Dates of publication and the organisation of Versuch einer Naturgeschichte der Krabben und Krebse by Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Herbst

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Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Herbst (b. 1743, d. 1807) published an early treatise on carcinology entitled Versuch einer Naturgeschichte der Krabben und Krebse nebst einer systematischen Beschreibung ihrer verschiedenen Arten in three Bände (= volumes, singular Band) between 1782 and 1804 (Herbst 1782–1790, 1791–1796, 1799–1804; Table 1). Each Band is comprised of four to eight Hefte (= issues or parts; singular Heft) (Table 1).

Within each Heft are varying numbers of Bögen (= sheets, corresponding to signatures or gatherings, singular Bogen). The work was published in quarto format, with signature marks appearing every eight pages. The wrapper of each Heft (except Heft 1 of Band 1; Fig. 1A) lists the plates and Bögen of text it contains (e.g. Fig. 1B). Each Heft (except for Heft 2–3 and Heft 4–5 of Band 1, see Table 1) was issued individually and the wrapper of each Heft is dated (Fig. 1A, B). Title-pages were also issued upon the respective completion Band 1 and Band 2 (e.g. Fig. 1C; Anonymous 1790: 267; 1801: 214). These title-pages are also dated (Fig. 1C).

The publisher of Hefte 1–7 of Band 1 (1782–1788) was “Joh. Casper Fuessly, Zürich” (Fig. 1A). All subsequent Hefte (1790–1804) were published by “Gottlieb August Lange, Berlin und Stralsund” (Fig. 1B, C).

With the exception of the Heft 1 of Band 1 (Fig. 1A), the title on the wrapper of each Heft was abbreviated to Versuch einer Naturgeschichte der Krabben und Krebse &c. &c. (Fig. 1B). The wrappers (which are technically title-pages) of each Heft of Band 3 also bear the abbreviated title. The title-pages issued upon the respective completion of Band 1 and Band 2 have the full title printed on them (e.g. Fig. 1C). No overall title-page for Band 3 was issued. When citing individual Hefte (except for Heft 1 of Band 1), or Band 3 as a whole, the abbreviated title should therefore be used.

Rathbun (1897: 157) provided a collation of the work, and listed the text pages and plates in each Heft, which was reproduced in K. Sakai (1999: 7). Sherborn’s (1902: xxix) collation listed only the pages. An updated collation of this work is presented in Table 1. The notes accompanying Table 1 discuss additional information that has been located (including ‘not after’ dates for seven Hefte).

The ‘not after’ date for Heft 3 of Band 2 is particularly informative as it allows for the determination of relative priority between this part of Herbst’s work (which was published before 11 May 1793, Table 1) and another important carcinological work that was published in the same year, i.e. Fabricius (1793) (Fig. 1D). The title-page of the second volume of Fabricius’ Entomologia systematica emendata et aucta bears the date “1793” (Fig. 1D). No information on the exact date of publication of Fabricius (1793) is known, and the last day of the year (i.e. 31 December 1793) is to be accepted as the date of publication (Article 21.3.2 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, and hereafter the Code; ICZN 1999) (see also Evenhuis 1997: 248; Hemming 1936: 122). At least one stomatopod name described by Herbst (1793a) is synonymous with a name described by Fabricius (1793) (Low & Ng 2012: 47, 48).

In addition to describing new species based on material available to him, Herbst also validated several pre-Linnean names, such as those of Rumphius (Low 2012; Low & Ng 2012). The type material on which Herbst based his descriptions is deposited in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, Germany (ZMB). A catalogue of the decapod crustacean type material was published by K. Sakai (1999) (see also McLaughlin & Holthuis 2001).

This study was based primarily on a copy of Herbst’s work held in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, Germany (ZMB).