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A REVIEW OF THE PARATYDEIDAE (ACARI: PROSTIGMATA) 
WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVES, 
TANYTYDEUS LAMINGTON SP. NOV. AND T. KAKADU SP. NOV. 

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SUMMARY: We briefly review and key the described species of Paratydeidae, provide a revised diagnosis for the family, re-establish Neotydeus as a valid genus, and describe the first Australian species, Tanytydeus lamington sp. nov. and Tanytydeus kakadu sp. nov., from Queensland and the Northern Territory, respectively.

INTRODUCTION 

The microarthropod faunas of dry soils are often dominated by minute, soft-bodied mites of the Prostigmata (including Endoestigmata) (THERON et al., 1969, PRICE, 1973, KETHLEY 1990). Many of these mites have elongate bodies, and some are more or less worm-like, including the Paratydeidae—a problematical group. Although originally classified as members of the Tydeoidea (BAKER, 1949), subsequent study discovered characters such as separate cheliceral bases and small, strongly curved movable cheliceral digits (BAKER, 1950; THERON et al., 1969) that suggest a closer relationship to the Anystoidea (KETHLEY, 1982). However, placement of the Paratydeidae in the Anystina is still tentative (EVANS, 1992). No strong apomorphies have been proposed to define the family, and distinguishing characteristics are the elongate body form, separation of coxae I–II from III–IV, constrictions or “sutures” of the opisthosoma, the absence of characteristics of other families (e.g. rutella, leg trichobothria, and the palptibial claw and tarsal ‘thumb’), the presence of anystoid-like chelicerae, and reductions of the prodorsal setation to one pair of trichobothria and two pairs of setae, and the palps to four segments (KETHLEY 1982, 1990). The Paratydeidae is a morphologically homogeneous group: differences among genera are not impressive (KETHLEY 1982) and placement depends on the presence or absence of eyes, the number of transverse “sutures” dividing the opisthosoma, and the shape of the prodorsal plate. To date, ten species of paratydeid mites have been described, and six genera have been proposed to accommodate them: Paratydeus alexan-

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In Australia, Kethley (1990: 684) states that the Paratydeidae are one of the three dominant families of soil-inhabiting prostigmatsans (along with Nanorchestidae and Pseudocheyletidae). However, despite their reputed prominence, no Australian Paratydeidae have been described, and the only generic record is of a “Paratydeus” sp. taken from soil on One-Tree Island, a coral cay in the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Queensland (Heatwole et al., 1981). Herein, we provide a new diagnosis for the family, describe two new species of Paratydeidae from mainland Australia, and provide a key to all of the described species.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Samples of sandy soil from under rocks (Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory) or rotting wood, bark and mosses (Lamington National Park, Queensland) were extracted into 80% ethanol in simple Berlese funnels using 40 watt light bulbs. Mites were cleared in Nesbitt’s solution (Krantz, 1978) and mounted in Hoyer’s or Heinze PVA medium (Evans, 1992) on glass microscope slides. Measurements are in μm, follow structures in parentheses, and are based on specimens observed under differential-interference microscopy and measured using a calibrated ocular grid. Legs were measured from the coxal base to the tips of the claws, idiosomas from naso to tip of abdomen, and setae from their insertions to tips. Setal designations follow Kethley (1990); eugenital setae and papillae follow Judson (1995).

FAMILY PARATYDEIDAE

DIAGNOSIS. Elongate, soft-bodied acariform mites with plicate cuticle; pale white to orange or violet in colour. Prodorsum of adult with shield reduced or absent, one pair of trichobothria (sci), 2 pairs of setae (ve, sce), 0–2 pairs of eyes, and dorsolateral peritremes with tracheae opening between bases of chelicerae. Rutella absent; palps linear, 4-segmented (femora fused to genua), without thumb-claw complex; cheliceral bases free; movable digit hook-like; fixed digit reduced to short lobe. Dorsal-sejugal suture well developed; coxal fields III–IV displaced well posteriorly by a dorsal, suture-like constriction at the level of coxae III; segment D often similarly delimited by a constriction posterior coxae IV. Genital and anal openings distant to approximate; anal opening terminal; 2–3 pairs of genital papillae. Legs without trichobothria; femora I and IV divided; dorsal peg-like setae present on palpcoxa and/or coxae I; all tarsi with two claws and a small claw-like empodium. Male with an internal spermatothoracic complex presumably used to produce stalked spermophores.

