



The genitive of species-group scientific names formed from personal names

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Abstract

To avoid confusion with citations of a generic name and its author, the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* encourages specific names based on personal names to be instigated in the genitive case. The Latin genitive suffix also indicates the gender and singular or plural state of the modified proper noun. Some zoologists have interpreted Article 31 as stipulating that these latter should always correspond with the gender and singular or plural state of the person or persons commemorated. They believe the original spelling is justifiably emended if, in their view, the author or authors have employed the incorrect suffix. We contend that the gender and singular or plural state of a noun so employed is part of its etymology and unregulated by the Code. The author's selection of suffix should be respected and the original spelling preserved. We offer a rewording of Article 31 to remedy this ambiguity.

Key words: Code, emendation, genitive, gender, nomenclature, personal name, sex, species, spelling, suffix, taxonomy

Introduction

To avoid confusion with the citation of a generic name and its author, the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* encourages an author to instigate in the genitive case a species-group name based on a personal name. The Latin suffix added not only indicates the case but also the gender and singular or plural state of the proper noun forming the species-group name. An author applying the Latin genitive when naming two species of separate genera after male and female family members with the same surname (e.g., *Aus browni* after Mr Brown and *Bus browni* after Mrs Brown), has the following options:

1. *Aus browni* and *Bus browni*
2. *Aus brownae* and *Bus brownae*
3. *Aus browni* and *Bus brownae*
4. *Aus brownae* and *Bus browni*

A surname is a noun, not an adjective. Its gender derives from its etymology which is outside the jurisdiction of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (see Appendix B5). The English surname Brown has no unequivocal Latin gender and therefore all four above options should be available to an author. Article 31, however, has been interpreted as permitting only the third and fourth options: a species-group name in the