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TWO NEW SPECIES OF MACROCHELES FROM FRANCE (MESOSTIGMATA: MACROCHELIDAE)

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SUMMARY: Macrocheles lisae and Macrocheles paucipecticatus are described from France. Macrocheles lisae was found phoretic on Nicrophorus vespilloides, and is recognizable by the smooth dorsal setae and the ornamentation of sternal shield. Macrocheles paucipecticatus with only four dorsal pilose setae (j1, S5, Z5 and J5) is hosted by Aphodius scybalarius. Aphodius and Nicrophorus are both unusual hosts. The association of M. lisae with Nicrophorus illustrates the relationships of some species of macrochelids with carriers living in favourable habitats where mite predates on eggs or larvae of Diptera living on carrion.

RÉSUMÉ : Macrocheles lisae et Macrocheles paucipecticatus sont décrits de France. Le premier est phorétique de Nicrophorus vespilloides, et se distingue par les soies dorsales lisses et le bouclier sternal. Macrocheles paucipecticatus est capturé sur Aphodius scybalarius et ne compte que 4 soies dorsales plumeuses (j1, S5, Z5 and J5). Les deux hôtes sont inhabituels et l’association de M. lisae avec Nicrophorus illustre les associations de macrochelides avec d’autres transporteurs exploitant des habitats favorables où les acariens se nourrissent sur les œufs et les larves de Diptères.

INTRODUCTION

In Western Europe, literature on the macrochelids living in pastures is abundant (EVANS & BROWNING 1956 and EVANS & HYATT 1963, CICOLANI 1979; CICOLANI 1983; CICOLANI & SABATINO 1991; GLIDA & BERTRAND 2002; NIOGRET et al. 2006) and fourteen coprophilous species were recorded from France (NIOGRET et al., 2007): M. glaber (Müller, 1860), M. pergabler Filipponi & Pegazzano, 1962, M. scutatus (Berlese, 1904), M. vernalis (Berlese, 1887), M. falsiglaber Glida & Bertrand, 2002, M. craspedochetes Glida & Bertrand, 2002, M. robustulus (Berlese, 1904), M. merdarius (Berlese, 1889), M. muscaedomesticae (Scopoli, 1772), M. plesitii (Berlese, 1882), M. saceri Costa, 1967, M. subbadius (Berlese, 1904), M. penicilliger (Berlese, 1904) and M. seraphim Nio­gret & Nicot, 2007. The most common species play a key-role in grazed areas by feeding on fly eggs and larvae, nematodes, mites in the coprophilous community. Phoresy allows dispersal, the colonization of habitats with abundant resources (dung pats, car­rions...) and ensures the trophic continuity in exploitation of such vanishing habitats. Some of the species, often the opportunists, are cosmopolitan (glaber, robustulus...). The rarer species are limited by
host distribution (Aceri, ..) or are rarely collected (craspedochetes). Two new species collected on carrion feeder (Nicrophorus vespilloides Herbst, 1783) and on the dung beetle Aphodius scybalarius Fabricius, 1781 are described here.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The mites were found phoretic on Aphodius scybalarius Fabricius, 1781, collected by pitfall traps baited with cattle dung (CSR model, according to LOBO et al. 1988 and VEIGA et al. 1989) in grazed area: Le Caylar, 03°10' E, 43°51' N, 800 m a. s. l., December 2005. Other macrochelids were collected attached to Nicrophorus vespilloides Herbst, 1783: St-Just-en-Chevalet, 03°50' E, 45°54' N, 630m a. s. l., July 2001 in Barber traps during a survey of biodiversity in grazed areas (collected by Lisa BERTRAND).

Females were collected with a fine brush and stored in 95% ethanol, cleared in hot lactic acid and dissected under an Olympus® SZH stereoscopic microscope. Specimens were mounted either on temporary or permanent slides using lactic acid or HOYER’s medium. Observations were made with a Leitz Dialux® 20 EB. A 480 Motic® digital camera driven by Motic® Image Plus software 2.0 was used for measurements (mean ± SD μm).

Measures. — Dorsal shield: maximal length; width of the dorsal shield at the r3 level. — Sternal shield: length from anterior to posterior end of the shield along the median axis; — width: minimal width length at the level of coxae II. Epigynial shield: length from anterior to posterior end along the sagittal axis.

DESCRIPTION

Family Macrochelidae Vitzthum 1930
Genus Macrocheles Latreille 1829
Macrocheles lisae Niogret & Nicot

Description. Female. Yellowish-brown in colour. Dorsal shield (Fig. 1): Similar in shape to Macrocheles glaber, with distinct ornamentation lines, 782 μm long, 519 μm wide. Procurred line present; dorsal shield with ornamental pattern underlined by punctures. Dispersed reticulations on median part and forward procurred line. Twenty two pairs of pores, the pairs between J2 and Z1 elongated. Twenty-eight dorsal setae, J1 pilose and directed forward, Z1 simple and short. J5 pilose on the distal half, simple setae are j2, j3, j4, j5, j6, z2, z4, z5, z6, s2, s4, s5, s6, r2, r3, r4, J2, Z1, Z2, Z4, Z5, S1, S2, S4, S5.