REMARKS. Paratydeids probably represent an early derivative group of Anystina that have adapted to a euedaphic life-style through elongation of the body and the loss or reduction of various sensory structures (e.g. eyes, leg trichobothria) of little use in the narrow channels of soil pore space. They appear to be most closely related to the Pseudocheyletidae, and especially to the enigmatic genus Stigmocheylus (see Lindquist, 1977). Little is known about the biology of paratydeid mites, other than the tendency for them to be abundant in the soils of grasslands and dry forests and to possess a larval and three nymphal stages (Kethley, 1982, 1990). Their stout, hook-like movable digits suggest a predatory lifestyle, but these mites have never been successfully cultured and only rare feeding on the fluids of nematodes and of fungal hyphae has been observed in the laboratory (Walter, 1988).

Two main divisions of the family Paratydeidae are apparent. Those similar to Paratydeus Baker share a number of primitive character states such as eyes (seemingly absent in S. simplex), separate anal and genital openings, and the lack of constrictions or “sutures” of the opisthosoma beyond segment C. Those similar to Neotydeus Baker share three apparently derived character states: the loss of eyes, the conjunction of the anal and genital regions, and a
constriction of the opisthosoma behind segment D. KETHLEY (1982) suggested that only two or three valid genera of Paratydeidae had been described. Although this may be true, too little is known of the ontogeny of these mites to propose synonymies at this time. The only previous generic synonymy in the family was of Neotydeus with Scolotydeus (NELSON & BAKER, 1974); however, this was apparently made without reference to THERON et al.’s (1969) description of S. bacillus, and we consider it to be an error. Therefore, we revive Neotydeus. Below we key out the genera and species of Paratydeidae and describe two new Australian species.

**KEY TO ADULT FEMALE PARATYDEIDAE**

1. Genital and anal openings separate; opisthosoma not strongly constricted behind setal row d; 1–2 pairs of eyes or eye-like bodies usually present on lateral prodorsum .......................... 2
   - Genital and anal openings proximate; opisthosoma strongly constricted behind setal row d; eyes always absent ........................................ 6
2(1) Adult female with 6 pairs of aggenital setae .................................. 3
   - Adult female with 2 pairs of aggenital setae .................................. 5
3(2) Eyes present; adult female with 9–10 pairs of genital setae .................. 4
   - Eyes absent; adult female with 4 pairs of genital setae; New York .................. 6
   - Scolotydeus simplex Delfinado & Baker
4(3) Adult female with 10 pairs of genital setae; one pair of ill-defined eyes; trichobothria sc 1 about 50% longer than see; setae fl and h1 less than twice length of f1 or h1; Italy, Norway .................. 7
   - Adult female with 9 pairs of genital setae; two pair of eyes; trichobothria sc 1–3.4 times length of see; setae fl and h1 3–4 times length of f1 or h1; Brazil .................. Scolotydeus corticicola Flechmann
5(2) Prodorsum with subtriangular shield between bases of see; mid-dorsal opisthosomal setae relatively short, not passing insertion of next seta in series; c2 twice length of c1; see twice length of both see and c1; South Africa .......................... Sacotydeus lootti THERON et al.
   - Prodorsum without shield; mid-dorsal opisthosomal setae relatively long, most passing insertion of next seta in series; c2 subequal to c1; see subequal to see, slightly longer than c1; Mexico .................. Paratydeus alexanderi Baker
6(1) With 2 pairs of genital setae and 3 pairs of aggenital setae; Egypt .................................. 7
   - With 4 or more pairs of genital and aggenital setae; various countries .......................... 9
7(6) Three pairs of genital papillae .................................. Hexatyd eus amabilis KANDEEL
   - Two pairs of genital papillae .................................. 8
8(7) Prodorsal shield subtriangular .................................. Tanytydeus neorhizatus KANDEEL & HODA
   - Prodorsal shield linear .................................. Hexatyd eus aegypticus Soliman
9(6) Prodorsal shield absent; 4 pairs of aggenital setae; North America .......................... Neotydeus ardisanneae BAKER
   - Prodorsal shield linear; 5 or 6 pairs of aggenital setae .................................. 10
10(9) With 2 pairs of genital papillae and 4 pairs of genital setae; distal segments of legs I–II without elongate pits; South Africa .................................. Tanytydeus cristatus THERON et al.
   - With 3 pairs of genital papillae and 5–6 pairs of genital setae; distal segments of legs I–II with elongate pits; Australia .................................. 11
11(10) With 5 pairs of genital and aggenital (3 + 2) setae; seta ve anterolateral to see; short, about 1/3 length of see; see h1 at least twice the length of h1; Queensland .................................. Tanytydeus lamington sp. nov.
   - With 6–7 pairs of genital and 6 pairs of aggenital (4 + 2) setae; see ve anterior to see; relatively long, approaching length of see; see h2 less than 1/3 longer than h1; Northern Territory .................................. Tanytydeus kakadu sp. nov.

