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On the attribution of authorship for several elasmobranch species in Müller and Henle's *Systematische Beschreibung der Plagiostomen* (Chondrichthyes, Elasmobranchii)

CHRISTIAN M. JONES^{1,4}, WILLIAM B. DRIGGERS III¹, JOSÉ I. CASTRO² & MARCELO R. DE CARVALHO³

¹National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Mississippi Laboratories, P.O. Drawer 1207, Pascagoula, MS 39568, U.S.A. E-mails: christian.jones@noaa.gov; william.driggers@noaa.gov

²National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Protected Resources Division, 263 13th Ave. South, Saint Petersburg, FL 33701, U.S.A. E-mail: jose.castro@noaa.gov

³Departamento de Zoologia, Instituto de Biociências, Universidade de São Paulo, Rua do Matão, Trav. 14, no. 101, 05508-090, São Paulo, SP, Brazil. E-mail: mrcarvalho@ib.usp.br

⁴Corresponding author

“As in other branches of science, this work [ichthyology] has been done by sincere, devoted men, impelled by a love for this kind of labor, and having in view, as ‘the only reward they asked, a grateful remembrance of their work.’ And in token of this reward it is well sometimes, in grateful spirit, to go over the names of those who made even its slight degree of completeness possible.” (Jordan, 1902, p. 241)

Introduction

Even in light of the recent peak in new species descriptions of elasmobranchs (summarized in White & Last, 2012), Johannes Müller and Friedrich Henle's *Systematische Beschreibung der Plagiostomen* (1839–1841) stands as a major achievement in chondrichthyan taxonomy. This volume included all elasmobranch species then known as well as descriptions of 61 new species (for a total of 214 species), and established many of the family-level groups still in use today. Müller & Henle's work, however, would not have been possible without the collaboration of other naturalists who provided specimens for examination, detailed notes, and illustrations (Müller & Henle, 1841). Four men in particular made significant enough contributions to warrant Müller & Henle attributing the authority of several species to them: Achille Valenciennes (1794–1865), Gabriel Biberon (1805–1848), Heinrich Bürger (1806–1858), and Andrew Smith (1797–1872). In nearly every case however, authority is currently placed on Müller & Henle themselves, and not the gentlemen to whom they gave credit.

Article 50.1.1 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1999) states:

“... if it is clear from the contents that some person other than an author of the work is alone responsible both for the name or act and for satisfying the criteria of availability other than actual publication, then that other person is the author of the name or act. If the identity of that other person is not explicit in the work itself, then the author is deemed to be the person who publishes the work.”

It is in our opinion “clear from the contents” of Müller & Henle's (1839–1841) text that authority for certain elasmobranch species should rightly lie with the individuals to whom they (Müller & Henle) gave credit.

Valenciennes

Valenciennes contributed significantly to the descriptions of several species in the *Systematische Beschreibung der Plagiostomen*, as noted by Müller & Henle in the introduction:

“Seit der Herausgabe des ersten Heftes unsers Werks wurden mit dem früher bereits gesammelten Material noch die Haiische des Pariser und Frankfurter Museums verglichen. Zu den gütigen Beförderern unsers Unternehmens hatten wir nun auch noch die Herren Duméril, Valenciennes, Biberon [sic] und Rüppell zu rechnen und sagen ihnen hiermit