726,491 character states
- ▶ 1,775,411 ambiguous states (65.12%)



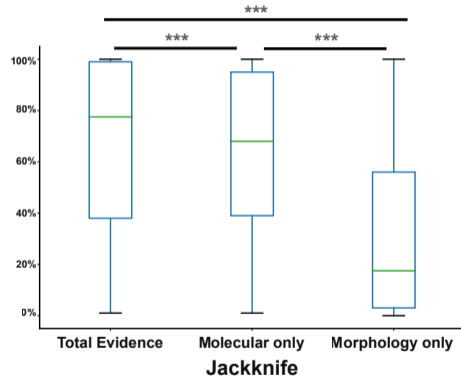
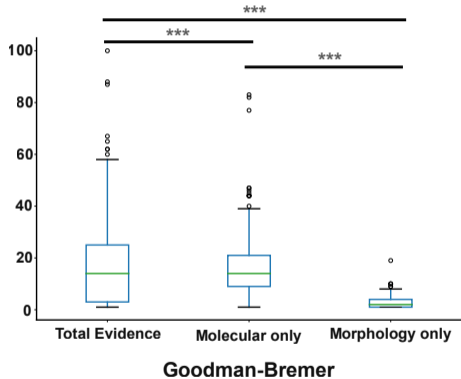
Combining morphological and molecular characters resulted in a topology that is mostly not recovered with molecular or morphological data alone.



The Venn diagram on the left shows the number of clades in the total evidence analysis and the amount of those clades in molecular- or morphology-only trees.



Goodman-Bremer and Jackknife values



Concluding remarks

- ▶ Our total evidence analysis of 15 genes plus 137 morphological characters yielded frog clades that would otherwise not be recoverable
- ▶ Our total evidence analysis resulted in more well-resolved trees with greater Jackknife or Goodman-Bremer values
- ▶ We raise concerns about nonugens, misannotations, and chimeric terminals on recent molecular phylogenies of frogs

Muito obrigado!

¡Muchas gracias!

Thank You!

