



Correspondence

Availability of nomenclatural acts published in the journal Salamandra: a response

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Scientific publications were traditionally produced in printed journals, but with advancements in digitization electronic journals (online publications) became increasingly common. The earliest online journals were published in the second half of the 1990s and in most cases constituted electronic versions of the print versions of the same journals, which remained the versions of record. Libraries and individual users would typically subscribe to a combined model, including both print and online versions for one price. New journals published online-only (i.e., without a print equivalent), initially faced criticism that was intensively discussed at the time, for example their general availability and archiving (permanent storage), or intellectual property rights regarding authorship of openly accessible files, and, often until today, the implementation of a proper peer-review process (e.g., WÜSTER et al. 2024). Nowadays, a wide range of journals traditionally published in print moved to online-only publication, for reasons that may have included cost reduction or to facilitate access by a broader readership.

In biological sciences, taxonomic works establishing new nomina, such as new species or genus names, are regulated by a set of rules concerned with nomenclature and nomenclatural acts. In zoology, nomenclature is governed by the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999; hereafter ‘the Code’). In order to facilitate the publication of nomenclatural acts in online journals the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) promulgated an amendment (ICZN 2012a) to the Code currently in force (ICZN 1999). To reach a broader readership, this amendment was published concurrently in the journals ZooKeys (ICZN 2012b) and Zootaxa (ICZN 2012c). In short, the main points of the amendment are

to clarify those situations that make a nomenclatural act available, and to declare that new nomina and nomenclatural acts in online-only publications before 2012 were not made available.

In a recent publication, DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) discussed this matter in detail employing their own idiosyncratic terminology. They analysed what they considered (un)available nomenclatural acts in herpetology with a focus on online publications. A list provided by these authors included herpetology specialist journals such as Salamandra, Journal of Herpetology, and Amphibia-Reptilia, as well as general biological and scientific journals, such as Biology Letters, Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution, Scientific Reports, Taxonomy, and Zoological Scripta, to name a few. At least with respect to works published in the German journal Salamandra, DUBOIS & FRÉTEY’S (2025) analysis contains a multitude of flaws, among them, in our view, a misinterpretation of the Code (ICZN 1999, 2012a). To understand misunderstandings of DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025), it is necessary to have a closer look at the Code, its amendments and definitions published therein.

In the Abstract to the amendment (ICZN 2012a) it reads: “The requirements for electronic publications are that the work be registered in ZooBank before it is published, that the work itself state the date of publication and contain evidence that registration has occurred, and that the ZooBank registration state both the name of an electronic archive intended to preserve the work and the ISSN or ISBN associated with the work. Registration of new scientific names and nomenclatural acts is not required.” Thus, as understood by many editors and journals, including Salamandra, publications containing nomenclatural acts need to be pre-registered. The ICZN wording reveals that not the ac-

tual nomenclatural act itself needs to be pre-registered but the work itself, i.e., the publication. A sole registration of the act (without registering the publication) would render the name or act unavailable. Only the work itself (publication) needs to have a Life Science Identifier (LSID) that has been registered with ZooBank prior to the publication.

The actual definition relevant to a nomenclatural act is provided in the glossary of the Code (ICZN 1999):

“available work. A published work in which, under the provisions of the Code, or by a ruling of the Commission, names or nomenclatural acts may be established.”

“act, nomenclatural, n: A published act which affects the nomenclatural status [...] of a scientific name or the typification of a nominal taxon.”

“nomenclatural status, n. Of a name, nomenclatural act or work: its standing in nomenclature (i.e., its availability or otherwise, and in the case of a name its spelling, the typification of the nominal taxon it denotes, and its precedence relative to other names).”

Further to this a list of nomenclatural acts is provided under Art. 23 (Principle of Priority): “23.6. Application to nomenclatural acts. In accordance with the Principle of Priority the first nomenclatural act taken in respect of a name or a nominal taxon to achieve any of the following constitutes the only valid such act: i.e., acts taken under the First Reviser Principle [Art. 24.2], fixation of type species [Arts. 68, 69], first inclusion of nominal species in a genus-group taxon [Art. 67.2], designation of lectotypes [Art. 74.1.3] and neotypes [Art. 75.5].”

We also note that in Art. 23, the Code distinguishes between the application of the Principle of Priority to synonymy (Art. 23.3) and its application to nomenclatural acts (Art. 23.6). From this statement alone, it can be derived that synonymy is not considered to be a nomenclatural act. Synonymy, and equally the resurrection of a nomen from synonymy, constitute reversible (and sometimes disputed) taxonomic concepts or hypotheses that do not affect the availability of nomina, their precedence, or their typification and are therefore not governed by the Code. We interpret this to mean that statements in the Code apply only to actions constituting nomenclatural acts that irreversibly affect the availability of nomina, their typification, or their precedence. For any changes related to a validly published, available nomenclatural act (“only valid such act”; Art. 23.6.) an application must be filed with the ICZN. Taxonomic decisions, such as the resurrection of a taxon (and its name) or its synonymization, clearly do not constitute nomenclatural acts, as they have no nomenclatural consequences.

