

Mr. Stuart Ashman
New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs
407 Galisteo St.
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Mr. Ashman,

I am writing to express concern over an article that recently appeared in New Mexico Museum of Natural History Bulletin 37 titled "*Rioarribasuchus*, a new name for an aetosaur from the Upper Triassic of North-Central New Mexico". This article is by New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science (NMMNH&S) Curator Dr. Spencer Lucas and colleagues and provides a new name for a Triassic reptile previously called *Desmotosuchus chamaensis* by Dr. Lucas and his co-authors. This paper was written some time after, but released approximately one week before, my own much more detailed descriptive paper also providing a new name for these specimens. Thus, by rules of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature their name takes precedence over mine. Shortly after the New Mexico Museum Bulletin was released I contacted Dr. Lucas and asked him about his article: he replied that the *Rioarribasuchus* paper is based on his independent discovery that the fossil belonged to a new genus rather than the genus *Desmotosuchus*. When I notified him of my impending paper he claimed that he had no knowledge that I intended to provide a new name for this animal. Dr. Lucas' comments are disturbing for several reasons:

1) After the first *Desmotosuchus chamaensis* paper was published in the Spring of 2003 by Dr. Lucas and colleagues I visited the NMMNH&S museum collections and examined the material first hand. I discussed with several of the staff that I did not feel that the specimens belonged to *Desmotosuchus* but instead were more like an animal called *Paratypothorax*. A few months later, Dr. Andrew Heckert (then collections manager of the NMMNH&S), Lucas, and colleagues released another paper in a NMMNH&S Bulletin that repeated the claims that the specimens represented *Desmotosuchus*.

2) In my Masters Thesis completed in December 2003 I referred the specimens in question to a new genus which I named *Heliocanthus*. Dr. Heckert and other staff at the NMMNH&S were notified of the release of my thesis and sent a copy for their library. I also published an abstract in the Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology (to which Dr. Lucas subscribes) and gave a talk at the Annual Meeting of Society of Vertebrate Paleontology in late 2003 where I noted that *Desmotosuchus chamaensis* represented a new genus. This information was also published in a second abstract in 2004 by Stocker et al. which is frequently cited by NMMNH&S staff in their publications.

3) In numerous papers from 2003 through 2005 Dr. Lucas and colleagues continued to insist that the material belonged to *Desmotosuchus*.

4) In 2005 I published an invited paper in a NMMNH&S Bulletin (edited by Dr. Lucas) where I reiterated that this material belonged to a new genus. Dr. Lucas was a reviewer of that paper and his written (dated and signed 4/2/05) comment to my statement was that he did not agree with my assessment. My submitted manuscript also noted that I had a paper in preparation dealing with this problem. A paper published by Drs. Heckert, Lucas, and Hunt in the same bulletin acknowledged my differing opinion but still considered the material to represent *Desmotosuchus*.

5) My manuscript renaming this material *Heliocanthus* was accepted for publication by the Journal of Systematic Paleontology on December 2, 2005 and was in press until its release the

first week of January in 2007. During this time I made no secret of my intentions or the name I was providing to NMMNH&S staff. The name was listed on the Petrified Forest National Park website and used in exhibits at that institution.

6) Dr. Lucas' paper was released the last week of December of 2006. It consists of only a few paragraphs, was not extensively peer reviewed, and cites my 2005 paper as the authority for providing a new genus name for this material. Furthermore, this was published in a NMMNH&S Bulletin that he co-edited, so he had the opportunity to "fast-track" the publication of his paper so that it would appear before my contribution.

Thus, it seems clear based on Dr. Lucas' citing of my 2005 paper that his renaming of the material was not based on his independent discovery. Furthermore, my intent was clear and had been circulating since 2003 and was known to colleagues of Dr. Lucas; he must have known of my intent because of his comments as a reviewer of my 2005 paper. To underscore the seriousness of this situation I would like to point out that shortly after the publication of Bulletin 37 and my own paper, I was independently contacted by one of the "co-editors" of the volume who wanted to assure me that he was not directly involved with the publication of the *Rioarribasuchus* paper, wanting to dissociate himself from what could be perceived as a "claim jump". Subsequently, another co-editor apologized for the publication of the paper in a public blog discussing the issue. Neither of these editors is affiliated with the NMMNH&S. Finally, this is not the first time that I have encountered a similar situation with Dr. Lucas and his colleagues.

In 2004 I made a discovery of skeletons of an animal named *Revueltosaurus callenderi*. This animal had previously been described as an early dinosaur by Dr. Adrian Hunt in 1989 and in subsequent publications, many authored with Dr. Lucas and other NMMNH&S staff. My 2004 discovery showed that *Revueltosaurus* was not a dinosaur but rather a form of early crocodile relative. I prepared a paper with colleagues and shortly before it was published (May 2005) gave a presentation on my findings at a paleontology meeting in Utah that was attended by Drs. Lucas and Hunt. One of their colleagues, Dr. Heckert, also cited me as a reference for this discovery in one of his publications in late 2004. In April of 2005 Drs. Hunt and Lucas published an abstract claiming independent discovery that *Revueltosaurus* was a crocodile rather than a dinosaur and implied this again in a NMMNH&S Bulletin paper published later that year. Although my discovery was cited in the latter paper, they used their April abstract as the primary authority for this discovery and suggested that their discovery was independent of mine.

I hope that you will look into this matter to determine whether staff members of the NMMNH&S are abusing editorial privileges in publishing non peer-reviewed, self-authored papers in these bulletins, and whether this constitutes inappropriate use of the bulletin series. I enclose documentation of all of the points that I have raised here and will be happy to provide any further information you request.

Sincerely,

William G. Parker
Vertebrate Paleontologist
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