

TAUTONYMS IN BIOLOGY (PART 1)

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One of my hobbies is collecting tautonyms--a harmless and inexpensive activity. Unlike rock-collecting, tautonym-collecting is clean, requires very little exertion, and only a small amount of storage space. Unlike coin or stamp-collecting, tautonym-collecting does not deal in objects of value; I don't have a safe to keep my tautonyms secure, nor do I have to pay anyone when I come across a tautonym.

I have found nearly 400 tautonyms in scientific and reference literature that comes my way, from *Aaptos aaptos* (a kind of sponge) to *Zingel zingel* (a type of fish). I divide them into two categories: eutautonyms, in which the generic and specific names are identical, and aneutautonyms, in which the generic and specific names differ slightly in spelling. All eutautonyms are animals, because botanical scientific nomenclature forbids them, but a few plant names have generic and specific names similar enough to meet my criteria for an aneutautonym, e.g. *Cajanus cajan* (the pigeon pea) and *Cuminum cyminum* (the cumin, of which P.D.Q. Bach wrote in his oratorio *The Seasonings* "I'm cumin, I'm cumin, for my head is bending low...").

One fictional animal is included: Wile E. Coyote, the Warner Brothers cartoon character who futilely chases the Roadrunner. In one cartoon his scientific name is given as *Famishus famishus*! Real coyotes rejoice in the nontautonymical scientific name of *Canis latrans* (thieving dog).

The tautonyms on my list need not be current, but they must be found in at least one reputable reference. For example, the lion is given as *Panthera leo* in most books, but the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives it as *Leo leo*, and if the EB is not reputable, I don't know what is. Most, but not all, of my tautonyms are living. Some are no doubt endangered, but the only one I know is extinct is the fossil ammonite *Parkinsonia parkinsoni*. I do not count cases where merely the species and subspecies names are the same. Some tautonymical animals such as the gorilla and the bison have a common name the same as the tautonymic scientific name.

For certain creatures, the generic name and specific name differ but mean the same thing, usually in two different languages such as Latin and Greek; these I call heterotautonyms. Three well-known examples are *Xiphias gladius* ("sword" in Greek and Latin), the swordfish, *Ursus arctos* ("bear" in Latin and Greek), the black bear, and *Staphyllarctos uva-ursi* ("berry-bear" in Greek and Latin), the bearberry. These are

rare; I have fewer than a dozen. There are two species of owl, *Otus asio* and *Asio otus*, both of whose names mean "owl".

I don't know how many tautonyms actually exist in the zoological nomenclature, though I suspect they are rare and I have most of them. I suppose I could inquire of the international Committee on Zoological Nomenclature, based at the University of Oxford, but that would seem to be cheating, and at best would remove the thrill of the chase--though the ability of modern personal computers to sort through large (several million species) databases does have attractions for a tautonym-hunter.

Each entry in the table below lists the scientific name, the common name, and the language and meaning of the tautonym. Please send in any omitted examples, as well as information to fill in the blanks, including documentation. I am most interested in any botanical tautonyms that existed before botanists banned them from their nomenclature sometime around the turn of the century, and in obsolete zoological tautonyms. (As taxonomists learn more about the relationships between various species and/or delve more deeply into the taxonomic literature, they occasionally agree to change the genus or the species of an existing scientific name, and the earlier name becomes obsolete--but if it's tautonymic, it's still grist for my mill.)

Aaptos aaptos (hadromeridan sponge) Gk?
Achatina achatina (West African giant snail) Gk: agate
Agama agama (agama lizard) Carib?
Ahaetulla ahaetulla (rear-fanged bronze-back snake)
Alburnus alburnus (bleak fish) La: whitish
Alces alces (moose or European elk) La: elk
Alle alle (dovekie) Swed: bird's name
Alosa alosa (European shad or allice) La: shad
Amandava amandava (avadavat bird) Gujarati: Ahmadabad, India
Amazilia amazilia (amazilia hummingbird)
Amplustre amplustre (amplustre bubble shell mollusc)
Anableps anableps (four-eyed fish) Gk: look up
Anatina anatina (smooth duck clam) La: duck-like
Anguilla anguilla (European eel) La: eel, narrow
Anhinga anhinga (anhinga or water turkey) Tupi: bird's name
Anoa anoa (anoa) Malay: animal's name in Celebes
Anostomus anostomus (pencil fish or striped anostomus) Gk: down mouth
Anser anser (greylag goose) La: goose
Anthias anthias (serranid fish) Gk: flowery?
Apus apus (common swift) Gk: without feet
Arcinella arcinella (true spiny jewel box shell) La: little ark or box
Argus argus (great argus pheasant) Gk: mythic character
Aspis aspis (aspis fish) Gk?: asp
Aspius aspius (asp) La: asp
Astacus astacus (European crayfish) Gk: lobster, crayfish
Aulica aulica (aulica volute shell) La: of the hall or court
Avicularis avicularis (bird spider) La: bird-catcher?
Axis axis (axis deer or spotted chital) La: a type of animal in India

