

Common names for *Cricetus cricetus* (Rodentia: Cricetidae)

Народные названия обыкновенного хомяка, *Cricetus cricetus*
(Rodentia: Cricetidae)

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Abstract. We list over a hundred vernacular names for *Cricetus cricetus*, which are in use in English and in languages spoken within the distribution range of the species. These names belong to 36 languages (including three historical languages: Old Slavonic, Old Czech, Old High German) from nine linguistic groups: Slavic (13 spoken languages), Uralic (6), Turkic (4), German (3), Romanic (3), Romani (1), Iranian (1), Mongolic (1), and Chinese (1). The two currently most used names (Hamster, *Cricetus*) have roots in Slavic languages. “Hamster” and names related to it (Hamsterul, Homyak, Chomik, Komak) originate from the Old Slavonic “Homěstor”. “Skrzeczeck”/“Skreczec” (Polish) is an example of onomatopoeia, an imitation of the hamster’s vocalization and is closely associated with various names in other Slavic languages (Skrečok, Křeč, Křeček, Chrček, Hrček, Hřčak, Gerčik), German (Grentsch, Krietsch), Romanian (Hârciog), and Hungarian (Hörcsög), and with the scientific tautonym *Cricetus cricetus*. *Cricetus* was first used by Albertus MAGNUS in the 13th century.

Key words. *Cricetus cricetus*, vernacular names, nomenclature, etymology, zoological names.

INTRODUCTION

“In order to gain knowledge of an animal, it is first of all necessary to know its name” (our translation from German, “Um zu der Kenntnis eines Tieres zu gelangen, ist es vor allem nötig, dessen Namen zu wissen”; SULZER 1774). This is the introductory sentence to a chapter on Nomenclature in the early scientific monograph on the common hamster *Cricetus cricetus* (Linnaeus, 1758), written by a German physician and naturalist, Friedrich Gabriel SULZER (1749–1830). The hamster is characterised by its unique external morphology, its habit of caching food for hibernation, occasional population outbreaks, and its current rapid population decline (MITCHELL-JONES et al. 1999). Unsurprisingly, colloquial names for *C. cricetus* are well established, involve little ambiguity, and therefore require no particular attention from the point of view of zoological nomenclature. On the other hand, the familiar appearance of the hamster has resulted in a great number of vernacular names throughout its vast Eurasian range. The diversity of common names attracted our attention, just as that of other naturalists in the past. Names for *C. cricetus* were punctiliously documented during early cataloguing of the diversity of the natural world in the 18th century. More recently, comprehensive lists of colloquial names

have been provided by MOHR (1961), MITCHELL-JONES et al. (1999) and BOGOMOLOV (2017). We extend this body of evidence by a list of all common names we were able to collect from the mammalian and etymological literature.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

We searched for names in a great variety of publications, both scientific and popular. Our interest was restricted to nations with the common hamsters occurring in their territory, the only exception being common names in English. Names as originally spelled are consistently listed in quotation marks and starting with an upper case letter (“Name”). Non-Latin characters were transliterated using the ISO 9 transliteration system. The system is univocal, as each character is replaced by one equivalent character which represents the original spelling and allows for reverse transliteration. The transliterated version follows the original spelling in square brackets. The names are arranged according to linguistic groups.

RESULTS

Germanic linguistic group

English. Common English name for *C. cricetus* is “Hamster”, either used alone (e.g. PENNANT 1793, GRAY 1821, OSBORN 1910), or in combination with an adjective: “Common Hamster” (MURRAY 1866, ELLERMAN & MORRISON-SCOTT 1951, CORBET & HILL 1980, MITCHELL-JONES et al. 1999, MUSSER & CARLETON 2005), “Black-bellied Hamster” (LUNDE & SMITH 2008), “European Hamster” (REZNIK-SCHÜLLER et al. 1974), and “Eurasian Hamster” (ANONYMOUS 2018). In the 18th century (LESKE 1779) and early 19th century (FISCHER 1814, WEISSENBORN 1839), *C. cricetus* was also called “German Marmot”.

