



The names of decapod and stomatopod Crustacea from Tahiti, French Polynesia, established by Anthony Curtiss in 1938 and 1944

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Abstract

In two poorly known books published in 1938 and 1944, Anthony Curtiss described 21 species of decapod and stomatopod crustaceans from Tahiti. Of these, 20 are found to be junior synonyms of well-known shallow-water species. One species, however, *Cancer raihoae* Curtiss, 1938, is a possible senior synonym of *Portunus hawaiiensis* Stephenson, 1968 (Portunidae).

Introduction

Anthony Curtiss, a self-made naturalist, published a little-known book on the animals of Tahiti (Curtiss 1938) and explicitly used Linnaean names and nomenclature for a large number of taxa. Although he listed a few previously described species, he clearly used many of his own names in the proposals of new taxa. A scathing review by Schultz (1940) presumably led at least one author of the *Zoological Record* to explicitly ignore Curtiss's new species names as he felt they did not comply with the rules of nomenclature (Smith 1942). Although Curtiss's scientific rationale for naming the many taxa was flawed, his names are nevertheless available under the present zoological code (ICZN 1999).

Anthony Curtiss, born Roy Abijah Curtiss, Jr. in New York City in 1910 to a wealthy business family, was interested in natural history at a very early age, and his precociousness is evident in his first publication on the fauna of New England (Curtiss 1924), written when he was only 14 years of age! Evenhuis (2010) provided a detailed account of the life and works of this extraordinary person.

Being independently wealthy, when he became of age and could tap into his trust fund, he traveled widely; and in 1934 ended up in the small town of Tautira on Tahiti Iti, married a 14-year old Tahitian, and settled in to observe the exotic nature around him. Following his 1924 fauna of New England, Curtiss decided to produce a book on the fauna of Tahiti. His knowledge of zoology was broad enough to be able to easily discern the different taxa he observed in and around his home in Tautira, but his failure to refer to previous taxonomic works meant that many of his new species names were of those already described by earlier workers. His 1938 work covered mammals, fishes, birds, and reptiles, as well as many invertebrate taxa, both marine and terrestrial. In all, over 250 taxa were listed by him, among which there are 210 new species. Although in most cases the descriptions are adequate to be able to identify the taxa, Curtiss was vehemently against the use of contemporary genus-group names, instead following the early names of the Linnaean era. For example, the decapod taxa he listed were all placed in the Linnaean genus *Cancer*. Schultz's (1940) review of this little book in *Science* wondered if this work meant we were stepping back into Linnaeus's time!

Curtiss's collections in his 1938 and 1944 works derive primarily from the town of Tautira and its surrounding areas on the southeastern portion of Tahiti, also known as Tahiti Iti. However, Curtiss does in some cases describe species from other islands. As he stated in the introduction to his original work (Curtiss 1938: xv): "Most of the