

COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSALS CONCERNING *ZORILLA* GEOFFROY  
1826 (MAMMALIA). Z.N.(S.) 758

(see volume 19, pages 284–289; volume 20, pages 242–245; volume 22, pages 17–18)

By Richard G. Van Gelder (*Department of Mammalogy, The American  
Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.*)

1. Contrary to the proposals and comments so far published, the author and date of the name of the type-species of *Zorilla* I. Geoffroy, 1826, is not Gmelin 1788, but Schreber 1776.

2. Schreber, 1776, "Die Säugthiere . . .", pl. 123 (and, 1777, text p. 445) based the new name *Viverra zorilla* on pl. 41 of Buffon (1765, *Histoire naturelle*, vol. 13, vernacular name only "le Zorille"), on Pennant (1771, *Synopsis of Quadrupeds*, p. 233, vernacular name only "Zorilla") and on Gumilla (1745, *El Orinoko Illustrado*, p. 240, vernacular name, pre-Linnaean). The specimen figured by Buffon is a specimen of the taxon now known as *Spilogale putorius* (Linnaeus, 1758) which was obtained by Mr. Aubry in America (Lichtenstein, 1836, *Über die Gattung Mephitis*, p. 296). The vernacular names employed by Pennant and Gumilla cannot be referred to *Spilogale* and are possibly referable to *Conepatus* sp. (Van Gelder, 1959, *Bull. Amer. Mus. nat. Hist.*, 117, p. 248).

3. Since *Viverra zorilla* Schreber is the nominate type-species of *Zorilla* Geoffroy, 1826, by indication, the name should certainly be fixed in its application to one of these species upon which it is based and we hereby designate the animal from America, obtained by Mr. Aubry, the whole individual figured by Buffon (1771, *tom. cit.*, pl. 41) [and republished by Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1963, *J. Mammal.*, p. 115, pl. 1)] as the lectotype of *Viverra zorilla* Schreber 1776.

4. The whereabouts of this specimen is unknown and Lichtenstein (1836, *tom. cit.*, p. 296) mentions that it is no longer extant. However, since there are several subspecific names of the spotted skunk *Spilogale putorius* (Linn., 1758) endangered by the name *V. zorilla* so long as its locality only remains "America", it is desirable that a neotype with precise locality be recognized. Since of these subspecies names only *putorius* Linnaeus antedates *zorilla* Schreber, the neotype must come from the range of that subspecies if it is to avoid the introduction of name changing into an otherwise stable nomenclature. The neotype proposed by China (1965, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.*, 22 (1), p. 18) is from the range of the subspecies *gracilis* Merriam, 1890, and would involve its replacement.

5. Accordingly, we request the Commission to disregard Dr. China's application and direct that the specific name *Viverra zorilla* Schreber, 1776, be interpreted by reference to the neotype specimen American Museum of Natural History No. 5423/4286, skin and skull, ♂, collected at Greensboro, Hale County, Alabama, by W. C. Avery on 29 February 1892. The skin of this specimen agrees well with Buffon's plate and the locality falls within the range accorded to the subspecies *putorius* Linnaeus.

6. If the Commission takes this action, the *Viverra zorilla* Schreber, 1776, becomes a subjective junior synonym of *Viverra putorius* Linnaeus, 1758 (and of the subspecies *putorius*). It is also a senior subjective synonym of *Spilogale ringens* Merriam, 1890, of which name the type locality is also Greensboro, Hale County, Alabama.

7. The name *Zorilla* was used first as a name in the genus group by I. Geoffroy St. Hillaire in an article "Marte" in *Dict. Class. Hist. Nat.*, 1826, vol. 13, p. 215. In this he was merely applying a formal Latinized name to a "group name" which had been used previously in a similar dictionary by Desmarest (Nov. Dic. Hist. Nat. 1818, vol. 19, p. 379, article "Marte"). Both Geoffroy and Desmarest make it abundantly clear that this new generic name is based upon fresh material from the Cape of Good Hope, from Senegal, and from Gambia. In fact, Desmarest expressly rejects the idea that the species *Viverra zorilla* Schreber is from the American continents (see Anderson and de Winton, 1902, *Zoology of Egypt: Mammalia*, p. 238, for an historical mention of this error).



