

ARTICLES

PLESTIODON: A REPLACEMENT NAME FOR MOST MEMBERS OF THE GENUS *EUMECES* IN NORTH AMERICA

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Griffith *et al.* (2000) reviewed the *Eumeces* complex and proposed that it be split into several genera, thereby restricting the name *Eumeces* to a group of North African species; its type species is one of them. However, they proposed that the ICZN be petitioned to change the type species from *Scincus pavementatus* I. Geoffroy Saint Hilaire (in E. Geoffroy Saint Hilaire and I. Geoffroy Saint Hilaire, 1827) of North Africa to *Lacerta fasciata* Linnaeus (1758) of eastern North America, thus stabilizing the name *Eumeces* with its most frequent usage in application to American species. Since Griffith *et al.* (2000), the name *Eumeces* continued to be used for North American and most Mexican species (two southern Mexican and one Central American species were placed in a new genus, *Mesoscincus*).

However, action on the petition by the ICZN was so delayed that before it could appear Schmitz *et al.* (2004) rejected the proposal for change of the type species of *Eumeces* by Griffith *et al.*, arguing that although it would stabilize the name for the American species, it would produce instability for workers dealing with North African species. They agreed that the North American group constituted a genus separate from the African one, but inasmuch as the petition for change of the type species had never been published, they concluded that the name *Eumeces* should remain attached to the latter.

The earliest generic name based on an American species of the genus *Eumeces* (*sensu lato*) is *Plestiodon* Duméril and Bibron (1839), the type species of which was subsequently designated by Fitzinger (1843) as *Lacerta quinquelineata* Linnaeus (1766). That name was long accepted as a synonym of *L. fasciata* Linnaeus (1758), which Taylor (1932a, b) showed is a complex of three very similar species. It is uncertain whether the name *L. quinquelineata* is now referable to *fasciata* or to *Scincus laticeps* Schneider (1801), revived by Taylor (1932b) as a member of the *fasciatus* complex, but there has never been any question that it applies to some member of that complex. *Plestiodon* was accepted as a valid name for North American species for many years in the 19th century, and at least as late as Stejneger and Barbour (1917).

Entangled in this nomenclatural web is the name *Pariocele* Fitzinger (1843), type species *Scincus laticeps* Schneider (1801), a member of the *fasciatus* complex; it coincidentally was proposed on the line preceding the designation of the type of *Plestiodon*. Both Griffith *et al.* (2000) and Schmitz *et al.* (2004) erroneously gave precedence to *Pariocele* Fitzinger (1843) over *Plestiodon* Duméril and Bibron (1839), despite the latter name's priority, because of the uncertainty of the identity of the type of the latter species. Over many years after it was designated,

however, its identity was in no doubt whatever; that the species was later discovered to be a complex of species, none of which are referable to any other genus, does not affect its status as a generic type (see Article 75.5 of the Code, International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, 1999). Furthermore, *Pariocela* has never, except in the indicated works, been accepted as valid, whereas *Plestiodon* has a long history of acceptance.

For these reasons we recommend adoption of the name *Plestiodon* for those American species formerly referred to *Eumeces*, except for those now placed in *Mesoscincus*.

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