

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO SUPPRESS "PALMATOTRITON" SMITH 1945 (CLASS AMPHIBIA, ORDER CAUDATA)

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In a popular article ("Herpetological Collecting in Banana Fields of Mexico") published in volume 19, number 1, 1945, page 4 of Ward's *Natural Science Bulletin* (a widely distributed and regularly published journal of Ward's Natural Science Establishment, Rochester, New York) there appeared for the first time the generic name *Palmatotriton*. This name occurs in the following verbatim context: "Commonest in central Veracruz are the salamanders especially *Palmatotriton rufescens*, a small, broad-footed species about two inches long. This species is incredibly common, generally several occurring under each stalk. Yet, before this habitat and method of hunting was discovered, the species was considered to be rather rare, for only seven specimens were known from Mexico and thirteen from all other countries within range!"

2. As author of that article and of the passage quoted, I know the species referred to is the one now recognised (by Smith and Taylor, 1948, *Bull. U.S. nat. Mus.* **194**: 23; *et al.*) as *Bolitoglossa rufescens* (Cope), originally described as *Oedipus rufescens* Cope, 1869 (*Proc. Acad. nat. Sci. Philad.* **21**: 104). The specific name has been cited under no other combination, so far as we are aware.

3. To other authors it may be equally as apparent as to me that the species referred to is the one cited above, but this is true only because of their knowledge of esoteric information: they know the fauna of central Veracruz, or the habitat of the species, or which species in that area would be two inches long and broad-footed (no other is), or which species having these characteristics was known at the time of the last monograph prior to 1945 (Dunn, *Salamanders of the Family Plethodontidae*, 1926, p. 418) from only seven Mexican and thirteen non-Mexican specimens.

4. The name *Palmatotriton* was used under the erroneous impression that it was to be published prior to the date this article appeared by another author who at one time intended that it should be used for the group of species to which *rufescens* Cope belongs, as distinct from other species now included with *rufescens* in *Bolitoglossa*. That author later, unknown to me, determined not to segregate generically *rufescens* and its relatives from *Bolitoglossa*.

5. That it was my intent in 1945 to utilise a name already available, and definitely not to anticipate the other author's use, is not itself of significance, although if decision on the status of the name were not clearly indicated, intent might justifiably be considered. The status of the name is, on the contrary, clearly indicated.

6. Mr. Francis Hemming has pointed out, in reply to my query on this matter, that "under the amendment of Article 25 adopted by the Tenth International Congress of Zoology at Budapest in 1927 (which came into operation as from 1st January 1931) a name published in the way in which the name *Palmatotriton* was published would have possessed no availability, for no type species was designated for this genus. This portion of Article 25 was however considered further by the Thirteenth International Congress of Zoology at Paris in 1948 in the light of representations which had been received by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature that to refuse availability on the foregoing ground to a generic name published for a genus for which one species only was cited was unduly legalistic. The Paris Congress decided to modify the decision of the Budapest Congress in such a way as to confer availability upon a generic name published after 31st December 1931 for a monotypic genus even if no type species was explicitly designated by the original author of the generic name in question (see 1950, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 4: 72). The Paris Congress decided further to include in the *Règles* a provision making it clear that a nominal genus established with only one cited species is to be treated as a monotypical genus (1950, *ibid* 4: 153). We see therefore that under the *Règles* the generic name *Palmatotriton* must be regarded as having been validly published—though inadvertently and in an irregular manner—as from Smith, 1945, for it was provided with an 'indication' for the purposes of Article 25 by having been published with an 'indicated' type species (by monotypy). It is true that no author's name was cited for the species indicated as type species under the name *Palmatotriton rufescens* and that a certain amount of specialised knowledge is necessary in order to identify that species with the nominal species *Oedipus rufescens* Cope, 1869, but this cannot be held out as an argument against the availability of the generic name *Palmatotriton*, for zoological literature abounds with instances of generic names—some of them extremely well-known names in very common use—which were published with cited species for which no author's names were given by the original author of the name. Moreover, it is impossible to point to any provision in the *Règles* which would give any colour to the contention that a generic name so published does not possess availability."

7. In the foregoing circumstances the name *Palmatotriton* Smith, 1945, cannot legitimately be regarded either as a *nomen nudum* or as a *nomen dubium*. On the other hand, the name was published inadvertently and it could not fail to give rise to confusion if it were permitted to retain availability for nomenclatorial purposes. It is accordingly recommended that, in order to avoid this undesirable situation from arising, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature should use its Plenary Powers to suppress this name altogether. This name would then become available for use by any later author either as the name for a genus containing *Oedipus rufescens* Cope or in any other sense. It is suggested also that it would be convenient to take the present opportunity to place on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* the specific name *rufescens* Cope, 1869, as published in the binominal combination *Oedipus rufescens*, that name being the oldest available specific name of an extremely common and well-known species of salamander,

8. The proposal now submitted is that the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature should :—

- (1) use its Plenary Powers to suppress the generic name *Palmatotriton* Smith, 1945, for the purposes both of the Law of Priority and of the Law of Homonymy ;
- (2) place the name *Palmatotriton* Smith, 1945, as proposed, under (1) above, to be suppressed under the Plenary Powers, on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology* ;
- (3) place the specific name *rufescens* Cope, 1869, as published in the binominal combination *Oedipus rufescens*, on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology*.



Smith, Hobart M. 1954. "Proposed use of the plenary powers to suppress Palmato-triton Smith 1945." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 9, 247–249.
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