German. German vernacular names have already been meticulously documented by naturalists of the Renaissance (e.g. GESNER 1551) and Illumination (BRISSON 1762, SULZER 1774, DONNDORFF 1792), and were widely known before 1800 both in Germany and abroad (e.g. PENNANT 1793). Similarly to English, *C. cricetus* is also named “Hamster” in German (RZACZYNSKI 1721, BRISSON 1762, SULZER 1774, ZIMMERMANN 1777, DONNDORFF 1792, PENNANT 1793, BECHSTEIN 1801, FISCHER 1791, 1814, BLASIU 1857, MOJISOVICS 1897, WETTSTEIN-WESTERSHEIM 1934, MOHR 1961, VAN DEN BRINK 1968). In the Old High German (spoken between the years 700 and 1050), *C. cricetus* was named “Hamustra” (OREL 2003). Prior to the 19th century, the name was occasionally spelled “Hamester” (GESNER 1551, BRISSON 1762, SULZER 1774) or “Amster” (DONNDORFF 1792, BECHSTEIN 1801). Furthermore, the “Hamster” was combined with various adjectives and the most ancient composite names are “Korn-hamster” (SULZER 1774), which was more frequently spelled “Kornhamster” (SCHREBER 1792, BECHSTEIN 1801, WEISSENBORN 1839), and “Gemeine Hamster” (LESKE 1779, DONNDORFF 1792, BECHSTEIN 1801, GLOGER 1842, REICHENBACH 1835, GISTEL & BROMME 1840), with alternative spelling “Gemeinen Hamster” (GLOGER 1842, ZIMMERMANN & HANDTKE 1967). “Feldhamster” (NIETHAMMER 1982, BORKENHAGEN 1993, GÖRNER 2009, MEYER 2009) and “Grosshamster” (VAN DEN BRINK 1968) might be more recent as we traced them only in sources published during the second half of the 20th century. Another composite name is “Hamstermaus” (DONNDORFF 1792, BECHSTEIN 1801).

Several vernacular names which are now obsolete were local. According to BRISSON (1762), *C. cricetus* was named “Kornfarle” around Strasbourg; the name was known (as “Kornfärle”) to GESNER (1551). Alternative spellings were “Kornfärklein” (GESNER 1551) and “Kornferkel” (DONNDORFF 1792, SCHREBER 1792, WEISSENBORN 1839). SCHREBER (1792) claimed “Grentsch”, “Grutschel”, and “Erdwolf” were Silesian, and “Krietsch” was of Austrian origin. DONNDORFF (1792) also listed “Grosse Feldmaus”, which was rarely used at his time. Similarly to French (see below), *C. cricetus* has also been associated with the marmot (*Marmota*) in German: “Strasburgisches Murmelthier” and “Deutsches Murmeltier” (DONNDORFF 1792, PENNANT 1793, BECHSTEIN 1801).

As already stated, “Hamster” is the most frequently used German vernacular name now as was also the case in the past. Out of 41 references with German common names for *C. cricetus* quoted in DONNDORFF

(1792), 34 sources state only “Hamster” (one states its abbreviated version “Amster”). Six sources quote 1–9 other vernacular names in addition to “Hamster”, which are most commonly associated with the first part of the word “Korn-”: “Kornferkel” (3 sources), “Kornfarle” (1), “Kornfärklein” (1), and “Kornhamster” (1). “Krietsh” is quoted in a single source.

Dutch. “Hamster” (MOHR 1961, PELZERS & LENDERS 1992).

Flemish. “Hamster” (FRENCHKOP 1981).

Romanic linguistic group

French. Similarly to the Germanic linguistic group, “Hamster” is the most widespread name for *C. cricetus* in French and is used alone (GESNER 1551, ACLOQUE 1910, TROUËSSART 1910, DIDIER & RODE 1935, MOHR 1961, BAUMGART 1996) or with an adjective: “Hamster commune” (GÉRARD 1871, NIETHAMMER 1982, BAUMGART 1996), “Hamster gris” (SAINT-GIRONS 1973, LE LOUARN & QUÉRÉ 2003), “Grand hamster” (LE LOUARN & QUÉRÉ 2003, BAUMGART 1996, VAN DEN BRINK 1968), and “Hamster d’Europe” (BAUMGART 1996). Further three names were used during the 19th century: “Marmotte de Strasbourg” (BRISSON 1762, SULZER 1774), “Marmotte d’Allemagne”, and “Cochon de seigle” (BOUVIER 1891).

