Comments on the proposed conservation of the specific names of *Aphodius rufus* (Moll, 1782), *A. foetidus* (Herbst, 1783) and *Aegialia rufa* (Fabricius, 1792) (Insecta, Coleoptera)
(Case 2878; see BZN 51: 121–127, 340–341)

(1) Hans Silfverberg

Zoological Museum, P.O. Box 17, FIN-00014, Helsinki University, Finland

In their application Krell, Stebnicka & Holm seek to conserve the names *Aphodius rufus* (Moll, 1782) and *Aegialia rufa* (Fabricius, 1792), both originally described as *Scarabaeus rufus* and accordingly junior primary homonyms of *Scarabaeus rufus* De Geer, 1778 (currently known as *Disticha rufa*). Although there might once have been good reasons to conserve at least one of the names, it is my contention that the time for that is now long past. By following the Code we will now have a better chance of achieving stability in the nomenclature.

The first name in question is *Aphodius rufus*. This is a well known species and in the past known under that very name. However, almost 40 years ago Landin (1956) showed that the nomenclaturally correct name is *Aphodius scybalarius* (Fabricius, 1781). The correct name did not come immediately into use and at that time the case should have been brought to the Commission. No such action was undertaken and after a while *A. scybalarius* began to win ground. The application already lists a considerable number of papers using *A. scybalarius* and I can add, for example, Kumari (1985), Muona & Viramo (1986), Hansen & Pritzl (1987), Berlov (1989), Biström, Silfverberg & Rutanen (1991), Hanski & Cambefort (1991), Spuris (1991) and Miländer, Roosileht & Süda (1993).

The second name would probably never have reached the Commission on its own merits. The species was known in Europe as *Aegialia rufa* and in America as *Aegialia spissipes* LeConte, 1878, until Stebnicka (1977) synonymized them. It has hardly ever been mentioned outside taxonomy and faunistics. Either Europeans should get used to the American name, or Americans to the European one. As the former solution is in agreement with the Code our choice should be simple.

So far I have explained why I think the application is unnecessary. Actually I think its acceptance would be harmful for stability in nomenclature. Whenever a sufficiently important situation is found, where current use is threatened, an application should be made without too much delay, not when an ever-growing number of workers already have accepted the change. Were the Commission to approve this application it would encourage those who are lax in following the rules.

Additional references

- Berlov, É.Ja. 1989. Podsem. Aphodiinae. In Ler, P.A. (Ed.), *Opredelitel' Nasekomyh Dal'nego Vostoka SSSR*, 3(1): 387–402.
- Biström, O., Silfverberg, H. & Rutanen, I. 1991. Abundance and distribution of coprophilous Histerini (Histeridae) and *Onthophagus* and *Aphodius* (Scarabaeidae) in Finland (Coleoptera). *Entomologica Fennica*, 2: 53–66.
- Hansen, M. & Pritzl, G. 1987. Nogle interessante biller fra et nordsjaellandsk moseområde, med to nye danske, til muldvarpereder knyttede, arter (Coleoptera). *Entomologiske Meddelelser*, 54: 133–146.

- Hanski, I. & Cambefort, Y. (Eds.). 1991. *Dung beetle ecology*. 481 pp. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.
- Kumari, E. (Ed.). 1985. *Matsalu - rahvusvahelise tähtsusega märgala*. 309 pp. Valgus, Tallinn.
- Miländer, G., Roosileht, U. & Süda, I. 1993. Platinchatousye zhuki podsemejstva Aphodiinae (Coleoptera, Scarabaeidae) Estonii. [Aphodiinae (Coleoptera, Scarabaeidae) of Estonia]. *Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised. Bioloogia*, 42: 13–38.
- Muona, J. & Viramo, J. 1986. The Coleoptera of the Koillismaa area (Ks), North-East Finland. *Oulanka Reports*, 6: 1–51.
- Spuris, Z. 1991. Latvijas kukainu katalogs. 9. Skarabeju dzimta (Scarabaeidae). *Latvijas Entomologs*, 34: 5–27.

(2) Frank-Thorsten Krell

Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Zoologisches Institut, Lehrstuhl für Spezielle Zoologie, Auf der Morgenstelle 28, D-72076 Tübingen, Germany

I disagree with the comments on this case by Dellacasa (published in BZN 51: 340–341) and Silfverberg (above) on a number of points.

1. The nomenclatural problem with *Scarabaeus scybalarius* Fabricius, 1781, *S. rufus* Moll, 1782 and *S. rufus* Fabricius, 1792 still exists because the nomenclatural acts of Silfverberg (1977, 1979) have not been followed by subsequent authors. An act by a reviser which results in the transference of a well known binomen (*S. scybalarius*) from one well known species to another will never be accepted by a majority of succeeding authors, the more so because such an act works against stability and universality in scientific names and prevents the name of a taxon from being distinct and unique. As a result in this case we now have one binomen simultaneously naming two taxonomic species (those called *Scarabaeus rufus* by Moll, 1782 and *S. foetidus* by Herbst, 1783). Silverberg's sentence that 'after a while *A. scybalarius* [for *rufus* Moll] began to win ground' is misleading since this name (in the new sense) has not been winning supremacy. The nomenclatural chaos which exists will continue if *scybalarius* remains in use. Silfverberg's action meant the end of some formal problems but the beginning of a great number of practical ones.

2. Dellacasa's proposal (BZN 51: 340, item (1)) to designate a neotype for *Scarabaeus scybalarius* Fabricius, 1781 is unnecessary since a lectotype, designated by Landin (1956), already exists. The proposal would override Fabricius's original intention and in my view is not acceptable.

3. Dellacasa's proposed neotype designation for *scybalarius*, in order to make the name usable for the species correctly known as *Aphodius foetidus* (Herbst, 1783), would not end the confusion because (a) *scybalarius* has been used for two taxonomic species simultaneously for a number of years, and (b) a second transfer of the name from one species to another would cause as much confusion as the first, if not more.

4. In relation to Dellacasa's proposal (2)(b), the name *arcuatus* Moll in Schrank & Moll, 1785, published as *Scarabaeus arcuatus*, has been used at infrasubspecific rank by some authors (for example, Balthasar, 1964, p. 406; Dellacasa, 1983, p. 150; Bearaud, 1992, p. 135). Hence this name is not 'forgotten' but, as with most infrasubspecific names, is unfamiliar to most entomologists, in contrast to *Aphodius rufus* (Moll, 1782) which is well known (see para. 4 of the application). Conservation of the latter will, without doubt, stabilize the nomenclature.

Silfverberg, Hans. 1995. "Comments On The Proposed Conservation Of The Specific Names Of *Aphodius Rufus* (Moll, 1782), *A. Foetidus* (Herbst, 1783) And *Aegialia Rufa*." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 52, 71–72.

<https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.6732>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/44798>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.6732>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/6732>

Holding Institution

Natural History Museum Library, London

Sponsored by

Natural History Museum Library, London

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.