In the case of a resurrection, authors may reinstate an older, available name they consider to better reflect a taxonomic reality. This action is not governed by the Code as it has no bearing on nomenclature: it does not relate to availability, has no influence on the types of the respective species, and does not change precedence of names. Resurrection is not a nomenclatural act. Equally, if an author decides to synonymize taxa, a taxonomic concept, this does not affect the availability of the taxon names, their typifica-

tion, or their relative precedence. These actions reflect the scientific opinion of an author or a group of authors and, as scientific hypotheses, are reversible and can be updated as more evidence becomes available. Other taxonomists may not accept these concepts but provide and test contradictory hypotheses, which is how the scientific method progresses. The same is true for the transfer of a nomen to a different group, such as a species name to a different, already established genus, which also does not constitute a nomenclatural act.

If these taxonomic actions were considered by taxonomists or the ICZN as nomenclatural acts, one would expect a multitude of applications to the ICZN to revert revalidations or synonymies to their original status. We checked the Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature (BZN) and the ICZN website for comparatively recent cases dealing with synonymy or revalidation using the words “synonymy”, “synonymies”, “revalidation”, “resurrection”, “restoration” and “reinstatement” as search terms. Among the resolved and closed cases, we encountered only a single case where an application had been made with the proposal to reinstate *Pterodactylus crassipes* MEYER, 1857 (Case 3757, acknowledgment of receipt published in BZN 75:2). The case was never published in the BZN and closed “following correspondence with the author”. The ICZN clearly did not see a need for action to deal with a proposed revalidation of (reinstating) an available taxon name.

In order to corroborate our view on what constitutes a nomenclatural act, we enquired with current and past ICZN Commissioners as well as with several colleagues experienced in nomenclature. All respondents agreed with our interpretation of what constitutes a nomenclatural act. Consequently, online-only publications dealing with the revalidation of nomina or their synonymization do not require ZooBank (pre)registration (LSID). While the Code is pretty clear about what constitutes a nomenclatural act and what remains in the realm of taxonomy, DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) appear to have their own view on this. In the list of publications cited for Salamandra (see below), they included those that resurrected names (revalidated species) or synonymized names. With this in mind, we here present an analysis of statements made by DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) about articles published in Salamandra.

Were there really problems with publications in Salamandra?

DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) listed 18 Salamandra publications that should, in their view, have been pre-registered with ZooBank and should include LSID numbers to make each nomenclatural act available through the work. In terms of publication modality, those listed by DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) need to be divided into two parts, one dealing with publication prior to 2017 and the other dealing with all subsequent publications. Until 2017, Salamandra was distributed in print quarterly, with issues appearing at slightly varying dates each year, including occasional double is-

sues. In parallel, electronic copies of Salamandra articles were provided on the journal's website in PDF format to enhance the online presence of the journal.

In a footnote of their article, DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) stated that “No day being indicated for these publication dates, following Article 21.3.1 we credit the paper versions of the papers below, which lack mentions of LSIDs, to the last day of the relevant month in this list of four months.” This statement alone contains some misunderstandings. For example, by their reckoning DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) concluded that the publication day of WAGNER et al. (2012) was 31 May 2012 instead of 30 April 2012, the date given on the PDF. This article appeared in Volume 48, Issue 1, of Salamandra, an issue that should have been published during the first quarter of 2012 (on or before 31 March) but was delayed at the publisher. The date provided on the PDF is the actual, delayed publication date of the printed issue. In addition, it should be noted that Salamandra did not publish articles online in advance or online-first versions. The PDF published on the Salamandra website is nothing but an electronic copy of the original print version in PDF/A format to ensure that content and layout are preserved unchanged (Art. 8.1.3.2., ICZN 2012a), which takes the same date as the printed version. Thus, the date of availability is 30 April 2012. Likewise, DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) assigned the date of availability for nomenclatural acts in SANTANA et al. (2012) to 28 February 2013 and referenced the publication as “Salamandra, ‘2012’, 48 (4): 187–192”. Based on the issue (Volume 48, Issue 4), the printed version of this article was actually published on 30 December 2012, which is the date of nomenclatural relevance. This type of argument (date of print vs. date of PDF) applies to all publications listed by DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) prior to 2017. Consequently, the corresponding nomenclatural acts were made available in print (and online) as follows:

WAGNER et al. (2012), published on 30 April 2012. Nomenclatural act: new species nomen (*Acanthocercus branchedi*).

