

Articles

'Hypochoeris' / 'Hypochoeris': New Zealand usage is wrong and the rest of the world is right¹

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Abstract

The valid name of the genus *Hypochoeris*/*Hypochoeris* is *Hypochoeris*. The latter was published in Linnaeus' *Species plantarum* and the different spelling in *Genera plantarum* does not over-ride this. The *Code* does not allow changes in transliteration of names already published. Although this has generally been realised internationally, most usage in New Zealand has been of the incorrect *Hypochoeris*.

Keywords: catsear – cat's ear – Linnaeus – nomenclature – priority

Short communication

Two spellings of the genus *Hypochoeris* have been used: *Hypochoeris* and *Hypochoeris*. The name was published by Linnaeus in *Species plantarum* (Linnaeus² 1753), as *Hypochoeris*³, and used with that spelling in his *Flora Anglica* of April 1754 (Linnaeus 1754). Later that year, Linnaeus used *Hypochoeris* in *Genera plantarum* ed. 5 (Linnaeus 1754). However, he reverted to *Hypochoeris* in later works, such as later editions of *Species plantarum* (e.g. Linnaeus 1763), and later editions of *Flora Anglica* (Linnaeus 1759). Since *Hypochoeris* was Linnaeus' first and final choice, it seems clear that this was his intention.

Moreover, the correct name is that which conforms to the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* (Greuter et al. 2000), determined primarily by priority and starting with the 1753 *Species plantarum* (Articles 11.3 & 13). The name was published in the 1753 *Species plantarum* as *Hypochoeris*. Article 13.4 of the *Code* (Greuter et al. 2000) explicitly states that "The spelling of the generic names included in *Species plantarum*, ed. 1 [1753], is not to be altered because a different spelling has

¹ This article has been accepted by the Scientific Editor, upon the advice of two overseas referees.

² The modern spelling of Linnaeus' name is used.

³ Diphthongs such as 'æ' have been converted to single letters, as in modern usage.

been used in *Genera plantarum*, ed. 5 [1754]”. Linnaeus’ name is clearly based on a transliteration from the Greek name for the plant, ὑποχαρίς, which would normally be transliterated into the Latin alphabet as *Hypochoeris*, and for a new name such classical transliteration is recommended (Recommendation 60A). However, for earlier names (and one cannot get earlier than Linnaeus), the transliterations of the original authors must be retained (Article 60.7). It therefore seems quite clear that *Hypochoeris* is the correct name under the *Code*.

A genus can have only one correct name (Greuter et al. 2000, Article 11.1). In earlier taxonomic works, *Hypochoeris* was common, e.g. Bentham (1866), Hooker⁴ (1884), Bentham & Hooker (1937). That spelling is still almost always used in New Zealand (Allan 1940; Wilson 1978; Taylor 1981; Wilson 1982; Webb et al. 1988; Nicol 1997). It is used in *Current Names for Wild Plants in New Zealand* (Parsons et al. 1998). [The very concept of ‘current names’ is contrary to the *Code*, which gives rules for correct nomenclature, but does not dictate taxonomic judgement, which is always up to the individual.] In any case, for *Hypochoeris*, *Current Names* is wrong.

The most recent British flora uses *Hypochoeris* (Stace 1997). Recent indices of plant names also use *Hypochoeris* as their primary entry (Chapman 1991; Quattrocchi 2000). The disagreement has been resolved overseas, sometimes with the issue being addressed explicitly (Harriman 1980; Chambers 1991). The issue gives the impression of having been resolved in New Zealand, but the resolution is different from that in the rest of the world⁵, and incorrect. The correct name in New Zealand is the same as the correct name elsewhere: *Hypochoeris*.

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⁴ But as *Hypochoeris* in the index.

⁵ Though old habits die hard in Australia too, e.g. Gilfedder, L. & Kirkpatrick, J.B. (1993), Somerville & Nicol (2002)

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⁶ Place names have been modernized

Catsear, *Hypochoeris/Hypochaeris radicata*
 from *Stewart Island plants*, by Hugh D Wilson.
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