Case 2777

Dytiscus biguttatus Olivier, 1795 (currently Agabus biguttatus; Insecta, Coleoptera): proposed conservation of the specific name

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Abstract. The purpose of this application is to conserve the specific name of the diving water beetle Dytiscus biguttatus Olivier, 1795. It is threatened by the unused senior homonym Dytiscus biguttatus Gmelin, 1790, which may be a junior synonym of D. nebulosus Forster, 1771.

1. Gmelin (1790, p. 1959) established the name Dytiscus biguttatus for an aquatic beetle from ‘Europe’. The description given by Gmelin was cited from Zschach (1788, p. 36, no. 796) who did not give any name to the species for which he gave a five line description.

2. Olivier (1795, p. 26, pl. 4, fig. 36) used the same name Dytiscus biguttatus for a different species of aquatic beetle from near Fréjus, France. Aubé ([1837], p. 166) transferred this species to the genus Agabus Leach, 1817, where it remains classified today.

3. The only reference to Dytiscus biguttatus Gmelin is by Zaitzev (1908, p. 121) who attributed the name to Zschach and thought it was probably a junior synonym of D. nebulosus Forster, 1771 (p. 56). Zaitzev (1908, p. 121) also noted that Dytiscus biguttatus Olivier was a junior homonym and proposed the replacement name Agabus olivieri. However, in his later works (e.g. 1953, p. 227), Zaitzev used A. biguttatus (Olivier) as a valid name without mentioning his own replacement name. Zimmermann (1920, p. 157) cited A. olivieri Zaitzev as a junior synonym of A. biguttatus (Olivier).

4. The name Dytiscus biguttatus Gmelin has been overlooked or ignored by other authors. The name D. biguttatus is attributed only to Olivier in the catalogues of Schönherr (1808, p. 19), Gemminger & Harold (1868, p. 453), Van den Branden (1885, p. 68) and Zimmermann (1920, p. 157) and in the monographs of Aubé (1838, p. 341) and Sharp (1882, p. 499). All modern workers use the name A. biguttatus Olivier (for example, Franciscolo, 1979, p. 546; Galewski, 1971, p. 78; Schaefflein & Wewalka, 1982, p. 13; a further 12 references by 15 authors in the last 22 years are held by the Commission Secretariat). To reject Dytiscus biguttatus Olivier, 1795 because of its homonymy with the unused D. biguttatus Gmelin, 1790 would create instability in the literature and cause considerable confusion.

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

(1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the name biguttatus Gmelin, 1790, as published in the binomen Dytiscus biguttatus, and all uses of the name Dytiscus
biguttatus prior to that by Olivier, 1795, for the purposes of both the Principle of Priority and the Principle of Homonymy;

(2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name biguttatus Olivier, 1795, as published in the binomen Dytiscus biguttatus;

(3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name biguttatus Gmelin, 1790, as published in the binomen Dytiscus biguttatus and as suppressed in (1) above.

References


