

Honorable Editors,

In this letter we would like to refute an authoritative and reductionist comment by Professor Oleg Aleksandrowicz, concerning the classification of leeches within the phylum Uniramia. Professor Aleksandrowicz believes that in our paper entitled „A checklist of leech species from Poland” (Bielecki A., Cichocka J.M., Jeleń I., Świątek P., Adamiak-Brud Ź. 2011, *Wiadomości Parazytologiczne*, 57 (1): 11–20) in Table 2 „*Must be Annelida*” because „*Hirudinea have never been classified as a class within the phylum Uniramia*” [translated in Polish].

We are surprised that Professor, without a knowledge of literature, which is mentioned (i.e. Sawyer 1986), makes such comment and dissembles laborious research of many scientists. We have noticed that changes in the classification of higher taxonomic level make difficulties for specialists of one taxon.

It would be the best solution to respond to Professor’s remark in the review article „Holism and reductionism in leech (Hirudinea) classification. Arthropodization in Hirudinea: Evidence for a phylogenetic link with insects and other Uniramia”. And so we intend to do.

Meanwhile, we present a few words concerning the classification of leeches. Until now the most comprehensive work about these animals is three-volume monograph by Sawyer (1986), in which

leeches, Hirudinea, are listed as the class of the subphylum Clitellata in the phylum Uniramia. This phylum is divided into freshwater taxa with clitellates, and land taxa, with Onychophora, Myriapoda and Hexapoda. However, this division by Sawyer (1986) is based on the embryological characters of this group of animals, which was a modern approach at that time.

Considering the dynamic changes in the systematics of leeches that result from intensive phylogenetic reconstruction based on morphological characters and molecular data (by M.E. Siddall, E. Bureson, S. Utevsky, P. Trontelj), we decided to give a second, modernized, classification (Table 3). According to the latest research findings leeches are the order Hirudinida (in our work the subclass) within the class Clitellata synonymized with Oligochaeta within the phylum Annelida.

We believe that the vision of classification from only-one-taxon point of view, and ignorance of the studies that broaden the spectrum of our imagination and unconventional thinking, and lead us to formulate appropriate questions, causes many ill-conceived comments, like this one by Professor Oleg Aleksandrowicz.

Yours sincerely,

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and co-authors*