

**Case 3159*****Staphylinus maculosus* and *S. violaceus* Gravenhorst, 1802 (currently *Platydracus maculosus* and *P. violaceus*; Insecta, Coleoptera): proposed conservation of usage of the specific names**

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**Abstract.** The purposes of this application are (1) to conserve the widely used staphylinid name *Platydracus maculosus* (Gravenhorst, 1802) by suppressing its senior subjective synonym *Staphylinus viduatus* Fabricius, 1801, which has been used only once in the past 160 years, and (2) to conserve the specific name of *Platydracus violaceus* (Gravenhorst, 1802). The latter name was originally published in combination with *Staphylinus* Linnaeus, 1758; it is a junior primary homonym of *S. violaceus* Olivier, 1795 (now *Plochionocerus violaceus*), but the two taxa have not been considered congeneric since 1833 and the conservation of *Platydracus violaceus* is proposed in accord with Article 23.9.5 of the Code.

**Keywords.** Nomenclature; taxonomy; Coleoptera; STAPHYLINIDAE; *Platydracus*; *Platydracus maculosus*; *Platydracus violaceus*; rove beetles.

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1. Fabricius (1801, p. 591) described a new species *Staphylinus viduatus* from 'Carolina'. Gravenhorst (1802, p. 165) described another new species *Staphylinus maculosus* from 'Baltimore'. Gravenhorst (1806, p. 123) later extended his description of *S. maculosus* and listed *S. viduatus* as a synonym, without comment as to dates. Say (1830, p. 38; 1834, p. 451) noted that *S. viduatus* had priority over *S. maculosus* and used the former name as valid for the species. Nevertheless, in the staphylinid monographs of Nordmann (1837, p. 31) and Erichson (1839, p. 375), and in all subsequent publications known to me until 2000, *S. maculosus* has been used as the valid name for this species, and *S. viduatus* has been ignored or cited only as a synonym of *S. maculosus*. Moore & Legner (1975, p. 38) noted the one-year priority of *S. viduatus* but used *S. maculosus* as the valid name, specifically citing Article 23b of the 1961 and 1964 editions of the Code as the basis for rejecting *S. viduatus* as a nomen oblitum, although they did not refer the case to the Commission (and, unknown to them, the provision had been revoked with effect from 1 January 1973). In recent literature *S. maculosus* has usually been placed in the genus *Platydracus* Thomson, 1858, which was formerly treated as a subgenus of *Staphylinus* Linnaeus, 1758.

2. Very recently Smetana & Davies (2000, p. 41), in a world review of *Staphylinus* and related genera, listed the new combination *Platydracus viduatus* as a valid name with *P. maculosus* as its junior synonym, without comment and without indicating that this is a revised status for both names. Their adoption of a specific name that had not been used as valid since Say (1834) is contrary to the spirit of nomenclatural



stability in all recent editions of the Code, and is directly contrary to the letter of the fourth edition of the Code (Article 23.9.1) in effect at the time of publication (2 February 2000). However, the manuscript of Smetana & Davies (2000) was submitted for publication before 1 January 2000 (L. Herman and A. Smetana, pers. comm. April 2000), and thus according to Article 86.1.2 any nomenclatural acts by Smetana & Davies (2000) that are not in compliance with the Code's new provisions (in this case, with Article 23.9.1) cannot be set aside on this ground alone. The implications of this relative to the names *P. maculosus* and *P. viduatus* are that Article 23.9.1 cannot now be invoked automatically as intended (because *P. viduatus* has now been used, on this one occasion, as a valid name after 1899) and that an application to the Commission becomes necessary to conserve *P. maculosus*.

3. *Platydracus maculosus* is one of the best-known and largest species of staphylinid in North America, and in my opinion the replacement of its specific name with the effectively unused synonym *viduatus*, published one year earlier, would lead to confusion and instability in the North American scientific and semi-popular literature. Prior to Smetana & Davies (2000), *P. maculosus* easily met the two conditions of Article 23.9.1 for automatically preserving prevailing usage, since the senior synonym *viduatus* had not been used as valid since 1834 and *P. maculosus* has been used as a valid name in at least 30 works by more than 24 authors during the period 1951–1998 (some examples are Walker, 1957; Dillon & Dillon, 1961; Blackwelder, 1973; Moore & Legner, 1975; Headstrom, 1977; Papp, 1984; Arnett, 1985; Downie & Arnett, 1996, and Poole & Gentili, 1996; a list of 21 further works has been given to the Commission Secretariat). These examples of usage, including technical taxonomic articles, catalogs, ecological and behavioral studies, and semi-popular books, were all found in the literature in my office, and many additional examples could be found in a broader search of the literature. A search of the World Wide Web produced 10 different sites using *P. maculosus* as a valid name, but none using *P. viduatus*. Finally, during my nearly completed revision of the genus *Platydracus* of the New World (in which the synonymy of *P. maculosus* and *P. viduatus* has been confirmed), I have studied more than 3800 specimens of *P. maculosus* from 84 public and private insect collections worldwide and returned them individually labeled as *P. maculosus*. Based on this demonstrated extensive usage of *P. maculosus* as the valid name for this species in the published literature, on the Internet, and in collections, and the lack of use of *viduatus* as a valid name for 166 years until Smetana & Davies (2000), I propose that *S. maculosus* should be conserved; since the synonymy of *S. viduatus* has never been disputed it would be simpler to suppress the latter name rather than to give *maculosus* precedence over it.