**Tanytydeus**

**TYPE SPECIES:** Tanytydeus cristatus THERON, MEYER & RYE, 1969: 703.

**DIAGNOSIS.** Eyes absent; prodorsal shield linear, crista-like; naso weakly expressed; segments C and D delimited by suture-like constrictions; genital and anal openings proximate; 3 pairs of ad setae; 2–3 pairs of genital papillae. Adult female with 4–6 pairs of genital and 5 pairs of aggenital setae.

**Tanytydeus lamington** n. sp.

**(Figs. 1–9)**

**MATERIAL EXAMINED.** — Holotype ♀: Queensland, Lamington National Park, Mt Bithongabel, 28° 16' S, 153° 10' E, 15 Dec. 1998, ex rotting wood, bark
Figs. 1-2: Tanytyleus lamington sp. nov. (adult female), dorsal (1) and ventral (2) views of idiosoma. Scale bars = 50 μm.
and moss, *Nothofagus moorei* forest, D. E. WALTER (deposited in Queensland Museum, Brisbane). Para-
types: 4 ♀, 5 ♂, 5 tritonymphs, 2 deutonymphs, same
data as holotype (deposited in University of Queens-
land Insect Collection).

**FEMALE (Figs. 1–6).** — Idiosoma 520–540 μm long,
with longitudinal striae except for a region of trans-
verse striae level with leg III; dorsosejugal and seg-
ment C sutures well developed, less clearly constric-
ted posteriad segment D. Prodorsum with linear,
crista-like shield and 3 pairs of setae: a pair of simple
trichobothria, *sci* (53), on the shield margin and 2
pairs of simple setae, *ve* (12) and *sce* (35), in the
plicate cuticle; peg-like setae, *p1* (4) and *p2* (4) on
dorsal palpcocxae and coxae I, respectively. Peritremes
open at the base of the cheliceral digits and extend
laterally along the cheliceral bases and longitudinally
into the opisthosoma. Anteriorly, an integumental
fold delineates a weak naso.
Opisthosoma with 12 pairs of setae in addition to anal, aggenital and genital setae. Segment C with setal pairs c1 (14) rod-like, c2 (58); pore ia and seta c3 (56) located ventrally. Setae d1 (13), e1 (13), f1 (17), h1 (24), ps1 (23) and ps2 (20) short and rod-like. Setae f2 (45), h2 (46), and ps3 (40), elongate, acuminate. Pore im anterolateral seta e1; large median pore and pore ip between f1-2; f2 (40-45), pore ih lateral of h2 (46). Anus flanked by three pairs of rod-like setae ad 1-3 (19-22). Genital opening with 5 pairs of genital setae (g), an interior row of 3 setae and an outer row of 2 setae; 5 pairs of aggenital setae (ag); 3 pairs of genital papillae (Va, Vm, Vp), Vp about half the size of Va and Vm; a minute seta is positioned anteriorly of each papilla (kl–3).

Setation of coxal fields I–IV 4-3-2-2, respectively; trochanters 0-1-1-0; (basifemora (1)7-3-3-(1)2; genua 6-3-3-1; tibiae [rod-like setae] 6[2]-2-3-3; tarsi [rod-like setae] 8[6]-6-6-5. Solenidion of tibiae I short (6), anterolateral, and protected by a guard seta sharing the same alveolus; tarsus II with a short (6) median solenidion. Tibiae I with elongate (8 x 1) sensory pit, tibiae II–III with shorter (5–6), narrower (0.5) pits. All tarsi with a pair of claws and a small, claw-like empodium; tarsus I with 2 elongate (10 x 2) sensory pits; tarsus II with a single sensory pit (9 x 1). Leg I longest (185–190), leg II–III (140), leg IV (154–160).

Chelicerae with bases free, each with a simple seta and a strongly curved movable digit. Venter of gnathosoma with 4 pairs of simple setae, lateral and posterior pairs longest (14–16). Palp trochanters, femora-genua, tibiae and tarsi with 0-2-3-4[2], setae [rod-like setae], respectively.

