Case 3201

*Scarabaeus punctatus* Villers, 1789 (currently *Pentodon bidens punctatus*; Insecta, Coleoptera); proposed conservation of the specific name

Frank-Thorsten Krell

*Department of Entomology, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K.* (e-mail: F.Krell@nhm.ac.uk)

**Abstract.** The purpose of this application is to conserve the specific name of *Scarabaeus punctatus* Villers, 1789 (*Scarabaeidae*, *Dynastinae*), which is a junior primary homonym of *S. punctatus* Linnaeus, 1758 (*Scarabaeidae*, *Rutelinae*). Despite the homonymy both specific names have been used since publication and are currently in use; they have never been treated as congeneric and neither has been included in the original genus since 1798. The name *Pentodon bidens punctatus* (Villers) refers to the west and central Mediterranean subspecies of a common Palaeartic rinoceros beetle; *Pediophaga punctata* (Linnaeus) refers to a common chafer occurring in the eastern part of the U.S.A. and southern Ontario.

**Keywords.** Nomenclature; taxonomy; Coleoptera; *Scarabaeidae*; *Dynastinae*; *Rutelinae*; *Pentodon bidens punctatus*; *Pediophaga punctata*; rinoceros beetles; chafers; Mediterranean; eastern North America.

---

1. Linnaeus (1758, p. 350) described *Scarabaeus punctatus* from ‘India’. In 1775 Fabricius (p. 33) transferred the species (‘from America’) to his new genus *Melolontha*. Later Latreille (1802, p. 152) placed it in his new genus *Rutela*, and finally MacLeay (1819, p. 158) established the genus *Pediophaga* for the species and this classification has been maintained. The specific name has been continuously treated as valid since its first publication. The identity of the species is unequivocal because Linnaeus (1764, p. 23) subsequently described it in detail and there is a specimen in the collection of the Zoological Museum, Uppsala which has been considered to be an original specimen (see Landin, 1956, p. 11); Wallin (1994, p. 43) incorrectly recorded that Landin (1956) had designated this specimen as the lectotype, The type locality (‘India’), given as a locality for the species by Linnaeus in all his publications, was that indicated for other American species (see Landin, 1956). The name *Pediophaga punctata* refers to a well-known chafer, called the spotted grape beetle, from the eastern U.S.A. and southern Ontario, Canada, included in the subfamily *Rutelinae* (see Hardy, 1975 and Arnett, 2000). It has occasionally been reported to be a pest (Hayes, 1925, p. 90)

2. Villers (1789, p. 40, pl. 1, fig. 3) described *Scarabaeus punctatus* from ‘Occitania circa Nemausum’ (Nîmes in southern France). In 1798 Fabricius (p. 21) transferred the species to *Geotrupes* Latreille, 1796. Hope (1837, p. 92) designated *S. punctatus* Villers as the type species of his new genus *Pentodon* (*Scarabaeidae*, *Dynastinae*), where it has remained. No type specimens are known. Endrödi (1969, p. 166)
supposed them to be in the Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle in Lyon but there are no _Pentodon_ specimens amongst the old collections in this museum; Villers’ collection is most probably destroyed (J. Clary and H. Labrique, in litt., 2000). The specific name _punctatus_ Villers has been treated as valid since its publication (see the recent works of El-Hariri, 1968; Georgiou, 1977; and Peetz & Kahlen, 1977; a list of 12 earlier publications is held by the Commission Secretariat). Since Endrödi’s (1967) revision of _Pentodon_, _P. punctatus_ has generally been treated as a geographic subspecies of _Pentodon bidens_ (Pallas, 1771) (see, for example, Endrödi, 1985; Baraud, 1992; and Carpaneto & Piattella, 1995).

3. The name _Scarabaeus punctatus_ Villers, 1789 has unused junior synonyms. _S. punctulatus_ Rossius, 1790 (p. 9) has not been used as valid since the early 19th century and is a junior homonym of _S. punctulatus_ Gmelin, 1788. The synonym _Pentodon castaneus_ Mulsant, 1842 (p. 384), described as a variety of _P. punctatus_ Villers, has never been treated as a valid name; the original author himself neglected it in the second edition of his monograph of French scarab beetles (Mulsant & Rey, 1871, p. 242).

4. As noted in paras. 1 and 2 above, the names _Pelidnota punctata_ (Linnaeus, 1758) and _Pentodon bidens punctatus_ (Villers, 1789) are both currently in use for well-known and common taxa. _Pelidnota punctata_ had already been removed (in 1775) from _Scarabaeus_ before _S. punctatus_ Villers was described. The latter species was removed from _Scarabaeus_ in 1798. Thus, the species have never been treated as congeneric and neither has been included in the original genus since 1798. The two species are currently placed in different subfamilies, which are sometimes treated as families. Replacement of the well known name _Pentodon punctatus_ (Villers) by the unused junior synonym _Pentodon castaneus_ Mulsant, 1842 (see para. 3 above) would cause considerable and unnecessary confusion and the case is referred to the Commission under Article 23.9.5 of the Code.

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

(1) to use its plenary power to rule that the specific name _punctatus_ Villers, 1789, as published in the binomen _Scarabaeus punctatus_, is not invalid by reason of being a junior primary homonym of _Scarabaeus punctatus_ Linnaeus, 1758;

(2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the following names:
   (a) _Pelidnota_ MacLeay, 1819 (type species by monotypy _Scarabaeus punctatus_ Linnaeus, 1758);
   (b) _Pentodon_ Hope, 1837 (type species by original designation by Hope (1837) _Scarabaeus punctatus_ Villers, 1789);

(3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
   (a) _punctatus_ Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the binomen _Scarabaeus punctatus_ (specific name of the type species of _Pelidnota_ MacLeay, 1819);
   (b) _punctatus_ Villers, 1789, as published in the binomen _Scarabaeus punctatus_ (specific name of the type species of _Pentodon_ Hope, 1837) (not invalid by the ruling in (1) above).

References


Comments on this case are invited for publication (subject to editing) in the Bulletin; they should be sent to the Executive Secretary, I.C.Z.N., c/o The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K. (e-mail: iczn@nhm.ac.uk).