Romanian. The most commonly used names are “Hârciog” (MITCHELL-JONES et al. 1999, BOGOMOLOV 2017), “Hârciogul” (CĂLINESCU 1931, VASILIU 1937, HAMAR et al. 1959, MURARIU 1984, POPESCU & MURARIU 2001), and “Cățelul-pământului” (MURARIU 1984, POPESCU & MURARIU 2001, CHIȘAMERA in litt.). Other names quoted in the literature are “Hamsterul-comun” (HAMAR et al. 1959, MURARIU 1984, POPESCU & MURARIU 2001), “Hârciogul ordinar” (CĂLINESCU 1931), “Hîrciog”, “Hîrciogul”, “Șobolanul pătat”, “Colțanul pătat” (HAMAR 1967) and “Ciuriciu” (BEZLAJ 1977).

Moldavian. “Hârciog” (MONTEANU et al. 2013).

Romani linguistic group

The only name from this linguistic group is for Burgenland. Given that Roma live in many regions also occupied by *C. cricetus*, the diversity of common names for this animal is most likely underrated.

Burgenland Romanes. “Hamsteri” (SPITZENBERGER & BAUER 2001).

Slavic linguistic group

Old Slavonic (also Old Church Slavonic/Slavic) names for *C. cricetus* were “Хомѣсторъ” [Homěstor] and “Хомѣстаръ” [Homěstar] (TRUBAČEV 1981).

Earlier authors quote two “Illyrian” names for *C. cricetus*: “Skrzecziek” (GESNER 1551) and “Krziczi-eti” (SULZER 1774, WEISENBORN 1839). Illyria refers to a Roman province between the Danube and the Adriatic Sea, where *C. cricetus* occurs only marginally. In the early 19th century (1809–1814), the Illyrian Provinces were an ephemeral administrative unit encompassing parts of what are now Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia. Territorially the provinces did not overlap with the geographic range of *C. cricetus*.

Russian. The most commonly used name is “Хомякъ” [Homâk] (FISCHER 1817, BOGDANOV 1871, KUZNECOV 1948), also spelled “Хомяк” [Homâk] (OGNEV & WOROBIEV 1923), “Chomak” (SCHREBER 1792), “Chomäk” (WEISENBORN 1839), and “Khomjak” (BOGOMOLOV 2017). The name is rarely used alone, usually being combined with an adjective: “Обыкновенный хомяк” [Obyknovennyj homâk] (EVERSMAN 1850, VINOGRADOV 1933, VINOGRADOV & ARGYROPULO 1941, KUZNECOV 1944, VINOGRADOV & GROMOV 1956, MOHR 1961, GROMOV et al. 1963, KUZÂKIN 1963, FLINT 1965, ТЕМБOTOV 1972, ŠUBIN 1977, GROMOV & BARANOVA 1981, GROMOV & ERBAEVA 1995, KRUSKOP 2002, ЛЕБЕDEV 2012), “Хомяк обыкновенный” [Homâk obyknovennyj] (РОPOV 1960, PAVLINOV et al. 2002), “Обыкновенный рыжий хомяк” [Obyknovennyj ryžij homâk] (HEPTNER 1926), and “Пестрый хомяк” [Pestryj homâk] (ARGYROPULO 1936).

Another name in use during the 18th and 19th centuries is “Карбышъ” [Karbyš'] (FISCHER 1817), also spelled “Карбыш” [Karbyš] (EVERSMAN 1850, BOGDANOV 1871) or “Karbusch” (ERXLEBEN 1777, SCHREBER 1792, PALLAS 1811, WEISSENBORN 1839). FASMER (1953) derives the name from Turkic. We could not identify “Karbyš'” in the Turkic linguistic group and regard the etymological origin of the name as uncertain.

BOGOMOLOV (2017) stressed that “Karbyšch” is the name for a standard tricolored *C. cricetus*, while black (melanistic) hamsters are named “Zemlyanoi medvedko”, literally an “earth/soil bear”. In FILIN (1976) the “Zemlyanoi medvedko” indicates a mole (*Talpa*). In the mid-19th century, EVERSMAN (1850) claimed that in the province of Kazan, a standard tri-colour *C. cricetus* was named “Хомяк” [Homâk] or “Карбыш” [Karbyš], while the melanistic type was known as “Крот” [Krot] which is the Russian name for the mole (*Talpa*).

Another historical Russian name is “Stepnaja krissa” (literally a steppe rat) which was used in Siberia (PALLAS 1811). During the 20th century, the Russian inhabitants of Siberia and Northern Kazakhstan still referred to *C. cricetus* as “Крыса” [Krysa] (KAŠENKO 1900, ZVEREV 1937, ŠUBIN 1977), i.e. a “rat”.

