

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF THE "RÈGLES" TO  
PROVIDE THAT SPELLED-OUT LETTERS OR NUMERALS  
ARE NOT TO BE ACCEPTED AS AVAILABLE TRIVIAL  
NAMES, WHEN THOSE LETTERS OR NUMERALS WERE  
ORIGINALLY EMPLOYED AS ORDINALS FOR THE  
ENUMERATION OF THE SPECIES, SUBSPECIES OR  
INFRA-SUBSPECIFIC FORMS CONCERNED**

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The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature has already decided in 1914 that Serial Letters, such as *a*, *b*, *c*, etc., are not acceptable as specific names. (Summary to *Opinion* 64, *Smithson. miscell. Publ.* **2256** : 151.) It was decided at the recent Paris Congress that a provision to this effect should be incorporated in the Rules of Zoological Nomenclature (1950, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* **4** : 140) and should be extended to cover the case of a serial letter used in conjunction with a trivial name like "*var. g. bruhni*" (1950, *ibid.* **4** : 348). It is clearly logical to consider that the decision of the Commission also covers the case of serial numerals used in the same way, but this is not actually stated and this ought to be done.

The case raised below is more difficult, since it is not clear whether or not the decision of the Congress covers it; it is the case where an author applies serial letters to a number of organisms and a subsequent writer spells them out. There is an excellent example in the Mallophaga, where Piaget 1880 (*Pédiculines* : 21, 366; 1885, *Pédiculines Supplement* : 75) described a number of forms as (: 21) *Docophorus pachypus* var. *a* *cornuta*, var. *angulata*, var. *γ* *rotundata*, and (1880 : 366; 1885 : 75) as *Lipeurus variabilis* vars. *a*, *β*, *γ*, *δ*, *ε* and *η*. Kellogg (1908, in Wytsman's *Gen. Ins.*, **66**, *Mallophaga*) correctly ignored (: 14) the Greek letters preceding the names given by Piaget to the forms he described as varieties of *D. pachypus*, but (: 45) spelled out those attached to Piaget's varieties of *L. variabilis*, so that in Kellogg's work these appear as *L. variabilis*, vars. *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma*, *delta*, *epsilon* and *eta*, all attributed to Piaget and with valid "indications" in the form of references to the page of Piaget's work on which they were described. It seems to me to be clear that Kellogg did not intend to convert Piaget's Greek letters into names and that it is in accordance with the spirit of *Opinion* 64 that they should not be so regarded, but the Rules inevitably pay little heed to what an author intended to do but only to what he did. I think it almost equally clear that (as the Rules stand) Kellogg did give names to the forms that Piaget had carefully left nameless, though of course Kellogg himself, and not Piaget, is the author of them. Nearly all authors have disregarded vars. *alpha* Kellogg, *beta* Kellogg, and the rest, or have applied to them Piaget's Greek letters, but very recently at least one author has used "*var. delta* Piaget" as a name and has thus brought the matter to a head. A decision must now be reached,



and at the same time a decision ought to be made on the question of numerals—if *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma* and *delta* used as a series are to be valid trivial names, then there is no logical reason why the same should not apply to *one*, *two*, *three* and *four* or to less well-known numerals such as *tasi*, *lua*, *tolu* and *fa*. If the decision is adverse to these spelled-out numerals and letters, it will have to be made clear that it does not affect the position of similar words when not used as part of a series, as in the case of so many species of Lepidoptera that have names such as *delta*, *epsilon*, *c-album* or *comma*, which are not serial but refer to some characteristic of the insect.

I therefore suggest that the Commission should consider recommending the insertion into the Rules of a provision on the following lines: "Serial letters, such as *a*, *b*, *c*, etc., and serial numbers, such as 1, 2, 3, etc., whether used alone or in conjunction with a trivial name (e.g., var. *g.*, *bruchii*) are not to be available as trivial names. And in instances in which serial letters of numerals were originally used merely as ordinals for the enumeration of species, varieties, etc., the fact that they may have been spelled out or transliterated by some later author does not confer on them any status of availability."



Hopkins, G. H. E. 1951. "Proposed amendment of the "regles" to provide that spelled-out letters or numerals are not to be accepted as available trivial names, when those letters or numerals were originally employed as ordinals for the enumeration of the sspecies, sub-species or intrasubspecific forms concerned." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 6, 52–53.

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