



Reversal of precedence for *Notospermus* over *Ophiocephalus* and validation of *Notospermus viridis* (Nemertea: Heteronemertea)

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Abstract

The lineid heteronemertean nominal species *Borlasia viridis* Quoy & Gaimard, 1833 (type locality: Port Jackson, Sydney) has been considered synonymous with *Borlasia tricuspidata* Quoy & Gaimard, 1833 (type locality: Guam) and referred to as *Notospermus tricuspidatus* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833). The species eventually published in 1833 as *Borlasia viridis* had been quoted as *Ophiocephalus viridis* in Blainville's 1828 work, with the taxonomic authority ascribed to Quoy & Gaimard. As *O. viridis* (= *B. viridis*) and *B. tricuspidata* are here interpreted as different species, the former is validated as *Notospermus viridis* (Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828) comb. nov. The generic name *Ophiocephalus* Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828 has not been used as valid after 1899 for nemerteans (not as incorrect subsequent spelling of the freshwater perciform fish genus *Ophicephalus* Bloch, 1793), while *Notospermus* Huschke, 1830 has been used in at least 31 works published by 24 first authors from 1991 until 2026, thus satisfying the conditions stipulated in Article 23.9.1 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (4th edition). *Notospermus* is here declared a *nomen protectum* with respect to *Ophiocephalus*, a *nomen oblitum*.

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Introduction

The *Astrolabe* expedition (1826–1829), a French scientific voyage around the world, yielded descriptions of seven nemertean species (Quoy & Gaimard 1833). Among the seven was the lineid heteronemertean *Borlasia viridis* Quoy & Gaimard, 1833, based on a specimen collected among brown algae at a considerable depth in Port Jack-

son, Sydney. Another of the seven was *Borlasia tricuspidata* Quoy & Gaimard, 1833 from Guam.

Gibson (1981) treated *Borlasia viridis*, *B. tricuspidata*, and *Meckelia albovittata* Stimpson, 1855 as conspecific. Subsequent studies have shown that this broad species concept was overly inclusive. Chernyshev (2016) revalidated *M. albovittata* as *Notospermus albovittatus*, while Kajihara et al. (2016) suggested that *B. viridis* itself may not be conspecific with *B. tricuspidata*. These develop-

ments warrant reassessment of both the taxonomic and nomenclatural status of *B. viridis*.

Methods

This study is based on previously published literature. In this article, 'Article' and 'Recommendation' refer to those in the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature 1999).

Taxonomy

Notospermus Huschke, 1830

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Ophiocephalus Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828: 574, nom. oblit.

Notospermus Huschke, 1830: 681, nom. prot.

Notogymnus Ehrenberg, 1831: 66, nom. nud.

Type species. *Notospermus drepanensis* Huschke, 1830, fixed by monotypy.

Remarks. When Blainville (1828: 574) introduced *Ophiocephalus*, he attributed its authorship to Quoy & Gaimard. According to Recommendation 51E, the name should be cited as "*Ophiocephalus* Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828", rather than "*Ophiocephalus* Blainville, 1828" (e.g., Gibson 1995: 451).

Notospermus Huschke, 1830 and *Ophiocephalus* Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828—along with five other genera—were synonymized with *Lineus* Sowerby, 1805 by Bürger (1904: 88). Then, *Notospermus* remained invalid for 87 years. When it was re-validated by Riser (1991), who transferred *O. tricuspidata* (as *Lineus tricuspidatus*) to it, *Ophiocephalus* was not mentioned. So far as I am aware, the senior synonym *Ophiocephalus* Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828 has not been used as valid after 1899. An examination of Gibson (1995) and subsequent nemertean taxonomic literature failed to reveal any post-1899 usage, satisfying the condition stipulated in Article 23.9.1.1. The name *Ophiocephalus* has been frequently used for more than a century (e.g., Starks 1911; Yang et al. 2026) for snakeheads in the freshwater perciform family Channidae. However, *Ophiocephalus* is a subsequent incorrect spelling of *Ophicephalus* Bloch, 1793. Moreover, *Ophicephalus* Bloch, 1793 has been synonymized with *Channa* Scopoli, 1777 by Myers & Shapovalov (1932).