4. Gravenhorst (1802, p. 162) described a new species *Staphylinus violaceus* from North America. Melsheimer (1844, p. 35) described *Staphylinus cuprepennis* as a color variety of *S. violaceus*. *S. cuprepennis* (always subsequently spelled *cupripennis*) was listed as a variety or synonym of *S. violaceus* in 19th and 20th century literature, but has never been used as the valid name for the species or treated as a subspecies. In recent literature, *S. violaceus* Gravenhorst has usually been placed in *Platydracus* Thomson, 1858.

5. Smetana & Davies (2000, p. 25) were apparently the first to note that *Staphylinus violaceus* Gravenhorst is a junior primary homonym of *S. violaceus* Olivier, 1795 (p. 8), and accordingly they replaced the Gravenhorst name with its



junior subjective synonym *S. cuprepennis* (as *Platydracus cupripennis*). Smetana & Davies also noted that *Staphylinus violaceus* Olivier is currently placed in the Neotropical genus *Plochionocerus* Dejean, 1833. Indeed, *Plochionocerus* was established by Dejean with *S. violaceus* Olivier as the only available species name, and this species has been included in either *Plochionocerus* or its junior objective synonym *Sterculia* Laporte, 1835 by all subsequent authors. Since Erichson (1839, p. 301), *Plochionocerus* (or *Sterculia*) has been placed in a higher taxon (currently treated as the tribe XANTHOLININI) separate from *Staphylinus* and *Platydracus* (tribe STAPHYLININI). Thus, although the action of Smetana & Davies (2000) in rejecting *Staphylinus violaceus* Gravenhorst as a junior primary homonym was consistent with earlier editions of the Code (though not with stability), it is directly contrary to Article 23.9.5 of the fourth edition of the Code in effect at the time of publication (2 February 2000). Article 23.9.5 prescribes the mandatory conservation of a junior primary homonym when the senior homonym has not been considered congeneric after 1899, as is the case here, by application to the Commission for a ruling.

6. *Platydracus* (or *Staphylinus*) *violaceus* (Gravenhorst) is one of the better-known species of STAPHYLINIDAE in North America, and in my opinion the replacement of this name with the later name *P. cuprepennis*, never used for a species or subspecies, would lead to confusion and instability in the North American scientific and semi-popular literature. Prior to Smetana & Davies (2000), *P. violaceus* nearly (and perhaps fully) met the conditions of Article 23.9.1.2 for the mandatory preservation of prevailing usage without reference to the Commission, since it has been used as a valid name in at least 20 works by more than 15 authors during the period 1951–1998 (some examples are Dillon & Dillon, 1961; Blackwelder, 1973; Moore & Legner, 1975 and 1979; Headstrom, 1977; Hoebeke, 1978; Arnett, 1985; Downie & Arnett, 1996 and Poole & Gentili, 1996; a further 11 references have been given to the Commission Secretariat). These works include technical taxonomic articles, catalogs, biological studies, and semi-popular books, were all found in the literature in my office, and I believe that at least five additional examples (bringing the case within Article 23.9.1.2) could be found in a broader search of the scientific literature. In contrast, until Smetana & Davies (2000) the name *cuprepennis* or *cupripennis* had not been adopted by anybody since being used for a variety in 1844. A search of the World Wide Web produced nine different sites using *Platydracus violaceus* as a valid name, but none using *P. cuprepennis* or *cupripennis*. Finally, during my nearly completed revision of the genus *Platydracus* of the New World (in which the synonymy of *violaceus* and *cuprepennis* has been confirmed), I have studied more than 1460 specimens of *P. violaceus* from 77 public and private insect collections worldwide and returned them individually labeled as *P. violaceus*. Based on this demonstrated extensive usage of *P. violaceus* as the valid name for this species in the published literature, on the Internet, and in collections, the lack of use of *P. cuprepennis* or *cupripennis* until Smetana & Davies (2000), and the fact that the senior homonym *Staphylinus violaceus* Olivier has been placed in a different genus and higher group of STAPHYLINIDAE for more than 160 years, in accordance with Article 23.9.5 of the Code I propose the conservation of *P. violaceus* (Gravenhorst) as a valid name.

7. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:



- (1) to use its plenary power:
  - (a) to suppress the name *viduatus* Fabricius, 1801, as published in the binomen *Staphylinus viduatus*, for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy;
  - (b) to rule that the name *violaceus* Gravenhorst, 1802, as published in the binomen *Staphylinus violaceus*, is not invalid by reason of being a junior primary homonym of *Staphylinus violaceus* Olivier, 1795;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
  - (a) *maculosus* Gravenhorst, 1802, as published in the binomen *Staphylinus maculosus*;
  - (b) *violaceus* Gravenhorst, 1802, as published in the binomen *Staphylinus violaceus* (not invalid by the ruling in (1)(b) above);
- (3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *viduatus* Fabricius, 1801, as published in the binomen *Staphylinus viduatus* and as suppressed in (1)(a) above.

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