



Type designations of Diptera (Insecta) in the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*

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Abstract

Previously overlooked type designations for genus-group names of Diptera given in the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* are presented. The encyclopedia is described and its volumes dated.

Key words: taxonomy, nomenclature, encyclopedias, Diptera

Introduction

Finding and enumerating the earliest original as well as subsequent type designations for genus-group names is essential for the nomenclature and taxonomy of biological organisms. As part of the research toward a world list of Diptera genus-group names, I have been researching natural history publications for the last 20 years in order to find the earliest subsequent designations of genus-group names (e.g., Evenhuis & Thompson, 1990; Evenhuis, 2007; Evenhuis & O'Hara, 2008; Evenhuis *et al.*, 2008).

One of the largely neglected types of publications that have been found to harbor many nomenclatural actions are the numerous natural history encyclopedias and dictionaries of the early to mid-19th century. [See Table 1 for a list of encyclopedias and dictionaries known to have novel nomenclatural and/or taxonomic acts for Diptera.] These publications were produced by publishers to effectively summarize from a multitude of books and articles the knowledge of the world into a concise and affordable medium. By publishing these volumes in parts, publishers would not only help educate the public about the world around them, but also gain a profit from potential subscribers who felt it essential to have such a reference in their study or reading room. For scientists who wrote entries for these encyclopedias and dictionaries, it proved to be a useful supplemental source of funds in an otherwise bleak existence salary-wise (Evenhuis, 2003). Scientists were often paid by the line for their entries and in order to maximize the amount of funds they could get, these scientists often wrote extensive entries for scientific terms. Among other information, these entries would sometimes contain novel nomenclatural or taxonomic information including the fixation of type species for genus-group names appearing as entries.

This paper gives the results of researching the little-known (in scientific circles) British *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* and generally follows the format of presentation given in Evenhuis & Thompson (1990).

History of the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*

The *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* was conceived by its initial publisher, Rest Fenner, to summarize the essential knowledge of the world in a single work to be issued in fifty parts. A lengthy prospectus by Samuel Taylor Coleridge describing the plan for the encyclopedia was well publicized when it came out in late 1817 and the first part of the encyclopedia was printed in May 1818. However, by June 1819 and after having printed only five parts (of these, only four were distributed by that time), Fenner became bankrupt. He