The junior synonym *Notospermus* is currently in prevailing usage, having been used as valid at least in the following 31 works (at least 25 required) by 24 first authors (at least 10 authors required) encompassing a span of 35 years (not less than 10 years required) in the immediately preceding 50 years (since 1976): Riser (1991), Senz (1994), Gibson & Sundberg (2002), Thollessen & Norenburg (2003), Chen et al. (2009), Herrera-Bachiller et al. (2015), Kvist et al. (2015), Chernyshev (2016, 2025), Kaji-

hara et al. (2016, 2022), Kaji-hara (2017, 2021), Lipej et al. (2017), Jiang & Deng (2018), Luo et al. (2018), Hookabe et al. (2019), Inoue & Satoh (2019), Hoffman & Kaji-hara (2020, 2023), Hookabe & Kaji-hara (2020a, b), Martin et al. (2020), Sun et al. (2021), Kahrić et al. (2022), Saadi et al. (2023), Santovito et al. (2023), Andrikou et al. (2025), Marturano et al. (2025), Maslakova et al. (2025), and Abato et al. (2026). It thus satisfies the conditions stipulated in Article 23.9.1.2. Under Article 23.9.2, *Notospermus* Huschke, 1830 is here declared a *nomen protectum* with respect to *Ophiocephalus* Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828, a *nomen oblitum*.

Notospermus viridis (Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828) comb. nov.

Ophiocephalus viridis Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828: 574 [secondary source].

Borlasia viridis Quoy & Gaimard, 1833: 288, pl. 24, figs 9–11 [from Port Jackson, Sydney, Australia].

Nemertes viridis: Örsted (1844: 91) [secondary source].

Meckelia viridis: Diesing (1850: 267) [secondary source]; Schmarda (1859: 43) [from Sri Lanka (Ceylon)].

Lineus viridis: Bürger (1904: 97) [secondary source].

Notospermus sp.: cbimages (2019) [from Tulamben, Bali, Indonesia].

Diagnosis. A *Notospermus* with light-green body; single transverse white band present in precerebral region, twisted anteriorly on midline; no white rings on the body (Fig. 1).

Remarks. *Ophiocephalus viridis* Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828 is interpreted here as an available species-group name under Article 12.1. Blainville (1828: 574) included only a single species in *Ophiocephalus*, namely *O. viridis*, and referred to the animal for which the genus had been established as being dark green dorsally and paler ventrally. Although brief, this statement is here interpreted as constituting a description associated with the sole species included in the genus, thereby rendering the species-group name available.

Blainville (1828: 574) ascribed the authorship of *Ophiocephalus viridis* to Quoy & Gaimard. Therefore, according to Recommendation 51E, the name should be cited as "*Ophiocephalus viridis* Quoy & Gaimard in Blainville, 1828".

Pending molecular and anatomical reassessment, *Notospermus viridis* is here considered a different species from *N. tricuspidatus*. When Gibson (1981: 206) synonymized *Borlasia viridis* Quoy & Gaimard, 1833 (Fig. 1) with *Borlasia tricuspidata* Quoy & Gaimard, 1833 (type locality: Guam) and referred to it as *Lineus tricuspidatus* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833), he also considered *Meckelia albobittata* Stimpson, 1855 as conspecific. This taxonomic treatment was an over-lumping, as Chernyshev (2016) later re-validated the last nominal species as *Notospermus albobittatus* (Stimpson, 1855). As Kaji-hara et al.

