

PROCEEDINGS
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ON THE GRAMMAR OF NAMES FORMED
WITH *-SCELUS*, *-SCELES*, *-SCELIS*, ETC.

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There are many names in zoology, both genus-group and species-group names, which end in *-scelus*, *-skelus*, *-skelos*, *-sceles*, *-skeles*, *-scelis*, *-skelis*, *-scela*, *-scelia*, *-scelum*, etc. The grammatical usage of these names has been confused, with many emendations and variations in their gender and case-forms. I wish to present here a basis for their correct usage. These names constitute an unusually complex case, with most of the difficulties encountered in the grammar of nomenclature.

Most of the names refer to characters of legs and therefore must be derived from the Greek *σκελος* *skelos* (leg), a noun of neuter gender² equivalent to the Latin *crus*, which is also neuter. If names are formed directly from this noun, they will end in *-scelus* (recommended latinization), *-skelus*, or *-skelos*, be of neuter gender, and have the genitive *-sceli* or *-skeli*. There is also, but unlikely to be found in zoological names, a Latin *scelus*, meaning 'heinous act, crime, sin,' also of neuter gender and with the genitive *sceli*.

Names ending in *-sceles* (Greek form) or *-scelis* (Latin form), as well as the transcriptional variations with *k*, if based upon *skelos*, are adjectives (except *Periscelis*, see below).

Lexicons also cite *σκελις* *skelis* (feminine gender; genitive *σκελιδος* *skelidos*) as an Attic dialectical form of *σχελις* *schelis*

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² Article 30a.i.3 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, however, states that "names ending in *-us*, latinized from the Greek endings *-os* (*os*), . . . are masculine. . . ."



(ribs of beef), later in plural form as σκελιδες *skelides* (hams or sides of bacon), or as a variant of σκελλις *skellis* (fem.; gen. σκελλιδος *skellidos*) a late word for ἀγλις *aglis* (a head of garlic).

The Greek noun *skelis* is thus by its meanings irrelevant to zoological names referring to characters of legs, but it has been used to form names referring to characters of the *costa* (Latin for 'rib') and other parts of the wing of insects.

The names formed upon these bases will therefore be treated grammatically in two ways, depending upon their meaning.

Names ending in *-is*, when referring to 'leg,' unless that ending is part of a complete classical derived noun (see *Periscelis*, below), should be considered as latinized compound adjectives similar to *fuscipalpis* (from *palpus*), *fuscipennis* (from *penna*), *fuscicornis* (from *cornu*), or *megalotis* (from ὄυς, *ous*; gen. ὠτος *ōtos*). In their use as genus-group names, these compound adjectives, both in *-is* and in *-es* are used as nouns; their gender according to the Code (Art. 30a.i.2) will be determined in the original publication by statement or by combination with a species-name indicating the gender, otherwise they must be treated as masculine. When used as species-group names, they assume their basic nature of adjectives and will change according to the gender of their genus-name. Adjectives in this class end in *-is* for both masculine and feminine genders, but replace the *-is* with *-e* for neuter.

As shown in the last three lines of the table below, any

Ending of name	Genitive (noun or adj.)	Gender-forms of adjectives (Nominative)		
		Masc.	Fem.	Neut.
<i>-scelus</i> (neuter noun)	<i>-sceli</i>	—	—	—
<i>-sceles</i> (basically adjectival)	<i>-scelis</i>	<i>-sceles</i>	<i>-sceles</i>	<i>-sceles</i>
<i>-scelis</i> ('leg,' Neo-Latin adj.)	<i>-scelis</i>	<i>-scelis</i>	<i>-scelis</i>	<i>-scele</i>
" ('leg,' CLASSICAL derived noun, e.g., <i>Periscelis</i>)	<i>-scelidis</i>	—	—	—
" ('rib, costa,' fem. noun)	<i>-scelidis</i>	—	—	—
" ('rib, costa,' adjective)	<i>-scelidis</i>	<i>-scelis</i>	<i>-scelis</i>	<i>-scele</i>
<i>-scela</i> (feminine noun)	<i>-scelae</i>	—	—	—
<i>-scelia</i> " "	<i>-sceliae</i>	—	—	—
<i>-scelum</i> (neuter noun)	<i>-sceli</i>	—	—	—

genus-group name formed upon either of these bases but with a change of gender-ending (to *-a*, *-ia*, *-um*, etc.) will be of the gender indicated by the new ending (*-a*, *-ia*, fem.; *-um*, neuter) and have the regular Latin genitives for those endings.

The genitive forms, needed when forming names of supra-generic taxa and when naming other organisms after the taxa bearing these names, are tabulated along with the gender-forms of the adjectives (species-group names) as in the table above.

The only case wherein a word used as a species-group name ending in *-is* can definitely be considered an adjective is when it is used with a neuter genus-name and in the form *-scele* (3rd and 6th lines of above table).

