

OPINION

RESPONSE TO “*BOTULA KLEEMANNI* VALENTICH-SCOTT, 2008, ACTUALLY A MEMBER OF *LITHOPHAGA (LEIOSOLENUS)*”

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I appreciate having an opportunity to respond to Dr. Kleemann's hypothesis that *Botula kleemanni* Valentich-Scott, 2008, might be better included in another genus. While his suggestions have merit, I find many of his conclusions to be lacking, and will outline the discrepancies below.

Dr. Kleemann based his findings on two photographs of the holotype. These images include an exterior lateral view and an internal lateral view. Sadly, he has not examined any of the type material of the species in question. Additional paratypes, showing variation within the species, also were not examined. Had Dr. Kleeman examined these specimens he would have noticed the following characters.

1. There is significant variation in the placement of the beaks, from completely terminal as in *Botula* in the strict sense, to subterminal (e.g. the holotype specimen).
2. The beaks are exceedingly inflated in many specimens, as in *Botula*.
3. The ventral margin is incurved in some specimens, and straight in others.
4. The periostracal matt on the posterior end is not like the typical calcified concretions of *Leiosolenus*. *Botula kleemanni* has a softer, more fibrous matt, frequently with sand inclusions.

In addition, Dr. Kleemann suggests that Fig. 2I in our publication (Valentich-Scott & Tongkerd, 2008) is not an image of *Botula kleemanni*. This image is of a paratype specimen of this species (SBMNH 80178). It has very little of the periostracal matt, but is definitely a *B. kleemanni*.

So, in fact, this species represents characters of both *Botula* and *Leiosolenus*. It was well outside the scope of our original publication to erect a new genus, but perhaps this will be accomplished by subsequent authors.

LITERATURE CITED

- Kleemann, K., 2009. *Botula kleemanni* Valentich-Scott, 2008, actually a member of *Lithophaga (Leiosolenus)*. *Raffles Bulletin of Zoology*, 57(1): 221–223.
- Valentich-Scott, P. & P. Tongkerd, 2008. Coral-boring bivalve molluscs of southeastern Thailand, with the description of a new species. *Raffles Bulletin of Zoology*, Supplement No. 18: 191–216.