President’s Message:  
The Scientific Name for Greasebush in Kern County:  
Forsellesia vs. Glossopetalon  
by Rich Spjut

One species of shrub in Kern County that we have yet to see on our Chapter field trips, since I joined the CNPS in 2009, is greasebush (Crossosomataceae), not to be confused with greasewood (Sarcobatus vermiculatus, Sarcobataceae, formerly Chenopodiaceae) found mostly outside Kern County except for three reports, two from Edwards Air Force Base and one from the “Caliente Quad” “near Bakersfield.” The latter appears to be “Adobe Station,” a former rail stop just south of Hwy 223 along Adobe Road and west of Hwy 99, collected by C. A. Purpus in May 1897 (Jepson 1923, without reference to county; Shevock 1984). It was subsequently rediscovered there and from nearby canyons by James Shevock during March 1981. He reported five populations mostly at mid elevations, 1100–1300 m (CCH), the largest number of plants on Laura Peak. Shevock, during his presentation at our annual 2018 potluck meeting, mentioned Forsellesia while showing a slide of Lake Isabella from Laura Peak where another perennial that we have not seen on field trips — Cryptantha confertiflora (Boraginaceae) — occurs.

What is the correct genus name for greasebush in Kern County according to the International Code of Nomenclature (ICN, https://www.iapt-taxon.org/nomen/main.php)? Article (Art.) numbers cited herein are in reference to the ICN.

The genus Glossopetalon was described by Asa Gray in 1853 from a specimen reportedly collected near Frontera, New Mexico, possibly from the southern end of the Organ Mountains — the species named G. spinescens. The genus name, of Greek origin, refers to the tongue-like shape of the petals. Glossopetalum was also a genus name given by J. C. D. Schreber in 1789 to another plant (Carl von Linné, Genera Plantarum, ed. 8, I: 205), with the earlier name, Goupia Aublet (1775) was an alternate name thus illegitimate (Snip from BHL shown below).

The slight difference in endings (um v. on) indicates that one is Greek, the other Latin (Brown 1954, petalon; Stearn 1983, petalum; Holmgren 1988).

Edward Greene in 1893 (Erythea 1:206) created a new
an improper Latin termination but otherwise in accordance with this Code are regarded as validly published; they are to be changed to accord with Art. 16–19, 21, 23, and 24, without change of the author citation or date (see also Art. 60.12).” Art. 20 recommendation (20a): “Use Latin terminations insofar as possible.”

Margaret Ensign, a student of Phillip Munz, who revised the genus Forsellesia in 1942, pointed out that in order to use the later name given by A. Gray, the spelling would have to be conserved. Art. 14.11: “A name may be conserved in order to preserve a particular spelling or gender...” This is usually done by submitting a proposal for publication in the journal Taxon. The International Botanical Congress meets every six years to decide on proposals, which include amendments to the code. The code is “retroactive unless expressly limited.”

But botanists can be impatient. In August of the same year, 1942, Harold St. John rejected Forsellesia (Proc Biol. Soc. 55: 109-112) arguing that Schreber’s addition of Glossopetalum over Goupia was illegitimate. Art. 53.1, Note 2: “A validly published earlier homonym, even if illegitimate, rejected under Art. 56 or F.7, or otherwise generally treated as a synonym, causes rejection of any later homonym that is not conserved, protected, or sanctioned (but see Art. F.3.3).”

Brummitt (Taxon 42: 696–97, 1993), made reference to an unpublished submission for review by the Nomenclatural Committee (one person committee, Brummitt) on the controversial spelling, reviewed under Art. 53.4, which states: “When it is doubtful whether names of their epithets are sufficiently alike to be confused, a request for a decision may be submitted to the General Committee...A rec-mendation may then be put forward.” Brummitt then reported that the Nomenclatural Committee found the names Glossopetalon and Glossopetalum not confusable. However, this decision is contradicted by the literary history in which both Forsellesia and Glossopetalon had been used equally (50:50). Thus, for anyone to say that Glossopetalon and Glossopetalum were not confusing, after they had been in confusion for the past 108 years, is hypocritical.

The conclusion here is that Glossopetalon is currently illegitimate according to Art. 14.11, 32.1, 53.1, because Glossopetalum A. Gray is a homonym for the earlier Glossopetalum Schreber. Unless the original spelling (Glossopetalon) is conserved (Art. 53.1), Forsellesia remains the correct genus name, and in current use (Ackerfield 2015; Mimulus Memo: Mar 2015, Sep 2018).

The genus Forsellesia has more than one species; the one in Kern County has been treated as F. nevadensis (Ensign 1942; Munz 1959; Shevock 1984).