

OPINION 133

Urothoe DANA AND PHOXOCEPHALIDAE SARS

SUMMARY.—Under the Rules, the type of *Urothoe* is *U. rostratus*. The original author of a family name is free to select any contained genus as the nomenclatorial type of that family. It is not necessary to select the oldest included genus as type genus for the family. Under the present premises it is unnecessary to substitute the newer name Urothoidae 1932 for the earlier Phoxocephalidae.

PRESENTATION OF CASE.—Dr. Jean M. Pirlot of the University of Liéges requests an Opinion on certain points of nomenclature which he has raised on pages 61-62 in an article¹ published in February 1932, involving the generic name *Urothoe* Dana, 1852 and 1853, vs. *Pontharpinia* Stebbing, 1897, and the family name Phoxocephalidae vs. Urothoidae.

DISCUSSION.—I. Type of *Urothoe*. Dana (1852, p. 311²) in an extensive key summary, down to and including genera, describes *Urothoe* Dana, with generic diagnosis but without mention of any species. This appears to be the original publication of the generic name.

The following year, Dana (1853, p. 921³) discusses *Urothoe* and cites two species (*U. rostratus* [which is given unconditionally] and *U. irrostratus* [which is clearly given sub judice⁴]). This is apparently the first allocation of any species to this genus.

Under Article 30cβ⁵ of the Rules, *U. irrostratus* is excluded as type, and *U. rostratus* automatically becomes type regardless of the fact whether one dates the genus from 1852 or 1853. Compare Opin-

¹ Les Amphipodes de l'Expédition du Siboga, deuxième partie. Les Amphipodes Gammarides: I. Les Amphipodes fouisseurs, Phoxocephalidae, Oedicerotidae. Leide.

² On the classification of the Crustacea Choristopoda, Amer. Journ. Sci., ser. 2, vol. 14, no. 41, Sept.

³ U. S. Expl. Exped., vol. 13, pp. 920-923.

⁴ "The occurrence of the individuals of this species with the preceding leads us to suspect that the two may be male and female. Yet the great difference in the front is not like any sexual difference noticed; moreover, the superior antennae differ much."

⁵ e. The following species are excluded from consideration in determining the types of genera.

β. Species which were *species inquirendae* from the standpoint of the author at the time of its publication.

ions 35 and 46. For determination of this point it is not necessary to follow the literature further and the fact that *U. irrostratus* has been used as type by some authors is irrelevant as the case now stands.

2. Family name. A complication has arisen because of the fact that *U. irrostratus* has been used as type⁶ of *Urothoe*.

Stebbing (1906, *Das Tierreich*, vol. 21, p. 131) retains *U. irrostratus* in *Urothoe*, family Haustoriidae, and classifies (idem., p. 146) *U. rostratus* in *Pontharpinia* Stebbing, 1897, mt. *pinquis*, family Phoxocephalidae. Thus a typical "transfer case" is presented.

Pirlot raises an important question in regard to Phoxocephalidae, namely:

1. Must the oldest included generic name be taken as type for the family name? To this, the answer is in the negative.

Article 4 of the Rules reads: "The name of a family is formed by adding the ending *idae*, the name of a subfamily by adding *inae*, to the stem of the name of its type genus."

This rule does not prescribe how the type genus of a family is to be selected; and in the absence of restrictions covering this point it is to be assumed that, in accordance with custom, the original author is free to select as type genus any generic unit which he prefers. This is in harmony with the spirit of Article 30 which obviously leaves an original author of a genus entirely free to select as type species any species he wishes thus to designate. If the original author of a family (or of a genus) were compelled to select as type the oldest genus (or the oldest species) in the proposed family (or genus), this might confine his choice to a little known and very rare taxonomic unit—a restriction which would obviously be contrary to the interest both of taxonomy and of nomenclature. In this connection it is to be recalled that the "type" selected is the nomenclatorial type as distinguished from the assumed anatomical norm.

Since (with the exception of isolated instances by early authors) family names are based upon the name of the respective type genus, such family name constitutes, *ipso facto*, a definite designation of the type genus. For instance, *Musca* is definitely and unambiguously designated generic type by the use of the family Muscidae, *Homo* of Hominidae, *Ascaris* of Ascaridae, etc. It would be a nomenclatorial *reductio ad absurdum* to consider any other genus as type of any of these families. The concepts of a given family are not identical as adopted by different authors and if the rule obtained that the oldest

⁶ Stebbing, 1891, on the genus *Urothoe* [etc.], *Trans. Zool. Soc. London*, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 10: "This, which has become the type species of this genus."

genus must be the type genus of the family, the family name would be constantly subject to possible change according to the subjective ideas of authors from year to year; accordingly, even relatively stable nomenclature for family names would be hopeless, and synonymy in family names would be potentially indefinite and chaotic.

Accordingly, if *Urothoc*, type *rostratus*, is classified in Phoxocephalidae Sars it is not necessary to change this earlier family name to the later Urothoidae 1932.

In formulating this Opinion, the Commission has considered only the question of the formal application of the Rules and has not considered the question whether it would be wise to "Suspend the Rules" in this case. The data on which this latter question should be judged have not yet been placed before the Commission in sufficient detail.

In view of the foregoing premises the Secretary recommends the adoption of the following as the Opinion of the Commission:

Under the Rules, the type of *Urothoc* is *U. rostratus*. The original author of a family name is free to select any contained genus as the nomenclatorial type of that family. It is not necessary to select the oldest included genus as type genus for the family. Under the present premises it is unnecessary to substitute the newer name Urothoidae 1932 for the earlier Phoxocephalidae.

One of the points involved in this Opinion was voted upon by the Commission in the meeting at Lisbon, when the following interpretation was adopted:

Article 4 of the Code, which relates to the naming of families and subfamilies, does not require that the oldest generic name in the family or subfamily concerned must be taken as the type genus of the family or subfamily.

This point was concurred in by Commissioners Calman, Hemming, Jordan, Pellegrin, Peters, and Stejneger, and by the following alternates: Amaral *vice* Cabrera, Oshima *vice* Esaki, Chester Bradley *vice* Stone, Beier *vice* Handlirsch, Arndt *vice* Richter, Mortensen *vice* Apstein.

Opinion prepared by Stiles.

Opinion concurred in by seventeen (17) Commissioners (or alternates): Apstein (in part), Beier (in part), Cabrera, Calman, Chapman, Esaki, Fantham, Hemming (in part), Jordan, Oshima (in part), Pellegrin (in part), Peters, Richter, Silvestri, Stejneger, Stiles, Stone.

Opinion dissented from by no Commissioner.

Not voting, two (2) Commissioners: Bolivar and Horvath.

Apstein agrees in so far as concerns *Urothoc* but not in so far as it affects Phoxocephalidae.

Stone adds:

I concur in the Opinion that the first author to fix a type genus for a family is free to select any contained genus as the type, but in case the name then used for that genus is found to be untenable the family name changes in accordance with the change in the generic name.

For example, the American Wood Warblers were named Sylvicolidae by Gray, based on the genus *Sylvicola* (type *Parus americanus* Linn.), but *Sylvicola* was found to be preoccupied in mollusks and as a substitute *Compsothlypis* was proposed, and the family name changes to Compsothlypididae. If this were not done we might have *Sylvicola* for mollusks and Sylvicolidae for Birds!

Sylvestri states:

I agree perfectly with the opinion of Commissioner Stone as expressed in the Circular Letter No. 333 (Series 1936).