

Nomenclatural Note

The gender of genus-group names ending in either *-otis* or *-otus*

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The gender of genus-group names ending in either *-otis* or *-otus* has been the cause of some confusion. Inappropriate derivation of generic names, in particular of a number of genera of birds and mammals, has led to the incorrect formation of some species-group names associated with them.

The genus-group name *Cryptotis* is a Latinized word derived from the Greek *krupt-* (the stem of *kruptos*) plus *ot-* (from the stem of the genitive form of *ous*), with the Latin ending *-is*. Therefore, Article 30.1.2 of the Code does not apply because neither *Cryptotis* nor *-otis* can be interpreted as a Greek word of fixed gender transliterated into Latin without other changes. David & Gosselin (2002, p. 266) discussed this problem. Unfortunately, the Code does not offer guidance for generic names ending in *-is*. *Cryptotis* is to be treated as a noun in the nominative singular and, because the ending *-is* does not indicate a specific gender, *Cryptotis* must be treated as a word of common gender. According to Article 30.1.4.2 a word of common gender 'is to be treated as masculine unless its author, when establishing the name, stated that it is feminine or treated it as feminine in combination with an adjectival species-group name.' Even if priority of usage is invoked, Pomel's (1848, p. 249) description of *Cryptotis*, with *Musaraneus cinereus* (masculine) as its only included species, cannot be construed as treatment as feminine. In a different example, David & Gosselin (2002, p. 167) concluded that the avian name *Xanthotis* Reichenbach, 1852 (Aves) is masculine because it was first established in combination with *flaviventris*, an adjective not indicating a particular gender. David & Gosselin (2002) also commented that the name *Xanthotis* (as well as *Melanotis* and *Euptilotis*) should not be confused with names ending in the feminine Greek and Latin noun *otis*, which means bastard.

The following is a partial list of genus-group names ending in either *-otis* or *-otus* (formed from the same root, but with the second declension ending *-us*). Some of these are avian names with the terminal stem derived from *otis* (bastard).

Aotus = *A* (lacking) + *ot* (ear) + *us* (Latin second declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Ardeotis = *Arde* (heron-like) + *otis* (bastard) = feminine (Aves)

Chlamydotis = *Chlamyd* (mantle[ed]) + *otis* (bastard) = feminine (Aves)

Cryptotis = *Crypt* (hidden) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *is* (Latin third declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Dolichotis = *Dolich* (long) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *is* (Latin third declension ending) = treated as neuter by Cabrera (1961) (Mammalia)

Eupodotis = *Eu* (well) + *pod* (foot[ed]) + *otis* (bastard) = feminine (Aves)

Euptilotis = *Eu* (well) + *ptil* (feather[ed]) + *ot* (ear) + *is* (Latin third declension ending) = masculine (Aves)

Histiotus = *Histi* (sail) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *us* (Latin second declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Laephotis = *Laeph* (sail) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *is* (Latin third declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Macrotus = *Maacr* (long, large) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *us* (Latin second declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Melanotis = *Melan* (black) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *is* (Latin third declension ending) = masculine (Aves)

Microtus = *Micr* (small) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *us* (Latin second declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Myotis = *My* (mouse) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *is* (Latin third declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Otus = *Ot* (ear[ed]) + *us* (Latin second declension ending) = masculine (Aves)

Phyllotis = *Phyll* (leaf-like) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *is* (Latin third declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Plecotus = *Plec* (twist[ed]) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *us* (Latin second declension ending) = masculine (Mammalia)

Xanthotis = *Xanth* (yellow) + *ot* (ear[ed]) + *is* (Latin third declension ending) = masculine (Aves)

These examples are given in support of Case 3328, *Didelphis* Linnaeus, 1758 (Mammalia, DIDELPHIDAE): proposed correction of gender, and *Cryptotis* Pomel, 1848 (Mammalia, SORICIDAE): proposed fixation of gender (see BZN 62: 142–145).

References

- Cabrera, A.** 1961. Catálogo de los mamíferos de América del Sur. *Revista del Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales* «Bernardino Rivadavia», *Ciencias Zoológicas*, **4**(2): xvii–xxii, 309–732.
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