

Case 2875

***Coluber poecilogyrus* Wied-Neuwied, [1824] (currently *Liophis poecilogyrus*) (Reptilia, Serpentes): proposed conservation of the specific name**

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Abstract. The purpose of this application is the conservation of the widely used specific name of a South American snake, *Liophis poecilogyrus* (Wied-Neuwied, [1824]), by the suppression of the unused senior synonyms *Coluber m-nigrum* Raddi, 1820, *Coluber alternans* Lichtenstein, 1823 and *Natrix forsteri* Wagler in Spix, 1824.

1. The earliest name applied to the species now known as *Liophis poecilogyrus* (Wied-Neuwied, [1824], Heft 8, pl. [44]; for date see Woodward, 1915, p. 2315) is *Coluber m-nigrum* Raddi, 1820, as shown by Dixon (1989, p. 19) and Dixon & Markezich (1992, p. 133). Two female syntypes of *poecilogyrus* Wied-Neuwied [1824], from Rio Espirito Santo, Barra de Juca, Brazil, are located at the American Museum of Natural History, New York (Nos. 3593-94). Boulenger (1894, p. 131) correctly stated that Raddi's name was a senior synonym of Wied-Neuwied's but for unknown reasons still used the latter's name for the species, possibly because he interpreted Raddi's as incorrectly formed. All other publications in which *C. m-nigrum* appears (except for Dixon, 1989 and Dixon & Markezich, 1992) consider it to be a nomen dubium. As this name had not been used for over 170 years Dixon & Markezich (1992) rejected it in favour of *C. poecilogyrus*.

2. A second name, *Coluber alternans* Lichtenstein, 1823 (p. 104), which has similarly not been used since its original designation, has also been applied to *C. poecilogyrus*. Boulenger (1894) listed *C. alternans* as a doubtful senior synonym. Dixon & Markezich (1992) likewise rejected it, in spite of its priority, for the same reasons as for *C. m-nigrum*.

3. Dixon (1987, p. 174) concluded that *Natrix forsteri* Wagler in Spix, 1824 (p. 16, pl. 4, fig. 1) was a synonym of *L. poecilogyrus*. However, *N. forsteri* has never been accepted as valid as it has been regarded as a junior synonym of other specific names in *Natrix*.

4. A further synonym, *Coluber doliatus* Wied-Neuwied, 1825 appeared in the same work as *C. poecilogyrus* but as a junior primary homonym of *Coluber doliatus* Linnaeus, 1766 it is invalid.

5. The name *Liophis poecilogyrus* was accepted by Dixon & Markezich (1992) 'because of its usage in 52 primary articles as the valid name for the taxon'. This usage began as early as Wagler (1830, p. 188), who was also the first to use the now accepted combination *Liophis poecilogyrus*.

6. We consider that it is imperative in the interest of stability that the specific name *poecilogyrus* Wied-Neuwied, [1824] be maintained for the species to which it now applies. We have given the Commission Secretariat a list of ten works of the last 50 years which have used the binomen *L. poecilogyrus*; as examples we cite Parker (1931), Michaud & Dixon (1989), Pérez-Santos & Moreno (1991), Hofstadler (1992).

7. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the following specific names for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy:
 - (a) *m-nigrum* Raddi, 1820, as published in the binomen *Coluber m-nigrum*;
 - (b) *alternans* Lichtenstein, 1823, as published in the binomen *Coluber alternans*;
 - (c) *forsteri* Wagler in Spix, 1824, as published in the binomen *Natrix forsteri*;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *poecilogyrus* Wied-Neuwied, [1824], as published in the binomen *Coluber poecilogyrus*;
- (3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
 - (a) *m-nigrum* Raddi, 1820, as published in the binomen *Coluber m-nigrum* and as suppressed in (1)(a) above;
 - (b) *alternans* Lichtenstein, 1823, as published in the binomen *Coluber alternans* and as suppressed in (1)(b) above;
 - (c) *forsteri* Wagler in Spix, 1824 as published in the binomen *Natrix forsteri* and as suppressed in (1)(c) above.

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