

## 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 banjosid 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  
 Callorhinchus callorhinchus (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 linnnet) 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)  
 Coccythraustes coccythraustes (hawfinch) Gk: seed-crusher  
 Cochlearius cochlearius (boatbill heron) Gk: spoon  
 Coeligena coeligena (bronzy inca) La: heaven-born  
 Coelorinchus coelorinchus (saddled grenadier) Gk: hollow beak  
 Colius colius (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