

**Case 2936**

**CAECILIIDAE Rafinesque-Schmaltz, 1814 (Amphibia, Gymnophiona) and CAECILIIDAE Kolbe, 1880 (Insecta, Psocoptera): proposed removal of the homonymy by the revocation of Opinion 1462 and the adoption of the spelling CAECILIUSIDAE for the psocopteran family name**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this application is the conservation of the very well known family name CAECILIIDAE Rafinesque-Schmaltz, 1814 for caecilian amphibians. This name is a senior homonym of the insect name CAECILIIDAE Kolbe, 1880. Because it had been suggested that the emendation CAECILIUSIDAE of the latter would be non-euphonious, the amphibian name was emended to CAECILIAIDAE in Opinion 1462 (December 1987). The reversal of this ruling is sought in pursuit of both stable usage and adherence to priority; furthermore CAECILIAIDAE is both non-euphonious and cumbersome.

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1. In January 1980 H.M. Smith, U. Lanham and A. Loveridge drew to the attention of the then Commission Secretary the homonymy which existed between old family-group names based on *Caecilia* Linnaeus, 1758 (caecilian amphibians) and *Caecilius* Curtis, 1837 (psocopteran insects). In 1981 T.E. Moore, R.A. Nussbaum and E.L. Mockford independently submitted a detailed application to remove the homonymy, and Smith et al. supported the need for this. Smith remarked (in litt., 20 February 1981) '*Caecilius* does not lend itself well to a family name that accurately reflects the name of the type genus, viz. CAECILIUSIDAE'. The application by Moore et al. was published as Case 2333 in July 1983 (BZN 40: 124-128); they proposed that, because it was the older, the amphibian family name (which they attributed to Gray, 1825) should remain unchanged and that the psocopteran name CAECILIIDAE Kolbe, 1880 should be emended. The suggested spelling was CAECILIONIDAE.



2. Smith & Polhemus (BZN 41: 108–109) commented that a family name should clearly indicate the generic name on which it was based; CAECILIONIDAE did not do this and indeed implied a non-existent generic name. They proposed that the amphibian name should be emended to CAECILIAIDAE because this was 'much more euphonious' than would be CAECILIUSIDAE (see Smith's remark in para. 1 above) in the Psocoptera. Moore (BZN 41: 207–208) replied that he and Drs Nussbaum and Mockford had rejected both CAECILIAIDAE and CAECILIUSIDAE because of their 'unexpected spelling and form'; they had left the amphibian name unchanged because of its priority and because 'psocids are not particularly widely or popularly discussed animals and ... only a relatively few authors have used this group name in insects'. We note that Dr Mockford is a specialist in the Psocoptera. To meet the objections of Smith & Polhemus to the basis of CAECILIONIDAE, Moore et al. 'reluctantly suggested' a new generic name *Caecilionis*; this would replace *Caecilius*, which would have to be suppressed by the Commission. M.H. Wake (BZN 42: 220–221) also supported the proposal that the amphibian name should remain unchanged; she considered that usage made this important, and that CAECILIAIDAE was not easy to pronounce and not conspicuously distinct from CAECILIIDAE.

3. In 1986 Dubois (BZN 43: 6) pointed out that the first publication of the amphibian family name was by Rafinesque-Schmaltz (1814), who spelled it as 'Cecilia'. By Article 32c(iii) of the Code this incorrect original spelling is corrected to CAECILIIDAE.

4. In March 1987 the Executive Secretary issued voting papers on the CAECILIIDAE case to members of the Commission. The various comments which had been made were reviewed, and it was suggested that perhaps the least disruptive course would be to emend the amphibian name to CAECILIAIDAE, leaving the insect name unchanged. The Commission was not asked to vote on the possible adoption of CAECILIUSIDAE for the psocopteran family, because this name had not been advocated (for reasons only of euphony, as mentioned above) by any of the participants in the case.

