

Comments on the "Discussion Draft of the Fourth Edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature"

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Introduction

In June 1995, a "Discussion Draft of the Fourth Edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature" was published by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature in the Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature 52(2).

This draft contained a variety of proposals which distinguished the Draft from the current Code, e.g. "Additional requirements for the availability of names first published after 1996", "New provisions relating to the application of the Principle of Priority", "New provisions relating to the typification of nominal taxa" and "New provisions concerning the spelling and grammar of names".

More than 200 comments concerning the "Discussion Draft of the Fourth Edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature" were sent to the Editorial Committee by zoologists. It has been shown by these comments (some of which were published in the four parts of the Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature issued in September and December 1995 and March and June 1996) that some of these proposals were rather unrealistic and premature. On the other hand, the publication of such obviously controversial rules had the beneficial effect that the provisions caused provocation among the zoological community and thus encouraged numerous scientists to deal with the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature more critically than they hitherto had done.

Following these comments, the Editorial Committee (W.D.L. Ride, H.G. Cogger, C. Dupuis, O. Kraus, A. Minelli, F.C. Thomson, P.K. Tubbs) decided to reject many of their original proposals at a meeting in Vicenza, Italy, 24 - 30 June 1996 and decided to prepare a new draft which was sent to the authors in July, 1996.

We agree with several of the proposed changes, namely with those which are common sense, e.g. those Articles which have been in practice already by conscientious zoologists [e.g. Art. 16: "The new nominal species or subspecies must be explicitly indicated as being new"]. However, it is to be regretted that we still disagree with a number of articles and we would herewith like to

- 1) inform the Commission about our reservations and to
- 2) ask the Commission some crucial questions.

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Comments

Arts. 8, 9: These articles do not explicitly exclude electronic media (computer networks) from being accepted as a means of publication. Although we are aware that electronic media (e.g. Internet) will play an important role in scientific communication in future we would like to draw your attention to the fact that its unrestricted permittance might be disastrous for taxonomy and nomenclature. So far, anybody would be able to found his (her) own "electronic journal" with no obligations to editors or proof readers. Precautions must be taken and rules concerning electronic media must be worked out carefully.

Art. 16a: To avoid mere formalism we suggest to exclude taxa which are described in a monotypic taxon (see {Art. 16a} Example).

Arts. 16e, 72c: The designation of a syntype series is "taxonomic antagonism". It is ambiguous in itself. We (and probably many other taxonomists) know very well from our personal experience how destabilizing the lack of a holo- (or lecto-)type can be. In our opinion, designation of a holotype is a taxonomic necessity. **Question:** Can you name us any reason according to which the designation of a syntype series should be favoured instead of a holotype designation?

Recommendation 16D: In our opinion, the place of deposition of types is exactly indicated by any conscientious scientist. **Question:** Can you name any reason why Recommendation 16D is not made obligatory for types in general (not only for the neotype)?

Art. 41a: We are not satisfied with the wording of this article. How shall we interpret the word "*threatened*"? How is stability defined in this context? This article is a mixture of rule and recommendation because the word "should" is used.

Art. 74a: The wording "A lectotype may be designated from syntypes ..." is ambiguous. One might think that a lectotype could be designated from non-syntypical material as well. Thus we propose the following text: "If a lectotype is designated it must be chosen from syntypes ...".

In our discussions we concluded that - if for instance criterion 74a(ii) (2) is fulfilled - the designation of a lectotype is necessary. Thus, presenting additional reasons would just satisfy formalism. The modalities of the designation are the crucial point. As soon as these modalities are fulfilled we do not need to present extra reasons. Thus we propose to cancel 74a(ii) (5).

On the other hand the exact indication of the place of deposition of the lectotype is most essential. We propose to include this provision under Art. 74 (e).

Art. 75j: Types (holo-, lecto- or neotypes) are the basis for stability in nomenclature. Any rediscovery of original types following neotype designation necessarily causes instability. We must assume that the "owner" (curator) of the original type material will try to present facts which will render the neotype designation invalid. The general problematic of Art. 75j is enhanced further by the fact that the current provisions ruling neotype designations [e.g. Art. 75d(3)] are most ambiguous. It was shown by JÄCH (1993, 1994) that the search for the "lost" original type material can be rather insufficient making it too easy for the superficial taxonomist to create neotypes. Furthermore, the definition of the neotype [Art. 75 (a)] is most ambiguous: "... is believed to ...". "Believe" is always a matter of debate and must not become a taxonomic principle. Art. 75 (j) will open doors to abuse and arbitrary actions.

We strongly support the regulation that a neotype, whether validly designated or not, must become invalid as soon as the original type material is retrieved since in that case it is evident that the original "believe" was erroneous.

Summary

We have tested the revised version of the "Discussion Draft of the Fourth Edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature" proposed by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature without prejudice. We are nine entomologists, all concerned with Taxonomy and Nomenclature, some of us being leading specialists since decades. Following thorough and objective discussions we conclude unisonously that several of these articles nourish destabilization and are thus not acceptable.

Finally, we would like to ask a question which has been raised by several zoologists recently but which, to our knowledge, has not been answered satisfactorily. Did the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature ever think about a consultation of professional jurists?

References

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