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Recent Developments in International Biological Nomenclature

of

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**Abstract:** After a period of several decades of general neglect, biological systematics and taxonomy are again surfacing to the awareness of the scientific community and of policy makers. This we owe to the fact that they are the core disciplines of biodiversity research, now perceived to be a priority task in view of the impending threat of loss through extinction of a great number of species, and the wholesale destruction of ecosystems. Yet the renaissance of systematics and taxonomy is hampered by the inadequacy of the traditional rules governing the formation and use of scientific names of organisms. Names are a core aspect of human communication. They are the means by which scientists and laymen alike refer to organisms, the indispensable labels that enable the storage, retrieval and communication of any and all organism-linked data. This paper highlights the fundamental inadequacy of traditional nomenclatural Codes to fulfil their role. Past attempts to introduce new concepts into botanical nomenclature, such as the registration of new names and the stabilisation of the existing ones which are presently used, are mentioned - as well as their failure to gain acceptance by the small and highly self-centred community of specialists in the field. Recent attempts to launch competing sets of rules, the "Phylocode" in particular, are also discussed. While they may be a suitable means of breaking the dire monopoly of the Codes, they also have a dangerous destabilising potential. New solutions, which are doubtless needed, require great care lest we end up by undoing the achievements of the past.

**Key Words:** botany, zoology, codes of nomenclature, taxonomy, biocode, phylocode, names in current use, registration

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