MALE (Figs. 7–8). — Similar to female except in genital region. Genital opening flanked by 9 pairs of g setae and 6 pairs of ag setae. Anterior 3 pairs of genital setae (g1–3) thickened, toothed; genital setae g4–5 with small, inconspicuous barbs. Seta g1 unpaired in one specimen. Leg and palpal chaetotaxy, genital papillae and k setae as in female. Internal genital complex 65 μm long x 63 μm wide, with broad, granulate base. Ten pairs of setae within the structure, as figured.
TRITONYMPH (Fig. 9) — Similar to adult female except smaller (470–490) and with 3 pairs of genital and 3 pairs of aggenital setae.

**Fig. 9**: Tanytydeus lamington sp. nov. (tritonymph), genital region. Scale bar = 50 µm.

DEUTONYMPH — Similar to tritonymph except smaller (440) and with 2 pairs of genital papillae, one seta in coxal field IV, telofemora I with 6 setae; femora IV not subdivided, with 3 setae.

**Remarks**: The habitat of T. lamington, montane subtropical rainforest dominated by southern beech, is unusually mesic for a paratydeid; however, these specimens were collected from the relatively xeric microhabitat of moss and bark on logs and tree trunks. The elongate pits on the distal leg segments are reminiscent of those containing the rhagidial organs in the Rhagidiidae; however, no solenidia are present. We assume that they have a chemosensory function, and that the rod-like setae of tarsi and tibiae I (each with a narrow papilla on its tip) also are chemosensory. The species described below, *T. kakadu*, can be distinguished from *T. lamington* by having the pits filled with a smooth, raised area, and by the length and placement of setae ve, by having 3 rather than 2 rod-like setae on the palp tarsus, and by having 8, rather than 7, setae on telofemora I.

*Tanytydeus kakadu* n. sp. (Figs. 10–11)

**Material examined** — Holotype ♀: Northern Territory, Kakadu National Park, Baroalba Gorge, Gubara Walk, 12° 50' S 132° 52' E, ex soil under rocks, D. E. Walter and H. C. Proctor (deposited in Queensland Museum, Brisbane). 1 ♀, same data as holotype.

**Female** (Figs. 10–11).—Idiosoma similar to that of *T. lamington*, 455 µm long. Seta ve (16) anterior of trichobothria sci (45) and adjoining the linear, cristate prodorsal shield; see 22 µm long. Lateral opisthodnotal setae generally shorter than in *T. lamington*: segment C with three pairs of setae, cl (15), c2 (24), c3 (23–25); seta cl is unpaired on one specimen. Setae dl (14), el (15), fl (15), f2 (19), h1 (15–18), and ps1 (20) short and rod-like. Setae h2 (26), ps2 (26), ps3 (25), slightly longer, acuminate. Large median pore between setae fl absent. Genital opening with a variable number of genital setae (g): one specimen with 13 g setae, seta g1 unpaired; the other specimen with 11 g setae, seta g6 unpaired. Both specimens with an outer row of 2 pairs of g setae. Six pairs of ag setae. Three pairs of genital papillae (Va, Vm, Vp), Vp about half the size of Va and Vm; a minute seta is positioned anteriorly of each papilla (k1–3).

Setation of coxal fields I–IV 4–3–2–2; trochanters 0–1–1–0; (basi) femora (1)8–3–3–(12); genua 7–4–2–3; tibiae [rod-like setae] 5[3]–4–3–3; tarsi [rod-like setae] 8[6]–5[1]–6–5. Solenidion of tibiae I short (4) and protected by a guard seta sharing the same alveolus; tibia I with an elongate (7 × 1), raised sensory bump, tibiae II–IV with shorter (5–6) raised bumps. Genu I–II with elongate raised sensory bumps (7, 5 long, respectively). All tarsi with a pair of claws and a small, claw-like empodium; tarsus I with elongate (9 × 2), raised sensory area; tarsus II with a short (3) median solenidion and elongate (7 × 1), raised sensory area. Leg I longest (200), leg II–III (152), leg IV (180).
Chelicerae with bases free, each with a simple seta and a strongly curved movable digit. Venter of gnathosoma with 4 pairs of simple setae, lateral and posterior pairs longest (18). Palp trochanters, femora-genua, tibiae and tarsi with 0-2-3-4[3], setae [rod-like setae], respectively.

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