(85) Proposal to permit conservation of any name

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(85) In Art 14.1, replace “the nomenclature of families, genera and species” with “nomenclature”; in Art. 14.4, replace “A conserved name of a family or genus” with “A conserved name of any taxon in the rank of genus or a higher rank”, and replace the last sentence with the following text:

“A conserved name of any taxon below the rank of genus is conserved against all names in the same rank listed as rejected, and against all combinations based on the rejected names.”

This proposal aims to bring conservation into line with rejection by extending its application to names at any rank. A similar proposal (Art. 14 Prop. A, put forward by the Subcommittee 3B on Retroactivity of Lectotypification and Illegitimacy) was rejected at Yokohama by the Tokyo Congress. We suggest that this issue merits reconsideration, for the reasons given below.

The Report on botanical nomenclature – Yokohama 1993 (Englera 14: 97. 1994) shows that the proposal was discussed at the same time as a proposal to permit conservation of any species name (Art. 14. Prop. B) and that the two issues were confounded during the debate. The Report clearly reflects a lack of clarity in the debate as to the separate implications of these two proposals.

We agree with Subcommittee 3B’s contention that conservation proposals at subordinate ranks are unlikely to be numerous but would occasionally be desirable. That such cases are rare can be demonstrated by the fact that although the option to conserve names of taxa of ranks intermediate between family and genus was available for some 30 years (between 1950 and 1981) no such names were listed for conservation. The fact that the conservation of such names is highly desirable in certain instances can be illustrated by the suprageneric names in the legumes, where long-established tribal names such as Galegeae are threatened (see Reveal in Taxon 47: 191. 1998 for further examples).

The loss of the possibility of conservation of names of taxa intermediate between families and genera can be seen as a side effect of the wording of the proposal to the Sydney Congress to permit the conservation of species names. Understandably perhaps, the discussion at Sydney focused on the major implications at species level, and while the option to conserve the names of species of major economic importance was eventually approved by a narrow margin, the fact that the option to conserve names of taxa of intermediate rank was at the same time eliminated was neither made explicit nor discussed.

Due to the lack of uniformity between provisions for conservation and those for rejection, a botanist wishing to preserve current usage of a name of a taxon of intermediate rank has no option but to propose rejection of the name which threatens it. In a proportion of these cases, conservation would certainly be more appropriate were it permissible. In the case of the Astragaleae antedating the long-established Galegeae, mentioned above, current usage could be preserved by rejecting the name Astragaleae. However, this course is not advisable given the distinct possibility that

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at some point in the future a legume systematist will wish to treat *Astragalus* (the largest genus of flowering plants) and its segregate genera as a tribe distinct from the *Galegeae*. Other situations in which rejection does not represent a viable alternative to conservation include action to conserve orthography or gender, or to conserve a name with a conserved type.

Finally, one of the arguments against the acceptance of Prop. A was “a reluctance to burden the Committees with proposals dealing with intermediate ranks”. While these concerns regarding the workload of the Committees are indeed to be taken seriously, we contend that the additional workload arising from permitting the conservation of names at intermediate ranks will amount to only a small fraction of the proposals regarding the conservation of species names.