Ukrainian. The common name in Ukrainian is the same as in Russian, “Хом'як звичайний” [Hom'âk zvyčajnyj] (ŠARLEMAN' & TATARKO 1927, MIGULIN 1938, MEŽŽERIN & LAŠKOVA 2013, ZAGORODNIUK 2006), also spelled “Чомак” (PALLAS 1811) or “Khomjak” (BOGOMOLOV (2017). In West Ukraine, *C. cricetus* is also called “Хома” [Homa] (TATARINOV 1956).

Rusyn. Considered either a separate language in its own right (also known as Ruthene or Ruthenian) or a dialect of Ukrainian and spoken by Rusyns in the Carpathian region in Serbia, Slovakia and Poland. Common names for *C. cricetus* are “Герчик” [Gerčik] or “Гарчак” [Garčak], locally also “Дучко” [Dučko] and “Тарко” [Tarko] (КЕРЧА 2007).

Belarusian. Belarusian vernaculars for *C. cricetus* do not differ much from those in use in Russia and Ukraine: “Хамяк звычайны” [Hamâk zvyčajny] (GAJDUK 2003), “Звычайны хамяк” [Zvyčajny hamâk] (DEMÁNČIK 2006), and “Khamyak” (BOGOMOLOV 2017).

Polish. The earliest recorded Polish vernaculars were “Skreczcz”, “Skreżczek” and “Chomik” (RZACZYŃSKI 1721, PALLAS 1811, SCHREBER 1792, MOHR 1961, URBAŃCZYK 1980). “Skreczczek” was used from the 15th (URBAŃCZYK 1980) to the 18th (BRISSON 1762) and 19th centuries (WEISSENBORN 1839). For Polish, current sources quote “Chomik” (KOWALSKI 1964) and “Chomik europejski” (MITCHELL-JONES et al. 1999). “Chomik” has been in use in Poland since 1498 (URBAŃCZYK 1954) but was first used for the mole (*Talpa europaea*).

Upper Sorbian. A West Slavic minority language spoken by Sorbs in the historical province of Upper Lusatia (now in Saxony, Germany). The popular common name is “Žurk”, supposedly a verbal derivative of “zuriti” (scolding, raging), therefore referring to the habit of *C. cricetus* to fiercely attack a human in self-defence (SCHUSTER-ŠEWIC 1989b). Alternatively, “Žurk” may have an even earlier origin. “Žiurkėnas”, which is the Lithuanian name for *C. cricetus*, originates from “žiurkė”, indicating a rat (*Rattus*), and was integrated into several Slavic languages where it also denotes the rat: “Szczur” (Polish), “Щур” [šur] (Ukrainian), and “Шчур” [ščur] (Belorussian) (SMOCZYŃSKI 2007). WEISSENBORN (1839) used this name for *C. cricetus* as “Schurks”.

Lower Sorbian. A West Slavic minority language spoken by Sorbs in the historical province of Lower Lusatia (now a part of Brandenburg, Germany). Names in use for *C. cricetus* are metaphorical: “Zemcygař”, “Zemstař”, “Zemski pjas”, and “Zemski psik”. The former two names (“Zemcygař” and “Zemstař”) consist of two parts: “zem-” from “zemja” (Lower Sorbian for soil) and “-cygař” (“of incomprehensible origin”); “-stař” may be an abbreviation for “Hamstar”. The latter two names (“Zemski pjas” and “Zemski psik”) translate as “earth dog” (SCHUSTER-ŠEWIC 1989a).

Czech. WEISSENBORN (1839) quotes “Sskrecek”, with a reference to the Moravian dialectal “Skřeček” mentioned by ŠIR (1835). Anyway, modern sources consistently refer to *C. cricetus* as “Křeček” (BOGOMOLOV 2017) or “Křeček polní” (MOHR 1961, ANDĚRA & HORÁČEK 2005, ANDĚRA & GAISLER 2012). The Old Czech spelling is “Křeč” (BEZLAJ 1977).

Slovak. Two common names are in use in Slovak. “Skrečok poľný” (ANDĚRA & HORÁČEK 2005) is associated with Polish names, while “Chrček roľný” (FERIANCOVÁ-MASÁROVÁ & HANÁK 1965) and “Chrček poľný” (SLÁDEK & MOŠANSKÝ 1985, KRÍŠTOFIK & DANKO 2012) resemble the South Slavic “Hrček” or “Hrčak”. Further names in use in Slovak are “Chrček”, “Chrčok”, “Hrčok”, “Škrček”, “Skreček”, and “Škrečok” (BEZLAJ 1977, BOGOMOLOV 2017).