5. As reported in Opinion 1462 (BZN 44: 263–264, December 1987), by 19 votes to 4 the Commission accepted the amendment of CAECILIIDAE Rafinesque-Schmaltz, 1814 (Amphibia) to CAECILIAIDAE and left CAECILIIDAE Kolbe, 1880 (Psocoptera) unchanged. However, three Commissioners stated that they would have preferred to emend the latter name to CAECILIUSIDAE and others commented that it would have been desirable to retain CAECILIIDAE in Amphibia for reasons of both priority and usage.

6. In December 1988 one of us (Frost) wrote to the Executive Secretary (Dr P.K. Tubbs) saying 'I was dismayed by the resolution of the CAECILIIDAE controversy, as were Marvalee Wake and Alain Dubois. It seems that the solution reached was that most unacceptable to everyone'. Tubbs replied 'In retrospect, I do myself regret that CAECILIUSIDAE was not adopted for the Psocoptera, leaving CAECILIIDAE in amphibia ... but unfortunately that name had never received support in all the long correspondence'. There was further correspondence in 1990–1993 between Wake and the Executive Secretary on this case, and we are now applying for the revocation of the ruling in Opinion 1462 on the spelling of the family names.

7. We wish to make the following points:

- (a) The amphibian genus *Caecilia* Linnaeus, 1758 is extremely well known and is 79 years senior to the relatively obscure *Caecilius* Curtis, 1837.



- (b) The family-group name based on *Caecilia* was first published in 1814, 66 years before that based on the insect name. In accordance with the Principle of Priority and in the absence of a reason for a contrary discrimination between the homonyms, the Commission should have protected the earlier (amphibian) name and changed the junior homonym, as had been asked by Moore, Nussbaum & Mockford (see para. 1 above).
- (c) The amphibian family name CAECILIIDAE has been very widely used for over 150 years, and indeed until 1968 all caecilians were placed in this family. Since the publication of Opinion 1462 in December 1987 there has been only limited mention of the cumbersome emendation CAECILIAIDAE which was introduced there. This usage has been motivated only by attempts at formal compliance (but not agreement) with the Opinion, and nearly all of it has been by one or more of us (sometimes with co-authors). It is unlikely that this spelling will enter general use or be introduced into the popular and semi-popular literature dealing with amphibians.
- (d) In cases of identical family-group names we support, as a standard convention to remove homonymy and ambiguity, the use of an entire generic name as the stem of a family name. Unless there are strong reasons to the contrary it is the junior homonym which should be altered. In this case we request that the complete name *Caecilius* be used as the stem, to give CAECILIUSIDAE Kolbe, 1880. We do not consider that it is too late for this course to be the best in the interest of stability.

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

- (1) to use its plenary powers:
  - (a) to revoke paragraphs (1), (4) and (5) of the Ruling in Opinion 1462;
  - (b) to rule that for the purposes of Article 29 of the Code the stem of the generic name *Caecilius* Curtis, 1837 is CAECILIUS-;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology the following names:
  - (a) CAECILIIDAE Rafinesque-Schmaltz, 1814, type genus *Caecilia* Linnaeus, 1758 (Amphibia);
  - (b) CAECILIUSIDAE Kolbe, 1880, type genus *Caecilius* Curtis, 1837 (spelling emended in (1)(b) above) (Insecta, Psocoptera);
- (3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Family-Group Names in Zoology the following names:
  - (a) CAECILIIDAE Kolbe, 1880 (spelling emended in (1)(b) above to CAECILIUSIDAE);
  - (b) CECILINIA Rafinesque-Schmaltz, 1814 (an incorrect original spelling of CAECILIIDAE).

## References

The references in this case are those in the *Bulletin* which are mentioned above, or are cited in them.



Wake, Marvaley H. et al. 1994. "CAECILIIDAE Rafinesque-Schmaltz, 1814 (Amphibia, Gymnophiona) and CAECILIIDAE Kolbe, 1880 (Insecta, Psocoptera): proposed removal of the homonymy by the revocation of Opinion 1462 and the adoption of the spelling CAECILIUSIDAE for the psocopteran family name." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 51, 237–239.  
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