

On the proper denomination of *Cabrita jerdonii* Beddome, 1870 (Reptilia: Lacertidae)

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The lacertid genus *Cabrita* Gray, 1838 has recently been synonymized with *Ophisops* Ménériés, 1832 by Arnold (1989) because the two species of *Cabrita* differ from all members of the closely related *Ophisops* only in the possession of moveable eyelids, which is a symplesiomorphic characteristic. Furthermore, Arnold (op.cit.) believes that “the two species that constitute *Cabrita* are each more closely related to particular species of *Ophisops* than they are to each other. *Cabrita jerdonii* Beddome, 1870 is allied to *Ophisops jerdoni* Blyth, 1853 and *Ophisops beddomii* (Jerdon, 1870), while the relationships of *Cabrita leschenaultii* (Milne-Edwards, 1829) lie with *Ophisops microlepis* Blanford, 1870.”

The synonymization of *Cabrita* with *Ophisops* leads to a secondary homonymy (Art. 59b, 60b ICZN): *Cabrita jerdonii* Beddome, 1870 becomes *Ophisops jerdonii* (Beddome, 1870) and is antedated by *Ophisops jerdoni* Blyth, 1853. Arnold (op.cit.) established therefore, though rather informally, a new name for the former, viz. *Ophisops nictans* Arnold, 1989 to replace the “trivial” (Arnold, op.cit.) name *jerdonii* Beddome, 1870.

Beddome’s (1870) species, which for a century was believed to occur only in India (see e.g. Boulenger, 1921; Smith, 1935; Deraniyagala, 1953), received an objective junior synonym when Deraniyagala (1971) discovered this species also on Sri Lanka and immediately erected a new, endemic subspecies: *Cabrita jerdonii minor*. The name *minor* Deraniyagala, 1971, therefore, has to be reinstated for the whole species when the older species name becomes a secondary homonym.

Only a taxonomic revision of the Indian and Sri Lanka population of this lizard could clarify whether both forms are actually subspecifically distinct. If this would prove to be the case, the nominate form of the species would be located in Sri Lanka whereas the Indian populations would have to be termed *Ophisops minor nictans* Arnold, 1989.

References

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