
By W. F. H. Ansell (Dept. of Wildlife, Fisheries & National Parks, Zambia) and Anne Innis Dagg (Dept. of Zoology, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada)

It is now generally accepted that the Reticulated Giraffe is a subspecies of Giraffa camelopardalis Linnaeus (1758, Syst. Nat., (ed. 10) 1 : 66). But there is some question as to its correct nomenclature.

Mertens (1968, Senckenbergiana biol., 49(2) : 85-87) showed that Camelopardalis giraffa var. reticulata Weinland, 1863 is a junior objective synonym of G.c. antiquorum (Swainson, 1835). As Weinland’s name antedates the well known and universally used name Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata de Winton, 1899 for the Reticulated Giraffe of northeastern Kenya, southern Ethiopia and southern Somalia, Mertens requested the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to use its plenary powers to suppress the subspecific name reticulata Weinland, 1863 and validate reticulata de Winton, 1899 (Mertens, Bull. zool. Nomencl., 25(2/3) : 113, 1968). We support this proposal, but there is the following further consideration.

Giraffa camelopardalis australis Rhoads, Nom. nov. (Proc. Acad. nat. Sci., Philadelphia, 1896 : 518) has generally been taken as referring to the Cape Giraffe, and therefore a junior synonym of G.c. giraffa (Boddaert) (1785, Camelopardalis giraffa, Elenchus Animalium : 133), though it is worth noting that it cannot be regarded as a junior homonym of C [amelpardalis] australis Swainson (1835, Geog. & Classification of Animals: 95) or of Camelopardalis Australis A. Smith (1837, Miscell. zool. Lond., 2 : 40) as these are nomina nuda, therefore unavailable. At the time Rhoads proposed australis it was customary to use the English vernacular terms “Northern Giraffe” and “Southern Giraffe” to denote those from Kenya northwards and those from South Africa respectively, the areas in between being practically unexplored zoologically, and their forms of giraffe as yet un-named. No doubt it was this that caused acceptance of G.c. australis Rhoads as a synonym of G.c. giraffa (Boddaert). Nevertheless, careful reading of Rhoads’ original description in conjunction with the references he cited from Sundevall (1846, K. Vet. Akad. Handl., Stockholm, för ar 1844 : 175) and Thomas (1894, Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.: 135) indicates that he intended his name to apply to the female giraffe in the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, which he was discussing, and which may therefore be taken as the type. This specimen was collected somewhere between Somaliland and Lake Rudolf, and, though the exact locality was not specified, it undoubtedly came from within the range of the Reticulated Giraffe. This is further made clear by Rhoads’ comment that it exhibited “…the peculiarities defined by Mr. Thomas for the northern form” which were “…the dark marks were large, sharply defined, and only separated from each other by narrow pale lines…” (Thomas, loc. cit.). Thus by “southern race” Rhoads must have meant the form inhabiting the southern part of the northern range,
not the southern part of the African continent. This is in no way invalidated by the fact that de Winton himself, as shown by his remarks in 1897, *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.*: 276, thought Rhoads’ name to refer to the Cape Giraffe. Further, de Winton’s comment that Thomas’ description was based on a male Cape Giraffe was incorrect, as Thomas (*loc. cit*) was explicitly dealing with the skin of a giraffe from Somaliland (= Reticulated Giraffe).

Rhoads’ specimen, though once part of the exhibits department collection, was not listed in the card catalogue of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, nor incorporated into the mammal collection, and recent repeated searching has failed to uncover it at the academy. We are indebted to the Custodian of the Mammal Department, Dr. Robert Grant, Jr., for this information.

If our interpretation of Rhoads’ work is correct, then the prior name *G.c. australis* Rhoads, 1896 would be valid for the Reticulated Giraffe, with *G.c. reticulata* de Winton, 1899 a junior synonym. As above stated, we agree with Mertens’ proposal that the name *reticulata* de Winton 1899, as published in the combination *Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata*, should be placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology, and therefore request that the Commission:

1. use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name *australis* Rhoads, 1896, as published in the combination *Giraffa camelopardalis australis*, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;

2. place the name suppressed in (1) above on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid specific Names in Zoology.