PROPOSED ACCEPTANCE OF THE SPECIFIC NAME "AUSTRALIS"  
KERR, 1792, AS PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION "CANIS  
AUSTRALIS" AS THE NAME FOR THE FALKLAND ISLANDS  
WOLF

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(Commission’s reference : Z.N.(S.) 898)

At the time when he proposed that the Commission should use its Plenary 
Powers to suppress the name antarcticus Kerr, 1792, as published in the com-
bination Canis antarcticus, in order to preserve for the Dingo of Australia 
the well-known name dingo Meyer, 1793, as published in the combination Canis dingo (File Z.N.(S.) 487), the late Dr. G. H. H. Tate (The American 
Museum of Natural History, New York) suggested also that the Commission 
should consider whether it was desirable in the interests of stability in nomen-
clature to suppress another specific name published by Kerr which had long 
been ignored but which had been found to be older than the name which had 
for many years been in use for the species in question.

2. The name referred to by Dr. Tate was the name australis Kerr, 1792 
(Anim. Kingd. zool. Syst. Linnaeus : 144), as published in the combination Canis australis. This name applies to, and is the oldest available name for, 
the Falkland Islands Wolf. For a hundred and thirty years, however, this 
name was completely overlooked, the Falkland Islands Wolf being known by 
the name antarcticus Bechstein, 1799 (Pennant’s Uebers. vierfüssige Thiere 
1 : 271) as published in the combination Canis antarcticus.

3. The identity of the species represented by the two foregoing nominal 
species was established by Cabrera in 1931 (J. Mammal. 12 : 66). In the 
light of current zoological sentiment against the upsetting of long-established 
names by the resurrection of ancient names which have long been consigned 
to oblivion, it is unfortunate, as Dr. Tate pointed out, that an application was 
not made to the Commission for the suppression of the name australis Kerr 
immediately it was discovered that it antedated the established name antarcticus 
Bechstein. Now that twenty-five years have elapsed since the re-appearance 
of the name australis Kerr, it is necessary to consider whether that name has 
during that period established itself sufficiently to make it unnecessary at this 
stage to attempt to save the name antarcticus Bechstein.

4. Shortly before his death Dr. Tate informed me that he had come to the 
conclusion that it was now too late to prevent the disappearance in synonymy 
of the name antarcticus Bechstein. The same view has been expressed by

See p. 121 of the present volume.

Dr. T. C. S. Morrison-Scott (British Museum (Natural History), London), whom I recently consulted on this subject. In his letter (dated 4th January 1955) Dr. Morrison-Scott noted that there was only one recent work on the mammals of South America as a whole; this is the work entitled Mamíferos Sud-Ameri- canos by Cabrera & Yepes published in 1940, in which work the name australis Kerr was used for the Falkland Islands Wolf.

5. In view of the fact that this question was raised with the Commission by Dr. Tate, it seems desirable that a decision should now be taken on it. Having regard to the evidence summarised above it appears that the general feeling is that in view of the march of time the best course will be to accept the change of name made in this case. Accordingly, if this is found to be the general view, I recommend that the Commission should close this case by placing the specific name australis Kerr, 1792, as published in the combination Canis australis, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology.

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