

***Helobdella serendipitous* Saglam *et al.*, 2018 is the available name (Annelida: Hirudinida)**

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Saglam and Shain (2025) correct *Helobdella serendipitous* Saglam, Kutschera, Saunders, Saidel, Balombini & Shain, 2018 to *Helobdella serendipitosa*. This is an unjustified emendation according to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999), as *serendipitous* is neither Latin nor latinized, and must be treated as a noun in apposition according to the Code and left unchanged.

The reasoning Saglam and Shain (2025) give for this correction is that *serendipitous* is a masculine adjective, derived from the English word *serendipity* combined with the anglicised Latin ending *-ous*, which is derived from the Latin ending *-osus*. Saglam and Shain are correct that *serendipitous* is an adjective. However, *serendipitous* is not a Latin adjective, but an English one, and *-ous* is an English adjectival ending and not a Latin adjectival ending. It is also not masculine, as English adjectives do not mark for gender. The Glossary of the ICZN defines 'latinize' as "To give Latin form and characteristics (including a Latin ending or a Latin suffix) to any word which is not Latin." The suffix *-ous* is not a Latin ending or a Latin suffix, and so *serendipitous* cannot be considered a latinized adjective. Saglam and Shain (2025) note that *-ous* is "equivalent" to *-osus*, but the equivalency is both vague and not defined in the Code, and I could think of no reading where equivalent words would be valid. As the species-group name is not a Latin or latinized adjective, Article 31.2 of the ICZN does not apply, and the species name does not need to be changed to conform to the feminine gender of the generic name *Helobdella* with which it is combined.

The definition of 'latinize' in the Glossary of the Code is very confusing. What does "form and characteristics" mean? How are they linguistically different from each other? Does transcription into the Latin alphabet count as latinizing? Does latinizing include only Latin endings and suffixes, or are there other characteristics that are valid? There is no clear resolution to these questions at present. However, a strict reading of the Code must be that non-Latin words with non-Latin endings are not considered latinized.

Helobdella serendipitous Saglam, Kutschera, Saunders, Saidel, Balombini & Shain, 2018 is the available name.

References

- ICZN (1999) *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*. 4th Edition. International Trust for Zoological Nomenclature, London, 306 pp.
- Saglam, N. & Shain, D.H. (2025) Correction of the specific epithet in *Helobdella serendipitous* Saglam *et al.* 2018 (Annelida: Hirudinea) as *Helobdella serendipitosa*, in accordance with Latin grammar. *Zootaxa*, 5647 (5), 499–500.
<https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.5647.5.9>