

# A CODE OF PRACTICE FOR NAMING NEW SPECIES IN AOTEAROA?

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## BACKGROUND

Science uses a set of rules by which species are named, based on principles first defined by Linnaeus. When a new species is discovered and classified, the discoverers of new species are expected to comply with these rules when naming new species. However, in Aotearoa, a range of strategies have been applied to the naming of new species within a scientific context.

## AIM

To examine the use of Māori language in species nomenclature.

## METHOD

We extracted examples of naming in which the Māori language was used. To do this, we reviewed the journals of the Royal Society of New Zealand and international journals to provide global comparisons.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Māori language has been used in many cases of species nomenclature in Aotearoa, from early 19 century ethnographers and naturalists through to modern botanists.

Most common uses of Māori language in scientific naming are:

- recognition of the local Māori people;
- recognition of the discovery location; and
- to describe a physical attribute of the species.

Problems in the use of the Māori language in scientific naming include:

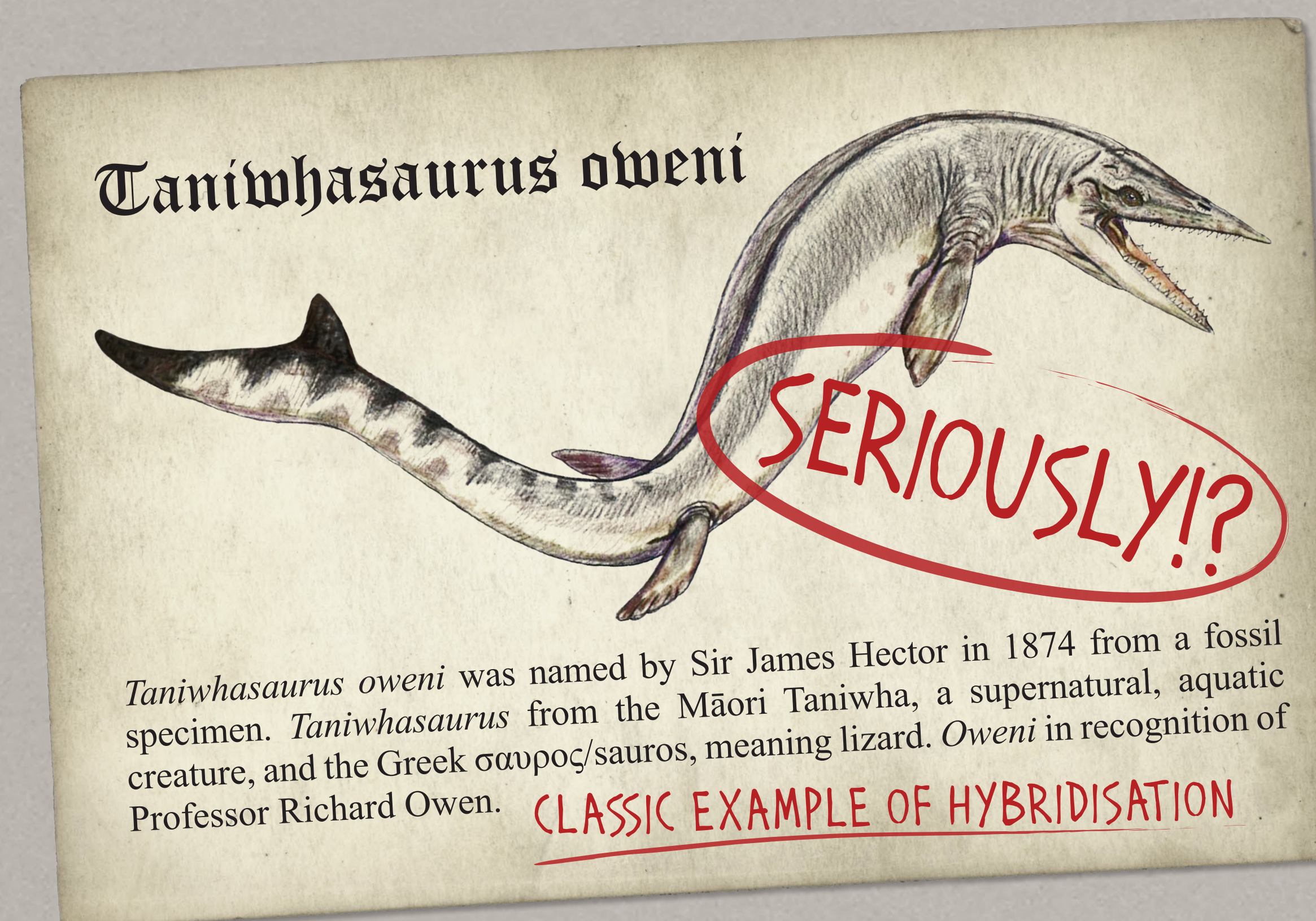
- the arbitrary nature of the practice;
- language hybridisation;
- incorrect linguistic context;
- a lack of full understanding of the meanings of the words and names; and
- the questionable naming practices of some taxonomists.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME

The simple answer is 'everything'. Names evoke memories of the past and they provide a frame of reference to signify the connection of people, culture and language to the environment, to historical, social and political events.

There is a great advantage of developing a set of possible recommendations for the use of indigenous words in the names of new species. Using sacred names, such as those of Gods, chiefs, ancestors' names, the names of people and places, is unlikely to be appropriate.

We recommend that researchers should consult with local iwi, Māori language communities and language experts and pay greater attention to rules of naming within the Linnaean system to avoid confusion and culturally inappropriate names.



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