

(2625) Proposal to reject the name *Littorella spicata* (*Plantaginaceae*)

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(2625) *Littorella spicata* Rojas Acosta, Cat. Hist. Nat. Corrientes: 175. 1897 [Angiosp.: *Plantagin.*], nom. utique rej. prop.
Typus: non designatus.

Nicolás Rojas Acosta (1873–1947) was a botanist from Corrientes Province, north-eastern Argentina, who made important contributions to the knowledge of the natural history of north-eastern Argentina, especially of medicinal plants in the area (Polich de Calvo, Hombres Mujeres Chaco. 1996). Nevertheless, the nomenclatural and taxonomic situation of many names that he published remains problematic, which is especially relevant because some of these names have priority over names in current use. To complicate things further, the authorship of the species described by Nicolás Rojas Acosta is very frequently confused with that of the Paraguayan botanist Teodoro Rojas Vera (1877–1954).

Our nomenclatural revision of *Littorella* P.J. Bergius has evidenced that the only species name that Rojas published under this generic name (*L. spicata* Rojas Acosta, Cat. Hist. Nat. Corrientes: 175. 1897) is most probably not a *Littorella*, but rather a species of *Plantago* L. Rojas described *L. spicata* (original spelling: “*littorella spicata*”) providing a scant morphological description (“*Plantaginácea de larga espiga*” [Plantaginaceae with long spike]) which nonetheless would be enough to distinguish the new species from all other *Littorella* species, and thus the name is validly published (Art. 38.1(a) of the ICN – McNeill & al. in Regnum Veg. 154. 2012). No information was given on original material, except the implicit suggestion (due to the title of the work in which it was published) that the species occurs in the Argentinian province of Corrientes. No original material for this name could be located, as is the case with many names published by Rojas (María Silvia Ferrucci, CTES Herbarium, pers. comm.). The morphological description included in the protologue is far too ambiguous to ascertain the identity of *L. spicata*, although it is enough to rule out that this name refers to a *Littorella* species. This is further supported by the fact that there is no evidence of the occurrence of any *Littorella* species in north-eastern Argentina. It should be noted that *Littorella* is sometimes subsumed within *Plantago* (e.g., Linnaeus, Sp. Pl.: 112–116. 1753; Rahn in Bot. J. Linn. Soc. 120: 145–198. 1996; Rønsted & al. in Bot. J. Linn. Soc. 139: 323–338. 2002).

Rojas attributed the Spanish common name “*Llantén macho*” (male plantain) to *L. spicata*, which indicates that this species would be relatively large and robust, which, in the context of *Plantago* would indicate that the species would be perennial. Careful consideration of

the information given in the protologue of *L. spicata* on its morphology and distribution indicates that this name could refer to *P. australis* Lam. (Tabl. Encycl. 1: 339. 1792), *P. napiformis* (Rahn) Hassemer (in Phytotaxa 221: 230. 2015: *P. paralias* subsp. *napiformis* Rahn in Bot. Tidsskr. 60: 56–57. 1964), or *P. tomentosa* Lam. (l.c.: 340), all of which are perennial and have long spikes, are native in north-eastern Argentina, and belong to *Plantago* sect. *Virginica* Decne. & Steinh. ex Barnéoud (see Rahn in Dansk Bot. Ark. 30(2): 1–180. 1974). A non-native species in the area, *P. major* L. (Sp. Pl.: 112–113. 1753), also is perennial and has long spikes, but being so well-known and readily recognisable compared to the native *Plantago* species in Corrientes, we do not think that Rojas would have confused specimens of *P. major* with an undescribed species. Considering that *L. spicata* predates *P. napiformis* by 118 years, the former is a potentially disruptive name, which could threaten a well-established species name, causing a disadvantageous nomenclatural change. This would be undesirable especially because of the uncertainties involving *L. spicata* due to the lack of original material. Despite the fact that *P. napiformis* was only recently (2015) elevated to species rank, this taxon has been accepted as a subspecies (*P. paralias* subsp. *napiformis*, and later *P. tomentosa* subsp. *napiformis*) in all taxonomic works on *Plantago* for the region since 1964 (e.g., Rahn, l.c. 1964: 47–57, l.c. 1974, in Fl. Fanerog. Argentina 269: 1–24. 1995; Hassemer & al. in Phytotaxa 221: 226–246. 2015, 278: 141–152. 2016, 316: 1–21. 2017). Furthermore, it should be noted that *P. napiformis* is a very frequent species, with a rather wide distribution in north-eastern Argentina, Paraguay and south-western Brazil, and is commonly used as a medicinal plant by people living in its distribution range (pers. obs.).

Considering all of the above, and with the objective of promoting nomenclatural stability in accordance to Art. 56.1, we believe that the best course of action would be to reject outright the name *Littorella spicata*. Acceptance of this proposal would prevent the possibility that a new combination for *L. spicata* in *Plantago* could become the correct name for the currently accepted *P. napiformis*. Rejection of this proposal would mean that the name *P. napiformis* could be threatened by *L. spicata*.

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