



Type specimens, samples of live individuals and the Galapagos Pink Land Iguana

THOMAS M. DONEGAN¹

¹ *Fundación ProAves, 33 Blenheim Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7RT, UK*
tdonegan@proaves.org or thomasdonegan@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

The nomenclatural implications of Gentile & Snell (2009)'s innovations in the designation of a type specimen - that is sampled and tagged but not killed - are discussed. The paper also responds to Nemésio (2009)'s criticism of Donegan (2008), where I argued that descriptions based on samples of live individuals are valid. I also discuss whether recent descriptions of such a nature involve a different degree of scientific rigour to other descriptions.

Key words: Nomenclatural availability, vouchers, collecting, specimen, type specimen, sample, ethics, framework, Code, Commission, *Conolophus marthae*.

Introduction

In this issue of *Zootaxa*, Gentile & Snell (2009) describe a critically endangered new species of land iguana from the Galápagos islands, named *Conolophus marthae*. Aside from being an important discovery, this description includes noteworthy innovations in the designation of a type specimen based on a live individual. In a recent exchange of papers in *Zootaxa*, the validity of descriptions based on a holotype which is not a full, dead specimen (such as this) have been discussed (Dubois & Nemésio 2007, Donegan 2008, Nemésio 2009). Dubois and Nemésio have expressed the viewpoint that descriptions based on live individuals are not valid nomenclatural acts. I have expressed the contrary view.

Other recent descriptions based on holotypes which are not killed have relied solely upon photographs and, in some instances, samples taken from live individuals (see discussion in Donegan 2008). In Gentile & Snell (2009), the individual in question was branded with a number and had a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) with a unique serial number hypodermically inserted allowing the individual's location. Gentile & Snell (2009) stated that "*The legal authority governing biological diversity of the Galápagos Islands, the Galápagos National Park Service, has agreed that if continued monitoring of the population of pink iguanas suggests that the population is increasing, the Holotype will be captured, moved to an existing captive facility at the Galápagos National Park Center, Puerto Ayora, Isla Santa Cruz; where it will be maintained until it dies. Upon the Holotype's natural death, it will be preserved and deposited in the Governmental Galápagos collection, maintained by the Charles Darwin Foundation, Puerto Ayora, Galápagos.*"

The methods and text used by Gentile & Snell (2009) in their designation of a type specimen raise novel issues in the context of the validity of descriptions based on live individuals, which are discussed in this paper. I also take this opportunity to respond to certain points made by Nemésio (2009) in his criticism of Donegan (2008).