Badis badis (blue perch or badis)
Bagarius bagarius (goonch)
Banjos banjos (a banjosit fish)
Barbastella barbastella (western barbastelle bat) La: evening
Barbus barbus (barbel) La: beard
Basiliscus basiliscus (basilisk lizard) Gk: basilisk (kingly)
Belone belone (garfish) Gk: needle, dart
Bidyanus bidyanus (silver perch)
Bison bison (bison or American buffalo) La/Gk?: animal's name
Bombina bombina (common European fire-bellied toad) La: hummer, buzzer
Bonasia bonasia (hazel grouse) La: aurochs-like
Boops boops (bogue fish)
Brama brama (Atlantic pomfret)
Brosme brosme (cusk)
Bubalus bubalus (wild buffalo) La: buffalo, wild ox
Bubo bubo (eagle owl) La: owl
Bufo bufo (common toad) La: toad
Buteo buteo (European buzzard or short-winged hawk) La: hawk (owl?)
Calamus calamus (saucereye porgy) La: reed
Callichthys callichthys (cascaudo) Gk: beautiful fish
Callorhynchus callorhynchus (elephant chimaera fish) Gk: beautiful snout
Capreolus capreolus (roe deer) La: goat-like?
Caracal caracal (caracal) Turkish: black ear
Carassius carassius (crucian carp)
Cardinalis cardinalis (cardinal) La: cardinal (hinge)
Carduelis carduelis (European goldfinch) La: thistle
Caretta caretta (loggerhead turtle) Taino:
Casuarius casuarius (cassowary) Malay: bird's name
Catla catla (catla fish) Bengali: fish's name
Catostomus catostomus (large-scaled sucker) Gk: down mouth
Cerastes cerastes (horned asp or horned desert viper) Gk: horned
Chaca chaca (chacid fish) Hindi?:
Chalcides chalcides (three-toed or cylindrical skink) Gk: coppery
Chanos chanos (milkfish)
Chloris chloris (greenfinch or green linnet) Gk: green
Chlorura chlorura (green-tailed towhee) Gk: green tail
Chromis chromis (blue damselfish) Gk: colored
Ciconia ciconia (European stork) La: stork
Cinclus cinclus (water ouzel) La: kind of bird
Citellus citellus (suslik) Slavic: suslik
Clathrus clathrus (wentletrap shell) Gk: lattice
Clelia clelia (mussurana or sand viper)
Coccothraustes coccothraustes (hawfinch) Gk: seed-crusher
Cochlearius cochlearius (boatbill heron) Gk: spoon
Coeligena coeligena (bronzy inca) La: heaven-born
Coelorrhinus coelorrhinus (saddled grenadier) Gk: hollow beak
Colinus colinus (white-backed coly or mousebird) Gk: green woodpecker
Concholepas concholepas (hare's-ear shell or loco) Gk: shell-hare
Conger conger (conger eel) Gk: lump
Constrictor constrictor (boa constrictor) La: squeezer
Coscoroba coscoroba (coscoroba swan) S.Amer. Span: bird's name

