

Good Heavens, Holy Cow!!!

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I recently received an interesting email. My first reaction was anger. Then I began laughing so hard I almost fell out of my chair. Finally, I thought I'd share both the posting and my response. This person has openly requested that we publish his post. I've done nothing to change the spelling, grammar or format as received. I have changed the individual's name.

Here it is, the person's post will be in Italics. Editor comments are in bold face and in brackets, Stan begins.

John: Thanks for your posting. It suggests quite strongly that you are at least both vastly uninformed and vastly misinformed. I will address each of your topics in its turn in an attempt to correct this state of affairs. Thus, we both may learn something here.

I realize there might be some slight repeating of facts in this letter, but please read the intire thing. My following statements are not directed to you personally, but rather the whole field of tarantula keepers, experts and educators. To begin with, I am new to the tarantula hobby. I presently own a tarantula and have become facinated with these remarkable creatures. I plan to start a larger collection.

Welcome to the hobby. I hope you find it even one tenth as enjoyable as we do.

I recently purchased a highly recomended book by Schultz & Schultz. There is a HUGE problem with this book. A problem that goes against science and the TARANTULA itself. I have also noticed this problem on several

internet sites dedicated to the tarantula. There are several problems with that book.

Most of them are addressed on the Internet at ucalgary.ca/~schultz/ An additional problem is that the hobby is progressing so fast that after only a few years, the GUIDE is beginning to show signs of being out of date.

Heres the problem, why do the authers of that book and so many tarantula experts have to list and call tarantulas by thier scientific names only?

The problem you refer to, however, is most definitely not a real problem, merely an artifact of your perception and lack of understanding. Read on. When trying to identify a tarantula during a conversation or dissertation (such as the GUIDE), there are only four possibilities: 1. Use some common name. 2. Use the scientific name. 3. Invent something. 4. Use some combination of the above. As stated clearly in the GUIDE, any given kind of tarantula may carry any number of common names and any given common name may refer to any number of different kinds of tarantulas. Even worse, there is little or no rationale to the way that common names are applied so there is no way to predict or determine if the name you are using is the correct name or not. In fact, there is no entirely "correct" common name equally applicable to everyone.

For these reasons and many others, using common names alone is largely inadequate, even in the spoken word, unless the person you're conversing with has the same cultural,

linguistic and educational background as you. Such is most definitely not the case in either readers of the printed word, or surfers on the Internet. Making up a new name for every kind of tarantula that didn't already have a more or less universally accepted common name would only make things worse. Doubtlessly you've read the story of Babylon. While there are big problems with using scientific names, they remain a default method for identifying tarantulas that cuts across cultural, linguistic and, to some extent, educational barriers. The system isn't perfect and some of us have profound criticisms of it, but at the moment it's the best we have.

In the GUIDE, we recognized this problem and decided to use scientific names with a cross reference as an appendix. This has several results: 1. The additional information is still readily available. 2. It saves expensive paper. The GUIDE is already almost 400 pages long, the largest single tarantula book in history. 3. The reader is encouraged to learn the scientific names. 4. Once the scientific names are learned, it saves huge amounts of time, not having to stumble over the endlessly repetitive iterations of common name associations.

When I was reading that book I was GREATLY upset and shocked. From the first page to the last page every time a species of tarantula was mentioned only the scientific name was given. I do not speak or understand Latin.

Neither do I. Since the Catholic Church stopped using Latin in Mass, neither does almost anyone else. The fact is that you don't have to speak or understand Latin to use scientific names in the same way that you don't have to speak or understand German to use my name. What does the phrase Stanley Anton Schultz mean? Does it even have a meaning? [I think Breene means crazy horse thief landlord.] Do you have to delve into ancient Germanic to understand the phrase? What makes you think that you're being

forced into Latin lessons when you are expected to learn a scientific name? My name, your name and the scientific name of some tarantula are merely labels that we use for uniquely identifying specific individuals or kinds, nothing more. What difference does it make if these labels are Latinized names, Germanic descriptions, common names in some other language, or even numbers? You still have to learn a new label for a new animal if you need or want to know anything about that animal!

