

Comments on the proposed conservation of the specific names of *Strombidium gyrans* Stokes, 1887 (currently *Strobilidium gyrans*) and *Strobilidium caudatum* Kahl, 1932 (Ciliophora, Oligotrichida)
(Case 3011; see BZN 55: 6–8)

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In his application to conserve the specific names of *Strombidium gyrans* Stokes, 1887 and *Strobilidium caudatum* Kahl, 1932, Charles Heckman describes the facts correctly. However, I do not agree with his proposed action for the following reasons.

1. The ciliates are an extremely understudied group with few workers. For this reason, it is important not to apply too great an importance to current usage of junior homonyms or synonyms, but rather to maintain the principle of priority wherever possible.

2. *Strombidion caudatum* Fromentel, 1876 was not strictly speaking a forgotten name, but the two revisers — Kahl (1932) and Maeda (1986), who overlooked Fromentel's species — preferred the later name given by Stokes. Accordingly, this is not a true nomenclatural problem, but rather a problem of synonymy and ignorance.

3. There are precedents for handling similar situations in the ciliates. Brown (1968) recognized that *Aspidisca costata* (Dujardin, 1841) Stein, 1859 was a junior synonym of *Aspidisca cicada* (Müller, 1786) Claparède & Lachmann, 1858. The junior name was used in hundreds of publications, while the senior name was 'forgotten'. Brown's proposal that the senior name, *A. cicada*, should be resurrected was not at first welcomed, but soon became fully accepted (see Curds, 1977). The same principle should be followed in the present case.

In summary, I recommend that this application should be rejected, and that priority should be followed.

Additional references

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- Curds, C.R.** 1977. Notes on the morphology and nomenclature of three members of the Euplotidae (Protozoa: Ciliata). *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History), Zoology*, **31**: 267–278.
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I am opposed to what is being asked of the Commission in this application, in effect, to use its plenary powers to conserve the names of two oligotrichous ciliates,

Strobilidium gyrans (Stokes, 1887) Kahl, 1932 and *Strobilidium caudatum* Kahl, 1932, in the alleged interest of widespread usage and nomenclatural stability. The matter is a rather complicated one, so a little background discussion is needed before I turn to the specific points in question.

1. In the broad field of protozoology, there are few taxonomists and even fewer ecologists who are nomenclaturists. In fact, the protozoological literature is replete with clearcut examples of widespread disinterest in (if not ignorance of) the rules of nomenclature (Corliss, 1962). There is no convincing evidence of much change in this regard in recent decades, despite repeated emphasis by the writer (e.g., Corliss, 1992) and others on the continuing need for better interfacing between taxonomy (including its indispensable nomenclatural aspects) and ecology.

2. Because of this lack of general interest in proper nomenclatural usage of many protozoological names, the few and widely scattered specialists in such technical matters have been obliged periodically to assume the burden of publishing lists of corrections in cases of organisms in which they may have a particular interest. In ciliate taxonomy, two examples of this include the papers by Corliss (1960; and see appropriate section in Corliss, 1979) and Foissner (1987).

3. Contrary, perhaps, to common opinion, nomenclaturists are not always interested in preservation of only the oldest available name in every case; that is, all of them are not solely 'priority purists'. For example, two very well known generic names (junior synonyms or homonyms) among the ciliated protozoa which have been 'saved' by the actions of 'conservationists' are *Tetrahymena* (see Corliss & Dougherty, 1967) and *Stentor* (Kirby, 1954); others could be cited as well, including one (*Trachelocerca*) in a petition to the Commission now pending (Corliss & Foissner, 1997).

4. Wilhelm Foissner and associates at Salzburg have been carrying out thorough systematic and ecological studies of major taxonomic groups of ciliates for the past 20 years, with much needed attention to matters nomenclatural. Consistent treatment of cases of synonymy and homonymy has been invoked, with priority the usual basis for their proposals. Although on occasion such actions have caused temporary sorrow among others of us who may have become accustomed to more 'popular' names for certain specific organisms, in the long run the Foissner decisions have brought and are bringing about needed stability to the field. With thousands of species involved and only a relative handful of ciliatologists with interest and training in taxonomic/nomenclatural problems, decades may pass before some names, in correct or incorrect form, ever appear again in the published literature.

5. With respect to the specific subject here under consideration, some 12 years ago Foissner (1987) painstakingly produced a paper in the well known journal *Archiv für Protistenkunde* correcting numerous nomenclatural errors in past taxonomic works on ciliates. Unfortunately, few (at most!) protozoologists (taxonomists and ecologists alike) seem to have taken note of this publication with regard to their own subsequent investigations involving some of the same organisms. On grounds of priority, Foissner proposed the name *Strobilidium caudatum* (Fromentel, 1876) as replacement of *Strobilidium gyrans* (Stokes, 1887) Kahl, 1932, the latter name relatively popular in the literature of the past 50 years or so (although the identification of the exact freshwater oligotrichous species to which the name has been applied has not always been clearly determined, an important point to mention here). Within the past

decade, *Strobilidium caudatum*, as a substitute for *Strobilidium gyrans*, has appeared in several papers by Foissner and colleagues, particularly in the major — if perhaps often overlooked — monographic series in German commonly referred to as 'The Ciliate Atlas,' appearing in four huge volumes during the period 1991–1995 (see especially Volume 1, by Foissner et al., 1991, which contains a section on the order Oligotrichida, of direct pertinence to the present case). Also note the use of Fromentel's specific name in the recent and well received book edited by Hausmann & Bradbury (1996).

6. During the same period, other works by other protozoan taxonomists have appeared that have used the name *Strobilidium gyrans*; but they have offered no discussion of the matter and, indeed, have shown complete unawareness of the decisions proposed by the Foissner group. An outstanding example is Puytorac (1994), editor of the systematic volume on the ciliates in the well known French *Traité de Zoologie* series.

7. Neglect of or carelessness in nomenclatural details is all too common in the protozoological literature (see paragraphs 1 and 2 above), but this is no valid excuse for failure to appreciate conscientious efforts made by others to promote long-lasting stability in nomenclatural matters.

8. Incidentally, the potential confusion caused by the fact that Kahl (1932) gave the name *Strobilidium caudatum* to a new species of a brackish water oligotrich has been overcome by a nomenclatural action of Petz & Foissner (1992): these workers replaced what to them was a junior synonym by a new name for the latter rarely seen organism, viz., *Strobilidium kahli*.

9. The purpose of the present application by the noted ecologist C.W. Heckman is clear and understandable. Because the name *Strobilidium gyrans* has been used — ever since Kahl (1932) — by various taxonomists and ecologists (including himself: Heckman, 1990), he proposes that it be conserved for the major species involved in order to prevent further confusion in the literature following the different name, *S. caudatum* Fromentel, 1876, applied by Foissner (1987). Heckman has also proposed that a relatively rare species could retain its original name, *Strobilidium caudatum* Kahl, 1932 (although note the alternative solution in paragraph 8, above, for this particular organism).

10. Not only has Foissner et al. (1991) been overlooked in the petition, but also the door has been opened for the preservation in the future, from time to time and with perhaps debatable justification, of junior synonyms in relatively popular use without regard for the possible advantage for long-range stability in many instances of recognizing the priority of senior synonyms whether or not the latter have been noted and already treated in (likely neglected) modern taxonomic/nomenclatural monographs.

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