Case 3328

*Didelphis* Linnaeus, 1758 (*Mammalia, Didelphidae*): proposed correction of gender, and *Cryptotis* Pomel, 1848 (*Mammalia, Soricidae*): proposed fixation of gender

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Abstract. The purpose of this application, under Article 80.9 of the Code, is to emend the entry on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology to correct the gender of the nominal genus *Didelphis* Linnaeus, 1758 from masculine to feminine, as originally used by Linnaeus. It is proposed that the gender of the nominal genus *Cryptotis* Pomel, 1848 is fixed as masculine.

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; Soricomorpha; *Didelphidae*; *Soricidae*; *Didelphis*; *Cryptotis*; mammals.

Gender of the genus-group name *Didelphis*:

1. Linnaeus (1758, pp. 54–55) established the nominal genus *Didelphis* and included five species: *marsupialis*, *philander*, *opossum*, *murina* and *dorsigera*. These species-group names are currently used as follows: *Didelphis marsupialis*, *Caluromys philander*. *Philander opossum* and *Marmosa murina*. *Didelphis dorsigera* is a synonym of *Marmosa murina*. No gender was given when *Didelphis* was placed on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology (Opinion 91, ICZN, 1926), but subsequently its gender was given as masculine in the first comprehensive Official List of Generic Names in Zoology (ICZN, 1958). It may be suggested that when the latter list was prepared, the gender was based on that of the Greek word *delphis*, which is masculine. Linnaeus (1758) clearly intended *Didelphis* to be feminine, however, which gave rise to the commonly used variant spelling *Didolphys* (e.g. Schreber, 1777; Wied-Neuwied, 1826; Wagner, 1843; Burmeister, 1854; Thomas, 1888). These and other authors presumably used the incorrect subsequent spelling *Didolphys* because it unambiguously expresses Linnaeus’s meaning of *Didelphis* as ‘two wombs’ (an allusion to an internal womb and the external marsupium; obviously feminine), not ‘two Delphi’ (masculine), or ‘two dolphins’ (masculine). Mondolfi & Pérez-Hernández (1984) described *Didelphis albiventris imperfectus* as masculine, because *Didelphis* is identified as masculine on the Official List (ICZN, 1958, 1987). Most authors today follow Gardner (1993) in writing the name in the feminine form, *imperfecta* (e.g. Voss & Emmons, 1996; Lemos & Cerqueira, 2002). It is therefore proposed that the entry on the Official List is emended to record that the gender of *Didelphis* Linnaeus, 1758 is feminine.
Gender of the genus-group name Cryptotis:

2. Pomel (1848, p. 249) established Cryptotis as a subgenus of Musaraneus Brisson, 1756, with ‘Musaraneus. cinereus (sorex cinereus Bachm[an])’ as the only included species. Sorex cinereus Bachman, 1837 (p. 373) is a junior homonym of Sorex arcticus cinereus Kerr, 1792 (p. 206) (currently Sorex cinereus) and junior synonym of Sorex parvus Say in James, 1823 (p. 163, footnote) (currently Cryptotis parvus). Trouessart (1879, p. 262) listed Cryptotis as a synonym of Blarina Gray, 1838 (p. 124). Merriam (1895, p. 16) used Cryptotis as a subgenus of Blarina Gray, 1838, and treated Sorex cinereus Bachman, 1837, as a synonym of Sorex parvus Say, 1823 which he used in the combination Blarina parva. Miller (1911, p. 221) elevated Cryptotis to full generic rank, described C. gracilis, C. fronalis and C. pergracilis macer as new and also used Cryptotis for the following nominal species: C. mexicana, C. mexicana peregrina, C. nelsoni, C. nigrescens, C. orophia, C. soricina and C. tropicalis. All of these names were originally described in the nominal genus Blarina with no change of gender. Subsequently, many authors (e.g. Miller, 1912; Goldman, 1920; Goodwin, 1954a, 1954b) were equally inconsistent in their treatment of the gender of Cryptotis. Miller & Kellogg (1955, pp. 38–43) were the first to treat all Cryptotis name combinations as feminine. Cabrera (1958, pp. 46–48), however, consistently treated the name Cryptotis as masculine.

3. Woodman (1993) addressed the issue of gender and concluded that the name Cryptotis is feminine. Although he should have considered Article 30(a)(i) of the then current edition of the Code, Woodman’s (1993, p. 545) argument hinged on his claim that ‘Greek noun formation dictates that names ending in –otis are feminine’ and the assumption that Cryptotis refers to a hidden eared-creature. He also concluded that all generic names of mammals ending in –otis should be treated as feminine, apparently unaware that Myotis is on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology as masculine. Woodman has continued to treat Cryptotis as feminine (e.g. Woodman, 1996, 2003; Woodman & Timm, 1992, 1993; Woodman, Cuartas & Delgado, 2003).

4. Pritchard (1994, p. 549), commenting on Woodman’s (1993) assertion that Cryptotis is feminine, stated that the –otis ending was a derived form of ois, the genitive of ous (the neuter word for ear), and not derived from the Greek otis, a feminine word, meaning bastard (Aves) and, as Prichard commented, an inappropriate derivation for a genus of mammal. Prichard (1994) interpreted the name Cryptotis to be a combination of adjectives meaning hidden-eared, rather than hidden ear, and certainly not hidden bastard (or hidden eared creature). To stabilize usage it is proposed that the gender of the genus-group name Cryptotis is confirmed by the Commission to be masculine. Further discussion and examples of genus-group names ending in either –otis or –otus is provided in a Nomenclatural Note on pp. 183–184.

5. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature accordingly is asked:

(1) to use its plenary power to emend the entry on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology for Didelphis Linnaeus, 1758 to record that the gender is corrected from masculine to feminine;
(2) to rule that the gender of the name Cryptotis Pomel, 1848 is masculine;
(3) to place the name Cryptotis Pomel, 1848 (gender: masculine), type species by monotypy Sorex cinereus Bachman, 1837, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology.
References


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Comments on this case are invited for publication (subject to editing) in the Bulletin; they should be sent to the Executive Secretary, I.C.Z.N., Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K. (e-mail: iczn@nhm.ac.uk).