

T. V. Wollaston's *Coleoptera Hesperidum*: correction of its spurious 1867 publication date to 1868

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ABSTRACT: The classic monograph by Thomas Vernon Wollaston, *Coleoptera Hesperidum, being an Enumeration of the Coleopterous Insects of the Cape Verde Archipelago*, was published in London by John Van Voorst. Hitherto, the spurious publication date of 1867 on the title-page has been generally unquestioned. However, recent research has now shown that the earliest demonstrable date for this book's published existence is 28 January 1868, coincident with the first announcement by the book-trade. Therefore, the preferred Harvard-citation *referens* for *Coleoptera Hesperidum* should henceforth be "Wollaston, 1867 [1868]". This discovery necessitates re-examination of the numerous names of new taxa and nomenclatural acts published in *Coleoptera Hesperidum*, in case the status of any of them might be affected by the corrected publication date.

KEYWORDS: Cape Verde Islands, Coleoptera, John Van Voorst, publication dates, spurious dates, T. V. Wollaston.

INTRODUCTION

The *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, 1999) rules that the date of publication specified in a work is to be adopted as correct in the absence of evidence to the contrary (article 21.2). In fact, there are probably more books than generally realized that, for various reasons, bear incorrect publication dates. Perhaps the most common kind of example results from a book's being originally issued in parts. In many such cases, the title-page of the book-issue bears a single year-date, usually the year in which the final part was issued, for instance Edward Forbes's *A History of British Starfishes* (see Williams, 2014).¹ On occasion, if publication of the final part occurred during the approach of the Christmas period, an additional complication might be that the title-page of the book-issue bears the date of the following year, as in P. H. Gosse's *Actinologia Britannica* and in Griffith & Henfrey's second edition of *The Micrographic Dictionary* (see Williams, 2017).

There is thus a general tendency for the consolidated volume of a book that was originally issued in parts to be dated later (usually as a year only) than the date-range during which its contents were actually published. Hence, it is important for zoologists (and also botanists and palaeontologists) to be aware of such situations that potentially might lead to significant errors in taxonomic studies that address the precedence of scientific names and nomenclatural acts. Much less commonly, however, a book produced as a single entity

¹ More rarely, a range of dates during which the parts were published is given, but no more precisely than the complete years.

might be dated earlier than when it was actually published. For example, during an investigation of the synonymy of some species of Coleoptera, I discovered that one of the works involved, Thomas Vernon Wollaston's *Coleoptera Hesperidum*, published in London by John Van Voorst, is misdated in that way. It is therefore vital to draw attention to its spurious title-page date, and to place on record the supporting evidence for its correct, later date of publication.

THE DATING PROBLEM

In this present case, the names of two nominal coleopteran species, generally regarded as synonymous (see Fisher, 1950: 83–84), have hitherto both been thought to have been published in 1867. One of them (*Bostrichus brunneus* Murray) appeared in a periodical (Murray, 1867: 92–93), the relevant part having been issued, according to the internal printed evidence, in August 1867. The other name (*Bostrychus grayanus* Wollaston) was published on pp. 109–110 of Wollaston's classic monograph of the beetles of the Cape Verde Islands, *Coleoptera Hesperidum*, which was issued as a single volume, and also dated 1867; the correctness of that date has hitherto been generally unquestioned.

Since it was essential to establish which of those two works is the earlier, and being unaware of any previous attempt to do so, I carried out a thorough search for evidence of the exact publication date of *Coleoptera Hesperidum*, initially assuming that it must have been during 1867. I was surprised to discover, however, that it was published not in 1867, as generally supposed, but in 1868. The evidence now follows.

DATING COLEOPTERA HESPERIDUM

An invaluable tool for establishing the most precise dates of publication of British books is the fortnightly book-trade journal, *The Publishers' Circular*. There, *Coleoptera Hesperidum* is included in a list of "New works published from the 2nd to the 14th of March" (p. 150 of volume 31 (no. 732) of *The Publishers' Circular* for 1868). Furthermore, *The English Catalogue of Books* (Low, 1873: 415) also records the publication of *Coleoptera Hesperidum* as during 1868.

Corroboration of publication dates may sometimes be provided by announcements of books in newspapers, which of course are always dated to the day. Thus, *The Morning Advertiser* of 10 February 1868 (p. 3) includes *Coleoptera Hesperidum* in a list of books headed "Publications for the Past Week" (i.e., 4–10 February); whilst *The Staffordshire Advertiser* of 15 February 1868 (p. 3) includes *Coleoptera Hesperidum* in a "List of New Books". Hence, four separate printed sources indicate that *Coleoptera Hesperidum* was published on a date between 4 February and 14 March 1868.²

The issue of *The Spectator* dated 1 February 1868, cited by Bousquet (2016), lists *Coleoptera Hesperidum* under "Publications of the week" (p. 139), indicating that it had been published at some time between 26 January and 1 February 1868. This is confirmed by a letter from Joseph Dalton Hooker to Charles Robert Darwin, dated 28 January 1868, which comments on

² Only after I had completed the present typescript did I discover the catalogue "Litteratura Coleopterologica (1758–1900)" by Bousquet (2016) who had come to a closely similar conclusion (publication of *Coleoptera Hesperidum* between 1 February and 16 March 1868; see pp. 572–573) as myself, though based on different sources of evidence.