Example, Haplopelma lividum. How do you even pronounce that?

Use the same rules of emphasis that you'd use with similar English words. There are books available from libraries that deal with this subject. Most of all, if you get it wrong, no one else will probably know or care. They aren't experts in Latin either.

Scientific names FOR ALL ANIMALS are for scientific purposes. NOT FOR USE BY THE GENERAL POPULATION. Where did you get this idea? Does any other hobby do this?

Orchid fanciers, African cichlid enthusiasts, cactus fanciers, killifish fanciers and amateur insect collectors to name several. There are many others.

With dogs, a Great Dane, German Shepard or Pointer, these are not scientific names. All domestic dog breeds belong to only one species. Reciting the scientific name everytime you mention the family pooch would have no purpose or utility. Not so with tarantulas. With snakes, a Boa constrictor, Ball python or Rat snake, these or not scientific names.

Boa constrictor is a scientific name that has been adopted as a common name. Reptiles have been kept as pets for many decades, perhaps a century or two. There are relatively few, commonly kept kinds of reptiles, they are generally quite distinct from each other, their common names are well entrenched in the hobby, and there is almost no possibility for confusion. Therefore, repeating the scientific name would be an exercise in pointless

redundancy. Reptile and amphibian enthusiasts often resort to scientific names for the more rare species or where the potential for confusion arises.

Why dont they use scientific names for DOGS AND SNAKES in books and internet sites? Because the readers do not speak Latin, and that is not how society has evolved to function in education and information.

Wrong. Because the readers already know about dogs and snakes. And now you do, too. See? You're already learning a lot in spite of your reluctance! The terminology has been well established and everybody is playing on a level field. Not so for tarantulas. You're also dead wrong on the "that is not how society has evolved to function in education and information" part, too. You need to do a lot of homework on the philosophy and purpose of education too, my friend. The Latin thing again?

When people like the authers of that book use complicated Latin words to so called inform beginners and children, that could be considered a crime against science and education.

This is absurd! The basic premise behind writing that book and all the others like it that have been written is to educate beginners and children, to teach these people about tarantulas. The whole point is to get beginners and children to learn those scientific names. You're suggesting that education is a crime against education? Novel concept! SCIENCE created those scientific names. That's why they call them scientific.

When I try to read that book and come upon the scientific name of a tarantula (without the common name) I have to stop reading go to the index look up the scientific name and then get the common name.

And this is how you learn the scientific name for an organism: By using it, referring to it, rolling it around the inside of your mouth a few times. It's called variously education and patterned learning.

This is not the normal order of things.

Excuse me? What WOULD be the normal order of things? Which common name? The one used in the hobby, the one used in Europe, the one on the AAS list, or the one taken off some dealer's price list? What makes you think the one you chose would be the correct one?

AND A (LARGE) PART OF THE TARANTULA FIELD SEEMS TO FOLLOW THESE INSANE FORMATS OF LISTING INDIVIDUAL SPECIES OF TARANTULAS.

Insane? And who would be ranting and raving over being asked to learn a few dozen new words and phrases? The standing joke among tarantula keeping enthusiasts is that anyone who keeps tarantulas is insane! Nothing new here. A question for you: Who has the problem, the person who obstinately refuses to learn a few sets of names, or the person who at least considers the concept? When everybody else in town wears a red shirt except you, the very first thing you should ask yourself is what they know that you don't. When everybody else who seriously keeps tarantulas uses the scientific name and you don't, the very first thought that should occur to you is that you're missing something here.

I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET INFORMATION ON SEPERATE TARANTULA SPECIES BEFORE I AM FORCED TO LEARN LATIN AND LATIN PHRASES.