SANTANA et al. (2012), published on 30 December 2012. Nomenclatural act: new species nomen (*Adelophryne meridionalis*).

DEHLING (2015), published on 30 April 2015. Nomenclatural act: new species nomen (*Rhacophorus malkmushi*).

VAN ROOIJEN et al. (2015), published on 30 April 2015. Nomenclatural acts: neotype designations (*Dendrophis punctulatus* var. *atrostriata* MEYER, 1874 and *Dendrophis punctulatus* var. *fasciata* MEYER, 1874).

Each of these publications was Code-compliant and did not require ZooBank pre-registration or a ZooBank LSID. These publication, and the nomenclatural acts published therein, take the dates indicated on the PDF versions (identical with the print versions) and not those reported by DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025). There were no advanced publications of any files on the Salamandra website, and all articles contained in the quarterly print version were made available online on the same day. To make the actual publication dates of online articles in Salamandra prior to 2017 clear (again) we would like to refer here

to an advertising slogan: “It exactly does what it says on the tin”.

The most incongruous statements by DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) are found among post-2017 publications, when Salamandra had become an online-only journal (retaining its original ISSN) and no longer produced quarterly print versions. Despite the non-existence of print versions, DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) reported dates of print editions where nomenclatural acts had purportedly been made available. Our own analysis of the publications reported by DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) yields diametrically opposed results when it comes to the need for ZooBank pre-registration (LSID):

ORRICO et al. (2017), published on 15 February 2017: Resurrection of *Hypsiboas xerophylla* (DUMÉRIL & BIBRON, 1841) from its synonymy with *Hypsiboas crepitans* (WIED-NEUWIED, 1824); *Hyla levaillantii* DUMÉRIL & BIBRON, 1841, *Hyla doumercii* DUMÉRIL & BIBRON, 1841, *Hyla fuentei* GOIN & GOIN, 1968, and *Hypsiboas indris* COPE, 1867 synonymized with *H. xerophylla*. Taxonomic decisions, no nomenclatural acts, no LSID required.

MURPHY et al. (2017), published on 15 May 2017: Resurrection of *Rhinella beebei* (GALLARDO, 1965) from its synonymy with *Rhinella humboldti* (GALLARDO, 1965). Taxonomic decision, no nomenclatural act, no LSID required.

SCHERZ et al. (2017), published on 15 August 2017: Resurrection of *Platypelis BOULENGER*, 1882 from its synonymy with *Cophyla BOETTGER*, 1880; resurrection of *Stumpffia BOETTGER*, 1881 and *Anilany SCHERZ*, VENCES, RAKOTOARISON, ANDREONE, KÖHLER, GLAW & CROTTINI, 2016 from their synonymy with *Rhombophryne BOETTGER*, 1880. Taxonomic decisions, no nomenclatural acts, no LSID required.

SANCHEZ et al. (2018), published on 15 May 2018: Resurrection of *Minervarya DUBOIS*, OHLER & BIJU, 2001 from its synonymy with *Fejervarya BOLKAY*, 1915. Taxonomic decision, no nomenclatural act, no LSID required.

PICCARIELLO et al. (2018), published on 30 October 2018: *Rana pseudodalmatina* EISELT & SCHMIDTLER, 1971 supported as a species distinct from *Rana macrocnemis BOULENGER*, 1885. Taxonomic decision, no nomenclatural act, no LSID required.

PINTO et al. (2018), published on 30 October 2018: Clarification of the *Stenostoma albifrons* WAGLER, 1824 neotype. No new typification, no nomenclatural act, no LSID required.

ENTIAUSPE-NETO et al. (2020), published on 30 October 2020: Resurrection of *Apostolepis sanctaeritae* WERNER, 1924 from its synonymy with *Apostolepis cearensis* GOMES, 1915; *Apostolepis ammodites* FERRAREZZI, BARBO & ALBUQUERQUE, 2005 synonymized with *Apostolepis sanctaeritae* WERNER, 1924. Taxonomic decisions, no nomenclatural acts, no LSID required.

HURTADO GÓMEZ et al. (2021), published on 15 May 2021: Recognition of *Micrurus carvalhoi* ROZE, 1967, *M. diutius* BURGER, 1955, *M. filiformis* (GÜNTHER, 1859), *M. helleri* SCHMIDT & SCHMIDT, 1925, and *M. lemniscatus* (LINNEAUS, 1758) as full species. Taxonomic decisions, no nomenclatural acts, no LSID required.