8. Since the generic name *Zorilla* Geoffroy, 1826, is thus based upon a misidentified type-species, the matter is referred to the Commission to be dealt with in accordance with Article 70 (a).

9. The generic name *Zorilla* has never been used for a genus of American skunks so that neither stability nor universality of nomenclature can be served by the Commission adopting the alternative action 70 (a) (iii) and thus declaring *V. zorilla* Schreber, 1776, to be the type-species of *Zorilla* Geoffroy, 1826.

10. The identity of the species *V. zorilla* Schreber is not in doubt, so that alternative action 70 (a) (iii) is not applicable.

11. Hayman (in China, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.*, 22 (1), p. 18) has shown that both *Zorilla* and *Ictonyx* are in current use for South African spotted polecats (commonly called "zorilles" in the vernacular) but that *Ictonyx* appears more often. The list of recent usages of *Zorilla* and *Ictonyx* can both be added to with ease, but it is relevant that the attention of the Commission should be drawn to the fact that even if only the list of usages of *Ictonyx* presented by Hayman be examined, all but Hollister 1919, Monard 1935, Schouteden 1944, Shortridge 1934, and Setzer 1956 make mention of the fact that the supposedly unavailable *Zorilla* belongs here; and of these five authors, Setzer later makes such a statement (The Mustelids of Egypt, J. Egyptian Public Health Assn., 1958, p. 201). Thus, *Zorilla* must be regarded as a name used familiarly in connexion with this taxon and no ambiguity arises through its use.

Accordingly, I believe that stability will not be upset by the Commission adopting alternative 70 (a) (i) [which is also effectively the procedure which could be adopted under 70 (b) which some might regard as applicable to this case] and I am of the opinion that universality will be best served by it since the Commission is not being requested to take arbitrary action.

12. Thus, I request the Commission, through its plenary powers, and in accordance with Article 70 (a) (i), to designate the type-species of *Zorilla* Geoffroy, 1826, to be *Bradypus striatus* Perry, 1810 (*Ictonyx striatus*).

13. In summary, this new application in respect of the names *Ictonyx* Kaup, 1835, and *Zorilla* Geoffroy, 1826, requests that the Commission should:

- (a) direct that the name *Viverra zorilla* Schreber, 1776, be placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology as interpreted by reference to the neotype, American Museum of Natural History No. 5423/4286, type locality Greensboro, Hale County, Alabama.
- (b) through use of its plenary powers and in accordance with Article 70 (a) (i) designate *Bradypus striatus* Perry, 1810, to be the type-species of *Zorilla* I. Geoffroy, 1826.
- (c) direct that the name *Zorilla* I. Geoffroy, 1826, type-species *Bradypus striatus* Perry, 1810, by subsequent designation (above) be placed on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology.

#### COMMENT ON DR. VAN GELDER'S PROPOSAL

By W. E. China (*Assistant Secretary to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature*)

In view of Dr. Van Gelder's demonstration that my request for a designation of a neotype of *Viverra zorilla* Gmelin under the plenary powers would result in the name of the Colorado subspecies *Spilogale putorius* (L.) *gracilis* Merriam being changed to *Spilogale putorius* (L.) *zorilla* Schreber, I herewith retract my request. (See *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 22 : 18, para. 6.)

I agree with him that the oldest valid name for *Viverra zorilla* Gmelin, 1788, is *Viverra zorilla* Schreber, 1776, referred to by Erxleben, 1777.

I am sorry to see that Van Gelder supports the change of name of the South African Stinkmuishond from the well-used *Ictonyx* Kaup to the hopelessly confused *Zorilla* I. Geoffroy and would prefer the suppression of the latter name under the plenary



Van Gelder, Richard G. 1965. "Comments on the proposals concerning Zorilla Geoffroy 1826 (Mammalia). Z.N. (S.) 758." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 22, 278–279. <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.11113>.

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