The Latin thing again. You've obviously missed the point. The scientific name is part of the information you need to know about those separate tarantula species!

NO OTHER HOBBY OR BRANCH OF EDUCATION DOES THIS. NOT LIKE THIS.

Wrong. Check out www.orchidweb.org for an example. Have you never had a high school biology course? Have you never strolled through a botanical garden or even a garden shop?

My self education of the tarantula has been halted because of the authers of that book. And

I also run into the same obstacles on the internet.

I find it difficult to understand how that could be so much of an impediment. It merely requires absorbing new information, learning.

I do realize that there may be some confusion with the names of certain tarantulas.

This is a massive understatement!

But this confusion should be the responsibility of the experts who made the mistakes, Many, if not most, of these mistakes were made in the jungles of Borneo or Brazil by collectors who had much less of an education than your teenager.

You expect too much of them. Most of the experts you refer to have been dead for a half century to 200 years or more. I doubt they'll be of much help now. There are too few experts currently alive and working on the problems to be able to make more than a token effort. Granting agencies don't consider spiders and such to be of high enough importance.

and not a beginner like me.(and our children). [OH, MY GOD! It reproduced! Abandon all hope, we are doomed!] Just because of this confusion me and some 14 year old kid should not be forced to learn Latin in order to learn about a few tarantula species.

The forced thing again? The Latin thing again? Learning those names is all part of learning about those tarantulas.

You all may understand the Latin phrases because of years of experience. But these forced Latin lessons will stop people from entering this hobby and field of study. IT HAS HALTED ME GREATLY IN LEARNING ABOUT TARANTULAS. and my desires are strong.

The Latin thing again. The forced thing again. The scientific name thing again.

WHAT TO DO?

Obviously, learn the names.

The experts and people that give the general population information must start

using common names. Even if there are mistakes with several species. These experts like the authors of that book can no longer force people and children to learn Latin. NOT ALL OF THEM WILL LEARN LATIN AND STUDY SCIENTIFIC NAMES. That's the way human beings work.

The forced thing again. The Latin thing again.

Yes I know the scientific name for human beings was HOMO SAPIENS I bet I spelled it wrong. NOW IMAGIN A 14 YEAR OLD KID HAVING TO LEARN THE SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF 40 TARANTULA SPECIES WHEN ALL HE WANTS TO KNOW IS WHAT KIND OF SUBSTRATE TO USE FOR HIS PET.

Funny. That same 14 year old kid probably knows more about computers than you do! That would clearly indicate that they have some capacity for learning at least moderately complex things. We aren't talking rocket science here, just learning the names of a few dozen animals. Both you and the 14 year old have proven that you can learn to recite 26 different letters in the correct order, you've learned several thousands of combinations of those letters to produce words, learned to attach meanings to those words, and learned to juggle them in some fashion to get meaningful concepts across to others of our species. I think that both the 14 year old and you probably have the capacity to learn a few dozen unfamiliar names if you have the interest and take the time. And your lives will be much richer for it, believe me.

Pamphobeteus tetracanthus OR Brachypelma boehmei OR Avicularia avicularia OR Aphonopelma hentzi. No normal person would understand the above names.

What's to understand? The names are merely handles to help us deal with the kinds of animals, no more, no less. All indications are that there are literally thousands of otherwise normal people out there who have learned to deal with them, often quite handily.

When everybody else in town wears a red shirt except you.

Go back to that list of scientific names above and imagin a kid having to asociate a tarantula with those words.

But kids, adults, even people like you are doing it all the time! Wherein lies the difficulty?

IT IS HIGHLY DIFICULT BECAUSE THEY DO NOT SPEAK LATIN.

The Latin thing again.

Wouldnt it be so much eazyer to remember a name like Texas brown tarantula OR Pinktoe Tarantula OR Mexican bond tarantula instead of Brachypelma albopilosum. DO YOU SEE MY POINT?

I only see that you have some problem with learning to use names that you're unfamiliar with.