Ventral shields (Fig. 2): sternal shield large, 164 μm long, 155μm wide. Three pairs of setae and two pair of pores. Median transverse line underlined by puncture, reaching the oblique anterior lines. Arched and angular lines delimiting a zone with three pentagonal pattern drawn by punctures. Posterior part of the sternal shield with areae punctatae. Sternal shield overtake the coxae III level. Reticulate area at the level of the posterior pore. Metasternal plates close to the sternal shield. Epigynial shield broader than long (151 μm long, 194 μm maximal width), one pair of setae, ornamentation drawing two principal median arched patterns, both underlined by punctures. Two tinier lateral and arched lines complete ornamentation. Ventrianal shield wider than long (252 μm long; 300 μm maximal width), with seven main transverse lines underlined by punctures. Two anterior zones on the first line with a central rounded zone, reticulate pattern on each side. Three pairs of preanal setae, 3 paranal setae. Metapodal sclerites elongated. The postcoxal pore is visible, included in the posterior part of the sclerotized ring.

Gnathosoma: Chelicerae (Fig. 3): fixed digit with ridged blade, pilus dentilis, with three teeth, principal and pyramidal tooth, and a strongly ridged tooth. Movable digit with three teeth, distal small tooth, the median and proximal teeth fused and ridged, and terminal hook. Arthrodel brush highly pilose, shorter than mobile digit (1/3). Hypostomal groove with five transverse rows of denticles.

Legs: Chaetotaxy normal, setae simple or poorly pilose at the distal end except in PII, six setae on genu IV.

TYPE MATERIAL: Holotype and paratype: collection of Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle de Paris (France); other specimens in the laboratory collection, Montpellier (France) collected on N. vespilloides.
**Macrocheles paucipectinatus** Niogret & Nicot

**DESCRIPTION.** **FEMALE.** Yellowish-brown in colour, medium size. Dorsal shield (FIG. 4): *gla*ber-like in shape, longer than wide (716 µm long, 450 µm wide) with distinct ornamentations, procured line visible and underlined by two punctured lines distally oriented towards posterior part of the shield. Reticular pattern underlined by punctures draws irregular pentagonal or hexagonal tiles. Twenty two pairs of pores. Twenty-eight dorsal setae with *j1* directed forward and pilose, *z1* reduced in length and simple. Setae *j5* and *z5* are slightly shorter and simple. *j5* irregular all along, *Z5* and *S5* are pilose at the half of the setae. Setae *z2*, *z4*, *z6*, *j2*, *j3*, *j4*, *j6*, *s2*, *s4*, *s5*, *s6*, *r2*, *r3*, *r4*, *Z1*, *Z2*, *Z4*, *J2*, *S1*, *S2*, *S4* long and simple.

**Ventral shields** (FIG. 5): Sternal shield (149 µm long, 107 µm wide), with three pairs of setae and two pairs of pores. Median transverse line is clearly visible; the oblique anterior lines toned down forward. Arched line is short, central part of sternal shield with reticular pattern. Angular line divided in 2 branches posteriorly. Oblique posterior lines *gla*ber-like. Posterior part of sternal shield with punctured *posterior areae*, more or less reduced in size and two horizontal symmetric punctured lines.

Metasternal plates closed to the sternal shield, not extending behind the posterior edge of coxae III. Epigynial shield (116 µm long, 183 µm maximal wide) with 1 pair of longer than wide setae. Sclerotization deeply attenuated forward, sclerotized lines drawing arched pattern, underlined by punctures. Ventrianal shield rounded, wider than long (249 µm long; 285 µm maximal wide) with 7 main transverse lines, longitudinal ornamentation is masked, punctures draw two polygons. 3 pairs of preanal setae, 3 paranal setae.

Legs: Chaetotaxy normal for the genus, six setae on genu IV.

Type material, holotype and paratype: collection of Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris (France); other specimens in the laboratory collection, Montpellier (France).

Discussion

By several characters, Macrocheles paucipunctatus n. sp. is closed to the glaber group: the well defined procured line, the pattern on sternal shield, the simple and pilose dorsal setae (S5, Z5 pilose and serrated J5). However simple z4 and r4 get M. paucipunctatus n. sp. different from the standard definition (WALTER & KRANTZ 1992). Macrocheles caelatus Berlesse, 1918, could be confused but it differs by 1) pilose setae z4 and j4, 2) linea angulata lacking in the median part, 3) the weak ornamentation, 4) linea arcuata lacking on sternal shield.

Macrocheles paucipunctatus n. sp. was found on Aphodius scybalarius (800m a. s. l.). The genus Aphodius is not greatly involved in dispersion if compared with larger beetles (Niogret et al., 2006). However, species active all along the year could contribute to disperse macrochelids during less favourable seasons for the thermophilous dung beetles (Bubas, Geotrupes, Scarabaeus genera) (Glida et al. 2003).

Macrocheles lisae n. sp. is a weakly ornamented species, considered by authors closed to the subbadius group. Weakened procured line and the pilose setae J5 help in identification (J5 is smooth in the group). Moreover, M. lisae n. sp. presents special reticulated and punctured pattern of sternal shield. Macrocheles lisae n. sp. was found borne by the scavenger Nicrophorus: M. glaber can be collected from insects exploiting corpses (Hyatt & Emberger 1988). Smallest predators find in this habitat homologous conditions of life condition in dung pads: the ephemeral resource, substratum changing with time, and providing abundant resource that decreases with time (resources: nematodes, and eggs and larvae of Diptera developing on animal carcass). Springett (1968) showed that Nicrophorus failed to breed on corpses infested with Calliphora fly eggs unless mites Poecilocirrus sp. were present to predate them. Macrocheles mites predate on eggs and young fly larvae (AxteII 1963; Krantz 1983): Macrocheles paucipunctatus borne by necrophagous host could participate in limiting fly competition with benefit to the host. These type of interaction could be one of the first step leading to mutualism, mites paying back the insect by limiting competition.

References


