OPINION 1045

BOA LINNAEUS, 1758 (REPTILIA: SERPENTES): PLACED ON THE OFFICIAL LIST

RULING.—(1) The application for the use of the plenary powers to designate *Boa canina* Linnaeus, 1758, as the type-species of *Boa* Linnaeus, 1758, is hereby refused.

(2) The generic name *Boa* Linnaeus, 1758 (gender: feminine), type-species, by subsequent designation by Fitzinger (1843), *Boa constrictor* Linnaeus, 1758, is hereby placed on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology with the Name Number 2019.

(3) The specific name *constrictor* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the binomen *Boa constrictor* (specific name of type-species of *Boa* Linnaeus, 1758) is hereby placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology with the Name Number 2561.

(4) The generic name *Constrictor* Laurenti, 1768 (a junior objective synonym of *Boa* Linnaeus, 1758) is hereby placed on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology with the Name Number 2064.

(5) The specific name *formosissimus* Laurenti, 1768, as published in the binomen *Constrictor formosissimus* (a junior objective synonym of *constrictor* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the binomen *Boa constrictor*) is hereby placed on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology with the Name Number 1004.

HISTORY OF THE CASE (Z.N.(S.) 1188)

The present case was first presented to the office of the Commission by Professor Robert Mertens in December 1956. It was not found possible at that time to formulate precise proposals for the Commission. In November 1961 a fresh application was received from Professor Hobart Smith. After an exchange of correspondence, this was drafted as a request for the use of the plenary powers to designate *Boa canina* Linnaeus, 1758, as the type-species of *Boa* Linnaeus, 1758; and for those names, together with *Constrictor* Laurenti, 1768 and the name of the corresponding type-species, *constrictor* Linnaeus, 1758, to be placed on the appropriate Official Lists. This application was sent to the printer on 6 December 1961 and was published on 16 July 1962 in *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 19: 205–7. Public Notice of the possible use of the plenary powers in the present case was given in the same part of the *Bulletin* as well as to the other prescribed serial publications (Constitution Art. 12b; *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 31: 97) and to two herpetological serials. An objection was received by Dr. Jánis Roze (*Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 20: 116).

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

On 24 October 1963 the members of the Commission were invited to vote under the Three-Month Rule on Voting Paper (63)32 for or against the proposals...
as set out in *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* 19: 207. At the close of the voting period on 24 January 1964, the state of the voting was as follows:

Affirmative votes—thirteen (13), received in the following order: China, Hemming, Hering, Vokes, Bonnet, Tortonese, Hubbs, Boschma, Lemche, Uchida, Jaczeswki, Borchsenius, do Amaral

Negative votes—fifteen (15), received in the following order: Brinck, Holthuis, Riley, Stoll, Simpson, Mayr, Miller, Alvarado, Forest, Binder, Obruchev, Mertens, Kraus, Ride, Sabrosky

Voting Paper not returned—one (1): Munroe

Dr. G. O. Evans returned a late negative vote.

The following comments were made by members of the Commission in returning their voting papers:

*Mr. Francis Hemming:* On the information available the action recommended in this case seems the best available for promoting continuity in the nomenclature of the group concerned.

*Professor Per Brinck:* After having read Roze’s note in *Bulletin* 20: 116, I am definitely not prepared to vote for the proposal. According to Roze the conditions prevailing in literature before 1900 are again today accepted by “a great majority of herpetologists . . .”

*Dr. Carl Hubbs:* In arriving at a ‘for’ vote I have obtained favourable reactions from three local outstanding authorities on Ophidia, namely Laurence M. Klauber, Clifford H. Pope and Charles E. Shaw.

*Dr. Henning Lemche:* With the exception of the words “holotype in . . . 1899: 27” in para. (3)(a) and “two syntypes in . . . 1899: 27–8” in para. (3)(b) and “:209” in para. (4).

*Dr. G. G. Simpson:* There is evidently a conflict of current usage, and Smith and Roze make but do not demonstrate opposite statements on that subject. Since it is not clear that use of the plenary powers would in fact promote stability, I believe that those powers should not be exercised.

*Dr. Ernst Mayr:* I think here is clearly a case where stability is best served by following usage in the general zoological literature. I have asked numerous zoologists “what species does the genus Boa call to your mind?” and they all said immediately “constrictor”. To be sure, herpetologists have become used to Stejneger’s switch of names, but even they will not be inconvenienced by adopting broad zoological usage. Making constrictor the type of Boa will remove all ambiguity from the literature.

*Dr. Raphael Alvarado:* When the nomenclatural facts are not clearly opposed to the taxonomic ones, as stated by J. Roze (*Bulletin* 20: 116), it seems to me preferable to maintain and not to reverse common nomenclatural usage—in the case concerned, of constrictor as type-species of Boa.

