

**OPINION 2292** (Case 3521)***Megaselia abdita* Schmitz, 1959 (Diptera, PHORIDAE): precedence given over *Aphiochaeta griseipennis* Santos Abreu, 1921 (currently *Megaselia griseipennis*)**

**Abstract.** The Commission has conserved the specific name *Megaselia abdita* Schmitz, 1959 for a widespread Holarctic scuttle fly by suppressing its senior subjective synonym *Megaselia griseipennis* (Santos Abreu, 1921).

**Keywords.** Nomenclature; taxonomy; Diptera; PHORIDAE; *Megaselia*; *Megaselia abdita*; scuttle fly; Holarctic.

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**Ruling**

- (1) Under the plenary power it is hereby ruled that the name *abdita* Schmitz, 1959, as published in the binomen *Megaselia abdita*, is to be given precedence over the name *griseipennis* Santos-Abreu, 1921, as published in the binomen *Aphiochaeta griseipennis*, whenever the two are considered to be synonyms.
- (2) The following names are hereby placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology:
  - (a) *abdita* Schmitz, 1959, as published in the binomen *Megaselia abdita*, with the endorsement that it is to be given precedence over the name *griseipennis* Santos-Abreu, 1921, as published in the binomen *Aphiochaeta griseipennis*, whenever the two are considered to be synonyms;
  - (b) *griseipennis* Santos-Abreu, 1921, as published in the binomen *Aphiochaeta griseipennis*, with the endorsement that it is not to be given priority over the name *abdita* Schmitz, 1959, as published in the binomen *Megaselia abdita*, whenever the two are considered to be synonyms.

**History of Case 3521**

An application to conserve the specific name *Megaselia abdita* Schmitz, 1959 for a widespread Holarctic scuttle fly by suppressing its senior subjective synonym *Megaselia griseipennis* (Santos Abreu, 1921) was received from R. Henry L. Disney, Michael Akam, Pat Simpson (*University of Cambridge, Cambridge, U.K.*), and Urs Schmidt-Ott (*The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, U.S.A.*) on 15 March 2010. After correspondence the case was published in BZN 67: 238–242 (September 2010). The title, abstract and keywords of the case were published on the Commission's website. One Comment in support was published in BZN 67: 314 (December 2010).

**Decision of the Commission**

On 1 September 2011 the members of the Commission were invited to vote on the proposals published in BZN 67: 240. At the close of the voting period on 1 December 2011 the votes were as follows:

Affirmative votes – 16: Ballerio, Brothers, Halliday, Harvey, Kottelat, Krell, Lamas, Minelli, Pape, Papp, Rosenberg, Štys, Winston, Yanega, Zhang and Zhou.

Negative votes – 7. Alonso-Zarazaga, Bogutskaya, Grygier, Kojima, Kullander, Patterson and van Tol.

Bouchet abstained. Fautin, Lim, Ng and Pyle were on leave of absence.

Voting FOR, Štys said that for insect genera that are extremely speciose and ecologically diversified, but taxonomically poorly known, we should expect many taxonomic changes reflected by corresponding and sometimes unwelcome changes in nomenclature. *Megaselia* was an excellent, but not the only, example of this. Nevertheless, Štys agreed that the case for conservation of the species group name *Megaselia abdita* was strong because of the importance of this species in developmental biology and forensic entomology. However, he said he could not endorse two lines of the authors' argument: (1) Their assertion that 'editors of journals tend to favour the use of the names in the most recent checklists and catalogues'. Štys felt it exceedingly unlikely that editors, who were generally overworked, would check an insect name after the referees had done their jobs, nor would they be likely to have the necessary literature available. Furthermore, Štys asked, why should the editorial practice have any bearing on nomenclature; (2) Unpublished taxonomic evidence should not be introduced in nomenclatural arguments, particularly if it is incomprehensible to a non-specialist. As an example, he asked which of the Commissioners could be expected to know what such characters as 'SPS vesicles of the postpedicels' and 'Dufour's crop mechanism' meant, and what their diagnostic significance was in the PHORIDAE.

Voting AGAINST, Alonso-Zarazaga explained that he felt that this was another case in which the nullification of systematic work and descriptions of zoologists working in countries not considered to be More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC) was requested because the same species described later by a zoologist in a MEDC received much more publicity and use. He felt it was particularly egregious, as Schmitz (1959) described his species without even attempting to remount the single specimen of *M. griseipennis* he examined. Alonso-Zarazaga felt that since both species had been used in the 20th century, the only fair decision was to vote for the application of priority. Also voting AGAINST, Grygier said that the point of the proposals advanced here appeared to be to avoid adverse effects on forensic entomologists and certain developmental geneticists associated with co-applicant Dr Schmidt-Ott. But only 16 years or so had passed since this fly was first used in either field, so it should still be possible to encourage the use of the valid species name in both of these fields as well as phorid taxonomy per se. Also voting AGAINST, Kojima thought that this proposal was based on the designation of the lectotype of *griseipennis* Santos Abreu, 1921 and a taxonomic decision (synonymy of *Aphiochaeta griseipennis* with *Megaselia abdita* Schmitz, 1959) made by one of the authors of this proposal, both of which were published only in this proposal. However, the background and reasoning for this synonymy or this taxonomic decision had never been published. In other words, the authors seemed to be asking the Commission for approval of the proposal as a prerequisite for publishing the synonymy which might or might not be accepted by taxonomic societies; the proposal should have been made only after the synonymy of *Megaselia abdita* Schmitz, 1959 with *Aphiochaeta griseipennis* Santos Abreu, 1921 was formally published.

Bouchet ABSTAINED, saying that he sympathized with the intent of the application, but viewed conditional reversal of precedence as a source of nomenclatural instability. He therefore rejected the technical solution proposed. The name *Aphiochaeta griseipennis* Santos-Abreu, 1921, should, in his opinion, have been placed on the Official Index.

### **Original references**

The following are the original references to the names placed on Official Lists and Indexes by the ruling given in the present Opinion:

*abditata*, *Megaselia*, Schmitz, 1959, *Broteria*, **55**: 123.

*griseipennis*, *Aphiochaeta*, Santos-Abreu, 1921, *Memorias de la Real Academia de Ciencias y Artes de Barcelona*, **17**(1): 57.