And people like the authers of that book and many other experts and educators dont see this OR they want to give everyone new to the hobby Latin lessons. I DONT WANT LATIN LESSONS. I just wanted to learn about Tarantulas. What if some kid buys the GUIDE. He starts to read and comes upon the words GRAMMOSTOLA SPATULATA. He then has to look up those words in the index and find out what that would mean in a English like language. And then he reads on and comes to the words GRAMMOSTOLA PULCHRA. then he decides he does not feel like learning Latin and he puts down the book JUST LIKE I DID.

The Latin thing, yet again? Then he (and you) will miss out on learning about one of the more fascinating kinds of organisms on the planet. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. We try, but we can't do it all alone. You have to expend some effort as well.

Now imagin that instead of that young boy or girl first incountering the word Grammostola spatulata the name they incountered was Chilean rose tarantula that same kid might have went on to learn the info. on 40 diferent kinds of tarantulas instead of

putting down the book.

Then they would have missed knowing the scientific name and missed being able to find out all that is published about that kind of tarantula under its scientific name. Thus, that person's learning deficit or psychological problem would effectively block their educational development, a very sad state of affairs indeed! The family physician should be consulted for referral to an appropriate therapist.

IT IS (HIGHLY) DIFICULT TO ASSOCIATE A TARANTULA WITH A PHRASE LIKE MEGAPHOBEMA MESOMELAS COSTA RICAN REDLEG TARANTULA IS SO MUCH EAZYER I cant even pronounce the latin words, do you see what I meen about a latin lesson? It is totally insane for the tarantula field or any aspect of it to expect beginers and children to STUDY and learn these horrible foriengn words.

The language you speak, the language we're now communicating with, is English. It originated in England. It developed over many centuries from Latin, Anglo-Saxon, German, and several Celtic dialects and can trace its origin back to a set of dialects and languages spoken in the Middle East many millennia ago. The very language you speak is a foreign language! In a very real sense, they're all foreign languages. How you could apply the term horrible to them is a complete mystery. What could possibly be so horrible about someone else's language? What's so horrible about learning a very few unique names for a few very unique animals?

I DONT WANT TO LEARN LATIN !!!! I know that there are tarantula society(s) and clubs and I know you all have meetings. One of you must bring up these points to the rest of the field. And the next time some one like Schultz write another book in Latin. They should write on the cover that this book is for experts. I have seen this book recomeded by no less than 3 experts on line. It was recomendad for beginers. Its time the field see things threw

the eyes of beginners and children as well. I have nothing against the authors of that book. I realize their love and respect for tarantulas. THEY WANT TARANTULAS TO BE CARED FOR PROPERLY AND THEY WANT HUMAN UNDERSTANDING OF TARANTULAS TO INCREASE. But unknown to them and many other tarantula experts, beginners and kids are pushed away from these remarkable creatures by the inability to learn about different species. [Good heavens, I may quit as chair of the Committee and only use scientific names from now on after this.]

Not inability. More appropriate terms might be unwillingness, resistance, even obstinacy. All of those people you mention are quite able to perform other complex tasks: Reading, writing, speaking (at least at some rudimentary level), driving motorized vehicles, operating a computer, etc. You present no evidence to suggest that they'd be unable to learn a few new names for a few new animals. No, inability is definitely not applicable here!

These people would have it so that before anyone could learn about a individual species they would have to learn phrases like Cyclosternum fasciatum. Why should anyone have to learn Latin just to learn about tarantula species. THERE IS NOTHING ELSE LIKE THIS PRESENT MOVEMENT, IT IS INSANE AND IT CAN NOT BE ALLOWED TO GO ON ANY FURTHER.

Oh, please! Spare us! It's not a movement, there's no conspiracy, it's reality. It isn't insane, it's based on a completely rational premise and carried out in a completely rational way. It's merely learning about the animals you profess to value and appreciate. And, trust me, it will not only continue, it will grow and prosper as we understand more about these creatures.

