

**NOTROPIS RAFINESQUE, 1818 (PISCES): REVISED
PROPOSAL TO DESIGNATE THE GENDER OF THAT
GENERIC NAME AS MASCULINE. Z.N.(S.) 663**

By the Secretary, International Commission
on Zoological Nomenclature

The present case was first brought to the attention of the Commission in March 1952 by Dr Reeve M. Bailey and Dr R.R. Miller (*Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA*).

2. *Notropis* Rafinesque, 1818 (*Amer. monthly Mag. and crit. Rev.* vol. 2: 204) was established with only one included species, *N. atherinoides* Rafinesque, 1818 (*ibid.*), which is consequently its type-species by monotypy. It is the largest genus of North American freshwater fishes, containing about 250 nominal species and subspecies of which well over 100 are valid taxa. They include many of the most abundant and widespread species of their class on the continent. There is, however, some divergence of usage as to the gender of the generic name.

3. As indicated by Rafinesque, the generic name was suggested by the keeled back (probably an artefact due to improper preservation), and if it had been correctly formed using the latinised Greek words to denote that derivation, it would have been written "*Nototropis*". In that case, it would probably have been treated (correctly) as feminine from the start (as will have been noticed, Rafinesque did not indicate the gender through the name of the only species he referred to the genus). However, it was uniformly treated as masculine until Hubbs (1951, *Occ. Pap. Mus. Zool. Univ. Michigan*, no. 530: 14) pointed out that the name is classically feminine and accordingly altered a few specific names to agree. This procedure is correct under the present Code, and was so at the time. The change, if thoroughly applied, would affect about half the nominal species in the genus, and would result in confusion and misunderstanding for years, especially among students, ecologists and editors who are not taxonomic zoologists.

4. Dr Bailey and Dr Miller therefore asked that the plenary powers be used to designate the gender of the generic name *Notropis*. Their application, which was published in October 1954 (*Bull. zool. Nom.* vol. 9: 272-274) included a list of the names of 58 American zoologists who supported this proposal and of seven who

opposed it. Among the latter were Carl Hubbs and W.I. Follett, whose objection was published immediately after the application (: 274-275). A letter of support for Dr Bailey and Dr Miller was received from nine zoologists at the *Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, Stillwater, Oklahoma, USA*.

5. On 19 May 1955 the members of the Commission were invited to vote under the Three-Month Rule on voting paper (1955)3 either for Alternative A (the Bailey and Miller proposal) or for Alternative B (the Hubbs and Follett counter-proposal) - the acceptance of either proposal entailing the addition of *Notropis* and *N. atherinoides* to the Official Lists. At the close of the voting period on 19 August 1955 13 members of the Commission (out of 25) had voted for Alternative A and 11 for Alternative B (there was one late vote for Alternative B). Thus there was not a sufficient majority to carry the proposal to use the plenary powers, and a minority in favour of the second alternative.

6. In this situation Mr Hemming (then Secretary to the Commission) thought that the best course might be to hold up the case until after the London (1958) Congress, when he hoped that the general views of zoologists on the relative merits of usage and strict linguistic rules might have been made clearer. This did not come to pass, and nothing was done until Dr Bailey wrote to me (then Assistant Secretary to the Commission) in May 1959 to enquire what had happened in the case. I was unfortunately unable to find time to answer him and it was not until 1962 that my successor, Dr W.E. China, wrote to tell Dr Bailey that the Hubbs and Follett proposal had in fact been adopted (which was not the case - the misinformation was in fact corrected in a later letter). No action has been taken on the case until now.

7. Having read through the file, my first action was to examine the *Zoological Record* from 1952 to 1969 to see what course had been followed by zoologists in the absence of any published ruling by the Commission. I found that *Notropis* was among the most heavily used generic names in the CYPRINIDAE. Among the records of species with indubitably adjectival specific names, I found 72 using the masculine gender and one the feminine. This usage must be viewed in the light of the fact that at least 69 ichthyologists had known in 1954 that the gender of the name was properly feminine, plus an unknown number of readers of Hubbs's 1951 paper in which attention had first been drawn to that fact, and of readers of the application by Dr Bailey and Dr Miller or of the advertisement of the possible use of the plenary powers in the case.

8. Dr Bailey wrote in September 1977 to say: "Our original request indicated the preference by a large majority of working ichthyologists for treatment of *Notropis* as of masculine gender. Since then, prevailing practice continues to treat *Notropis* as masculine, as you discovered in a survey of the Zoological Record. Names of species of *Notropis* appear in the general literature thousands of times; those that you sampled mostly appear in titles or descriptions of new taxa. Most if not all of those persons who originally expressed preference for *Notropis* as feminine have since followed custom and used masculine endings on adjectival names in their own publications Thus, if the Commission should rule that *Notropis* must be treated as feminine, it is predictable that diverse spelling of adjectival names in the genus will continue for decades."

9. Under Bylaw 35 of the Bylaws of the Commission, I am obliged to treat the vote on V.P. (53)3, giving a majority for the use of the plenary powers less than a two-thirds majority, as a preliminary vote and issue a second voting paper calling for a final decision while calling attention to the nomenclatural consequences of acceptance or rejection of the proposed use of the plenary powers. In view of the length of time that has elapsed since the vote in question, however, it seems to me only proper to publish the proposals anew and to issue a fresh advertisement of the possible use of the plenary powers. Taking the evidence of usage into account, I am inviting the Commission to use its plenary powers to declare that *Notropis* is masculine. If there is a majority against that proposal, or a majority smaller than a two-thirds majority in favour of it, *Notropis* will be placed on the Official List as feminine.

10. The Commission is therefore asked

- (1) to use its plenary powers to rule that the gender of *Notropis* Rafinesque, 1818 is masculine;
- (2) to place the generic name *Notropis* Rafinesque, 1818 (gender, by the ruling given under the plenary powers in (1) above, masculine), type-species, by monotypy, *Notropis atherinoides* Rafinesque, 1818, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology;
- (3) to place the specific name *atherinoides* Rafinesque, 1818, as published in the binomen *Notropis atherinoides* (specific name of type-species of *Notropis* Rafinesque, 1818) on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology.



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