

SOME COMMENTS ON THE LATIN NAMES OF BRITISH MILLIPEDS

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Although the words used for composing the Latin names of animals are not necessarily having a particular descriptive significance and may even consist of purely arbitrary combinations of letters, fact is that most authors did choose descriptive names for the taxa they proposed. Knowledge of the meaning of these words may not be of scientific importance, it can help the reader to memorise the names and their spelling. Mr. Slawson's list (Slawson, 1996) serves this purpose very well. It is only to improve the quality of the list that I take the liberty to make some suggestions with regard to the correct meaning of a few names.

Entothalassinum – The name was coined by Attems (1914: 228) probably to emphasize the distribution of the genus: around the (western part of the) Mediterranean sea (*ento* = within, *thalasso* = sea: inland sea).

Lagur/a -us – This name is composed of two Greek words: *lagos* = hare, *oura* = tail: hare-tail, obviously referring to the caudal tufts of setae of the animal.

Melanops – Consisting of the Greek words *melas* = black, *ops* = eye: with black eyes.

Oxidus – when proposing this generic name for the greenhouse millipede *Fontaria gracilis* C.L. Koch, Cook (1911:628) alluded "...to the repugnatorial secretion of prussic acid".

Polyxenus – Etymologically this is a rather peculiar matter. Latreille (1804:82), who was the author of this name, spelled it with a double l: *Pollyxenus*, and gave as the meaning of the word "pollyxène": "rusé", in English: cunning, sly. He referred to the habit of the animals to hide under bark. Subsequent classical authors, e.g. Gervais, Koch, Leach, Lucas, in their writings mostly followed Latreille's orthography. It was Latzel (1884: 70) who pointed out that he knew of no Greek dictionary giving a translation of *Pollyxenus* as stated by Latreille. He preferred to drop one l and formally proposed the spelling *Polyxenus* for which word he gave as a, to him at least more satisfactory meaning "viele Gäste habend" (having many guests), in allusion to the species' habit of living in groups.

Vulnerarius – Berlese (1888: Fasc. 48, Nr. 1) describing *Mesoiulus vulnerarius* (now *Cylindroiulus* v.) wrote in the diagnosis "*pallidus, rubro lateribus guttulatus*" (pale, laterally spotted red). The pale animal has reddish ozadenes shining through the integument. Therefore possessing wounds.

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