

A BRIEF NOTE ON THE GENUS *RHAMPHICHTHYS* Mueller and Troschel, 1846. (*Gymnotoidei*; *Rhamphichthyidae*).

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Rhamphichthys Mueller and Troschel, 1848, is the spelling and date most used by researchers working on gymnotids (excepting Perugia (1891), who used *Ramphichthys* seemingly by a typographical error) to identify the zoological prototype *Gymnonotus rostratus* Bloch and Schneider, 1801 = *Gymnotus rostratus* Linnaeus, 1766. This practice should be revised for Mueller (1846) had already delimited and named the same animal under *Ramphichthys* Mueller and Troschel in 1844.

Jordan (1919) in his "The Genera of Fishes" gives as original reference for the genus in question that of a still later paper by Mueller and Troschel (1849), a line that has been followed by many other authors. Neither this paper nor the former published in 1848 acknowledges Mueller's earlier contribution, a fact very strange indeed.

Heider *et al.* (1954) and Neave (1940), in their treatises of zoological names, point out the priority in spelling and date of *Ramphichthys* over *Rhamphichthys* without attempting any further discussion.

It seems clear that Mueller and Troschel intended to use *Rhamphichthys* (*rhamphos*, crooked beak of birds of prey, and also, to have a beak; and *ichthys*, a fish: a fish with a decurved snout), as suggested by their posterior papers and the actual main characteristics of the genus; however, the fact that there was no statement in regard to the etymology of the name chosen, and that the authors failed to make the necessary correction or to mention the earlier paper at all in either one of works (1848) and (1849), giving implicit priority to each of the papers published by them, has originated the rather confused situation found in the literature on the subject.

Thirty two out of thirty six papers consulted on systematics, in which the genus was quoted, identified it under *Rhamphichthys*, using several references for author and year of description but the one proposed here.

Considering both the etymological and the frequency factors, and interpreting the "Priority Law" on the light of the trend started by Berg for fish classification this matter should be settled by employing the right name intended and most frequently used, and the author and earlier year of description. Therefore, the genus should be quoted as *Rhamphichthys* Mueller and Troschel, 1846.

Other interpretations might perpetuate an error or cause greater confusion.

RESUMEN

Se discute la prioridad de *Ramphichthys* Mueller y Troschel, 1846, sobre *Rhamphichthys* Mueller and Troschel, 1848, ambas denominaciones usadas para identificar el prototipo *Gymnotus rostratus* Bloch y Schneider, 1801 = *Gymnotus rostratus* Linnaeus, 1766. Se concluye favorablemente por la fecha original y por la segunda ortografía por razones etimológicas, análisis de frecuencia en el empleo de las denominaciones e interpretación elástica de la "Ley de Prioridad", para solucionar la confusión existente en la literatura sobre el tema. El género debe ser referido como *Rhamphichthys* Mueller y Troschel, 1846.

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