OPINION 1566

Megaloceros Brookes, 1828 (Mammalia, Artiodactyla): original spelling emended

Ruling

(1) Under the plenary powers it is hereby ruled that the correct original spelling of Megaloceros Brookes, 1828 is deemed to be Megaloceros.

(2) The name Megaloceros Brookes, 1828 (gender: masculine), original spelling emended as in (1) above, type species by monotypy Megaloceros antiquorum Brookes, 1828 (a junior subjective synonym of Alce gigantea Blumenbach, 1799), is hereby placed on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology.

(3) The name gigantea Blumenbach, 1799, as published in the binomen Alce gigantea (valid name at the time of this ruling of the type species of Megaloceros Brookes, 1828), is hereby placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology.

(4) The name Megalocerus Brookes, 1828, (spelling emended to Megaloceros in (1) above) is hereby placed on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology.

History of Case 2606

An application for the adoption of Megaloceros as the correct spelling of the generic name of the ‘Irish elk’ or giant deer was received from Dr A. M. Lister (University of Cambridge, U.K.) on 30 April 1987. After correspondence the case was published in BZN 44: 255–256 (December 1987). Notice of the case was sent to appropriate journals.

A supportive comment from Dr P. J. Boylan (Leicester, U.K.) was published in BZN 44: 262.

Three members of the Committee on Mammal Names of the International Theriological Congress (Drs S. B. George, D. Kock and J. Meester) favoured the original spelling of Brookes’ generic name, Megalocerus, and this was noted on the voting papers. The spelling Megalocerus has never been used since Brookes’ obscure booklet of 1828; only Megaloceros is listed in Sherborn’s 1928 Index Animalium, while Neave’s 1940 Nomenclator gives Megalocerus as a junior synonym of Megaloceros. As documented in the references in para. 4 of BZN 44: 255, Megaloceros has been widely used since its adoption in 1945 by G. G. Simpson, who had evidently not seen Brookes’ publications. The ‘Irish elk’ (which was of wide Palaearctic distribution) was until 1945, and by some authors since, known as Megaceros Owen, 1844.

It may be noted that both Sherborn and Neave list the name Megalocervus Mantell, 1836 (p. 6). This was applied to the ‘Irish elk’ but seems never to have been mentioned since its original appearance.

Decision of the Commission

On 1 March 1989 the members of the Commission were invited to vote on the proposals published in BZN 44: 256. At the close of the voting period on 1 June 1989 the votes were as follows:
Affirmative votes — 20: Bayer, Bock, Cocks, Cogger, Corliss, Dupuis, Hahn, Halvorsen, Holthuis, Kabata, Kraus, Lehtinen, Martins de Souza, Mroczkowski, Nielsen, Savage, Schuster, Thompson, Uéno, Willink

Negative votes — 1: Ride.

No vote was received from Heppell. Starobogatov and Trjapitzin were on leave of absence.

Hahn commented that Megaceros should be treated as a junior synonym of Megaloceros. Ride commented that as a palaeomammalogist he did not consider that any confusion or loss of universality would be caused by use of the original spelling of Brookes' name, which was Megalocerus, and that it was widely recognized that any continued usage of Megaceros Owen, 1844 was simply wrong.

Original references

The following are the original references to the names placed on Official Lists and an Official Index by the ruling given in the present Opinion:


Additional reference


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