Wollaston's "Cape de Verd Coleopterology".³ Later in this letter, a *verbatim* quotation of a specific passage in the book confirms that Hooker was actually referring to *Coleoptera Hesperidum*. Hence, Hooker possessed a copy about the time of the earliest announcement by the book trade, the date-range of which is extremely unlikely to be incorrect, at least in respect of commercial availability of a book.

Possibly of relevance is that, in a previous letter, sent on 25 January 1868, Hooker wrote to Darwin, "You have probably heard of poor Wollastons [*sic*] misfortune—lost his all in a mercantile association, in which he invested, & from which he has not had 1^d.— he is off to Boulogne".⁴ Perhaps, therefore, in his sudden rush to leave for France (he was apparently still at home in Teignmouth on 13 January 1868),⁵ Wollaston might have instructed Van Voorst to send out his book to influential colleagues as soon as any copies were received from the binders. One might speculate that he believed that by leaving this matter in Van Voorst's hands, he could avoid seizure of his books by his creditors while he was out of the country.⁶ I have been unable to discover how Wollaston's financial problems were ultimately resolved.⁷

It is interesting to note that in the catalogue of the British Library, *Coleoptera Hesperidum* is dated 1867 (as per the title-page). The accession date of the legal-deposit copy received by the British Museum Library (Science Collection, shelfmark (B) G 10) is 25 February 1868, which is consistent with the range of dates here established from other sources.

POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE SPURIOUS DATE

What might have been the reason for the delayed publication of *Coleoptera Hesperidum*? Quite probably, Van Voorst hoped to benefit from the 1867 Christmas market, and perhaps optimistically instructed the London printers Taylor & Francis, on receipt of the manuscript of the final sheets for printing (pp. i–xxxix), to include that year-date on the title-page. However, finished copies would have needed to be ready for sale probably by about 15 December at the latest. Unfortunately, the final part of the manuscript apparently did not leave Wollaston's hands at Teignmouth, Devon, until after 7 December 1867, the date of his signing-off of the preface (p. iv).

³ Darwin Correspondence Project. Letter no. 5807, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/DCP-LETT-5807>. Accessed on 14 April 2017.

⁴ Darwin Correspondence Project. Letter no. 5798, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/DCP-LETT-5798>. Accessed on 14 April 2017. Since *Coleoptera Hesperidum* is not mentioned in the letter, at that time Hooker had apparently not yet received a copy. (Note that "1^d." is an abbreviation for the old monetary sum of "one penny".)

⁵ On 13 January 1868, Wollaston attended the annual meeting of the Teignmouth, Dawlish and Newton Infirmary and Dispensary, when he was appointed to the committee for the ensuing year (*Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 17 January 1868, p. 6).

⁶ The eminent banker Sir John Lubbock was "shocked at poor Wollaston's morals" and deplored his fleeing from his creditors. See Hooker's letter of 1 February 1868 to Darwin. Darwin Correspondence Project. Letter no. 5831, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/DCP-LETT-5831>. Accessed on 14 April 2017.

⁷ Wollaston was back in England by August 1868, appearing in the weekly arrivals list for Cheltenham, accompanied by the Rev. H. J. Wollaston at 6, Royal Parade; they arrived from "Withington" (probably the village about 35 miles north-west of Cheltenham) (*Cheltenham Looker-On*, 29 August 1868, p. 9). The identity of this Rev. H. J. Wollaston is uncertain; the initials and vocation are the same as of Wollaston's father, but he died in 1833, so perhaps this was one of his nine brothers.

Clearly, transmitting the remaining manuscript to Taylor & Francis; the setting-up of the type and printing; and finally the casing and distribution of copies to retailers would have taken somewhat longer than the one week or so remaining to make the book available by Christmas. Hence, the schedule must have extended a few weeks into the next year. No doubt Van Voorst would have considered that cancelling the title-page to correct the publication date would have involved too much expense and further loss of time, and so the book was issued as originally printed with the previous year's date.

CONCLUSIONS

Within the range of potential publication dates announced by the book trade (26 January to 14 March 1868 – see above), the earliest day on which *Coleoptera Hesperidum* can be demonstrated to certainly be in existence as a published work is 28 January 1868 (see Hooker's letter of that date to Darwin). Hence, in compliance with article 21.4 of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, 1999), that must be adopted as the earliest possible publication date. Furthermore, the Harvard-citation *referens* (*sensu* Williams, 2011) for *Coleoptera Hesperidum* should henceforth be "Wollaston, 1867 [1868]".

Coleoptera Hesperidum (Wollaston, 1867 [1868]) contains descriptions of ten new genera and 159 new species, so it must be ascertained whether priority of any of their names might now potentially be threatened by synonyms published elsewhere during January 1868, and also whether any nomenclatural acts might be affected. Such tasks are, however, beyond the scope of this paper, and are therefore left to specialist coleopterists.

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