COMMENTS ON CYNOCEPHALUS BODDAERT VERSUS GALEOPITHECUS PALLAS. Z.N.(S.) 1792
(see volume 24, pages 190–191)

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The proposal presented by Van Valen, Butler, McKenna, Szalay, Patterson and Romer, for suppression of the currently used and valid name Cynocephalus Boddaert, 1768, and its replacement by the almost completely disused junior synonym, Galeopithecus Pallas, 1783, for colugos or "flying lemurs", is an anachronism.

The name Cynocephalus is used in every modern work including those by Simpson (1945), Grassé (1955) and Romer (1966), cited by Van Valen et al. in support of their proposal, by Butler (1956) co-signer of the proposal, and by authors of widely disseminated reference books some of which are listed below. Few names for well known but rare animals are better established and more universal than Cynocephalus. A search through the issues of the Zoological Record since 1945 reveals Cynocephalidae adopted as the "official" familial name for colugos, and Cynocephalus used as the generic name 9 times, Galeopterus = [Cynocephalus] used three times, and Galeopithecus used once, by Davis (1962: 28, footnote).

Apprehension felt by the aforementioned proponents that Cynocephalus could be understood as the name for a baboon, is largely based on supposition and past events. There is slight likelihood that the application of Cynocephalus could be misconstrued in proper context, or as defined in modern dictionaries, encyclopedias and text books.

Colugos are living animals. It would not be surprising, therefore, that the six authors of the proposal in question, all vertebrate paleontologists, may have had little occasion to inquire into the literature of recent mammals and the present status of the name Cynocephalus. In any case, uniform use of the name Cynocephalus by practically all paleontologists and laymen does not affect in the least the availability of the literature on colugos under whatever name including the generic synonyms, Galeopithecus, Galeopus, Pleuropterus, Dermopterus, Galeolemur and Galeopterus.

In conclusion, I cannot agree with the distinguished proponents that suppression of Cynocephalus Boddaert and validation of Galeopithecus Pallas would, at this late date, insure stability and prevent confusion. On the contrary, substitution of an unavailable and nearly obsolete name for a valid, universally established and popularly known name for one of the familiar "oddities" of the animal world, could create the very dismay and confusion predicated but never realized when Galeopithecus was first dropped for Cynocephalus.

In the interest of eliminating unsettling proposals regarding the status of Cynocephalus, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is hereby requested to:

(1) place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology, the generic name Cynocephalus Boddaert, 1768, Dierkundig Mengelwerk, 2:8, footnote 1; type species, Cynocephalus volans, Boddaert (=Lemur volans Linnaeus, 1758), by monotypy [work cited, Boddaert's annotated translation of Pallas, 1767, Spicilegia Zoologica, fasc. 3 (Lemur volans, p. 4)];

(2) list Galeopithecus Pallas, 1783, Acta Acad. Imp. Petrop., 4 (1780): 208 [work not seen], with type Lemur volans Linnaeus, 1758, by monotypy, as a junior, objective synonym.

LITERATURE CITED

(with addition of selected reference works using Cynocephalus for colugos)

By the Committee on Nomenclature of the American Society of Mammalogists
(Chairman: William Z. Lidicker, Jr.)

The Committee has studied the proposals by Van Valen, et al. to suppress the generic name Cynocephalus Boddaert, 1768, in favour of junior synonym Galeopithecus Pallas, 1783. We would like to report that we are in unanimous disagreement with this proposal.

Our reasons for opposing the validation of Galeopithecus primarily stem from a disagreement with the authors of the proposal concerning the present state of unhappiness with Cynocephalus among mammalogists, and the extent to which we feel the alleged current confusion will be alleviated by a change to Galeopithecus. Specifically we feel that, whatever the merits of the Commission's 1925 ruling on this matter, Cynocephalus is currently an accepted and widely used name. Furthermore, its suppression at this time would only cause widespread and unnecessary confusion. We see no compelling argument why the law of priority should not be allowed to take its course in this case, and therefore strongly oppose suppression of Cynocephalus Boddaert. One Committee member has pointed out that understandable unhappiness with Article 40, which may force unwelcome change in long-standing family names, should not be used as an argument, as has been done in this case, for replacing a valid generic name with an objective synonym. Finally, one of us (Hershkovitz) has formally submitted his comments in opposition to the Van Valen et al. proposal (see above).