

GOBIUS ORCA COLLETT, 1874 (PISCES): PROPOSED USE OF THE
PLENARY POWERS TO SET ASIDE A FIRST REVISER SELECTION
Z.N.(S.) 1655

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1. In the present application, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is requested to use its plenary powers to set aside a long overlooked "first reviser" selection of a specific name for a monotypic gobiid genus. The species in question is a small, infrequently encountered inhabitant of offshore waters in the Eastern Atlantic boreal region, and was originally named twice in the same publication. Both specific names have been in use until recently, under the impression that they have referred to separate taxa. The name having page precedence in the original publication was employed by the present author in a modern revision which gives, for the first time, supporting evidence that the two names are synonymous. A much earlier worker, however, fulfilling the requirements of a "first reviser" as laid down in the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1961) (Article 24), reached a similar conclusion but chose as senior synonym the second specific name proposed in the original paper. According to Article 24(a) of the Code, "if more than one name for a single taxon . . . [is] published simultaneously . . . relative priority is determined by the action of the first reviser", the rule of page precedence in determining priority, adopted at the Paris Session of the International Commission in July 1948 (*Bull. Zool. Nomencl.* 4 : 330-331; 1950), having been annulled among the Copenhagen Decisions on Zoological Nomenclature (1953, Pt. 2, Sect. 2, Art. 28, pp. 66-67). In the present case, what technically qualifies as the first revision of the two nominal species was long neglected and not adopted by subsequent workers, and the extensive modern treatment of the taxon has appeared under the species name which has page priority but which was not selected in the first revision. By making the present application, it is felt that stability in nomenclature of this notoriously difficult group of bony fishes would be best served by setting aside the nomenclatural result of the hitherto forgotten first revision, and adding to the Official List the specific name currently in use. Full details of the nomenclature of the two nominal species involved are provided in the following paragraphs.

2. In 1874, Robert Collett published a short article which comprised descriptions of two new, supposedly distinct species of European gobiid fishes, named respectively *Gobius orca* (p. 446) and *Gobius scorpioides* (p. 447). Collett (1875) later provided more detailed accounts and also figures of these two nominal species (*G. orca*, pp. 172-175, Pl. III, figs. 1-3; *G. scorpioides*, pp. 175-179, Pl. III, figs. 4-6). The type specimens of both nominal species are in the collections of the Zoologisk Museum, Universitetet i Oslo, Norway: they consist of the holotype of *G. orca* (No. J3999), a male from Espevaer, Hardangerfjord, Norway, dredged in 145-180 m. during July 1873, and two syntypes of *Gobius scorpioides* (Nos. J4020, J4021), both females, from Hvittingsô, Stavangerfjord, Norway, and Lyngholmen, Hardangerfjord, dredged in 37 and 110 m. during July 1872 and August 1873 respectively. Further details of these specimens are given by Miller (1963, p. 218, Table VI).

3. Winther (1877), after examination of an additional specimen (Universitetets Zoologisk Museum, Copenhagen, No. 91), which he referred to *Gobius scorpioides*, proposed that the two species should be removed from the genus *Gobius* L. into a new genus, which was termed *Lebetus*, thus (p. 49):

“*Lebetus* n. gen.

Den anden af de for vor Fauna nye Arter, *Gobius scorpioides* Collett, opstilles her som Repraesentant for en ny Slaegt. Udsondringen af denne Art tilligemed den naerstaende Gob. orca (Collett) fra *Gobius* Cuv. er motiveret ved den Eiendommelighed, at begge disse Arter mangle det Hovedsaerkjende, de tragtformet sammenvoxede Bugfinner, hvorved Slaegten *Gobius* fra Cuviers Tid har vaeret skarpt skilt fra de naermest staaende Slaegter.” etc.

