NEOROMICIA ROBERTS, 1926 (MAMMALIA VESPERTILIONIDAE): CORRECTION OF GENDER AND ETYMOLOGY

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According to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN, 1999): Art. 31.2 (agreement in gender), “A species-group name, if it is or ends in a Latin or latinized adjective or participle in the nominative singular, must agree in gender with the generic name with which it is at any time combined.” Article 34.2, concerning mandatory changes in spelling, states “The ending of a Latin or latinized adjectival or participial species-group name must agree in gender with the generic name with which it is combined and must not be changed to agree in gender with the generic name [Art. 31.2.1].”

Neoromicia Roberts, 1926, with type species Eptesicus zuluensis Roberts, 1924 by original designation, was described without any statement of gender. The name Neoromicia clearly was derived from Romicia by adding the prefix “neo” (new). Gray (1838) described Romicia, with type species Romicia calcarata Gray, 1838 by monotypy. Although Gray did not explain his choice of calcarata as the species-group name, the meaning is clearly “provided with a spur”, a feminine adjective referring to the well-developed calcare (R. calcarata is a junior synonym of Pipistrellus kuhlii [Kuhl, 1817]). Therefore, Romicia is feminine and it follows that the gender of Neoromicia also is feminine.

Consequently, we correct the gender of the following specific names: Neoromicia
The reason for this decision was that Neoromicia is, and has always been, feminine as you correctly stated. Specific names following Neoromicia should agree in gender (Article 30.1). When some authors recently transferred certain species from the genus Pipistrellus to Neoromicia, the ending should have been changed accordingly but this was apparently overlooked and masculine endings were published.

The next author to use these names should therefore correct the endings to the feminine gender. This is a mandatory change and no explanation need be given. As such, this is not a matter which requires a ruling by the ICZN.” (Steven Tracey, ICZN Secretariat, personal communication, January 22, 2008).

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