

**MARSUPIALS FROM
ARGENTINA: COMMENTS ON
OJEDA AND MONJEAU (1995)***

Miguel C. Pinto¹ and Alfred L. Gardner²

¹ Escuela de Biología, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Avenida 12 de Octubre y Roca, Quito, Ecuador, and Research Training Program, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, <cmpinto@puce.edu.ec.>;

² USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, P.O. Box 37012, Washington, DC, USA, 20013-7012. <gardner.alfred@nrmh.si.edu>

We recently re-read the critique by Ojeda and Monjeau (1995) on the sections written by Gardner (1993 a, b, c) for the second edition of *Mammal Species of the World* (Wilson and Reeder, 1993). Gardner is also the author of revisions of these sections for the third edition of *Mammals Species of the World* (in press). Ojeda and Monjeau's comments are certain to create confusion concerning the taxonomy and nomenclature of Neotropical marsupials. We suggest that if Ojeda and Monjeau had been familiar with the primary literature, they would have had little to criticize. We are responding to their critique to emphasize the need to understand the rules of zoological nomenclature and to examine the original literature, and not to trust subsequent interpretations (or misunderstandings) of that literature. Ojeda and Monjeau discussed seven main criticisms of Gardner's lists, which we comment on in the same order they listed them, as follow:

1. Primary authority for the name *Caluromys lanatus*

Ojeda and Monjeau (1995) argued that *Caluromys lanatus* dates from Illiger (1815), not from Olfers (1818). However, as pointed out by Hershkovitz (1959), Illiger's name (*Didelphys lanatu*) is a nomen nudum because it simply appeared on a list and lacked a description or indication.

2. A typographical error

Ojeda and Monjeau (1995) devoted an entire paragraph to criticize a typographical error in the account of synonyms of *Didelphys albiventris*.

Didelphys paraguayensis dennleri and *D. p. bonariensis* were described in the same publication (Marelli, 1930 [not seen]; descriptions reprinted in Marelli, 1931). In Gardner (1993a) *D. bonariensis* is correctly dated as 1930; whereas *D. dennleri* had the wrong date, 1830.

3. *Lestodelphis* or *Lestodelphys*?

If Ojeda and Monjeau had examined Tate's (1934) original spelling for the replacement name for *Notodelphys* Thomas, 1921 (preoccupied), they would have realized that *Lestodelphis* is correct. Perhaps they relied on Cabrera's (1958) classic treatise on South American mammals, which is unfortunately marred by a large number of typographical and spelling errors. Crespo (1974), Olrog and Lucero (1981), and Ojeda and Monjeau (1995) used the incorrect subsequent spelling *Lestodelphis*. Cabrera and Yepes (1940), Marshall (1977), and Redford and Eisenberg (1992) correctly spelled the name of the Patagonian Opossum as *Lestodelphys*.

4. *Rhyncholestes raphanurus* in Argentina

Rhyncholestes raphanurus was not recorded from Argentina when Gardner (1993b) submitted the manuscript on the Paucituberculata, and information appearing after July 1, 1992 was not included (Wilson and Reeder, 1993:11). Argentine records are based on two specimens, one collected in 1992, and the other in 1995 (Birney et al., 1996). Ojeda and Monjeau (1995) criticized Gardner for treating *Rhyncholestes continentalis* Bublitz, 1987, as a synonym of *R. raphanurus* and implied that Gardner was not familiar with the literature in any language other than English. Monjeau was a coauthor of the report by Birney et al. (1996), which also treated *continentalis* as a synonym of *R. raphanurus*.

5. *Dromiciops australis* or *D. gliroides*?

Ojeda and Monjeau (1995) accused Gardner (1993c) of arbitrarily applying the rules of nomenclature when he used *Dromiciops gliroides* Thomas, 1894, as the correct name for monito del monte instead of the more familiar *Dromiciops australis*. The name *Dromiciops australis*, originally proposed as *Didelphys australis* Philippi, 1893, is preoccupied by *Didelphys australis* Goldfuss, 1812. Ojeda (1994) appears to have accepted *D. gliroides* as the correct name.

