



## Botanists voted to remove offensive names; will zoologists follow?

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The Nomenclature Section of the XX International Botanical Congress (IBC) was held from 15 to 19 July 2024, with 173 registered delegates in Madrid plus 219 additional attendees participating online (Gostel *et al.* 2014). It deliberated 433 proposals to amend the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants* (Turland *et al.* 2018, the Shenzhen Code). Among the decisions, one received significant media attention and was featured in top journals *Science* (Ortega & Stokstad 2024) and *Nature* (Callaway 2024): the removal of the letter *c* and the second *f* (if applicable) from 301 racially offensive names that include *caff[e]r-* and *caff[e]r-* (Smith & Figueiredo 2021). This proposal, along with others on offensive names (e.g., Hammer & Thiele 2021), received heated debates in *Megataxa* (Pethiyagoda 2023; Smith & Figueiredo 2023) and other journals (e.g., Jiménez-Mejías *et al.* 2024, with summaries of debates prior to this paper).

Over a dozen years ago, botanists at the XVIII IBC in Melbourne approved the proposal to enable e-publication of new names for algae, fungi, and plants (Knapp *et al.* 2011). Zoologists quickly followed to allow e-only publication in zoological nomenclature (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature 2012). This coincidence in code revisions by both botanists and zoologists resulted in a new era for taxonomy through electronic publication from 2012. While botanists started to propose changes in their code to remove offensive names in 2021 and had some success in 2024, zoologists have not made similar proposals. On the contrary, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature indicated that “renaming taxa on ethical grounds threatens nomenclatural stability and scientific communication” (Ceríaco *et al.* 2013). Preserving nomenclatural stability is also the consensus of over 1500 researchers, including both botanists and zoologists (Jiménez-Mejías *et al.* 2024).

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