

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

SOME GENERIC NAMES OF TURTLES.

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I.

Merrem, in 1820, (Tentamen, p. 27) was the first author to give a generic name, viz: *Terrapene*, to the Emydine turtles with a movable plastron, which some earlier writers, such as Oppel (1811) and Cuvier (1817), had indicated as a section of the genus *Emys*. In the genus he included six valid species (his *T. boscii* being only a synonyme of *T. ornata*) as follows:

- (1) *T. odorata* (+ *boscii*),
- (2) *T. pennsylvanica*,
- (3) *T. amboinensis*,
- (4) *T. tricarinata*,
- (5) *T. nigricans*,
- (6) *T. clausa*.

Two years later Fleming (Philos. Zool. II, p. 270) apparently without knowing Merrem's work, gave the name *Cistula* to the same group of turtles, without mentioning any species whatsoever. This makes it an unconditional synonym of *Terrapene*, a conclusion quite in consonance with Say's use of Fleming's name in 1825 (Journ. Phila. Acad., IV, ii, p. 205) for the species *C. clausa*, *C. pennsylvanica*, and *C. odorata*.

In 1824, Spix (Testud. Brasil., p. 17) instituted the genus *Kinosternon*, thus taking out of Merrem's *Terrapene* his *T. tricarinata*.

J. E. Gray in a paper entitled "A Synopsis of the Genera of

Reptiles and Amphibia" (Ann. Philos. (n. s.) X, pp. 193 seqv.) published in September, 1825, subdivided Merrem's genus and fixed *T. clausa* definitely as the type of *Terrapene*, as he spelled it. *Kinosternon* he also adopted as proposed by Spix, and in addition he instituted for *T. odorata* and *T. pennsylvanica*, a new genus for which he used a manuscript name by Bell, viz, *Sternotherus*.

Both of the species which constitute his new genus being congeneric with the type of *Kinosternon*, *Sternotherus* becomes an unconditional synonym of the latter.

Thomas Bell, whose MSS. name Gray had thus been appropriating, scarcely more than a month later (Zool. Journ., II, No. 7, Oct. 1825, p. 305) used the same name (though spelt slightly different, *Sternotherus*) in a somewhat different sense, including in it, besides *T. odorata* and the conspecific *T. boscii*, two new species *S. trifasciatus* and *S. leachianus*. This action ties the name *Sternotherus* down to *T. odorata*, if the latter be considered generically distinct from *Kinosternon*, thus antedating *Aromochelys*.

The genus which is now usually known as *Sternotherus*, therefore, must have another name, and *Pelusios* of Wagler (Nat. Syst. Amph., 1830, p. 137) becomes available with *P. nigricans* for type.*

The synonymies of these genera, as here mentioned, would then stand as follows:

Terrapene Merrem.

- 1820. *Terrapene* Merrem, Tent. Syst. Amph., p. 27 (type, as restricted by Gray, Sept., 1825, *T. clausa*).
- 1822. *Therapene* Schinz, Cuvier's Thierr. Uebers., II, p. 13 (emend.).
- 1822. *Cistula* Fleming, Philos. Zool., II, 270 (no species mentioned).
- 1825. *Terrapene* Gray, Ann. Philos. (n. s.) X, Sep., p. 211 (err. typogr.).

*If *Sternotherus* had not been disposed of by Gray in 1825, it would have stood for the genus now known as *Cyclemys*, since Wagler in 1830 clearly restricted it to *C. trifasciata* a whole year before Gray applied it exclusively to *Pelusios nigricans*.

Kinosternon Spix.

1824. *Kinosternon* Spix, Testud. Brasil., p. 17 (type *K. longicaudatum* + *K. brevicaudatum* = *Testudo scorpioides* = *Terrapene tricarinata* Merrem).
1825. *Sternotherus* Gray, Ann. Philos. (n. s.) X, Sep., p. 211 (type *S. odoratus*).
1825. *Sternotherus* Bell, Zool. Journ., II, p. 305 (type *S. odoratus*).
1829. *Sternotherus* Gravenhorst, Delic. Mus. Vratislav., p. 17 (emend.).
1855. *Aromochelys* Gray, Cat. Shield Rept. Brit. Mus., I, p. 46 (*A. odoratum*).

Pelusios Wagler.

1830. *Pelusios* Wagler, Nat. Syst. Amph., p. 137 (type *Emys castanea* + *E. subaigra* = *Terrapene nigricans* Merrem).
1831. *Sternotherus* Gray, Synops. Rept., p. 37 (same type) (not of 1825).

Cyclemys Bell.

1830. *Sternotherus* Wagler, Nat. Syst. Amph., p. 137 (type *S. trifasciatus*) (not of Bell 1825).
1834. *Cyclemys* Bell, Proc. Zool. Soc. London, 1834, p. 17 (type *C. orbiculata*).

II.

Gray's generic name *Nicoria* is plainly untenable being antedated by the same author's *Geoemyda*.

The type of the latter has been believed to be *G. spinosa*, but as I am going to show, this assumption is entirely erroneous. The type of *Geoemyda*, on the contrary, is undoubtedly *G. spengleri* which is so characterized in the original communication establishing the name in the following words (Proc. Zool. Soc. London, 1834, p. 99):

“Specimens were exhibited of several *Reptiles*, which were accompanied by notes by Mr. Gray. These notes were read:

“Mr. Gray regards the *Testudo Spengleri*, Walb., as the type of a new genus of *Emydidae*

“From the beautiful figure of the animal of *Em. spinosa* given by Mr. Bell in his ‘Monograph of the Testudinata’ Mr. Gray is inclined to believe that this species belongs to the same genus with *Em. Spengleri*.”

As will be seen nothing could be more explicit. The genus was also so accepted by contemporary authors as shown by Bonaparte’s use of the emended name *Geoemyds* in 1837 with *G. spengleri* as the only species.

That Gray himself afterwards (1855) shifted the name to *G. spinosa* has nothing to do with the case, except that it necessitates the coining of a new name for the genus for which the latter species stands as type. As a substitute I would propose *Heosemys** with the three species *Heosemys spinosa*, *grandis* and *depressa*.

The synonymy of the two genera would then stand as follows:

Heosemys Stejneger.

1855. *Geoemyda* Gray, Cat. Shield Rept. Brit. Mus., I, p. 16
(type *G. spinosa*) (not of 1834).
1902. *Heosemys* Stejneger, Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, XV,
Dec., 1902, p. 216 (same type).

Geoemyda Gray.

1834. *Geoemyda* Gray, Proc. Zool. Soc. London, 1834, p. 100
(type *Testudo spengleri*).
1837. *Geoemyds* Bonaparte, Mag. Zool. Botan., II, No. vii,
p. 60 (emend.; same type).
1855. *Nicoria* Gray, Cat. Shield Rept. Brit. Mus., I, p. 17
(same type).
1869. *Melanochelys* Gray, Proc. Zool. Soc. London, 1869, p.
187 (type *M. trijuga*).
1876. *Chaibassia* Theobald, Cat. Rept. Brit. Ind. (p. 6) (type
Ch. tricarinata).

*From ἧώς, East and ἐμύς, turtle, formed in analogy to ἔωσφορός.