

PROCEEDINGS  
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THE EARLIEST GENERIC NAME OF THE NORTHERN  
FUR SEAL.

BY T. S. PALMER.

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Nine years ago I proposed *Callotaria*\* as a substitute for *Callorhinus* Gray, 1859, on the ground that the latter name was preoccupied by *Callirhinus* Blanchard, 1850, a genus of Coleoptera. Further investigation shows that *Callorhinus* was not, as commonly supposed, the first generic name applied to the northern fur seal, but that it was antedated more than forty years by *Otoes* G. Fischer. The latter name appeared in 1817† in a publication which is not generally accessible, and the description of this genus is therefore reproduced in full below:

*Otoes*, Fisch. ab ὠτῶεις, auritus. Otaries Peron. Les phoques a oreilles. Cuv. Regne an. I, p. 166.

Incisivi quatuor utrinque biacuminati, superiores exteriores simplices et minores, inferiores furcati, molares conici. Auriculæ distinctæ.

*Phoca jubata*, ursina, Lin. Gmel.

Reference to the Règne Animal which also appeared in 1817, the same year in which this description was published, shows that Cuvier recognized a group of eared seals under the designation 'Les Phoques a oreilles extérieures', which he suggested

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\*Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, VII, p. 156, July 27, 1892.

†Mem. Imp. Soc. Nat. de Moscou, V, p. 445, 1817.



might prove to be generically distinct. In this group he placed *Phoca jubata* Gmelin and *P. ursina* Gmelin. *Phoca jubata* Gmelin is a composite species based in part on a southern fur seal and in part on the northern sea lion, *Leo marinus* of Steller = *Eumetopias stelleri* of recent authors. The name had been, however, previously applied by Forster, in 1775, and is now generally restricted to the southern fur seal. *Phoca ursina* Gmelin (= *P. ursina* Linn.), is the northern fur seal of Bering Sea and, as the only identifiable species in the group, may be considered the type of *Otoes*.

It may be objected that Fischer did not name the northern fur seal, but merely applied a generic name to the eared seals in general or renamed *Otaria* of Péron. This, however, was not the case. Péron's *Otaria* had appeared only the year previous, and there is no evidence that Fischer had ever seen the description. What he did was simply to apply a generic name to Cuvier's group which, as shown above, was based chiefly on the northern and not on the southern fur seal.

Three different generic names are now applied to the northern fur seal: *Callotaria*, *Callorhinus* and *Arctocephalus*\*. The general adoption of *Otoes* would obviate this confusion, and the species thus far described would stand *Otoes ursinus* (Linnaeus), *Otoes alascanus* (Jordan & Clark), and *Otoes curilensis* (Jordan & Clark).

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\*W. L. Sclater, Mammals of South Africa, I, p. 118, 1900, gives the type of *Arctocephalus* Cuvier, 1826, as *Phoca ursina*.



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