

Guidelines for Identification Services

Please refer to the following guidelines for availing identification services mentioned by Late Dr. T. C. Narendran under "Ethics in Taxonomy" (Narendran, 2006).

Taxonomists and user communities

1. Some send specimens for identification to taxonomists without getting prior permission from them. As a result the sender may not get a prompt reply or he may not get his specimen identified quickly. This is because the taxonomist may be busy at that time and normally he would have asked the reader to wait for some time to send the material till he completes his ongoing work. In some other instances, the taxonomist may be out of station and his subordinate may inform the sender to wait till the taxonomist returns. It is always courteous to write first and ask for permission before sending the specimens.
2. Some users irritate the taxonomist by repeatedly sending reminders to them for speedy identification although the sender can state in his first letter politely how important the identification is for his urgent work. After all, the specialist does not owe any such service to the sender of specimens and he may be busy with other research work of his interest and there may be several other requests from several other sources for help.
3. Since most specialists agree to identify specimens free of charge just for the sake of science, it is courteous and sometimes expected that the sender of specimens allows the specialist to retain at least some of the specimens of his choice. This is only a small compensation for the free service by the specialist. Some senders are reluctant to extend such courtesies.
4. If there is any new taxon identified by the specialist, he has every right to publish the description of the new taxon since it is his expertise of several years' that helped in the identification of the specimens. Hence it is inappropriate on the part of the sender of specimens to publish the taxonomic description of the new species or genus before the specialist does it. The sender can at the most request the specialist to publish the new name and description as early as possible so that it can be validated and used for further work. In such cases, most specialists will oblige and some specialists may even put the sender's name as co-author of the paper, if the sender is interested in doing so. (However good workers who send specimens to specialists usually do request the specialist not to include their names as co-authors since they have not contributed anything to the taxonomic study by the specialist or to the paper the specialist publishes).
5. Often senders do not take care in properly packing the specimens while dispatching them to the taxonomist. As a result, the taxonomist receives badly damaged specimens he will not be able to identify.
6. Some send unsorted materials containing several diverse orders or classes or families to a specialist who has specialized only in one particular order or subfamily or family. This gives added burden to the specialist for preliminary separation which the sender himself could have done before sending the specimens.

7. Some senders do not give relevant data on hosts, localities seasonal details, etc. of the specimens to the taxonomists. All such relevant data concerning the specimens, if available will help the specialist to identify the specimens more quickly and easily than without such data. Some students among senders of specimens may withhold such relevant details thinking that the specialist will publish them as 'new host record', etc. This is ridiculous since the specialist will be least bothered about publishing such small notes since he has much more important work to publish and he may have several hundreds of such unpublished host records, etc. with him.
7. Some senders usually send only very few specimens to the specialist even if they have plenty of specimens to spare. Sending as many specimens as possible will help the specialist to take care of the variations within the taxa and to dissect out one or two specimens to study the genitalia, mouth parts, etc.
8. Some senders after getting identification results from the taxonomist, fails to acknowledge this help while publishing papers mentioning the determination made by the taxonomist.

Reference

Narendran, T.C. 2006. An Introduction to Taxonomy: 1-80 (Published by the Director, Zool. Surv. India, Kolkata).