

ON THE CORRECT NAME FOR THE YELLOW RATTLE-
SNAKE FROM THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN

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(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)176)

1. In 1929 (*Bull. Univ. Utah*, **20** (6) : 3) Woodbury published the name *Crotalus concolor* and applied it to a race of rattlesnakes of the Colorado River Basin (type locality at the base of the Henry Mountains, Garfield County, Utah) now assigned to the species *Crotalus viridis*.

2. In 1930 (*Trans. San. Diego Soc. nat. Hist.* **6** : 111) Klauber published the name *Crotalus confluentus decolor* and applied it to a race of rattlesnakes of the Colorado River Basin (type locality at Grand Junction in western Colorado) now also assigned to the species *Crotalus viridis*.

3. In the present state of knowledge *Crotalus viridis concolor* Woodbury, 1929, and *Crotalus viridis decolor* Klauber, 1930, are regarded as applying to the same race, and *C. viridis concolor* Woodbury, by virtue of its priority, was universally regarded as the valid name for the race concerned until 1940.

4. In 1940 ("Genera *Sistrurus* and *Crotalus*." *Spec. Publ. Chicago Acad. Sci.* **4** : 216-217) Gloyd applied the name *Crotalus viridis decolor* Klauber to the sub-species in question on the grounds that he regarded *concolor* Woodbury as "preoccupied by *concolor* Jan (1859 : 153), a *nomen nudum* which originally appeared as a variety of *C. durissus (horridus)*, and was later placed in the synonymy of *C. horridus* by Garman (1883 : 175) and Stejneger (1895 : 427) . . . the association of Jan's name with *C. horridus* by subsequent reviewers of the genus gives it a status as a synonym of that species, and *concolor* Woodbury (1929) is therefore a homonym."

5. The facts about the alleged name *concolor* Jan are as follows :

- (1) As stated by Gloyd in the passage quoted above, the name *Crotalus durissus* var. *concolor* Jan was published in 1859 (*Prodrome d'une iconographie descriptive des ophidiens et description sommaire de nouvelles espèces de serpents venimeux*, Paris : 153) as a *nomen nudum*.
- (2) In 1883 Garman (*Mem. Mus. comp. Zool.* **8** : 175) cited *Crotalus durissus* var. *concolor* Jan as a questionable or possible synonym of *Crotalus horridus* Linnaeus, 1758.
- (3) In 1895 Stejneger (*Ann. Rept. U.S. Nat. Mus.* **1895** : 427) also cited *Crotalus durissus* var. *concolor* Jan as a questionable or possible synonym of *Crotalus horridus* Linnaeus, 1758.

- (4) Finally, Gloyd (1940:171) cited the name *Crotalus durissus* var. *concolor* Jan as a synonym of *Crotalus horridus horridus* Linnaeus without a question.

6. The question now arises as to which, if any, of the above actions conferred availability on the trivial name *concolor* Jan.

7. There can be no doubt that Gloyd conferred availability on the name *concolor* when he definitely synonymised it with the previously published name *Crotalus horridus horridus* Linnaeus, assuming it had not already acquired availability by any earlier action; but it is clear from the decisions taken by the International Congress of Zoology in Paris in 1948, on the advice of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, that Gloyd's action in itself conferred availability on the name *concolor* only as from 1940, and that the name should be attributed not to Jan but to Gloyd himself. (cf. *Bull. Zool. Nomencl.* 4:145-146, 563). Thus, Gloyd's action in establishing the name *C. horridus concolor* Gloyd, 1940, could in no circumstances have had the effect of invalidating *concolor* Woodbury, 1929, since *concolor* Gloyd, 1940, is itself an invalid junior homonym of *concolor* Woodbury, 1929.

8. The only relevant issue, therefore, and the one which has been the subject of disagreement among specialists, is whether availability was conferred upon the trivial name *concolor* by Garman (1883) when he published that name (which had previously existed only as a *nomen nudum*) as a questionable synonym of *Crotalus horridus* Linnaeus, 1758. Gloyd (loc. cit.) and Smith (*Copeia*, 1943:251) have argued that Garman's action in 1883 did confer availability on the trivial name *concolor*, while the Stejneger and Barbour checklist (*Bull. M.C.Z.*, Harvard, Mass., 1943), Woodbury (*Copeia*, 1942:258) and Klauber (*Trans. San. Diego Soc. nat. Hist.* 6:242) have taken the opposite view.

9. The object of the present paper is a twofold one:

- (1) to secure an authoritative ruling from the International Commission on the question whether the citation of a *nomen nudum* as a questionable or possible synonym of an available name confers availability upon the name so cited; and
- (2) to settle definitely the question of the correct name of the race of yellow rattlesnake from the Colorado River Basin.

10. On the second of these questions, in view of the difference of opinion which has arisen during the last ten years on this matter, the acceptance of either of the two alternative solutions would cause a certain amount of short-term disturbance and confusion. We should like to propose, therefore, that the matter be settled once and for all by the Commission placing on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology* whichever of the two names *concolor* Woodbury, 1929, or *decolor* Klauber, 1930 turns out, in the light of the decision on the matter of principle raised in point (1) of the previous paragraph, to be the correct name under the *Règles* for the subspecies concerned.



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