

NOTES ON THE NOMENCLATURE OF SCYMNUS OR
SCYMNORHINUS, A GENUS OF SHARKS.

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THE SHARK genus generally known under the name *Scymnus* can not retain that name. To show why it can not and what should be its substitute is the object of the present communication.

I.

The name *Scymnus* was given to the genus of sharks by Cuvier in 1817; the same name had been given by Kugelmann in 1794 to a genus of coccinelloid beetles, and is still in use, the insect genus now comprising very numerous species. Therefore, the use of the appellation in ichthyology is precluded. Several names are available as substitutes.

II.

In 1810 Rafinesque gave the name *Dalatias* to a genus distinguished from his *Squalus* (*Acanthias*) by the alleged absence of spiracles. Our knowledge of the Mediterranean fauna and Rafinesque's descriptions otherwise enable us to identify the two species which he refers to *Dalatias* and to assume that the spiracles must have been present in both of them. The *D. sparophagus* was a *Scymnus*; the *D. nocturnus* a typical *Squalus*. *Dalatias* of Rafinesque was, therefore, a synonym of *Squalus* of Rafinesque, and the result of a blunder and failure of observation.

III.

In 1839 Swainson adopted the genus "*Dalatias*, Raf." but limited it to *D. nocturnus*, incorporating with the generic diagnosis, characters derived from the specific diagnosis given by Rafinesque (furnished with anterior spines, etc.) of *D. nocturnus*.

IV.

In 1846 Bonaparte first substituted for the name *Scymnus* the new term *Scymnorhinus*, doubtless for the reason that he had ascertained that the coleopterous genus had received the former name before the selachian.

V.

In 1850 Gray revived the name *Dalatias* for the *Scymni*, on the ground of priority for the former and not because *Scymnus* was preoccupied.

VI.

I conclude that *Dalatias* was to all intents and purposes a pure synonym of *Squalus*, and the addition of a species of another genus was surely insufficient to affect its character. *Scymnus* would therefore have been available as the first independent name of the shark genus, so called, had it not been already used. Under the circumstances, however, *Dalatias* might have been revived with the modified sense attributed to it by Gray, if its revival had not been precluded by other considerations. But the previous limitation of *Dalatias* by Swainson and substitution of a new name by Bonaparte barred such revival. The name given by Bonaparte must therefore be used for the *Scymni* of Cuvier.

VII.

The following synonymy will give other data respecting the names referred to:

Genus SCYMNORHINUS.

- < *Les Leiches* (*Scymnus*), CUVIER, Règne Animal, II, p. 130, 1817; 2d ed., II, p. 392, 1829 (not of Kugelmann, 1794).
- < *Scymnorhinus*, BONAPARTE, Cat. Met. Pesci Europei, p. 16, 1846.
- < *Dalatias*, GRAY, List Fishes Brit. Mus., I, p. 75, 1851.

We may congratulate ourselves that such a barbarous compound as *Dalatias* (of unknown formation) need not be used. *Scymnorhinus* has the merit of being of classical origin and correct formation, although meaningless¹ as a denominator of generic characteristics.

VIII.

The change of the generic name entails a corresponding change in the name of the family of which the genus is the type. The nomenclature of that family is summarized in the following synonymy:

Family SOMNIOSIDÆ.

- < Abtheilung der Haiische, MÜLLER and HENLE, Archiv Naturgesch., 3. Jahrg., I, p. 399, 1837.
- < Fourth division of Sharks, MÜLLER and HENLE, Mag. Nat. Hist., n. s., II, p. 88, 1838.
- < *Scymni*, MÜLLER and HENLE, Syst. Beschreib. Plagiostomen, p. 91, 1841.
- < *Scymnida*, ADAMS, Man. Nat. Hist., p. 89, 1854.
- < *Scymnida*, RICHARDSON, Encycl. Brit., 8th ed., XII, p. 325, 1856.
- < *Scymnoidei*, BLEEKER, Enum. Sp. Piscium Archipel. Indico, p. xii, 1859.

¹ *Scymnorhinus* < σκόμνος, eel or whelp + ρινη, shark. Why *Scymnus* was applied to beetles is not evident; it may have been given in allusion to their small size.

- < *Scymnoida*, GILL, Ann. N. Y. Lyceum Nat. Hist., VII, p. 405, 1862.
< *Scymni*, A. DUMÉRIL, Hist. Nat. Poiss., I, pp. 310, 450, 1865.
< *Spinacida*, GÜNTHER, Cat. Fish. Brit. Mus., VIII, pp. 355, 417, 1870.
< *Scymni*, FITZINGER, Sitzungsber. K. Akad. der Wissensch. Wien, LXVII, p. 56, 1873.
< *Somniosida*, JORDAN, Man. Vert. An. N. U. S., 5th ed., p. 15, 1888.
< *Spinacida*, WOODWARD, Cat. Fossil Fishes Brit. Mus., I, p. 30, 1889.
= *Dalatiida*, GILL, Mem. Nat. Acad. Sci., VI, p. 129, 1892.

Subfamily SCYMNORHININÆ.

- < *Scymnini*, BONAPARTE, Mem. Soc. Hist. Nat. Neuchatel, II, 1838; Nuovi Annali delle Sei. Nat., II, p. 199, 1838; IV, p. 183, 1840.
< *Dalatiiana*, GRAY, List Fish. Brit. Mus., pt. 1, p. 74, 1851.

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