



## Comments on

### “*Chersine* Merrem, 1820 and *Chersina* Gray, 1831: a nomenclatural survey by Bour & Ohler, Zootaxa, 1752: 66–68”

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In a recent correspondence, Bour & Ohler (2008) readdress the question of whether or not *Testudo hermanni* Gmelin, 1789 is the type species of the genus-group names *Chersine* Merrem, 1820 and *Medaestia* Wussow, 1916 (Reptilia: Testudines: Testudinidae). The senior author, Roger Bour, co-authored the earlier description of a new genus-group name for *T. hermanni* (*Eurotestudo* Lapparent de Broin, Bour, Parham & Perälä, 2006), a name considered as an objective junior synonym of both *Chersine* and *Medaestia* by Fritz & Bininda-Emonds (2007) and Fritz & Havaš (2007), who argued that all three names are based on the same type species, *T. hermanni*. Bour & Ohler (2008) disputed this conclusion. In the present paper, we wish to clarify nomenclatural issues raised by Bour & Ohler (2008).

#### Which is the type species of *Chersine* Merrem, 1820?

Bour & Ohler (2008) claim that *Chersine* is a replacement name (*nomen novum*) for *Testudo* Linnaeus, 1758 (type species: *Testudo graeca* Linnaeus, 1758), and consequently has the same type species, because Merrem (1820: p. 29) ‘only included *Testudo* as synonym of *Chersine*.’ However, Merrem (1820: p. 17) listed *Testudo* as synonym of his order ‘Schild-Pholidoten (Testudinata)’ as well, indicating a different concept of *Testudo* compared to its current use. When the name *Testudo* was introduced, Linnaeus (1758) applied it to all eleven chelonian species known to him (Table 1), including sea turtles (Cheloniidae), New World pond turtles (Emydidae), tortoises (Testudinidae), and snapping turtles (Chelydridae). A type species for *Testudo* was not fixed until Fitzinger (1843: p. 29) designated *Testudo graeca* Linnaeus, 1758, implying that when *Chersine* was erected, *Testudo* was still without type species and covering a wide range of highly distinct chelonian species. Hence, the argument by Bour & Ohler (2008) is invalid.

**TABLE 1.** Chelonian species described in the 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Systema Naturae by Linnaeus (1758) and their current taxonomic allocation according to Fritz & Havaš (2007).

Original name	Current name	Family
<i>Testudo caretta</i>	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Cheloniidae
<i>Testudo carinata</i>	<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Emydidae
<i>Testudo carolina</i>	<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Emydidae
<i>Testudo geometrica</i>	<i>Psammobates geometricus</i>	Testudinidae
<i>Testudo graeca</i>	<i>Testudo graeca</i>	Testudinidae
<i>Testudo lutaria</i>	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>	Emydidae
<i>Testudo mydas</i>	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	Cheloniidae
<i>Testudo orbicularis</i>	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>	Emydidae
<i>Testudo pusilla</i>	<i>Testudo graeca</i>	Testudinidae
<i>Testudo scabra</i>	unclear	unclear
<i>Testudo serpentina</i>	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>	Chelydridae