

# Restating scope of genus *Metaphire* Sims & Easton, 1972: 40 years on

(Oligochaeta)

Robert J. Blakemore

**Abstract.** Clarification of correct placement of species in genus *Metaphire* Sims & Easton, 1972 is required as differentiation from *Amyntas* Kinberg, 1867 hinges on condition of male pores in their respective type-species. Confusion is due in part to misconception of rules of ICZN and partly because of problems of parthenogenetic degradation of male organs. In summary, *Amyntas* is the default genus of pheretimoids with superficial or absent male pores, *Metaphire* species differs by having non-superficial male pores and in *Pheretima* Kinberg, 1867, which is not known in East Asia, taxa further acquire nephridia on spermathecal ducts. The type of *Metaphire*, *M. javanica* (Kinberg, 1867), was misidentified in Australia but *M. californica* (Kinberg, 1867), its possible synonym, is widespread and is now confirmed in Korea. This latter cosmopolitan is still often confused with Japanese *Duplodicrodrilus schmarda* (Horst, 1883) that has eversible intromittent organs developed much more so than in *Metaphire*. Figures are provided.

**Key words.** Taxonomic priority, genera, pheretimoids, Asian earthworms.

## Introduction

Genera are contrivances to help place and organize groups of similar species. SIMS & EASTON (1972) realized the difficulty in placement of several component taxa when they established *Metaphire* mainly for taxonomic ‘convenience’ to provide “*smaller, more manageable groups*”. However, its male pores in copulatory pouches are obviously a derivative, regardless of timing or locality, from the superficial male pores as definitive of prior *Amyntas*, thus retention of both genera has phylogenetic merit. Compare this to GATES (1982: 52) who, while ignoring SIMS & EASTON (1972) for 10 years and despite accepting (on page 38) that invagination of genital pores is a secondary development, makes this false distinction in his male pore differentiation categories: “*invaginate*” versus “*superficial, i.e., non-invaginate*”. The key phrase is bolded because I wish to emphasize the point that GATES, and those who follow his reasoning, make a fundamental mistake: It makes little phylogenetic sense (and in this case also defies ICZN priority) to have “*invaginate*” male pores as the primary division when the opposite is the case: *i.e.*, from BLAKEMORE (2000) male pores are either “*superficial or non-superficial*”, just as setae are either lumbricine or non-lumbricine, nephridia are holoic or “non-holoic” and prostates are either tubular or “non-tubular” derivatives. This distinction is even more valid when the current ‘default’ genus is *Amyntas* with superficial male pores rather than *Pheretima* or *Metaphire* that, by definition and original designation of type-species, both have non-superficial male pores. Degree of development