SCIENTIFIC NOTE

THE ELLUSIVE CITATION FOR HAPLOCNEMUS SUBINTEGER PIC, 1902 (COLEOPTERA: RHADALIDAE: APOLCNEMINI) AND THE EVILS OF JOURNAL TITLE ABBREVIATION

MICHAEL L. FERRO
Clemson University Arthropod Collection
Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
277 Poole Agricultural Center, Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634-0310, U.S.A.
spongymesophyll@gmail.com

AND

ADRIEAN J. MAYOR
Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996, U.S.A.

Acting on a hunch I spent several months in Buenos Aires as Blind Pew... – Monty Python, Episode 14

In a rare taxonomic twist, the type specimen of Haplocnemus subinteger Pic, 1902 (Rhadalidae: Aplocnemini) is deposited in the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France, but the description went missing. Pic (1902) described H. subinteger and listed the species as Aplocnemus subinteger from “Mesopotamien”, an ancient designation for the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers essentially corresponding to present day Iraq, Syria, and Kuwait, in the Coleopterorum Catalogus with the citation “Journ. Ins. Nat., 2: 60” (Pic 1937).

During preparation of a catalog of the “Melyrid Lineage”, including the families Prionoceridae, Melyridae, Dasytidae, Mauroniscidae, Rhadalidae, and Malachiidae, AJM was unable to find a complete citation from the abbreviated listing in the catalog, suggesting that the citation listed by Pic was incorrect or incomplete. Pic (1913) failed to cite the paper in his list of publications up to that point, which added fuel to the notion that perhaps the paper had never been published. The species was not listed in the Zoological Record, and the citation was not found by Peacock (1987) in her review of the Rhadalinae. Thus, decades of search by several prominent melyrid workers failed to find the reference, elevating it to White Whale/Bigfoot status.

One of us (MLF) was enjoying a nice rant about the evils of journal abbreviations when the other (AJM) offered the story of the “Lost Pic” as a practical example of abbreviations gone awry. The full citation is: Pic, M. 1902. Haplocnemus subinteger n. sp. and Dasytes montanus Muls. et Rey. Journ. Ins. Nat., 2: 60. Accepting the challenge, MLF began looking for the publication off and on starting August 2014. Many months of failure and frustration followed.

The “Lost” Pic (1902) was finally discovered in the following manner. Beginning with the citation above, a Google search for “Dasytes montanus” yielded Pic (1903), which provided the citation “Journ. des Nat., n°9, 1902, p. 60” (In retrospect, this citation is also in the catalog under Aplocnemus montanus). Searches for “journ. des nat.” yielded little, except a citation including “Journ. des Nat. de Mâcon” (Lambillion 1906). After trial and error searches, “Nat.” was decoded as “naturalistes” and a search for “journal des naturalistes” led to discovery of the International Catalogue of Scientific Literature (International Council 1903), price ten shillings and sixpence. The catalog lists: “Journal des naturalistes. Bulletin mensuel de la société des naturalistes de Mâcon (Saône et Loire). [mensuel.,]”, abbreviated as “J. natural., Mâcon”. Searches using that journal title gave no useable results, and the title may be incorrect, but additional searches using “journal des naturalistes Mâcon” resulted in discovery of a holding at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: “Le journal des naturalistes : bulletin mensuel de la Société d’histoire naturelle de Mâcon”.
The consistent terms “journal des naturalistes” and “Mâcon” helped to link the otherwise poorly fitting pieces together. An incomplete Interlibrary Loan...