Slovenian. Two names are currently in use: “Navadni hrček” (BEVK 1957) and “Veliki hrček” (KRYŠTUFEK 1991). BEZLAJ (1977) quotes several archaic names: “Skrček”, “Skríček”, “Křžek”, and “Skřžek”.

Serbian. The vernacular in use since the early 19th century is “Хрчак” [Hrčak] (MARINKOVIĆ 1851, PANČIĆ 1869, DOKIĆ 1883, HABJIAN-MIKES et al. 1987); another version uses an adjective “Ridi hrčak” (literally a russet hamster; MIRIĆ 1969). In spoken language, “Hrčak” is locally pronounced “Rčak” (PAUNOVIĆ pers. comm., cf. BEZLAJ 1977).

Croatian. The Croatian name is the same as in Serbian: “Hrčak” (TVRTKOVIĆ 2006, BOGOMOLOV 2017) or “Veliki hrčak” (MITCHELL-JONES et al. 1999).

Bulgarian. Although Bulgarian is a Southern Slavic language, the common name for *C. cricetus* is the same as in Eastern Slavic languages: “Khomjak” (BOGOMOLOV 2017), “Обикновен хомяк” [Obiknoven homák] (MARKOV 1959, BOTEV & PEŠEV 1985, PEŠEV et al. 2004), and “Голям хомяк” [Golâam homák] (BOTEV & PEŠEV 1985).

Iranian linguistic group

Ossetian. Several names for *C. cricetus* in two Ossetian dialects literally translate as “tailless rat”: “Æнæдым уыры” [Ænædym uury], “Къода гæлæу” [K"oda gælæu] (ТАМАЕВ & BOLLOEV 2006), and “Къуда уыры” [K"uda uury] (BIGULAEV et al. 1970). Another Ossetian name is “Хъулон уыры” [H"ulon uury] (BIGULAEV et al. 1970) which translates as “motley rat”.

Turkic linguistic group

Bashkir. Old sources quote “Bakuk” (PALLAS 1811, WEISSENBORN 1839), however, “Алйырзан” [Aljyrzan] and “Ирлән” [Irlæn] are in current use (URAKSIN 1996).

Tatar. PALLAS (1811) quotes “Arlàn” (“Arlan” in WEISSENBORN 1839) which is currently spelled “Әрлән” [Ərlæn] (РОПОВ & LUKIN 1988). The meaning of “Arlan” is an animal which lives underground (BOGOMOLOV 2017).

Chuvash. The Chuvash name “Арлан” [Arlan] is frequently combined with an adjective: “Ахаль Арлан” [Ahal' arlan] (literally a “common hamster”), “Чән арлан” [Čän arlan] (literally a “true hamster”), and “Европа арланĕ” [Evropa arlanĕ] (literally the “European hamster”) (PLECHOVA et al. 2010).

Kazakh. The Kazakh names for *C. cricetus* are “Аламан” [Alaman] and “Ала-коржун” [Ala-koržun], also spelled “Алакоржун” [Alakoržun] (AFANAS'EV et al. 1953, ŠUBIN 1977).

Mongolic linguistic group

Kalmyk Oirat. PALLAS (1811) reported “Kergeldae”.

Uralic linguistic group

Hungarian. WEISSENBORN (1839) quoted “Gringie” for Hungarian but “Hörcsög” (spelled “Hörtschök” in SCHREBER 1792) is currently in use (BOGOMOLOV 2017). The name is frequently combined with an adjective: “Mezei hörcsög” (meaning the “field hamster”; ZOLTÁN 2007) and “Közönséges hörcsög” (“common hamster”; MITCHELL-JONES et al. 1999). MOHR (1961) lists also “Zaboló-egér” meaning the “eating mouse”.

Mordovian Erzya. PALLAS (1811) quoted “Maksaka” for Mordovian (without specifying the language). BOGOMOLOV (2017) quoted “Maksaka” for both Mordovian languages (Erzya and Moksha), and “Arlan” for Erzya. VERŠININ (2004) used “Арлян” [Arlân] for moles (*Talpa*) and a dialectal Erzya “Эрлень” [Ėrlen'] for *C. cricetus*. The native Erzya name for both, *C. cricetus* and for *Talpa*, is “Кажварч” [Kažvarč] (VERŠININ 2004).

