

Obs. The form of the flesh-spicule is, so far as is known, unique, although the skeletal spicules and structure of the sponge generally without this combination would be nothing extraordinary. There is, however, a tendency in the latter to a polygonal character (fig. 10); and the surface-interstices were tympanized with sarcode, in which probably the pores were situated.

The nearest approach in form to the flesh-spicule is the *inequianchorate* represented by Dr. Bowerbank in fig. 135 (Mon. B. S. vol. i. p. 249, pl. vi.), which came from a "parasitical" sponge also found at Freemantle, in Australia, and is likened to an *Esperia* (*Hymeniacidon*, Bk.).

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XV. fig. 10, a-e.

Fig. 10. *Monanchora clathrata*, n. gen. et sp., natural size of specimen. a and b, skeletal spicules; c, flesh-spicule. More magnified view of the latter: d, front view; e, lateral view.

XLVIII.—On *Mustela albinucha*, Gray.

By OLDFIELD THOMAS, F.Z.S., British Museum.

IN the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society' for 1864 (p. 69), the late Dr. Gray described and figured a brightly coloured weasel from South Africa, under the name of *Zorilla albinucha*; but afterwards, in his 'Catalogue of the Carnivora in the British Museum' (1869, p. 90), he stated that it was a "*Mustela* having the coloration of a *Zorilla*." On an examination of its skull, however, I find that it should be referred to a new genus, on account of the remarkable reduction in the number of its teeth, and of various differences in the general character of its skull. In all I have examined five specimens, of which four are in the British Museum and one is in the Paris Museum. I would propose for the genus the name of *Pœcilogale**. Its dental formula is as follows:—

$$I. \frac{3}{3}, C. \frac{1}{1}, P.M. \frac{2}{2}, M. \frac{1}{1} \text{ (rarely } \frac{1}{2}) \times 2 = 28 \text{ (or } 30).$$

The anterior premolars in both upper and lower jaws are entirely absent; and the minute posterior lower molar present in all other *Mustelidæ*, with the exception mentioned below, is absent in all the British Museum specimens, but present in

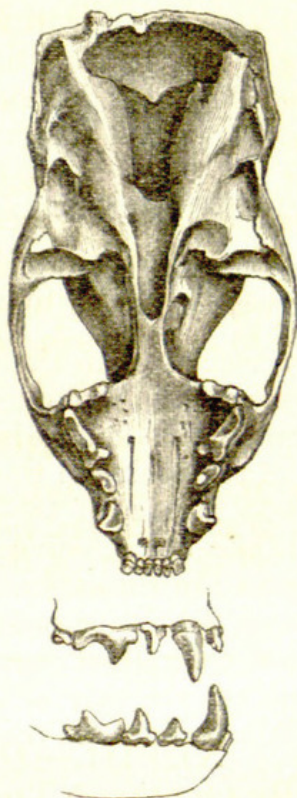
* From *ποικίλος*, meaning either "particoloured" (which the only species is) or "cunning" (which any weasel may be safely presumed to be).

that belonging to the Paris Museum, the presence or absence of this tooth being therefore a variable character. As to the premolar, there is no diastema where it should stand, and its absence is evidently due to the shortening of the jaws and the consequent strengthening of the biting power of the animal.

One species of Mustelidæ, however, the *Lyncodon patagonicus* of Gervais, is described as having the identical number of teeth ordinarily found in *Pæcilogale*; and I therefore wrote to Prof. W. P. Gervais, of the Paris Museum, asking him if he could allow me to see the original and only known skull of that species, and he has most kindly sent it to me to examine. I find, as might be expected in an animal from Patagonia, that it has no special relationship whatever with the South African

Pæcilogale, although its dental formula is the same. The whole shape of the skull is different, as may be seen by comparing Prof. Gervais's excellent figures with the woodcuts now given; the auditory bullæ are not so peculiarly flattened as in *Pæcilogale*, being, in fact, unusually inflated; the floor of the meatus is more produced, so that the opening is closer to the glenoid fossa and is not visible on viewing the skull from below. Altogether it is evident that no genus which was supposed to be founded on genetic affinity could contain these two forms, which have independently developed a similar reduction in the number of their teeth.

Finally, not only the colour but the *plan of coloration* (see P. Z. S. 1864, pl. x.) is so absolutely different from that of any other *Mustela*, that that alone would almost furnish a reason for forming a distinct group for the reception of *M. albinucha*.





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