Rules about species names

• Scientific names of species comprise two parts, called a binomial, with the genus name and the specific name. You can consider the genus like a surname and the specific name like your individual name. A single genus can have many species in it.

• Each genus-specific name pair must be a unique combination (there are no other species with this name), unlike vernacular or folk names (like “rockfish”).

• The specific name must be different from all other species already described in the same genus.

• Genus names always begin with a capital letter while specific names begin with a lowercase letter.

• Scientific names contain no diacritical marks (no accents, apostrophes, etc.), numbers, or hyphens.

• Scientific names must be more than one letter long, and must be possible to pronounce (e.g. “mxyzptlk” is unacceptable).

• Scientific names are often in Latin or ancient Greek and follow standardized rules of grammar (they must be nouns or adjectives). If they are Latin or Greek, the genus name and the species name must have gender agreement (but do not worry about this aspect).

• Even if not Latin or Greek, a scientific name is typically Latinized – it may stem from any language, although most names are Latin or Greek in origin.

• Some people refer to a scientific name as a Latin name and it usually appears in italics in publications because it is from another language.

Other considerations

• Although it is not a violation of the ICZN, by convention the name does not name a species after oneself.

• A species can be named after another person as an honor (http://iczn.org/content/how-do-i-name-species-after-someone).

• Species can be named after some feature of the organism, perhaps its morphology (e.g. hairy=hirsute, striped=striata, pulchella or pulchra=beautiful), habitat (geographic location, e.g. peruviana), where it lives (e.g. on a host plant).

• The name can be derived from Peru’s geography, people, culture, indigenous languages, etc. and Latinized. This site is informative on Peru’s indigenous languages: http://www.peru.sil.org/es/lengua_cultura/familia_linguistica_quechua