Mordovian Moksha. The Moksha word for *C. cricetus* is “Максакa” [Maksaka] (VERŠININ 2005).

Mari. Common Mari names for *C. cricetus* were adopted from Chuvash (“Арлан” [Arlan]) and Russian: “Комак” [Komak] and “Комакколя” [Komakkolâ]. The “Komakkolâ” is a composite of “Komak” and “kola”, indicating a house mouse (*Mus*). The name “Arlan” is frequently combined with an adjective: “Йошкар арлан” [Joškar arlan] (literally a “red hamster”), “Шем арлан” [Šem arlan] (literally a “black hamster”), and “Ала әрлан” [Ala әrlan] (literally a “motley hamster”; KUZNECOVA 2010).

Selkup. WEISSENBORN (1839) quoted “Tsharligan” but we were unable to verify the validity of this name.

Udmurt. The established name is “Арлан” [Arlan] (ALATYREV 1988). KOŽEVNIKOVA (2018) cites “Вань” [Van'] and “Комак пиищ” [Komak piiš] for Mozghinsk Rayon and “Комак” [Komak] for Malopur-ginsk rayon.

Chinese linguistic group

In China, *C. cricetus* occupies only the northern Xinjiang. We therefore assume that authentic native name(s) for the animal might be Uyghur (Turkic), rather than Chinese, but we were unable to find any. The Chinese names are 原仓鼠 [Yuan cang shu], 普通仓鼠 [Pu tong cang shu], 普通斑仓鼠 [Pu tong ban cang shu], 欧仓鼠 [Ou cang shu], 花背仓鼠 [Hua bei cang shu] (ZEXUN et al. 2000). The Chinese characters for “Hamster” are 仓鼠, and denote *C. cricetus* in combination with an adjective.

DISCUSSION

Above, we listed well over 100 different names for *Cricetus cricetus*, including examples of alternative spelling. These names belong to 36 languages (together with three historical languages no longer spoken) from nine linguistic groups. We identified names in thirteen spoken Slavic languages, followed by six languages from the Uralic group, four languages from the Turkic group, three languages each from German and Romanic groups, and one language each from the Romani, Iranian, Mongolic, and Chinese linguistic groups. Although our list contains more names than any other published on this topic thus far, it is doubtlessly deficient in various aspects. Particularly underrepresented are names from predominantly Asiatic linguistic groups (e.g. Mongolic, Turkic, and Iranian), but also various Romani variants in Europe.

Despite the obvious linguistic diversity, one can conveniently classify the most widely used names into three groups (Table 1): “Hamster” and its derivatives (Group 1), onomatopoeic names that lead to *Cricetus* (Group 2), and the Turkic “Arlan” and names derived from it (Group 3). “Hamster” and its derivatives are by far the most widespread vernacular names in German (German, Dutch, Flemish, English), Romanic (French, Romanian), and Slavic (Russian, Belarussian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Polish) linguistic groups, also being used in Udmurt and Romanes. According to TRUBAČEV (1981), the name originates from the Old Slavonic “Homěstor” which is supposedly a composite of “homě-” (cheek pouches) and “-stor”, the latter coming from the verb “sterti” with a derivative meaning of “flowing/pouring rapidly in a steady stream” or “a discharge”. Semantically, the name “Хомѣсторъ” therefore translates as “discharging cheek pouches” (TRUBAČEV 1981). In the Kazakh “Ала-коржун”, the second part of the word may originate from “hurjin” denoting a double saddle bag, possibly in allusion to the hamster’s paired pouches. This etymological explanation however is to be considered with caution.

Table 1. Most commonly used vernacular names for *Cricetus cricetus* in different languages. Names are organized in three groups, based on a presumed etymological similarity. Putatively the oldest name in the group is in bold. Group 1 – “Hamster” and its derivatives which originate from “Homěstor”; Group 2 – onomatopoeic names that lead to *Cricetus* and putatively originate from “Skreczeczek”; and Group 3 – Turkic “Arlan” and its derivatives

