

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

A NEW GENERIC NAME FOR THE ASIATIC TAPIR.

BY E. A. GOLDMAN.

Comparison of the skulls of the American and Asiatic tapirs indicates that the existing members of the family *Tapiridae* are divisible by cranial characters into three nearly coordinate groups which may be regarded as generic in rank. These are *Tapirus* Brisson, the type of which is *Hippopotamus terrestris* Linnæus, from Brazil; *Tapirella* Palmer, with *Elasmognathus bairdii* Gill, from the Isthmus of Panama, as type; and a third group typified by the species currently recognized as *Tapirus indicus* Desmarest, from Asia. The generic name *Rhinochoerus* must be disregarded as it was proposed by Wagler to replace *Tapirus* because the latter was not derived from a classical root.* This name was adopted by Gray† for the Asiatic tapir, but was based on the same South American species as *Tapirus*.

Since no other generic name seems available for the Asiatic tapir I propose the following:

Acrocodia ‡ gen. nov.

Type.—*Tapirus indicus* Desmarest, from southeastern Asia, which will now stand as *Acrocodia indica* (Desmarest).

Diagnosis.—Similar in general to *Tapirus* and *Tapirella*, but with distinctive characters as follows: Braincase broad, elevated and inflated anteriorly, the antero-external surface of frontals facing outward, and not deeply channeled above the frontomaxillary suture as in *Tapirus* and *Tapirella*; lambdoid crest broadly U-shaped; maxillae not prolonged upward in thin vertical plates embracing and supporting mesethmoid as in *Tapirella*, the ascending branches nearly straight, with upper surface flattened, and above lachrymals becoming wedge-shaped and continued upward in same plane as frontals (ascending branches grooved or deeply channeled in *Tapirus*, the upper portions broadly overlapped on inner side by descending processes of nasals); nasals each with a deep circular

pit near middle of posterior border, and without the descending processes which in *Tapirus* meet and overlap the ascending branches of maxillae; maxillary floor of orbital fossa rising nearly to level of orbital border of jugal; posterior nares much elongated as viewed from below, and opening directly downward (shorter and directed downward and backward in *Tapirus* and *Tapirella*); maxillo-turbinals deeply plicated, the internal folds and alternating furrows of similar width (in *Tapirus* the furrows are separated by very narrow trenchant ridges; in *Tapirella* the maxillo-turbinals are smooth); transverse divisions of upper molars thick, the posterior walls less broadly excavated than in *Tapirus* and *Tapirella*; first upper premolar with a broad anterior cusp; third upper molar with outer cusps laterally compressed and connected by a high trenchant ridge, much as in *Tapirella*, instead of conical and separated by a deep notch as in *Tapirus*.

Remarks.—Among the most important and readily apparent cranial peculiarities distinguishing the three genera of existing tapirs are the differing arrangement of the bony parts supporting the proboscis. In *Acrocodia* and *Tapirella* the nasals are flat, triangular bones without the stout descending processes which in *Tapirus* meet and overlap the maxillae. In *Acrocodia* and *Tapirus* the maxillae are not developed upward in thin vertical plates embracing an anterior ossified extension of the mesethmoid as in *Tapirella*. Skulls of *Acrocodia* are thus distinguished by the absence of descending nasal processes and vertically ascending maxillary plates. In dentition the genera are much alike; *Acrocodia* in dental details seems nearer to *Tapirella* than to *Tapirus*.

The three genera represent the surviving branches of a family whose former range included much of Europe and North America. Tapirs apparently became extinct in Europe§ before the Pleistocene period, as none of their remains have been found in the caverns or alluvial deposits in which those of elephants, rhinoceroses, and hippopotamuses occur in abundance. The genus *Tapirella* is known only from the tropical parts of Middle America, from eastern Panama northward to southern Mexico. *Tapirus terrestris* ranges widely in tropical South America and the genus is represented in the high Andes by *T. roulinii* Fischer, a species with remarkably flattened braincase, but agreeing in essential generic characters with typical *Tapirus*. In northwestern Colombia and eastern Panama the distribution areas of *Tapirus* and *Tapirella* probably meet or overlap. *Acrocodia* is now restricted to southeastern Asia and islands of the East Indies, and its isolation therefore is measured by the full width of the Pacific Ocean.

* Wagler (Nat. Syst. Amphibien, p. 17, 1830) quoting other authors says: "Nomina generica, quae ex graeca vel latina lingua radicum non habent, rejicienda sunt."

† Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond., p. 884, 1867.

‡ "ἄκρος, high; κώδεια, head.

§ Flower and Lydekker, Mammals Living and Extinct, p. 372, 1891.



Goldman, Edward Alphonso. 1913. "A new generic name for the Asiatic tapir." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 26, 65–66.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/22881>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/37450>

Holding Institution

MBLWHOI Library

Sponsored by

MBLWHOI Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.