

Taxonomy and its users—do we need to keep changing the names of large and/or iconic groups of plants?

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Biological taxonomy—the science and practice of naming—is an odd and rather unique discipline. We are a science, but (perhaps more than many sciences) will always have an element of subjectivity. We provide an underpinning framework that virtually every other biological discipline—and many a non-biological one—depends on. Importantly, and unlike most other taxonomies, we provide names to many non-scientists. Our user groups amongst other disciplines and in the broader community sometimes get annoyed when we change the names of organisms in response to growth in knowledge and understanding. How should we as practicing scientists and taxonomists handle this annoyance? This talk will explore the sociology of name changes from the personal perspective of someone responsible for a controversial and, to some people, inconvenient name change, and the intersection with changes (and lags in) our own and our users' understandings of exactly what it is that we do, and why.



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