*Dr. D. Obruchev:* I have read H. M. Smith’s application to sanction the piratical actions of Laurenti and Stejneger. I fully support J. Roze’s counter-proposal. *Constrictor* Laurenti is an objective synonym of *Boa Linnaeus* by force of the type-designations by Fitzinger and Forcart.

*Dr. W. D. L. Ride:* The claims by Smith and by Roze are in conflict as to usage and neither establishes his case. Since the Commission is being asked to decide upon a case in which transfer of names is involved (Smith would use
Constrictor for the genus called Boa by Roze, and Boa for the genus called Corallus by Roze). I am of the opinion that the case should be made out again with details of usage and re-submitted. Smith's proposal also involves the validation of syntypes. Surely a lectotype is desirable.

Dr. C. W. Sabrosky: I feel no obligation to maintain an interpretation contrary to the facts. By no stretch of the imagination did Laurenti (1768) fix types for Boa and Constrictor. He included three nominal species in Boa and five in Constrictor, with no type-designation or fixation of any kind. Opinion 6 was not in existence when Stejneger published in 1901, but even had it been, it would not have fitted the case. In Opinion 6 the Commission did not concur with Stejneger's conclusions of 1901; they ruled only on the example submitted to them which, as Smith points out, omitted some facts and changed others. Opinion 6 concerns a ‘division of the species’ of a genus, by which the genus is ‘definitely made into a monotypic genus’. How can Laurenti, who named three new species in Boa, possibly be construed to have made Boa monotypic? In particular, how can it be construed that he did so when he did not mention canina, hipnale, scytale, or the other Linnean species of Boa (except orophias), and thus as far as Laurenti is concerned those species are still in Boa? Contrary to Smith's statement, “Had Laurenti originated the name Boa...” the type would still not have been canina; it would have to be either thalassina, aurantiaca or exigua.

Fitzinger's designation of constrictor was legitimate and is the oldest valid type-designation for Boa. Forcart and the authors who follow him are correct and I support them.

I note two small discrepancies that do not, fortunately, affect the case. For Corallus, Smith states (Bull. 19: 205) that obtusirostris Daudin equals enydris Linnaeus. Roze (Bull. 20: 116) states that it equals Boa hortulana Linnaeus. Smith states (p. 206) that all five species included by Laurenti in his Constrictor were new, and later that Laurenti “consistently” substituted his own specific names for those of Linnaeus. It appears that Constrictor orophias is the same as Boa orophias Linnaeus; at least it was so interpreted by Stejneger (1901).

As a final point, may I note that Laurenti (1768) is not consistently binomial (Article 11c)! See pp. 46, 64, 92, 98, 99, 100, 107, 136, 188 and 198, with such names as Chalcides tridactyla Columnae, Coluber vipera Anglorum and Constrictor rex serpentum. The unfortunate change at the Paris Congress from binary to binomial yields further bitter fruit.

It is not clear why an Opinion was not issued at that time. A letter was received in April 1968 from the nomenclature committee of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists unanimously opposing the original application. In February 1975, Professor Smith wrote to ask what had become of the case. He was told that his application had been rejected by the Commission and was offered an opportunity to re-open the case. He replied on 21 February 1975 “I am content to accept the Commission's decision without appeal. It is more important that we have a unifying decision than what the decision is”. This Opinion has accordingly been written without further delay.
The following are the original references for names placed on Official Lists and Indexes by the Ruling given in this present Opinion:

**Boa Linnaeus, 1758, Syst. Nat. (ed. 10), 1 : 214**

**Constrictor Laurenti, 1768, Specimen medicum exhibens synopsin Reptilium emendatam . . . (Viennae): 106**

**constrictor, Boa, Linnaeus, 1758, Syst. Nat. (ed. 10), 1 : 215**

**formosissimus, Constrictor, Laurenti, 1768, Specimen medicum exhibens synopsin Reptilium emendatam . . . (Viennae): 107**

The following is the original reference for a designation of type-species upheld by the Ruling given in this present Opinion:

for **Boa Linnaeus, 1758, of constrictor, Boa, Linnaeus, 1758, by Fitzinger, 1843, Systema Reptilium . . . fasciculus primus: 24**

**CERTIFICATE**

I certify that the votes cast on Voting Paper (63)32 were cast as set out above, that the proposal contained in that Voting Paper has been rejected, and that the decision taken in consequence, being the decision of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, is truly recorded in the present Opinion No. 1045.

R. V. MELVILLE
Secretary

International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature
London
5 September 1975

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