Case 2953

_Loris_ E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796 (Mammalia, Primates): proposed conservation

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Abstract. The purpose of this application is to conserve the name _Loris_ E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796 for the slender loris (Primates, family Loridae Gray, 1821) of Sri Lanka and southern India. The name is threatened by the senior subjective synonym _Tardigradus_ Boddaert, 1785. The latter has been treated as a junior homonym of the sloth name _Tardigradus_ Brisson, 1762 and only once (in 1902) used as valid.

1. The proposed rejection of Brisson's (1762) work _Regnum Animale_ (Case 2928; BZN 51: 135–146) renders the name _Tardigradus_ Brisson, 1762 (pp. 12, 21) (sloths, Xenarthra) unavailable and its conservation is not proposed. Brisson's genus included both the three-toed and two-toed sloths. The name _Bradypus_ Linnaeus, 1758 (p. 34; type species _B. tridactylus_ Linnaeus, 1758 by subsequent designation by Miller & Rehn, 1901, p. 8) is currently in use for the three-toed sloths, and _Choloepus_ Illiger, 1811 (p. 108; type species _B. didactylus_ Linnaeus, 1758 by subsequent designation by Gray, 1827, p. 275) is in use for the two-toed sloths. On rejection of the (1762) work _Tardigradus_ Brisson will cease to preoccupy _Tardigradus_ Boddaert, 1785 (pp. 43, 67) and the latter would become the valid generic name for the slender loris of Sri Lanka and southern India, currently called _Loris_ E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796. A change of generic name to _Tardigradus_ would also have implications for the family name _Loridae_ Gray, 1821.

2. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1796, pp. 48, 49; see also the description on pp. 29–32) included two nominal species in his genus _Loris_., 'Loris tardigradus' with a reference to _Lemur tardigradus_ Linnaeus, 1758 (p. 29), and the new nominal species _Loris gracilis_ E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796 which was based on an illustrated description
by Buffon & Daubenton (1770, pp. 111–118, pls. 31–33). As has been pointed out by a number of authors (see, for example, Stone & Rehn, 1902, p. 138; Palmer, 1904, p. 384, footnote; W.C.O. Hill, 1933, p. 90; Ellerman & Morrison-Scott, 1951, p. 190), Geoffroy’s name gracilis refers to the slender loris and is therefore a junior synonym of tardigradus Linnaeus, 1758, whilst his ‘tardigradus’ is a misidentification of Linnaeus’s taxon and refers to the slow loris of south-east Asia. In 1812 Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (p. 163) restricted Loris to the single species L. gracilis and placed his misidentified ‘tardigradus’ (under the new name bengalensis) in the new genus Nycticebus, the name of which is currently in use for the slow lorises. Geoffroy’s original error in his use of the name tardigradus was unfortunately followed during the 19th and early 20th centuries and Nycticebus tardigradus was used for the slow loris (currently called Nycticebus coucang (Boddaert, 1785), a senior synonym of N. bengalensis E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1812).

3. Linnaeus (1758) described the nominal species Lemur tardigradus and included four previous references:

- Simia ecaudata, unguibus indicis subulatis. Syst[ema] nat[urae], [Ed. 6], p. 5
  [recte p. 3], no. 2.
- Animal cynocephalum tardigradum. Seb[a] mus., vol. 1, p. 55, pl. 35, figs. 1, 2
  & pl. 47, fig. 1.

All four of these references refer to the slender loris. Ray (1693), Seba (1734) and Linnaeus (1754, 1758) gave the locality of the species as ‘Ceylon’.

4. In 1811 Illiger (p. 73) proposed the replacement name Stenops for Loris Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and gave Lemur tardigradus Linnaeus as the type. This is a valid fixation of type species for Loris also (Article 67h of the Code). Recognition of the type as tardigradus sensu Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (as opposed to the true tardigradus Linnaeus, i.e. gracilis E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire) would cause the transfer of the generic name from the slender to the slow lorises. Thomas (1911, p. 129) noted ‘L. tardigradus [Linnaeus has] been made the type of Loris Geoffroy, 1796’. He also noted that, on the authority of Lönberg (curator at the Uppsala museum), the specimen recorded in Linnaeus’s (1754) catalogue Museum Adolphi Friderici, which could have been one of those illustrated by Seba (1734), was present in the Linnaean collection. One of us (C.P.G.) has seen this specimen in the Linnaeus House in Uppsala. It is almost certainly a Seba specimen.

5. Stone & Rehn (1902, p. 138) designated ‘Tardigradus loris Boddaert, 1785 = Lemur tardigradus Linnaeus, 1758’ as the type species of Tardigradus Boddaert and adopted the latter as the generic name for the slender loris. The use of Boddaert’s name Tardigradus rather than Loris has not been followed by other authors. The name Loris has appeared in works on primate biology, ecology and conservation, as well as taxonomy. Recent works in which the name has been used include Corbet & J.E. Hill (1991, p. 93; 1992, p. 162), Ellerman & Morrison-Scott (1951, p. 190), Groves (1989, p. 98; 1993, p. 248), Honacki, Kinman & Koepll (1982, p. 220), Jenkins (1987, pp. 136–143) and Nowak (1991, p. 404). Ever since Illiger (1811) and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1812) Loris has been regarded as containing only the single
species *L. tardigradus* (Linnaeus, 1758), i.e. *L. gracilis* E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796. To maintain the usage of the name *Loris* we propose that *Tardigradus* Boddaert be suppressed.

6. The replacement name *Stenops* Illiger, 1811 was used by some authors in the early 19th century (see W.C.O. Hill, 1933). The name *Loridium* Rafinesque, 1815 (p. 54) was a further replacement for *Loris* which has never been used.

7. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

(1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the name *Tardigradus* Boddaert, 1785 for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy;

(2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the name *Loris* E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796 (gender: masculine), type species (under Article 67h of the Code) by subsequent designation by Illiger (1811) *Lemur tardigradus* Linnaeus, 1758;

(3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *tardigradus* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the binomen *Lemur tardigradus* (specific name of the type species of *Loris* E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796);

(4) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology the following names:

(a) *Tardigradus* Boddaert, 1785, as suppressed in (1) above;

(b) *Stenops* Illiger, 1811 (a junior objective synonym of *Loris* E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796);

(c) *Loridium* Rafinesque, 1815 (a junior objective synonym of *Loris* E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1796).

References


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