BÖHME & KOPPETSCH (2021), published on 30 October 2021: Confirmation that *Seps caerulescens* LAURENTI, 1768 (= *Lacerta agilis* LINNAEUS, 1758) is the type species of *Seps* LAURENTI, 1768, a nomenclatural act implemented by STEJNEGER (1936). No new nomenclatural act, no LSID required.

RÖDEL et al. (2023), published on 15 May 2023: Resurrection of *Poyntonophrynus grindleyi* (POYNTON, 1963) from its synonymy with *Poyntonophrynus fenoulheti* (HEWITT & METHUEN, 1912), and resurrection of *Poyntonophrynus jordani* (PARKER, 1936) from its synonymy with *Poyntonophrynus hoeschi* (AHL, 1934). Taxonomic decisions, no nomenclatural acts, no LSID required.

KEHLMAYER et al. (2024), published on 15 February 2024: *Emydura victoriae* (GRAY, 1842) placed as a junior synonym of *Emydura australis* (GRAY, 1841). Taxonomic decision, no nomenclatural act, no LSID required.

GIPPNER et al. (2024), published on 15 May 2024: *Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidti* KÖHLER & STEINFARTZ, 2006 confirmed as a junior synonym of *Salamandra salamandra bernardezi* SCHARLINSKI, 1939. Taxonomic decision, no nomenclatural act, no LSID required.

Two post-2017 publications in *Salamandra* listed by DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) would have required a LSID to make the nomenclatural acts available at the respective date of the online publication in the sense of the Code:

SCHERZ et al. (2018), published on 30 October 2018: *Brookesia ambreensis* RAXWORTHY & NUSSBAUM, 1995 placed as a synonym of *Brookesia antakarana* RAXWORTHY & NUSSBAUM, 1995. With both binomina established in the same work, SCHERZ et al. (2018) acted as First Revisers (Art. 24.2.) and selected *Brookesia antakarana* as the name with precedence. This constituted a nomenclatural act, and in order to make it available on the publication date listed above in the online version, an LSID was required. Nomenclatural act made available in print on 31 January 2019 (see below).

DENZER et al. (2020), published on 30 October 2020: These authors declared that *Lacerta varia* WYTTENBACH in COXE, 1789 is a nomen oblitum and that the junior name *Lacerta bilineata* DAUDIN, 1802 is a nomen protectum (Art. 23.9). This constituted a nomenclatural act, and in order to make it available on the publication date listed above in the online version, an LSID was required. Nomenclatural act made available in print version on 31 January 2021 (see below).

It appears that when DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) issued their criticism, they were unaware that from 2017 onward print versions of *Salamandra* (in compliance with the Code's Art. 8.1 and 8.4.1) are produced at the end of each corresponding year or in the beginning of the following year, in multiple identical copies (70 for the 2017 volume, 100 in subsequent years). These printed volumes are produced for interested readers, including institutional subscribers, and are distributed latest in January of the year following online publication. Despite the fact that some of these printed volumes were already made available in December, following the last online publication date of October of that year, we take the conservative stance of re-

porting that any nomenclatural acts requiring an LSID, for which this LSID was omitted, were made available on 31 January of the following year. Thus, the nomenclatural acts of SCHERZ et al. (2018) and DENZER et al. (2020) became available for the purposes of zoological nomenclature on 31 January 2019 and 31 January 2021, respectively.

Conclusions

DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) criticized 18 publications in *Salamandra* for irregularities with ZooBank pre-registration of nomenclatural acts (LSID). Of these, four were published in the printed journal and 12 constituted taxonomic decisions and not nomenclatural acts. None of these required ZooBank pre-registration. Only two papers did require LSIDs, and the nomenclatural acts contained therein did not become available when the online version of the paper was published. Instead, these became available early in the following year via the print and distribution of *Salamandra*'s annual volumes. In their attempt to apply the Code to *Salamandra* publications, DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) made the mistake of confusing taxonomic decisions (i.e., scientific concepts rearranging nomina but without impact on their availability, precedence or typification) with nomenclatural acts (i.e., changes in the availability or precedence of a nomen, its spelling, or its typification). This is surprising, since DUBOIS et al. (2013) previously stated that "Subjective synonymisation, or its counterpart the restoration of a nomen once considered synonymous, is a taxonomic, not nomenclatural act, and as such is not submitted to the Rules of the Code".

At least with respect to the journal *Salamandra*, but possibly also with respect to other 'problematic' publications listed, we conclude that the effort by DUBOIS & FRÉTEY (2025) was insufficiently researched and prematurely published and should not be consulted as a reliable source for the availability of certain nomenclatural acts.

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