An English translation of the above by the late Dr. A. Bruun is given by Whitley (1931, p. 156). Whether or not *Gobius scorpioides* may be regarded as the type-species of *Lebetus* by original designation is perhaps debatable under Article 67(c) (i) of the Code. If this is not the case, then the first valid designation of a type-species for the genus (satisfying Article 69(a) (iii)) is that by Jordan (1919, p. 392), who regarded *G. scorpioides* Collett as the “orthotype” (i.e. type by original designation [Frizzell, 1933, p. 659]) of *Lebetus* Winther 1877. As well as including *Lebetus*, Jordan (1920, p. 487) also lists the nominal genus “*Lebistes* Smitt 1899: 543” with the orthotype given as “*L. scorpioides* Smitt.” As noted by Koumans (1931, p. 148, 162), this is clearly an erroneous reference to *Lebetus*, which was recognised by Smitt (1900, p. 554) as a subgenus of *Gobius* containing a single species, *G. scorpioides* Collett. The generic name *Lebistes* is, of course, preoccupied by *Lebistes* Filippi (1862, p. 69) among the cyprinodont teleosts, and, to replace this name within the Gobiidae, Whitley (1930, p. 123) proposed *Butigobius* (type-species “*Lebistes scorpioides* Smitt” by original designation). Later, Whitley (1931) reviewed the nomenclatural situation consequent upon his inability to consult Smitt’s work before proposing *Butigobius*, and stated that the latter was to be regarded as a junior synonym of *Lebetus* Winther, of which *Gobius scorpioides* Collett was cited as the type-species by “virtual haplotypy”. Since Winther (1877) clearly included the two species *G. orca* and *G. scorpioides* when founding *Lebetus*, it would seem that this statement by Whitley and his choice of type terminology (see Frizzell, 1933, p. 650) implies acceptance of Smitt’s conclusion, discussed in the next paragraph, that the two nominal species of *Lebetus* are synonymous. Although quoted in full by Whitley, it was not commented upon by him.

4. In his “Preliminary notes on the arrangement of the genus *Gobius*, with an enumeration of its European species”, Smitt (1900) included *Lebetus* Winther as a subgenus of *Gobius*, thus (p. 554): “ $\beta\beta$: Cheek longer than the postorbital part of the head.—*LEBETUS*, WINTHER.—*Gobius scorpioides* COLL. (σ = *Gob. orca*, COLL.).”

In thus defining the relationship between Collett’s two nominal species, Smitt cited both synonyms involved, indicated that they apply to the same species, chose *Gobius scorpioides* as the name of this taxon, and therefore, qualifies as “first reviser” of the two species, according to Article 24(a) (i). This revision,

which contains no evidence for the union of the two species, was overlooked or ignored in subsequent important references to this complex (e.g. Collett, 1902; Holt & Byrne, 1903; Grieg, 1913; Fage, 1918; Petersen, 1919; Duncker, 1928; De Buen, 1930 a, b, 1931; Koumans, 1931; Ehrenbaum, 1936; Tåning, 1940, etc.*) until noted by Miller (1961, p. 676). When published in 1900, there was no reason for selection of the name *scorpioides* in preference to *orca* on the grounds of appropriateness or of much greater frequency of usage, since, up to that date, the binomen *Gobius scorpioides* had appeared in eight publications, *Lebetus scorpioides* in three, *Gobius orca* in seven, and *Lebetus orca* in two (Miller, 1963, pp. 216–217).

5. Recently, the present author (Miller, 1961; 1963) has confirmed that *Gobius orca* and *G. scorpioides* are based on sexual dimorphism within a single species, with supporting evidence for this conclusion drawn from a study of coloration, meristic characters, body proportions, and distribution. Acting on the order in which these specific names were first published (see para. 1), *orca* was selected as the senior synonym and employed for the species in the binomen *Lebetus orca* (Collett 1874), *Gobius scorpioides* Collett 1874 being regarded as a junior subjective synonym (Miller, 1961, p. 676). Under the former name, a redescription of the species was provided, including, for the first time, details of the modified lateral-line system and the skeleton which have contributed towards a better understanding of systematic position, as well as an account of geographical and ecological distribution, diet, reproduction, and sexual dimorphism (Miller, 1963).

6. Accordingly, in the interest of stability in nomenclature, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is herein asked:—

(1) to use its plenary powers:

(a) to set aside the selection made by Smitt (1900), as first reviser, of *scorpioides* Collett 1874 in preference to *orca* Collett 1874, both names in the binomina *Gobius scorpioides* and *Gobius orca* having been published in the same work and on the same date, and being currently regarded as applicable to the same taxon, and, having done so,

(b) to grant precedence to the specific name *orca* Collett 1874, as published in the binomen *Gobius orca*, over *scorpioides* Collett 1874, as published in the binomen *Gobius scorpioides*.

(2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology, the specific name *orca* Collett 1874, as published in the binomen *Gobius orca*, to take precedence over the specific name *scorpioides* Collett 1874, as published in the binomen *Gobius scorpioides*, by the Ruling given under the plenary powers in (1) (b) above.

7. I am indebted to Dr. R. M. Bailey, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, U.S.A., and to Mr. D. Heppell, Zoology Department, Glasgow University, for advice on nomenclatural rulings and procedure. By this help, neither is necessarily committed to supporting this application.

* given in full by Miller (1963, pp. 249–253).

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