

SCIENTIFIC NOTE

THE ELLUSIVE CITATION FOR *HAPLOCNEMUS SUBINTEGER* PIC, 1902  
(COLEOPTERA: RHADALIDAE: APLOCNEMINI) AND THE EVILS OF JOURNAL  
TITLE ABBREVIATION

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*Acting on a hunch I spent several months  
in Buenos Aires as Blind Pew...*  
– Monty Python, Episode 14

In a rare taxonomic twist, the type specimen of *Haplocnemus subinteger* Pic, 1902 (Rhadalidae: Aplocnemini) is deposited in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France, but the description went missing. Pic (1902) described *H. subinteger* and listed the species as *Aplocnemus subinteger* from “Mesopotamien”, an ancient designation for the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers essentially corresponding to present day Iraq, Syria, and Kuwait, in the *Coleopterorum Catalogus* with the citation “Journ. Ins. Nat., 2: 60” (Pic 1937).

During preparation of a catalog of the “Melyrid Lineage”, including the families Prionoceridae, Melyridae, Dasytidae, Mauroniscidae, Rhadalidae, and Malachiidae, AJM was unable to find a complete citation from the abbreviated listing in the catalog, suggesting that the citation listed by Pic was incorrect or incomplete. Pic (1913) failed to cite the paper in his list of publications up to that point, which added fuel to the notion that perhaps the paper had never been published. The species was not listed in the Zoological Record, and the citation was not found by Peacock (1987) in her review of the Rhadalinae. Thus, decades of search by several prominent melyrid workers failed to find the reference, elevating it to White Whale/Bigfoot status.

One of us (MLF) was enjoying a nice rant about the evils of journal abbreviations when the other (AJM) offered the story of the “Lost Pic” as

a practical example of abbreviations gone awry. The full citation is: Pic, M. 1902. *Haplocnemus subinteger* n. sp. and *Dasytes montanus* Muls. et Rey. Journ. Ins. Nat., 2: 60. Accepting the challenge, MLF began looking for the publication off and on starting August 2014. Many months of failure and frustration followed.

The “Lost” Pic (1902) was finally discovered in the following manner. Beginning with the citation above, a Google search for “*Dasytes montanus*” yielded Pic (1903), which provided the citation “Journ. des Nat., n<sup>o</sup>9, 1902, p. 60” (In retrospect, this citation is also in the catalog under *Aplocnemus montanus*). Searches for “journ. des nat.” yielded little, except a citation including “Journ. des Nat. de Mâcon” (Lambillon 1906). After trial and error searches, “Nat.” was decoded as “naturalistes” and a search for “journal des naturalistes” led to discovery of the *International Catalogue of Scientific Literature* (International Council 1903), price ten shillings and sixpence. The catalog lists: “Journal des naturalistes. Bulletin mensuel de la société des naturalistes de Mâcon (Saône et Loire). [mensuel.]”, abbreviated as “J. natural., Mâcon”. Searches using that journal title gave no useable results, and the title may be incorrect, but additional searches using “journal des naturalistes Mâcon” resulted in discovery of a holding at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: “Le journal des naturalistes : bulletin mensuel de la Société d'histoire naturelle de Mâcon”. The consistent terms “journal des naturalistes” and “Mâcon” helped to link the otherwise poorly fitting pieces together. An incomplete Interlibrary Loan

request (complete pagination was never known) was sent through Clemson University Libraries Resource Sharing, and they were courteous enough to scan the entire paper.

Journal title abbreviations are a lovely example of man's inhumanity to man. The author is required to go out of their way and expend time and energy to intentionally break something that was whole, just so the next person to come along must go out of their way to fix it. It is like sending a photograph to be framed but shredding it first. Other than to satisfy editors beholden to archaic publishing practices, do any situations exist where an abbreviated journal title is necessary? A full title is required to find a journal online, to search a library catalog, request something through Interlibrary Loan, and, in an ironic twist, the full journal title *must* be known in order to find or create the abbreviation.

In Day's (1979) day, journal title abbreviations were all the rage (he provided a list of word abbreviations and recommended memorizing them), printing cost was 12¢ a word, and there were less than 6,500 scientific journals (Mabe and Amin 2001). For shorter articles citing numerous well-known journals, the practice may have made financial sense, although it's difficult to image. However, as of 2014 there were more than 34,000 active journals (Ware and Mabe 2015), and printing cost is either nonexistent (for electronic publications) or negligible on a per word basis.

Yet, even the technological revolution is at a loss to help with the problem of journal title abbreviations. Using an online search to decode an abbreviated title usually only yields more examples of the same abbreviation. The printing press, movable type, automatic typesetting, photocopiers, digital press, electronic printing, and ultimately electronic publishing have not freed us from the bane of journal title abbreviations. For example, Midsouth Entomologist, started in 2008, has always been an electronic-only journal, but still requires journal title abbreviations. The Entomological Society of America (ESA), which publishes six periodicals, requires journal title abbreviations, except for non-English titles. (Why? In an international forum, all languages are foreign, what makes English special?) Thankfully, ESA has relented a bit and now allows full journal titles for "systematics-related articles".

There is little reason (any?) to justify journal title abbreviations today, and it may be that their

continued existence is simply because, no matter how much a scientist may scorn tradition, the inner human still craves it.

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## **The Ellusive Citation for *Haplocnemus subinteger* Pic, 1902 (Coleoptera: Rhadalidae: Aplocnemini) and the Evils of Journal Title Abbreviation**

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