6. Eight species of marsupials omitted from the Argentine fauna?

Ojeda and Monjeau claimed that Gardner (1993a) neglected to include Argentina in the distributions of eight species of marsupials. They cited Redford

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and Eisenberg (1992), and included references, as evidence of the presence of these species. The use of Redford and Eisenberg (1992) as a primary source of information may not be recommended (see Pine, 1993). We treat each of the eight species Ojeda and Monjeau claimed were excluded from Argentina in the order they were listed:

a) *Didelphis marsupialis*: Gardner used the name *Didelphis aurita* for southern South American populations formerly referred to as *D. marsupialis*. These populations currently are known as *D. aurita* (see Cerqueira, 1985; Patton and Costa, 2003). Redford and Eisenberg (1992) did not mention *D. aurita*; furthermore, they stated that "*Didelphis albiventris* equals *D. azarae*" when in fact, *D. azarae* technically equals *D. aurita*.

b) *Gracilinanus microtarsus*: Ojeda and Monjeau (1995) did not cite any compelling evidence that *G. microtarsus* occurs south of Brazil and, as far we have been able to determine, it still does not (see Patton and Costa, 2003).

c) *Micoureus demerarae*: This species is restricted to northern South America; Massoia (1980) reported *Micoureus paraguayana* from Misiones as *Marmosa (Marmosa) cinerea paraguayana*.

d) *Monodelphis americana*: This species has been confused with *M. iheringi* and *M. sorex*, and while *M. americana* may occur in Argentina, specimens identified as belonging to that species have not had their identities verified (see Massoia, 1980).

e) *Monodelphis domestica*: Although Olrog and Lucero (1981) reported *M. domestica* for Argentina, the first report that confirmed identification and provided a locality was by Heinonen Fortabat and Chebez (1997). We recommend that the reader consult Pine (1980) and Myers and Wetzel (1979) regarding distributional records from Paraguay and southern Brazil.

f) *Monodelphis emiliae*: We have not been able to find any record for *M. emiliae* for Argentina. The distribution of *M. emiliae* is restricted to the Peruvian and Brazilian Amazon Basin (Pine and Handley, 1984). *Monodelphis emiliae* is often confused with *M. scalops*.

g) *Monodelphis scalops*: Massoia (1980) reported *M. scalops* from Misiones. Species of *Monodelphis* are difficult to identify, and Massoia's (1980) record for Argentina, and the one by Heinonen Fortabat and Chebez (1997), as well as the record for Paraguay reported by Contreras and Silvera Avalos (1995), have not had their identifications verified.

h) *Thylamys velutinus*: Gardner was aware, as confirmed by Birney and Monjeau (2003) and Solari (2003), that *T. velutinus* is found only in central and southern Brazil where it occurs in semi-arid Cerrado and Caatinga habitats.

7. The correct distributions of *Thylamys elegans* and *Thylamys pusillus*

Ojeda and Monjeau (1995) stated, without references, that the distributions of *T. elegans* and *T. pusillus* given by Gardner (1993a) are erroneous and that these species have a wider distribution in Argentina. Gardner (1993a) gave the distribution of *T. elegans* as Chile and western Argentina ("to Neuquén in the east"). More recently, Flores et al. (2000) elevated *T. cinderella* and *T. sponsorius* as full species, and Palma (1995) and Solari (2003) have recognized *T. venustus* as a valid species. This species had been treated as subspecies of *T. elegans*. Today, *T. elegans* is considered to be endemic to Chile and does not occur in Argentina. Argentine and Bolivian populations of *Thylamys* represent *T. venustus*, *T. cinderella* and *T. sponsorius*. The distribution of *Thylamys pusillus* traditionally included northern Argentina, until Birney et al. (1996) extended the distributional range of the species to more southern localities based on collections from the Patagonian provinces.

Massoia (1980) reported *Marmosa (Thylamys) microtarsus*, *Marmosa cinerea paraguayana*, *Monodelphis scalops*, and *Monodelphis americana iheringi* from Misiones. Only CEM 3914 (Massoia, 1980:plate 1), which represents *Marmosa cinerea paraguayana* (= *Micoureus paraguayana*), identifies any of these five taxa. Researchers should verify the identities of these specimens. Gardner (1993a) listed *Marmosa formosa* as a synonym of *Gracilinanus agilis*. Voss et al. (2004) reevaluated the holotype and only known specimen of *Marmosa formosa* and transferred the species to its own monotypic genus (*Chacodelphys*).

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