A few general examples may be adduced:

1) *Campyloscelus* Schoenherr, 1845 (Coleoptera). The author cited the derivation from "καμπυλος, *curvus*, σκελος, *crus*." The sole original species, *C. westermanni*, being a genitive construction, did not indicate the gender, but dictionaries show the gender of *-scelus* as neuter. The genitive is *campylosceli*. The names *Anoploscelus* Pocock, 1897 (Arachnida); *Brachyscelus* Bate, 1861 (Crustacea); *Heteroscelus* Baird, 1858 (Aves); *Platyscelus* Bate, 1861 (Crustacea); and *Plocoscelus* Enderlein, 1922 (Diptera) may be cited as grammatically similar additional examples, regardless of the gender given them by their authors. The sole original species of *Platyscelus* has a name which is an adjective of masculine form, although it should be neuter, and the sole originally included species of *Brachyscelus* is *B. crusculum*, which species-name is a diminutive (neuter) of the neuter noun *crus* in apposition.

2) *Parascela* Baly, 1878 (Coleoptera), and *Bradyscela* Bryce, 1910 (Rotifera) are feminine by ending. *Odontoscelia* Enderlein, 1922 (Diptera), differentiated from a related genus by strong thornlike bristles on its fore femur, is likewise feminine by ending. *Platyscelum* Audouin, 1826 (Arachnida) is neuter for the same reason.

3) *Anoplosceles* Warren, 1896 (Lepidoptera) had no cited derivation, although the hind tibia was characterized as spurless (*anoplo-*). The sole original species is *A. nigripunctata*. This genus-name is an adjective used as a noun, with its gender indicated as feminine by the species-name used with it. *Hyperskeles* Butler, 1883 (Lepidoptera) is grammatically similar; dictionaries cite an adjective *ὑπερσκελης hyperskelēs* and the sole original species is *H. choreutidea*.

4) *Lycosceles* Konow, 1905 (Hymenoptera). The author cited the derivation from *λυκος lykos* + *σκελος skelos*; it is therefore an adjective of Greek form used as a noun, but the gender was not stated. Since the original species is *L. herbsti* (genitive), the gender was not originally indicated either, and the gender according to the Code must be masculine.

5) *Glyptoscelis* Chevrolat in Dejean, 1837 (Coleoptera). No derivation was cited, but the name must refer to the characteristically sulcate tibiae of the species. The names of a few previously described species with masculine gender-endings were originally cited, thus indicating a Neo-Latin adjectival *-is* form. Later authors have generally incorrectly treated the genus as feminine. The genitive is identical with the nominative: *glyptoscelis*, and any suprageneric taxon based upon a name such as this would end in *-sclidae*, *-sclinae*, *-scelini*, etc.

6) *Periscelis* Loew, 1858 (Diptera). Since Loew stated that the genus was named for the annulate legs of the species, it must, as Becker (1914, Arch. Naturgesch. 80A:38) pointed out, come from *περισκελις periskelis* (anklet), a classical Greek noun of feminine gender formed with a prepositional prefix, and not a Neo-Latin compound. The genitive of *periskelis* is *periskelidos*, in Latin *perisclidus*. The family name based upon this genus is therefore Perisclididae.

7) *Trixoscelis* Rondani, 1856 (Diptera). This name can only refer to the spines on the wing margin (costa) and therefore must be derived from the noun *skelis*, although no derivation was originally cited. No original binominal combination was made, and the name therefore could be considered fundamentally as either noun or adjective, although in its capacity as a genus-name it must be treated as a noun. It seems logical to give preference to the possibility of its being basically a noun (feminine), as authors have generally done. The genitive is *trixosclidus*, and the family name is therefore Trixosclididae, rather than Trixosclidae.

8) The species-name *leucoscelis*, proposed in *Bembidion* (as *Bembidium*) by Chaudoir, 1850 (Coleoptera) would properly have had the form *leucoscele* if it had been considered an adjective. As a noun it would have to be derived from *skelis* and refer to a 'rib' character, possibly to a white elytral interstria, and have the genitive *leucosclidus*. But if the name refers to a leg character and therefore is an adjective in an incorrect gender-form, then the genitive would be *leucoscelis*.

All of these time-consuming and frustrating complexities, which are due to two things, the three gender-forms of Latin words and the irregularities of the formation of the genitive case, make one wonder how an improvement might be effected.

A scheme of automatic gender determined solely by the form of the nominative would be but little improvement because of the great number of changes resulting in the million or so names already proposed while doing nothing for the complexities of the gender-forms of adjectives and the genitives.

The usage of the originally proposed form of species-group names, regardless of its grammatical correctness or the gender

of any genus to which the name may be transferred, is not an improvement because it leads to a condition wherein the several gender-forms occur in the same genus with reference to the original description as the only means of determining the 'correct' form.

A practical simplification at this stage in the history of nomenclature could, however, be effected in the way that some natural languages have become simpler by the complete abolition of gender, with the use of only one form of adjectival names (? the dictionary-citation form, masculine) together with the simplification by fiat of the formation of the genitive case.



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