
We collected 14 specimens of the poorly known cryptobatrachid Stefania woodleyi in Kaiteteur National Park, west-central Guyana. Stefania woodleyi is endemic to the southern Pakaraima region, Guyana (Sefar and MacCulloch 2005. Bull. Biol. Soc. Washington 13:9–23), and little is known about its ecology (MacCulloch and Lathrop 2002. Herpetologica 58:327–346). One of these specimens, IRSNB 13799, a male SVL 45.8 mm, collected 25 March 2006 at 2130 h, in the vicinity of Elinkwa River in the southeastern part of the park (5°09'46"N, 59°24'01"W; 550 m elev.) displayed an aggressive defensive behavior on two occasions. When first captured, and later while being photographed, the frog suddenly inflated its lungs, opened its mouth wide and jumped toward the handler’s hand while emitting a single high-pitched cat-like “meow” distress call. The defensive mechanism was similar to an attempt to bite the handler’s hand. The first “attack” was so surprising that the handler almost released the frog. Three other specimens from the same locality also displayed the same behavior with some variation. IRSNB 13801, a male SVL 47.3 mm collected 23 June 2006 at 2230 h only inflated its lungs and opened its mouth without jumping, emitting any distress call and/or attempting to “bite”. IRSNB 13802, a female SVL 58.2 mm collected 26 June 2006 at 2130 h several times displayed the same aggressive defensive behavior as IRSNB 13799 and IRSNB 13803, a juvenile SVL 26.8 mm also displayed, but a single time only, the complete aggressive defensive behavior. This indicates that both sexes and juveniles display this defensive mechanism.

There is much intraspecific variation in defensive behaviors (Myers 1966, op. cit.), which may be influenced by ecological factors (Gomes et al. 2002. Copeia 2002:994–1005). Interestingly, only some of the S. woodleyi collected in Kaiteteur National Park displayed this aggressive antipredator mechanism and all of them were collected at the same locality, in the vicinity of Elinkwa River. As far as we know, this is the first report of aggressive defensive behavior within the genus Stefania and within the family Cryptobatrachidae. Unlike most anuran taxa that exhibit this type of behavior, Stefania are gracile, and lack fang-like teeth. Specimens are deposited in the herpetological collections of the Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique (IRSNB), Brussels, Belgium.

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