Tab. 1. Nejpožívanější vernakulární jména křečka polního (*Cricetus cricetus*) v různých jazycích. Jména jsou uspořádána do tří skupin podle předpokládané etymologické příbuznosti. Předpokládané nejstarší jméno ve skupině je vysazeno tučně. Skupina 1 – “Hamster” a jeho odvozeniny původem z jména “Homěstor”; skupina 2 – onomatopoická jména vedoucí ke jménu *Cricetus* a předpokládaně původem ze “Skreczeczek”; a skupina 3 – turkické “Arlan” a jeho odvozeniny

name / jméno	alternative name / alternativní jméno	language(s) / jazyk(y)
Group 1 / skupina 1		
Homěstor"	Homěstar"	Old Slavic / staroslověnština
Hamustra		Old High German / stará horní němčina
Amster	Hamester, Amster	German, Dutch, Flemish, English, French / němčina, nizozemština, vlámsština, angličtina, francouzština
Hamsteri		Romanes / romština
Hamsterul		Romanian / rumunština
Homyak	Homa	Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Bulgarian / ruština, ukrajinština, běloruština, bulharština
Chomik		Polish / polština
Komak		Udmurt, Mari / udmurtština, marijština
Group 2 / skupina 2		
Skreczeczek	Skreczecz	Polish / polština
Skrečok	Škrečok, Skreček, Škrček	Slovak / slovenština
Křeč		Old Czech / staročeština
Křeček		Czech / čeština
Chrček	Hrčok	Slovak / slovenština
Hrček	Hrčak, Rčak	Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian / slovinština, charvátština, srbština
Gerčik	Gerčak	Rusyn / rusínština
Grentsch		German / němčina
Krietsch		German / němčina
Hârciog	Hârciogul	Romanian, Moldavian / rumunština, moldavština
Hörcsög		Hungarian / maďarština
Group 3 / skupina 3		
Arlan	Ərlən, Ęrlen'	Tatar, Chuvash, Erzya, Mari, Udmurt / tatarština, čuvaština, mordvinština (erzja), marijština, udmurtština
Irlən	Aljyrĕan	Bashkir / baškirština

FASMER (1958) explained the origin of the name “Homěstar” from the Proto-Iranian. The presumption is based on a noun “hamaēstar” which appears in the Zoroastrian scripture the Avesta (9th/10th-century), meaning “an enemy” or “plunging to the ground”. TRUBAČEV (1981) did not

accept FASMER's explanation (l.c.). The Avesta is not a zoological textbook and would therefore not be likely to contain a description or name of a rodent. Rather than being of Proto-Iranian origin, the "Homěstar" more likely originates from the Proto-Indo-European. E.g. parts of "Homěstor" are frequently incorporated into Indo-European names of different animals. Therefore, the first part of the word is a constitutive part in different vernacular names for *C. cricetus* in East Slavic languages and in Polish, as well as in languages giving origin to names indicating rodents in Baltic tongues: "Kāmas" is a rat (*Rattus*) in Lithuanian, and "Kāmis" is *C. cricetus* in Latvian (FRAENKEL 1962). The second part in the word "Homěstor" comes from "stāras", which is Lithuanian for the ground squirrel (*Spermophilus*) and for *C. cricetus* (FRAENKEL 1965). The "-star" is also found in "Zemstař" (Lower Sorbian for *C. cricetus*; SCHUSTER-ŠEWIC 1989a), in "Горностај" [Gornostaj] and "Hranostaj" (Russian and Czech/Slovak, respectively, for the ermine *Mustela erminea*) and "Горностаř" [Gornostar] (archaic Archangelsk dialect for the ermine; FASMER 1958). ABAEV (1979) derived "-staj" (as in "Gornostaj") from "Staj" which is the Ossetian name for lynx (*Lynx*) with the root in "stāyu-", meaning "predator" or "thief". It is therefore possible to trace a part of the name "Homěstor" to the word for "thief", "predator" or "enemy".

Turning back to the "Hamaěstar" in the Proto-Iranian Avestan, "hama-" can be phonetically interpreted as "similar" or "the same" (RASTORGUEVA & EDELMAN 2007). If so, the meaning of the name "Homěstor" originally denoted someone "similar to a predator", possibly due to aggressive behavior on the part of *C. cricetus*. Over the course of time, the original meaning has been lost and the two parts of the name merged acquiring a new implication. The Old Slavonic "Homěstor" gave origin to vernaculars ("Homyak") in East Slavic languages (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian), in Bulgarian, and in Polish ("Chomik"). These Slavic names have been adopted as "Komak" by Udmurt and Mari from the Uralic linguistic group. Names derived from the word "Homěstor" are spoken widely across Europe by various linguistic groups.

