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Correction of a case of homonymy in the genus Zonurobia (Acari: Pterygosomatidae)

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ABSTRACT

A case of homonymy in the genus Zonurobia is corrected by proposing Zonurobia circularis limpopoensis as a replacement name for Zonurobia circularis transvaalensis Lawrence, not Zonurobia transvaalensis Lawrence.

Keywords Zonurobia; Pterygosomatidae; homonymy

Introduction

In proposing the genus Zonurobia for some mite parasites of South African lizards, Lawrence (1935) included 9 new species including Z. circularis (p. 11) and Z. transvaalensis (p. 15). He included an additional 5 “varieties” under Zonurobia circularis: capensis, latior, longipilis, spiniventer, and transvaalensis. Each was accompanied by the statement “n. var.”. Zonurobia transvaalensis was separately described and cited as “n. sp.”. The two taxa named “transvaalensis” were from different hosts and localities, so it is clear from his treatment that he regarded them as different taxa. According to Article 52 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN), these names are homonyms.

Bedford (1936) gave subspecies rank to all of Lawrence’s “varieties” without discussion (consistent with current ICZN Article 45.6.4), but in an apparent attempt to correct the homonymy between the two taxa named “transvaalensis” within Zonurobia, proposed “Z. transvaalica nom. nov.” for the species Z. transvaalensis Lawrence, 1935, perhaps because the new species name appeared later than the subspecies name in the work. Lawrence’s original names are cited as: “Zonurobia circularis transvaalensis Lawrence”, and “Zonurobia transvaalica (Lawrence)”. The use of parentheses in this case is not correct, and the latter replacement name should be attributed to Bedford. This is consistent with Articles 10.2 and 45.6.4.1 of the ICZN, which allows names originally proposed as “varieties” before 1961 to be treated as subspecies.

Jack (1964), in discussing morphological characters among species of Pterygosomatidae, made reference to Z. transvaalensis and placed this species in a group different from the five cited subspecies of Z. circularis. This clearly refers to Z. transvaalensis Lawrence (= Z. transvaalica Bedford). The subspecies “transvaalensis” of Z. circularis was curiously not mentioned.

Jack (1971) reviewed the genus Zonurobia, redescribing all of Lawrence’s original taxa and followed Bedford (1936) and Jack (1964) in treating his varieties as subspecies. He regarded the subspecies capensis and latior as just variants of circularis, although not formally placing the names in synonymy. He changed the spelling of Z. circularis transvaalensis to transvaalense without comment. Since the ending “-ensis” forms a Latin adjective of masculine or feminine gender, and the ending “-ense” is the neuter form of the word, this does...
not constitute establishment of a new name for the subspecies. The generic name “Zonurobia” was formed from the then name for the host family, Zonuridae (now Cordylyidae) and is feminine in form, so the spelling “transvaalensis” is correct. Jack also cited both Lawrence (1935) and Bedford (1936) in using the name Z. transvaalica for the full species but followed Bedford (1936) in attributing it to “(Lawrence) 1935”.

Bertrand et al. (2000) again referred to Lawrence’s subdivisions of Z. circularis as “variétés” and noted that further study would required to clarify their status.

Fajfer (2012), in her checklist of Pterygosomatidae parasitic on reptiles, cited only the original combinations used by Lawrence, i.e. “Z. circularis var. transvaalensis” and “Z. transvaalensis”.

**Taxonomy**

The species group names, *Zonurobia circularis transvaalensis* Lawrence, 1935 and *Zonurobia transvaalensis* Lawrence, 1935, are homonyms. ICZN Article 57.7 mandates that when there is homonymy between a species name and a subspecies name within the same genus, the species name has priority, meaning the subspecies name is to be changed. This is the opposite of the situation described above. To rectify the situation, I propose the following:

1. *Zonurobia circularis limpopoensis* O'Connor, nom. nov. for *Zonurobia circularis transvaalensis* Lawrence, 1935, not *Zonurobia transvaalensis* Lawrence, 1935. The new name derives from the South African province of Limpopo, formerly part of the old Transvaal province, where the type locality of the subspecies (Olifant river) is located.
3. Following Bedford (1936), the subdivisions within *Zonurobia circularis* should be referred to as subspecies and as available names rather than as varieties. This avoids confusion with the current ICZN, which regards modern names indicated as “varieties or forms” as unavailable.

**References**


