

County, Maryland. Another specimen I saw living in confinement in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where it was caught two years ago. One was killed quite recently near Ellicott City, Maryland.

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NOTE ON THE LATILOID GENERA.

By THEODORE GILL.

In a late number of the Proceedings of the U. S. National Museum (Vol. IV, p. 53), Messrs. Jordan and Gilbert have accepted the name *Dekaya* instead of *Caulolatilus* for a genus of the family *Latilidae*, with a foot-note, "*Caulolatilus*, Gill: *nomen nudum*." In order that the adoption of this view may be at once arrested, it is advisable to give a history of those names.

In 1862, in the "Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia" (p. 240), the name *Caulolatilus* was proposed as the generic denomination of *Latilus chrysops* and its allies, in the following terms:

"The *Malacanthini* of Poey form a natural family. The *Latilus chrysops*, Val., does not, however, appear to be congeneric with the type of *Latilus*, but is distinguished by its form and the structure of the fins. It may be called *Caulolatilus chrysops*."

It will be thus seen (1) that the respects in which *Caulolatilus* differs from *Latilus* were indicated; (2) the relationships were exactly appreciated; (3) a specific type was mentioned. There could consequently be no doubt as to what was meant nor as to the characters by which it should be distinguished.

In 1864, in the "Proceedings of the California Academy of Natural Sciences" (Vol. 3, p. 70), Dr. Cooper proposed the name of *Dekaya* for a supposed new fish, concerning which he had not the slightest conception as to its proper relationships, considering it "to be a very aberrant form of the *Percoid* family, having many of the characters of other orders" [sic!], but that on the whole it seemed to be most nearly related to "the genus *Heterognathodon*, of Bleeker." The remarks respecting the "other orders" and the affinities indicated the most complete misapprehension as to the type. The description was equally at fault. The "general shape" was said to be "elongated and fusiform," although a shape less "fusiform" could scarcely be associated with moderate elongation. In other respects the description was faulty and erroneous or vague, but these lapses need not detain longer.

The question arises in such a case, What is the advantage of any description? According to the rules of the British and American associa-

tions for the advancement of science, a description is necessary as the basis of permanent nomenclature, but like many of the other rules propounded in those codes, there is no proper logical basis therefor. If a description is necessary, it is necessary that the description should be apt, but, as every naturalist is well aware, the description is completely ignored in practice. We adopt, for example, the name *Perca* and many others from Linnaeus and his successors, but inasmuch as those names were applied by older naturalists to forms that are now relegated to distinct families, it will be obvious that no regard whatever is paid to the *definitions*. This is recognized to such an extent that it is now admitted that a definition is only necessary to show that the writer had some idea as to what he was treating about. In the case in question, (1), on the one hand, it is evident from the words that the author of *Caulolatilus* did have an adequate idea as to both what he was writing of and as to the true distinctions of the fish considered, and (2), on the other hand, that the author of the name *Dekaya* had not the least conception of the nature of the form he described, and that the name originated simply from an almost inexcusable blunder and ignorance of the subject he ventured to write upon. There would therefore seem to be no doubt that in any case the name *Caulolatilus* should be retained in preference to *Dekaya*. But it so happens that there is no complication in the consideration of the choice of names even from the extreme standpoint from which it is viewed by Messrs. Jordan and Gilbert. The name *Dekaya* is inadmissible as the denomination of the *Latiloid* fish, if for no other reason, because the same name under the form *Dekayia* had been applied previously by Messrs. H. Milne Edwards and Haime to a genus of *Corals* of the family *Chaetetidae*. (DEKAYIA, *H. Milne Edwards et J. Haime*, Monographie des Polypiers fossiles des Terrains Palæozoïques in Archives du Muséum d' Histoire Naturelle, t. 5, p. 154, 1851; *H. Milne Edwards*, Histoire Naturelle des Corallaires ou Polypes proprement dits, t. 3, p. 283, 1860.)

The history of the genus may therefore be epitomized as follows:

CAULOLATILUS.

Synonymy.

- =*Caulolatilus* Gill, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., [v. 14,] p. 240, 1862. (Characters indicated.)
 - =*Dekaya* Cooper, Proc. Cal. Acad. Nat. Sci., v. 3, p. 70, 1864. (Described, but erroneously, and name preoccupied by Edwards and Haime in 1851.)
 - =*Caulolatilus* Gill, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., [v. 17,] p. 66, 1865. (Fully described.—Adopted by Cooper (later), Poey, Bleeker, Goode and Bean, Jordan & Gilbert (at first.)
 - =*Dekaya* Jordan & Gilbert, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., v. 4, p. 53, 1880. (Name revived for *Caulolatilus*.)
- latilus* sp. *Cuv. et Val., Günther, etc.*

Type *Caulolatilus chrysops* = *Latilus chrysops* C. & V.

The following genus is very nearly allied, viz:

PROLATILUS.

Synonymy.

=*Prolatilus Gill*, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., [v. 17,] p. 67, 1865.

latilus sp. *Cuv. & Val.*, *Jenyns*, *Günther*, etc.

Type *Prolatilus jugularis*=*Latilus jugularis* C. & V.

Apparently closely related to *Prolatilus* is *Pinguipes*, viz:

PINGUIPES.

Synonymy.

=*Pinguipes Cuv. & Val.*, Hist. Nat. des Poissons, t. 3, p. 277, 1829.

Type *Pinguipes brasiliannus* C. & V.

The following genus has been associated with the preceding by all who have treated of them, save Dr. P. von Bleeker. That ichthyologist has referred *Latilus* to the family of "Percoidei" and its tenth subfamily, "Spariformes" and "Phalanx Denticini," and removed *Caulolatilus* and *Prolatilus* from all close relationship therewith. "(Spec. plures familiae Parapercoid. adnumer.)" What are the exact affinities must be determined by a study of the anatomy.

LATILUS.

Synonymy.

<*Latilus Cuv. & Val.*, Hist. Nat. des Poissons, t. 5, p. 369, (t. 9, p. 495,) 1830.

=*Latilus Gill*, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., [v. 17,] p. 67, (by exclusion,) 1865.

=*Latilus Bleeker*, Archives Néerland. Sc. exactes et nat., t. 11, p. 279, 1876.

Type *Latilus simus*=*Coryphæna sima* Bl. Schneid.=*Latilus argentatus*-C. & V.

To *Latilus* the following genus seems to be most nearly related, but whether such is really the case cannot be considered settled till its osteology is examined.

LOPHOLATILUS.

Synonymy.

=*Lopholatilus Goode & Bean*, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., v. 2, p. 205, 1879.

Type *Lopholatilus chameleonticeps* Goode & Bean.