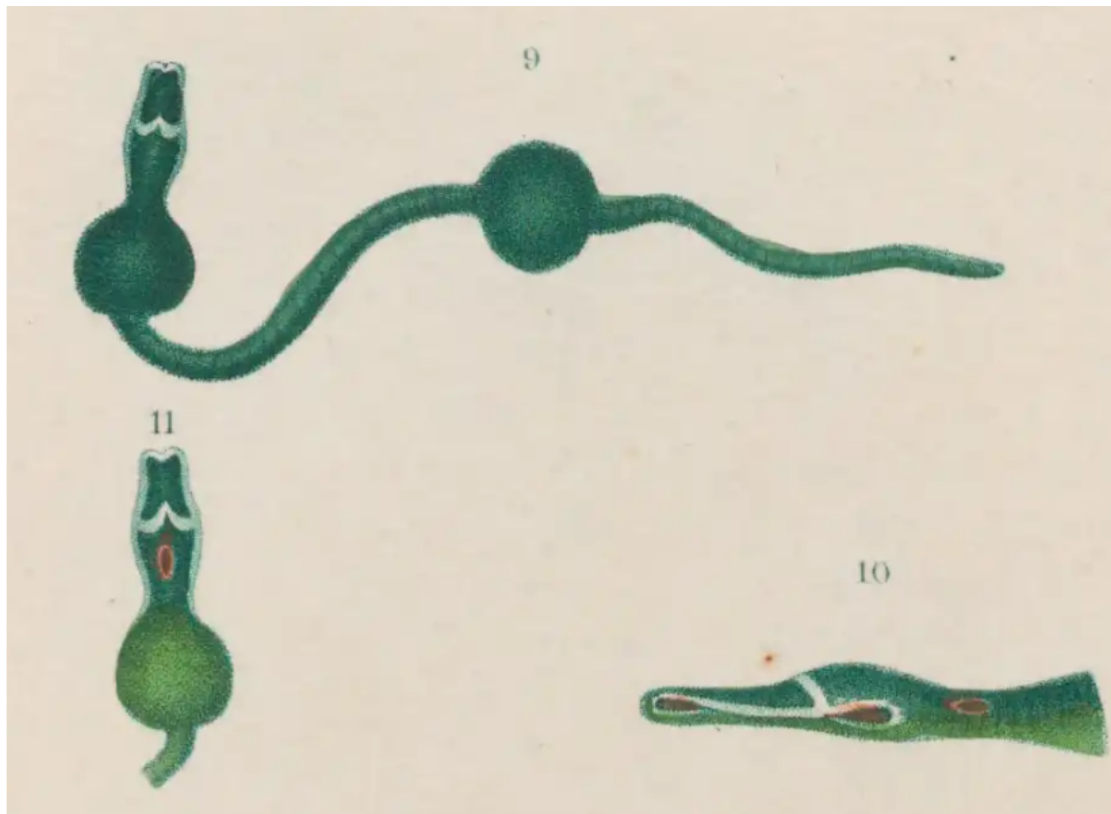


Figure 1. Original illustrations of *Borlasia viridis* Quoy & Gaimard, 1833 (pl. 24, figs 9–11); top, dorsal view of the anterior body (fig. 9); bottom right, lateral view of the head (fig. 10); bottom left, ventral view of the anterior body (fig. 11). The image is in the public domain.

(2016) suggested, *Borlasia viridis* (= *Ophiocephalus viridis*) and *Borlasia tricuspidata* represent different species, both belonging to *Notospermus*. The two species can be distinguished by the body color (*N. viridis* is light green vs. *N. tricuspidatus* is dark green) and the shape of the precerebral white transverse band on the dorsal surface (twisted anteriorly on the midline in *N. viridis* vs. twisted anteriorly three times in *N. tricuspidatus*).

Like many other congeners, *N. viridis* is widely distributed in the Indo-West Pacific, so far reported from Sydney, Australia (Quoy & Gaimard 1833), Sri Lanka (Schmarda 1859), and Bali, Indonesia (cbimages 2019).

Disclosures

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