

Discussions on the taxonomic status of some Ptinidae of economic importance

(Notes on North American Coleoptera, No. 5)

by

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It is inconvenient for students who may be interested in certain species of insects of economic importance to have a constant fight with taxonomic problems, especially if it is due to changing names of a genus or species. Such changes are made very often, and in some cases the student really does not know the reason for it and does not know which is the correct name. So it happens quite often that authors publish papers concerning the same species at the same time under four or five different names. Some of them mention synonyms to help students recognize the species he is writing about; some do not use synonymical references so the reader is confused and accepts the new combination, thus adding to the chaos.

In the present paper the most important cases are dealt with and discussed according to the best information, based upon the careful study of specimens and literature. The writer often refers to the 5th Supplement of LENG's Catalogue of Coleoptera of North America, by R. E. and R. M. BLACKWELDER (1948) and he believes, that BLACKWELDER by completing the 5th Supplement has presented the bibliography only (as noted on p. 29) and refers to previous authors' decisions concerning any taxonomic status. If there are some mistakes in the 5th Supplement, they are certainly not the fault of the compilers.

1. THE GENUS *Tipnus* THOMSON. — Established by C. G. THOMSON in 1863 (Skandinaviens Coleoptera, Lund, 5 : 141). Five years later MULSANT & REY described (or named) another genus as *Epaulaecus* in their monumental work "Histoire naturelle des coléoptères de France" (in the 2nd series of the *Ann. Soc. Linn. Lyon*, 1868, 15 : 49). This name was used later by E. A. H. KIESENWETTER in his "Naturgeschichte der Insecten Deutschlands" (Abt. I, vol. 5, 1877, p. 80). Also E. REITTER in his key-series of European beetles (Vol. 11, 1884, p. 4) used MULSANT & REY's name. Furthermore, G. SEIDLITZ overlooked THOMSON's generic description and used *Epaulaecus* in two of his greatest works, the "Fauna Baltica, die Käfer der deutschen Ostseeprovinzen Russlands" (1887—1897, pp. 192 and 818) in the part published in 1889 (p. 547), and in his other work "Fauna Transsylvanica" (1891, p. 547). Twenty years later M. PIC first recognized THOMSON's designation from 1863, and in his *Catal. analyt.*, 1911, 2 : 335, analysed the taxonomic value of both *Tipnus* and *Epaulaecus*, and upon discovering that both are the same he synonymized *Epaulaecus* Muls. & Rey and kept *Tipnus* Thomson as the generic name to be used. In 1911 Vol. 3 of E. REITTER's "Fauna Germanica" was in preparation, and, independently from PIC, REITTER also recognized the status of *Tipnus* and mentions it as a subgenus of *Niptus* Boield. (1912 : 322), placing *Epaulaecus* in synonymy. In the same year (1912) the Ptinidae Part of the *Catalogus Coleopterorum* (Part 41) was published, compiled by PIC, with *Tipnus* as a valid genus (p. 12) and *Epaulaecus*

as a synonym. A. HORION in his "Nachtrag zu Fauna Germanica" (1935, p. 270) definitely recognizes the genus *Tipnus*, by then widely used.

In order to promote stabilization of nomenclature the writer recommends re-establishing the status of *Tipnus* Thomson.

Of the genus *Tipnus* we have one species in North America as mentioned in the 5th Supplement: *T. unicolor* Piller. To avoid the description of other new species or varieties of this genus or species, the writer would like to mention that this species varies in color and in size. *T. unicolor* Piller is a small species, 1.5—2.5 mm (male and female) long, possessing all the typical ptinid characters. There are certain variations in color and size, and extreme dark and small specimens have been described as var. *fuscus* by GRADL (*Entom. Nachr.* 1881, 7 : 306) and are known from Germany and England; extremely large, and also dark, specimens from Poland are known as var. *salinus* Schilling (*Arbeiten schlesisch. Ges.* 1843 : 175). Another variation (var. *lutosus* Muls. & Rey, op. cit. p. 203) from France is unknown to me and has never been collected or mentioned since it was described.

