

**Comment on *Cornu Born, 1778* (Mollusca, Gastropoda, Pulmonata, HELICIDAE):  
request for a ruling on the availability of the generic name**  
(Case 3518; see BZN 68: 97–104, 282–292; 69: 124–127, 219–221)

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We are thankful to our colleague Ruud Bank for having communicated the manuscript of his comment in the *Cornu* case, enabling us to respond directly, as this will save time. Whenever we spoke of ‘correct names’ in this journal, we always did this in the sense of nomenclaturally correct names, never in the sense of taxonomically correct names. We do not believe the term ‘correct’ is appropriate in a taxonomic context. Taxonomy depends on personal judgements and there is no eternal truth dictating a certain classification. We are experts specialising in European pulmonates ourselves, and two of us (F. W.-S. and C. Aud.) classify *aspersa* in the genus *Helix*, as was done in a recently published identification guide on 2150 species of European molluscs (Welter-Schultes, 2012, p. 610). Those who do this can have various reasons for such a classification and take advantage of the freedom of science. Those who classify *aspersa* in a separate genus (e.g. C. Alt.) also have various reasons and also take advantage of the freedom of science.

R. Bank’s statement ‘it is now clear that *aspersa* is not a *Helix*’ is not in line with the usual form of scientific arguments that are brought forward (ordinarily one would say ‘the results suggest that *aspersa* is not a *Helix*’). The term ‘a *Helix*’ ignores the fact that the concept of a genus and the number of species included is never mandatorily fixed, and the definite use of ‘*aspersa*’ in this statement leads us to highlight another important detail that has been ignored in the previous discussion: the precise identities of some of the taxa involved. One problem is that the type of *Cornu Born, 1778* is not *aspersa*, but *copiae*. And we see no evidence that *Helix aspersa* Müller, 1774 is based on a name-bearing type. Probably it is not.

Another problem is that the taxonomy of what we currently call *aspersa* is not fully understood and still remains to be studied in detail. We only partly agree with Cowie’s (2011) statement that there are no doubts about *copiae* and *aspersa* being synonyms. This is only the current state of research, and not based on results of appropriately designed studies. Recently Italian researchers have speculated that the Italian *aspersa* populations may consist of a variety of different taxa, possibly several different species (F. Liberto, pers. comm., 2012). This must be seen in the light of recent results in Sicily, published by Colomba et al. (2011) who suggested the

presence of three separate local species of the *Helix mazzullii* complex. Again this is a lecture of scientific progress.

These forms have long been classified as varieties of *Helix aspersa*, more recently as a very closely related but separate species *H. mazzullii* and finally, with more detailed knowledge, Colomba et al. (2011) suggested classifying them in a separate genus *Ercetella* Monterosato, 1894. Nobody can currently exclude that something similar may not happen to the *aspersalcopiae* complex in the future, if Italian and non-Italian *aspersa* populations are studied more closely.

The name-bearing type of *Cornu copiae* Born, 1778 seems to have come from Spain (BZN 68: 287); the type locality of *aspersa* could be anywhere in Italy (Müller, 1774, p. 59). The two cannot be made objective synonyms.

Just declaring *aspersa* on the Official List as the valid name for *copiae*, as proposed in Cowie's (BZN 68: 97) third request, without knowing the exact identity of Müller's name *aspersa*, is not an ideal procedure. It is not well equipped for the future because such an entry could become meaningless with new insights, and the disputes could start again.

It would be desirable to have a stable genus-group name for *aspersa*, robust against changes in classification due to scientific progress, a genus-group name that is immune to nomenclatural or taxonomic disputes. The type species of *Cryptomphalus* Charpentier, 1837 is *Helix aspersa* (as already said by Cowie, BZN 68: 100), so this would be a stable name for *aspersa*. The three co-authors of this comment have different taxonomic views, but we would see *Cryptomphalus* as the better choice. If any future study came to the conclusion that *C. copiae* did not belong to *H. aspersa*, but perhaps to a surprisingly distantly related form, the genus *Cornu* could once again come into dispute. Setting *Cornu* on the Official Index would exclude such an undesirable situation.

We consider it a good idea of Cowie (BZN 68: 97) to ask the Commission for help in this disputed case. We would appreciate a definite decision – either by setting *Cornu* on the Official List or on the Official Index, but not an unclear or intermediate solution.

### Additional references

- Colomba, M.S., Gregorini, A., Liberto, F., Reitano, A., Giglio, S. & Sparacio, I. 2011. Monographic revision of the endemic *Helix mazzullii* De Cristofori & Jan, 1832 complex from Sicily and re-introduction of the genus *Ercetella* Monterosato, 1894 (Pulmonata, Stylomatophora, Helicidae). *Zootaxa*, 3134: 1–42.
- Welter-Schultes, F.W. 2012. *European non-marine molluscs, a guide for species identification*. Pp. A1-A3, 1–679, Q1-Q78. Planet Poster Editions, Göttingen.