

**Comments on the proposed fixation of the feminine gender of the genus *Trachys* Fabricius, 1801 (Insecta, Coleoptera) and the form of derivation of family-group names based on *Trachys***

(Case 3335; see BZN 63: 172–176, 273–274)

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I do not support the proposed fixation of the feminine gender of *Trachys*. Articles 30.1.2 through 30.1.3 of the Code give clear guidance on determining the gender of genus-group names based on Greek words transliterated to Latin or with a Latin or latinized suffix. The grammatically correct treatment of the name *Trachys* is masculine. This fact was first recognized many years ago, and even Bílý & Kubáň themselves readily acknowledge such in their proposal. Additionally, neither of the exceptions specified in Article 30.1.4 is applicable to *Trachys* – Fabricius did use feminine endings for the included species but did not expressly state that *Trachys* was neither formed from nor treated as a Latin or Greek word, and, as Bílý & Kubáň

have noted, there is no clear indication that *Trachys* or its stem are of common or variable gender. Thus, a masculine treatment is clearly called for. However, instead of accepting this guidance, Bílý & Kubáň invoke a nebulous argument involving 'non-standard names' and the idiosyncrasies of Fabricius's nomenclatural practices in an attempt to justify a feminine treatment. Bílý & Kubáň also do not explain why a feminine treatment for *Trachys* is preferred or why this is in the best interest of stability. They cite a lack of uniformity in interpretation of the gender of *Trachys* in the literature and the desirability to resolve the 'problem' ahead of the completion of several current catalogue projects. However, I interpret this 'lack of uniformity' not so much a result of lingering disagreement over the grammatical correctness of a masculine treatment for *Trachys*, but rather reflecting the belated recognition of this fact. Most of the early literature promulgates Fabricius's original, albeit grammatically incorrect, feminine treatment while a substantial volume of later literature has adopted the more grammatically correct masculine usage.

I am unconvinced by these strained rationalizations for a feminine treatment of *Trachys*. In contrast, the evidence favoring a masculine treatment is clear (i.e. grammatical correctness and conformity with the Code). In my opinion, stability would be best served by maintaining a masculine treatment for *Trachys*. This becomes even more evident when one considers the impact of this question on other buprestid genus-group names ending in '-achys' (e.g. *Brachys*, *Neotrachys*, *Paratrachys*). For *Brachys* in particular, a genus that includes several commonly encountered North American species (e.g. *B. aerosus*, *B. ovatus*, *B. tessellatus*), there has been a preponderance of masculine usage for more than 60 years. Would fixation of the feminine gender for *Trachys* provide a precedent for reversing gender in *Brachys* as well? Or would such precedence apply only to genus-group names expressly derived from *Trachys*? Or will the gender of any genus-group name ending in '-achys' need to be addressed individually by petition? Or are their genders assumed to be masculine, per the Code, unless petitioned otherwise? Such questions, should this 'against-the-rules' application to treat *Trachys* as feminine be accepted, are sure to arise repeatedly and would serve only to undermine uniform interpretation of gender for these other genus-group names. Greater stability will result if rules for transliteration from Greek to Latin are applied properly and consistently, regardless of the extent of any past improper application.

(2) Jacques Rifkind (Research Associate (Entomology), Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County)  
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I am writing to recommend that the proposed fixation of the name *Trachys* to the feminine gender be rejected. *Trachys* is obviously a masculine name, regardless of how it has been treated, and maintaining and standardizing it as masculine creates no nomenclatural disruption. The modification of suffixes to form agreement with the names of genera happens every time a species is transferred to a genus with a different gender. Why should this minor inconvenience force a ruling in one case? I think it is best here to maintain a conservative approach by adhering to the rules and allowing the linguistic facts to determine how we treat a taxon name, rather than following arbitrary post-facto impulses to 'tidy things up'.

(3) Richard L. Westcott

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I wish to comment on the proposal by Bílý & Kubáň to fix the gender of *Trachys* Fabricius, 1801 as feminine. I find their argument without merit. There is no question that *Trachys* is masculine, as those authors themselves pointed out in para. 6 of their application. Furthermore, the authors of this case point out that ‘. . . it seems clear that there is no indication that *Trachys*, or its stem, is of common or variable gender’. Therefore, Article 30.1.4.2 of the Code has no bearing on this case.

Rather than purporting to know what Fabricius intended 206 years ago, or to promote ‘non-standard’ or ‘grammatically incorrect’ transliterations, is it not more parsimonious to infer that Fabricius simply brought across the feminine endings for his genus (*Trachys*) from the feminine genus *Buprestis*, wherein earlier names were included (e.g. *Buprestis pygmaea* L.), and made his specific names to conform?

In the absence of being able to ascertain just what Fabricius was thinking (not that I believe it matters in this case), let us not promote instability by changing gender for what should be an unambiguous Greek word. If the proposal is accepted, then what befalls the genera *Brachys* (another clearly masculine derivation), *Neotrachys*, *Paratrachys* (all BUPRESTIDAE), and any other ‘-achys’ epithets that may exist in zoological nomenclature?

It is a primary stated purpose of the Code to promote stability in zoological nomenclature. To change gender for a genus derived from a word where the gender is not in question, is not variable and where similarly derived genera either would not be in accordance or would need separate proposals to overturn their genders, does just the opposite: it promotes instability.

I strongly recommend that the Commission reject Case 3335.

(4) Petr Zabransky

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I support the proposal by Bílý & Kubáň to rule that the gender of *Trachys* Fabricius, 1801 is feminine and that family-group names derived from that name should be formed by adding the appropriate ending to the name of the genus in the nominative case.