2. THE GENUS *Eurostus* Muls. & Rey. —The reader is certainly in a dilemma if he tries to establish a clear view of this genus according to the arrangement mentioned in the 5th Supplement (p. 29). *Eurostus* Muls. & Rey is at first stated to be a good genus, but in the next paragraph *Eurostus* is reduced to a synonym of *Pseudeurostus* Heyden. It is quite difficult to understand the economic literature if the following names are used: *Eurostus hilleri* Reitter (or *belleri*), *Pseudeurostus hilleri* (or *belleri*) and *Niptus hilleri* (or *belleri*), which are all the same species of beetle. It is doubly misleading if in economic publications authors misspell names, as in the case of "*hilleri*" and "*belleri*". REITTER described the species in 1877 (*Deutsche ent. Zeitsch.* 21 : 378) and named it after HILLER, the collector.

M. PIC (1912, Col. Cat. 41 : 11) was apparently the first to use the incorrect spelling of the name (*belleri*).

As mentioned earlier, at present we do not know which generic names are synonyms. Let us study the value and the history of these names with a third example, that of *Niptus*.

Eurostus Muls. & Rey (op. cit. p. 49 and 185) was erected for species from the Old World. There is an error in the 5th Supplement, because it is mentioned as a good genus on page 49, and on p. 185 as a synonym of *Pseudeurostus*. Whoever created this synonymy was not aware that it is identical with the genus mentioned on page 49.

Pseudeurostus Heyden (1906) the other name, was supposed to be a good generic name for *Eurostus* Muls. & Rey (1868). *Pseudeurostus* is a nomen nudum used by HEYDEN in a non-descriptive catalogue (Cat. Col. Eur. etc., p. 424). If we search the world literature we shall be able to recognize that HEYDEN's generic name is not mentioned anywhere else, except in some "modern" taxonomic papers. Where the mistake originates is hard to tell. Its origin can be attributed to the use of only the "Index" part of great catalogues. For example all synonymic or subgeneric names are printed in italics in the index of the Coleopterorum Catalogus, part 41 (Ptinidae, by Maurice PIC) and in part 170,

the general index. The latter was compiled from indexes of 169 parts. In the index of part 41 *Eurostus* is printed in italics (p. 40), and *Pseudeurostus* in century type which indicates that the first is a synonym or subgeneric name. This mistake was repeated in the general index, which may be the only reference used as a basis for such a taxonomic decision. The value of *Pseudeurostus* was recognized by M. PIC (Col. Cat. pars 41, 1912, p. 13) who placed it as a synonym of *Eurostus*.

Niptus is another generic name to be discussed in connection with the above two names. According to the bibliography in the 5th Supplement, *billeri* Rtt. (known also as *belleri*) is supposed to be a member of the genus *Eurostus*. BOIELDIEU erected the genus *Niptus* in 1856 in his "Monographie des ptiniores" (*Ann. Soc. ent. France*, Ser. 3, 4 : 290 and 662) with a previously described ptinid, *hololeucus* Fald. (1836), as genotype. Subsequently

J. LECONTE (1859) added *ventriculus* from the U.S.A.,

E. REITTER (1877) added *billeri* from Japan,

L. FAIRMAIRE (1878) added *schmidti* from Peru,

E. REITTER (1886) added *fausti* from Turkestan,

M. PIC (1908) added *maximus* from Brasil and

M. PIC again (1950) added *subelongatus* without locality.

After C. W. JOHNSON reported *N. billeri* Rtt. from New England (*Psyche* 1921, 28 : 7), European economic entomologists added further data to its biology.

Niptus belongs to a group of ptinid beetles in which the punctate and striate elytra cover the abdomen less extensively, the ventral segments being subequal in width to the elytra. Antennae eleven-jointed, and the prothorax contracted posteriorly. REITTER (1877, p. 378) indicates these facts clearly, but I am unable to recognize these elements in any description of the genus *Eurostus*, to which *billeri* Rtt. supposedly belongs. To endorse the status of the genus *Niptus* I would like to mention students who recognized it: REDTENBACHER, J. DU VAL, LECONTE, THOMSON, Mulsant & REY, KIESENWETTER, HORN, REITTER, FAUCONNET, LAMEERE, FALL, PIC, etc.

