

**Comment on the proposed conservation of HEMIDACTYLIINI Hallowell, 1856
(Amphibia, Caudata)**

(Case 2869; see BZN 50: 129–132; 51: 153–156)

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1. In order to try and protect the junior synonym HEMIDACTYLIINI Hallowell, 1856, Smith & Wake produce in their application a list of 16 references by 15 authors, most of whom are not 'independent' since they work in Wake's research team. When one deals with family-group names, the concept of stability has a meaning only when dozens, if not hundreds, of uses of the name can be called upon, which is very quickly obtained if the name has indeed been recognized by the scientific community. In this context, the number of 16 references (mostly by a single research team) is simply ridiculous and does not even deserve discussion. To add to the weakness of the case, the period of use is only 28 years (1966–1994). Of the 16 references, six (of which four are from Wake's team) are subsequent to my paper (Dubois, 1984) where the seniority of MYCETOGLOSSINI Bonaparte, 1850 over HEMIDACTYLIINI was first pointed out.

2. Family-group names have not always been strictly regulated by the Code; several of the current rules were introduced in the 1961 edition, for example Article 40 dealing with synonymy of the name of the type genus. A number of zoologists still treat family-group names as though they were not regulated. Indeed, there exists a clear tendency by some to consider that these names should *not* be regulated, as may be seen in various recent applications and even in several decisions by the Commission. These applications and decisions rely on a philosophy that can be summarized in two 'rules': (i) family-group names should not follow the principle of priority but a principle of 'current usage', i.e. all current names, however obscure and seldom used, should be protected from change; (ii) family-group names should be based on valid generic names, i.e. any based on a junior generic synonym should be replaced by one based on the valid generic name, or on another valid generic name belonging to the family-group taxon. As discussed in detail elsewhere (e.g. Dubois, 1987, pp. 48–52), most of the current rules are excellent and should be followed by all zoologists. In particular, respect for the rule of priority, for family names as for others, is the best way to achieve stability and universality. The current tendency to apply tacit 'rules' such as (i) and (ii) above, and to ask the Commission to suppress more and more names, contains the seeds of major problems for universality and stability of zoological nomenclature in the future (for more general discussion see Dubois et al., 1988 and Holynski, 1994).

3. Although this is not explicitly stated, the philosophy underlying Smith & Wake's proposal to conserve the name HEMIDACTYLIINI Hallowell, 1856 and to suppress MYCETOGLOSSINI Bonaparte, 1850 is clearly based on both 'rules' (i) and (ii) above. The fact that Wake does not attempt to adhere to the rules in the current Code, which should be followed by all zoologists, is illustrated by his statement (Wake, 1993, p. 232): 'The name Hemidactyliini ... has become well established, and the rules on zoological nomenclature are in a state of transition, so the case is not so

simple as Dubois (1984) implies. Recently an appeal has been made to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to suppress the name *Mycetoglossina* and to conserve *Hemidactyliini* ... and I recommend maintaining the traditional taxonomy until the matter receives formal attention'. Such a statement is indeed very strange to read. Adopting a similar attitude would lead, for example, to rejection of the current Highway Code under the pretext that some users were criticizing aspects of it and that this Code might be changed in the future. No doubt it would be difficult to convince a traffic policeman with this argument; as long as a law has not been replaced by another one, it remains in force.

4. The aim of Smith & Wake's application is clearly to protect an invalid use first introduced by Wake (1966) five years after the publication of the 1961 Code, i.e. after the date limit fixed for the conservation of names which had 'won general acceptance'. *Mycetoglossina* Bonaparte, 1850 belongs to the category of names 'forgotten' simply because later authors have not done their work properly (Dubois et al., 1988, p. 148). Usually in science, when someone has made a mistake which is pointed out by another author, he has the modesty to remain silent, but apparently the recent tendency of a few zoologists to speak loud and attack the basic principles of the Code has had such strong effects on the community of zoologists that some of them lose all control and sense of proportion. The Commission should not be impressed by this and should reject this entirely unwarranted proposal.

Additional references

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 Holynski, R.B. 1994. Structure and function or: what kind of nomenclatural regulations do we need? *Crystal* (Zoology series) (Göd, Hungary), **2**: 1–50.
 Wake, D.B. 1993. Phylogenetic and taxonomic issues relating to salamanders of the family Plethodontidae. *Herpetologica*, **49**: 229–237.

Comment on the proposed designation of a neotype for *Coelophysis bauri* (Cope, 1887) (Reptilia, Saurischia)

(Case 2840; see BZN **49**: 276–279; **50**: 147–151, 236–239, 291–294; **51**: 48–51, 156–158)

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Recent commentary in the BZN that recommends acceptance of Colbert et al.'s application may give the impression that most vertebrate paleontologists favor the application. Significantly, a growing literature by specialists currently doing original



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