Particularly in English, "Hamster" is also a generic name denoting any member of the subfamily Cricetinae (as defined in MUSSER & CARLETON 2005), e.g. "Eversmann's Hamster" (*Allocricetulus eversmanni*), "Gansu Hamster" (*Cansumys canus*), "Dwarf Hamsters" (*Cricetulus*), "Golden Hamster" (*Mesocricetus auratus*), "Desert Hamsters" (*Phodopus*), and "Long-tailed Hamster" (*Tscherskia*). MURRAY (1866) named these rodents "Rats with internal cheek-pouches". In the past, the name "Hamster" was also applied to other groups which are currently out of the taxonomic scope of Cricetinae but show dental similarities to them, e.g. fossil *Cricetodontes* ("Hamsters"; MURRAY 1866), *Calomyscus* ("Mouse-like Hamsters"; CORBET & HILL 1980) and Lophiomyiinae ("Crested Hamsters"; OSBORN 1910).

"Skreczec" was recorded for Poland as early as in 1472 (URBAŃCZYK 1980) while "Skreczec" dates back to the early 18th century (see above). Various closely related names from "Křeček" to "Hrček" and "Hârciogul" predominate in several West (Czech, Slovak) and South Slavic languages (Slovene, Croat, Serbian), as well as in German, Romanian, Moldavian and Hungarian, i.e. in five linguistic groups. Geographically, the name is in use in the Pannonian and Carpathian Basins, i.e. in Central Europe. All these names are an example of onomatopoeia, imitating the hamster's vocalization "khr" and "gr"; cf. Slovene "hrčati/hrčanje" ("to snore"/"snoring") and "grkati" ("to burr"; BEZLAJ 1977). NEHRING (1898) explained the origin of *Cricetus* from "Krietsch" and BEZLAJ (1977) also considers the name to be an example of onomatopoeia. In the opinion of WEISSENBORN (1839), *Cricetus* originates from Old Greek κριξω, meaning "I scream". PALMER (1904) derived the word from the Italian name for hamster "Criceto". The name *Cricetus* was first used by Albertus MAGNUS (ca. 1200–1280; WEISSENBORN 1839).

“Arlan” (“Irløn”) is widespread in the Turkic linguistic group and is also used by some Uralic languages (Mordovian, Mari, Udmurt), i.e. in East Europe and West Asia.

The noun for *C. cricetus* is frequently a part of a composite name, and the most commonly applied adjectives are “common”, “grain”, “greater”, and “European”. In several cases, the compound name for hamster involves naming of some other animal: a pig (German “Kornferkel” = grain piglet, and French “Cochon de seigle” = rye pig), a wolf (German “Erdwolf” = earth wolf), a dog (Romanian “Cățelul-pământului” and Lower Sorbian “Zemski pjas” and “Zemski psik” all translate as “earth dog”), a mouse (German “Grosse Feldmaus” = greater field mouse), a rat (Russian “Stepnaja krissa” = steppe rat), and a marmot (German and French “Strasbourg/European marmot”) and possibly a bear (“Zemlyanoi medvedko”). Note that *Arctomys* (Greek αρκτομυς, from αρκτος for a bear and μυς for a mouse), an obsolete name for the marmot, translates as “bear mouse” (“Bärmaus” in SULZER 1774).

РЕЗЮМЕ

Мы составили список из более сотни наименований *Cricetus cricetus*, которые употребляются на английском языке и на языках, используемых в пределах ареала данного вида. Эти названия представлены на 36 языках (включая три исторических языка: древнеславянский, старочешский, древневерхненемецкий) из девяти языковых групп: славянской (13 разговорных языков), уральской (6), тюркской (4), германской (3), романской (3), индоарийской (1), иранской (1), монгольской (1) и китайской (1). Два наиболее используемых названия (Hamster, *Cricetus*) имеют корни в славянских языках. “Hamster” и связанные с ним названия (Hamsterul, Номыак, Chomik, Комак) происходят от древнеславянского “Homěstor”. “Skrzeczek”/“Skreczec” (польский) – это звукоподражание, имитирующее вокализацию хомяка и близко связанное с различными наименованиями в славянских (Skrečok, Křeč, Křeček, Chrček, Hřeč, Hřčak, Gerčik), немецком (Grentsch, Krietsch), румынском (Hârciog), венгерском (Hörcsög) языках и с научным тавтономом *Cricetus cricetus*. Название *Cricetus* впервые было использовано Альбертом Великим в XIII веке.

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