As I said before, its wrong for everyone.

No. Wrong only for those who either have a learning deficit or an emotional problem with learning something the least bit new or complex. Either way, therapy is required. Help is available.

EVEN THE TARANTULA ITSELF. Because that young man or woman that was supposed to do something for the field or the tarantula itself may have given up learning about tarantulas ALREADY because they did not want to learn 40 Latin phrases and I sure don't blame them because I don't feel like learning Latin either. From my looking around and learning about tarantulas I see that the field is connected together fairly well. You all have meetings, news letters and correspondence. These points must be brought up to the entire field. From what I can see you all and I have begun have respect for the well being, care and further understanding of these creatures. Forcing the newcomers and children new to the field to learn Latin is TOTALLY INSANE and AGAINST EVERYTHING YOU ALL LOVE AND DO. YOU ALL do not want to make it difficult for beginners and children to learn about tarantulas, but that is what they and you all have already done. THIS MOVEMENT THAT WANTS TO SEE THAT THERE IS NO CONFUSION IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF SEPARATE SPECIES OF TARANTULAS MUST CHANGE, AND THESE FORCED LATIN LESSONS MUST CHANGE NOW. As I have already stated and proved these foreign scientific names have already pushed people away from the hobby and field. And it must stop.

You've proved nothing except that you have a problem with learning, Latin, all things foreign, and that you may have a learning deficit and paranoid tendencies.

When ever people in the field of tarantulas write books, internet pages, or news letters they must all start speaking in a language that all the intended people can speak and understand.

It is the height of audacity, bigotry, ethnocentrism and chauvinism to think, much less insist, that everybody in the world must comply with your limited views, experiences and linguistic preferences. The GUIDE, probably every other tarantula book and

probably every site on the Internet that you refer to are all trying to present the salient ideas in ways that cut across cultural, linguistic and educational barriers to the best of their abilities. Each uses its own personal talents and preferences and therefore approaches the problem in a different way. That's what makes each different and desirable. Your insistence that they conform to your unenlightened bigotry is unacceptable!

And if a part of the field wishes to still call every species by its Latin scientific name ALONE without a common name. They must be pushed away from the rest of the field. Let them talk to the experts in Latin. The whole intire field can NOT turn its back on beginers and children who have a desire to learn about this creatures. If these people continue to go by these Latin names ONLY it will be harder an harder to learn and aquire knolege about tarantulas. And if someones only source of info. was the GUIDE they would be forced to learn Latin phrases. I am going to send this letter to several diferent society(s), clubs, organizations, and maybe some breeders. BUT ONE OF YOU MUST SAY SOMETHING AT THE NEXT CONFERANCE OR IN THE NEXT NEWS LETTER. THE WHOLE FIELD CAN NOT BE ALLOWED TO FOLLOW PEOPLE LIKE SCHULTZ AND THE REST OF THE EXPERTS THAT FOLLOW THIS NEW PRACTICE OF SPEAKING LATIN. [Holy cow!?! Maybe drugs shouldn't be legalized after all.]

New practice? The pre-Roman Italics started speaking a form of Latin perhaps 3,500 years ago. It was the major intellectual language for most of the Western World until at least the 1600s. That's about a 5,000 year history! It's been used by biologists for describing and naming living organisms for over 250 years. ENGLISH has been used as an international language for less than 300 years, as a scientific language it has only been acceptable for less than 100 years. Man, are you off base! Also, the conspiracy thing again, the Latin thing again, and the problem with

authority again.

IF ANYTHING say something FOR THE CHILDREN WHO WILL BUY THESE BOOKS AND GO TO THESE SITES. most of them will not want to study and learn Latin phrases I SURE AS HELL DID NOT.

And they should forever live in ignorance?
Are you setting an example?

*Etc. Etc. Etc. THANKYOU,
John Doe. New Orleans, LA*