After this analysis the synonymy is the following: *Niptus billeri* Reitter = *Eurostus billeri* Reitter (not *belleri*)

3. *Ptinus testaceus* Olivier. — A GOOD SPECIES. This species has apparently been placed as a synonym of *P. hirtellus* Sturm (see 5th suppl.). OLIVIER described *testaceus* in 1790 (*Entom., Coleopt.* 2 : 9, plate 2, fig. 9), and it is a well-known European species. During the last 50 years *hirtellus* Sturm (1837) has been regarded as a variety of *testaceus* (on the basal half of the elytra without the usual white band of longer hairs). REITTER mentioned (*Fauna Germanica*, 1911, 3 : 324) *brunneus* Duft. (1825) as a good species and classified *testaceus* as a variety of it. PIC (1912, p. 35 and 36) recognized this mistake and changed the status of *brunneus* to var. *brunneus* and gave *testaceus* Oliv. a specific rank. FALL (*Trans. Amer. ent. Soc.* 1905, 31 : 112 and 114), not having seen the type specimen of *testaceus*, gave priority to a young specimen of a variation and mentioned *testaceus* as *brunneus*. Since PIC (1912) sorted out this problem a chain of other authors agreed with him, and really I do not see why we could not. Summary:

Pinus testaceus Oliv., Ent. Col. 1790, 2 : 9, pl. 2, f. 9.

= *advena* Woll., Ins. Madeira 1854, p. 261.

= *lucasi* Boield., Monogr. 1856, p. 636.

= *rufus* Lucas, Expl. Alg. 1847, 2 : 207, pl. 20, f. 4.

var. *brevipennis* Pic, Echange 1896, 12 : 108.

var. *hirtellus* Sturm, Deutschl. Ins. 1837, 12 : 80, pl. 258, f. A.

= *brunneus* Duft., Fauna Austr., 1825, 3 : 65.

= *hirticollis* Lucas, Expl. Alg. 1847, 2 : 212, pl. 20, f. 11.

var. (?) *obsoletus* Baudi, Berl. ent. Ztschr. 1873, 17 : 326.

P. brunneus Duft. (1825) is placed as a synonym of *Pinus testaceus* var. *hirtellus* Sturm. The writer does not know any *testaceus* described by THUNBERG, 1784, in this family, as mentioned in the 5th Supplement, but we know *testaceus* Castelnau 1840 (Hist. Nat. 1 : 296) from Dalmatia, which is a synonym of *Pinus fur* Linné, 1758.

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G. F. FERRIS (2 jan. 1893—21 mei 1958)

In verband met het overlijden van ons erelid prof. G. F. FERRIS (zie *Ent. Ber.* 18 : 197) zij meegedeeld, dat thans in het door hem opgerichte tijdschrift *Microentomology* (23, p. 65—92) een "memorial number" verschenen is. Het bevat een portret van F. in zijn werkkamer, een volledige lijst van zijn publicaties (1915—1958), een lijst van alle door hem beschreven geslachten en soorten en een korte levensbeschrijving, waaraan het volgende ontleend is.

FERRIS was het jongste kind van een spoorwegaarbeider, hij had een oudere zuster en 3 broers. Toen hij 2—3 jaar was, verhuisde de vader naar een kleine boerderij en woonde de familie in een blokhut met 1 kamer. Weldra overleed zijn moeder en kwam F. met zijn zuster bij een grootmoeder. Toen zijn grootmoeder stierf, kwam hij weer bij zijn vader, die ondertussen dagloner bij een zinksmelterij was geworden. Hij bleef daar tot zijn 13de jaar en diende gedurende twee zomers als knecht op een boerderij. Na zijn 13de jaar kwam hij bij zijn oudste broer Leslie, die aan het "Baptist College" (Ottawa University) studeerde, en agent van een krant was. F. hielp bij het bezorgen van de krant en studeerde ook. In 1909 was Leslie afgestudeerd en werd leraar aan de "high school" te Telluride (Colorado). F. nam het krantenbaantje van hem over en werd in 1909 ingeschreven als student van Ottawa University, maar was daar een mislukkeling ("a complete failure")! Toen wilde F., die 17 jaar oud was, naar zee, maar zijn vader en Leslie weigerden om toestemming te geven. Ten slotte wist Leslie hem geplaatst te krijgen bij de Telluride Power Company te Telluride.

Deze maatschappij nam jongelui aan op een zeer laag salaris, maar liet de beste studeren om zodoende de beschikking te krijgen over goed geschoold personeel. In 1911 wilde men F. naar Cornell University zenden, maar F. wilde naar Stanford University, omdat KELLOGG daar doceerde. F. had te Ottawa KELLOGG's American Insects gezien en KELLOGG was de enige entomoloog, waarover hij ooit gehoord had. Zomer 1912 kwam F. met een beurs van slechts \$ 450 van genoemde maatschappij te Stanford aan en behaalde daar zijn graad van M.A. in