Cossus cossus (goat moth) La: type of larva or grub
 Cotinga cotinga (purple-breasted cotinga) Tupi: wash?
 Coturnix coturnix (quail) La: quail
 Crangon crangon (sand shrimp) Gk: shrimp, prawn
 Cressida cressida (Australian big greasy butterfly) Gk: mythic character
 Crex crex (corncrake) Gk: a sort of long-legged bird
 Cricetus cricetus (hamster) Slavic: hamster
 Crocuta crocuta (laughing or spotted hyaena) Gk: a sort of wild animal
 Crossoptilon crossoptilon (Elwe's eared pheasant) Gk: fringe feather
 Curaeus curaeus (austral blackbird)
 Cursor cursor (cream-colored cursor or courser) La: of running, runner
 Cyanicterus cyanicterus (blue-backed tanager) Gk: blue-yellow
 Cygnus cygnus (whooper swan) Gk/La: swan
 Cymbiola cymbiola (species of volute mollusc) Gk: small cup or boat
 Cymbium cymbium (elephant-snout volute) Gk: small cup or boat
 Cyrina cyrina (hesperid butterfly)
 Dama dama (fallow deer) La (Celtic?): animal's name
 Dentex dentex (dentex or porgy) La: toothy
 Dives dives (melodious blackbird) La: rich
 Domicella domicella (black-capped lory) La: little lady
 Echinurus echinurus (spoonworm) Gk: viper-tail
 Emesis emesis (falcate metalmark butterfly) Gk: vomiting?
 Ensifera ensifera (swordbill hummingbird) La: sword-bearer
 Ensis ensis (curved razor shell) La: sword
 Equus equus (horse) La: horse
 Erosa erosa (?) La: worn away, gnawed?
 Erythrinus erythrinus (erythrinid fish) Gk: red, ruddy
 Falcipennis falcipennis (sickle-winged grouse) La: sickle-winged
 Famishus famishus (Wile E. Coyote) mock-La: very hungry
 Feroculus feroculus (Kelaart's long-tailed shrew) La: little fierce one
 Ficus ficus (fig shell) La: fig
 Flesus flesus (flounder) La: fish's name?
 Fossa fossa (Malagasay civet or fanaloka) Malagasay: animal's name
 Francolinus francolinus (francolin bird) Ital:
 Galbula galbula (green-tailed jacamar) La (Celtic?): type of small bird
 Galeus galeus (tope) La: dogfish, shark
 Gallinago gallinago (common snipe) La: hen
 Gallus gallus (red jungle fowl or domestic chicken) La: cock
 Gazella gazella (mountain gazelle) Arabic: gazelle
 Gemma gemma (amethyst gem clam) La: gem
 Genetta genetta (spotted genet) Arabic: animal's name
 Gerbillus gerbillus (gerbil) Arabic: jerboa
 Gesta gesta (blue-banded skipper butterfly) La: deed?
 Glis glis (common dormouse) La: dormouse
 Glycimeris glycimeris (bittersweet shell) Gk: sweet-bitter
 Gobio gobio (gudgeon) Gk/La: fish's name
 Goliathus goliathus (goliath beetle) Hebrew: Biblical giant
 Gonorhynchus gonorhynchus (beaked salmon) Gk: gonad-beaked
 Gorilla gorilla (gorilla) Gk: legendary African tribe
 Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa (mole cricket) La: cricket-mole
 Guira guira (guira cuckoo)

Gulo gulo (wolverine) La: glutton
Haemachatus haemachatus (ringhals cobra) Gk: blood-agate?
Harpa harpa (noble or common Pacific harp shell) La (Germ): harp
Hemicardium hemicardium (half-heart cockle shell) La-Gk: half-heart
Hemilepidotus hemilepidotus (red Irish lord) La-Gk: half-scaly
Heterophyes heterophyes (intestinal fluke) Gk: other body
Himantopus himantopus (stilt) Gk: thong-foot
Hippocampus hippocampus (sea horse) Gk: horse-sea monster
Hippoglossus hippoglossus (Atlantic halibut) Gk: horse-tongue
Hippopus hippopus (horse's-leaf shell) Gk: horse-foot
Histrion histrio (sargassum fish) La: actor
Histrionicus histrionicus (harlequin duck) La: of actors
Hucho hucho (huchen) German: fish's name
Huso huso (beluga sturgeon) Old High German: fish-skull
Hyaena hyaena (striped hyaena) Gk: swine, hog
Ibex ibex (ibex) La: animal's name
Ibis ibis (wood stork) Gk (Egyptian): bird's name
Icterus icterus (troupiat) Gk: yellow
Idus idus (ide or orfe) Swed: dark?
Iguana iguana (iguana) Arawak: animal's name
Indicator indicator (black-throated honeyguide) La: pointer-out
Indri indri (indri) Malagasay: look!
Irus irus (irus venus shell) Gk: rainbow
Jacana jacana (wattled jacana) Tupi (Portuguese): bird's name
Jaculus jaculus (jerboa) La: jumper
Janthina janthina (common janthina) Gk: blue violet (flower)
Lactarius lactarius (whitefish) La: milky, of milk
Laevicardium laevicardium (common egg cockle) La: left heart
Lagocephalus lagocephalus (pufferfish or oceanic puffer) Gk: hare-head
Lagopus lagopus (willow ptarmigan) Gk: hare-foot
Lagurus lagurus (steppe lemming) Gk: hare-tail
Lambis lambis (common spider conch) La: licker?
Lemmus lemmus (lemming) Danish/Norwegian: animal's name
Leo leo (African lion) Gk/La: lion
Lepadogaster lepadogaster (shore clingfish) La: limpet-belly
Lerwa lerwa (snow partridge) Nepali: bird's name
Leuciscus leuciscus (dace) Gk?: whitish?
Lima lima (spiny lima) La: rasp, file
Limanda limanda (dab) La: file (lime, mud)
Limosa limosa (black-tailed godwit) La: muddy
Liparis liparis (striped sea snail) Gk: fatty, shiny
Lithognathus lithognathus (white steenbras) Gk: stone jaw
Lithophaga lithophaga (common date mussel) Gk: stone-eater
Loa loa (species of nematode) Kongo: worm's name
Lota lota (burbot) La: fish's name
Lucioperca lucioperca (pike-perch) La: pike-perch
Luscinia luscinia (European or thrush nightingale) La: nightingale, singer
Lutra lutra (European otter) La: animal's name
Lutraria lutraria (common otter shell) La: of otters
Lynx lynx (European lynx) Gk: animal's name