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Previous volumes (2010-2018): 250 € / year (4 issues)
Acarologia, CBGP, CS 30016, 34988 MONTFERRIER-sur-LEZ Cedex, France
ISSN 0044-586X (print), ISSN 2107-7207 (electronic)

The digitalization of Acarologia papers prior to 2000 was supported by Agropolis Fondation under the reference ID 1500-024 through the « Investissements d’avenir » programme (Labex Agro: ANR-10-LABX-0001-01)

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DESCRIPTION OF THE FEMALE OF *DIPLOTHYRUS SCHUBARTI* LEHTINEN, 1999 (HOLOTHYRID A: NEOTHYRIDAE) AND NEW SPECIES OCCURRENCES IN BRAZIL

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(Received 16 April 2011; accepted 26 June 2011; published online 23 September 2011)

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ABSTRACT — The order Holothyrida includes one of the rarest groups of mites. For the moment, 28 species are known, but only one occurs in Brazil. This work aimed to describe the female of *Diplothyrus schubarti*, along with presenting the first occurrence of organisms of this order in caves. A total of 54 specimens were collected, in 17 caves in three municipal districts in the state of Pará, northern Brazil. The differences that stand out in the female of *D. schubarti*, in relation to the other species of the genus, are the absence of the membranous process in the palpus and the absence of the distinct cuticular strip running postero-ventral towards the edge of the dorsal shield.

KEYWORDS — Acari; Parasitiformes; Holothyrida; neotropics; cave mites

INTRODUCTION

The order Holothyrida is characterized by the large body size (2 to 7 mm), by being strongly sclerotized and having, as habitat, the litter present on the soil. These mites are still very little known, but it is known that their species compose one of the most primitive orders within the Parasitiformes group (Krantz and Walter, 2009).

The first taxon, *Holothyrus coccinella*, was described by Gervais (1842). Currently, the order is composed by 3 families (Allothyridae, Holothyridae and Neothyridae), totaling 15 genera and 28 species (Kontschán and Mahunka, 2004; Gerlach *et al.*, 2010; Klompen 2010).

The geographical distribution of the Holothyrida order comprises several places; Costa Rica, Panama and Dominican Republic (Central America); Venezuela, Peru, French Guiana and Brazil (South America); Seychelles and Mauritius Islands (Africa); Sri Lanka, Philippines and Luzon island (Asia); New Guinea, Louisiade Archipelago, New Caledonia, Australia, New Zealand and Lord Howe Island (Oceania) (Lehtinen, personal information 2011). Among the species described for the Neotropical Region, three were found in the northern portion of South America (Kontschán and Mahunka, 2004; Klompen, 2010).

The first described taxon was *Neothyrus ana*
Lehtinen (1981), present in the Peruvian Amazon. The second species, *Diplothyrus schubarti*, was described from specimens found in Brazil in a primary forest in the Adolpho Ducke Forest Reserve, located in the municipal district of Manaus, Amazon State, in the northern region of the country (Lehtinen, 1999). The third, recently described, is the species *D. lecorrei*, found in the French Guyana Amazon, north region of the South American continent (Klompen, 2010).

In the descriptive work of the Brazilian species, Lehtinen (1999) only used the male for the morphologic description and analysis. Thus, the objective of the present work is to conduct the description of the female of *D. schubarti*, which until now was not available for study, although present in collections of INPA. Furthermore, the present work presents new occurrences of the species in Brazil, all associated to ferruginous caves.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Study area**

Collections of mites were carried out in a total of 249 caves formed in iron ore, located in the municipal districts of Carajás, Parauapebas and Canaã dos Carajás, all located in the southeast portion of the state of Pará. The ferriferous formation of Carajás, where such caves are inserted, is totally under the domain of the Amazon Forest, located in the north area of Brazil. Some of the caves are found inserted within a National Forest (Flona de Carajás). This area, although comprising a protected area, presents multiple anthropic uses, such as iron ore exploration.

The ferriferous formation of Carajás is composed by plateaus whose topography is maintained by a ferruginous topmost breccia, named “canga”, under which the lateritic ore occurs, with a thickness that can surpass, locally, 200 meters (Lindenmayer et al., 2001). The entrances of the caves are in this lat-
eritic crust, and the development of conduits and galleries mainly occur below this thick layer of iron.

**Methods**

The collection was conducted through manual capture by using tweezers and brushes inside caves, all of the specimens being fixed in 70% alcohol and taken to the laboratory for identification.

The measurements and morphological observations were based on 3 females and 3 males clarified in Nesbitt’s solution, dismembered and later mounted on slides and glass coverslips using Hoyer’s solution (Evans 1992; Krantz and Walter 2009). The idiosoma and the genital opening measurements were taken based on 3 additional females and 3 males maintained whole and mounted on temporary slides with glycerin.

The ultrastructural analyses were conducted using the scanning electron microscope. The male and the female were placed on aluminum support stubs, placed over aluminum foil film with carbon tape, sputter-covered with gold (Baltec SCD 050), and observed in a LEO EVO 40 XVP scanning electron microscope (Leo Electron Microscopy).

**RESULTS**

**Geographic distribution**

A total of 54 specimens were collected, from which 21 were male, 10 were female and 23 were juveniles. The organisms were found in 9 caves in the municipal district of Carajás, 9 caves in the municipal district of Parauapebas and 1 cave in the municipal district of Canaã de Carajás, all located in the south of the state of Pará, northern Brazil (Figure 1).

According to the work of Lehtinen (1999), the distribution of *Diplothyrus schubarti* is restricted to the northeast area of the state of Amazonas, in the municipal district of Manaus. The new occurrences extend the distribution of the species by about 1100 km to the east, these also being the first occurrences of *D. schubarti* in the cave environment (Figure 1).

**Material examined from Pará State, Brazil**

One immature from Cave N4E-03 (6°02′24.3″S, 50°09′38.7″W), Carajás, coll. R. Andrade *et al.*, 20 April 2010; one male from Cave N4E-48 (6°02′15.3″S, 50°09′36.6″W), Carajás, coll. R. Andrade *et al.* 19 April 2010; one immature from Cave N4E-79 (6°01′58.5″S, 50°09′05″W), Carajás, coll. R. Andrade *et al.* 19 April 2010;

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**Table 1:** Morphological measurements of *Diplothyrus schubarti* males and females.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idiosoma (length)</td>
<td>1720 - 1760 μm</td>
<td>1680 - 1720 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiosoma (width)</td>
<td>1160 - 1200 μm</td>
<td>1120 - 1160 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palpus</td>
<td>690 - 675 μm</td>
<td>660 - 705 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcapitulum</td>
<td>350 - 400 μm</td>
<td>350 - 375 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelicera</td>
<td>385 - 395 μm</td>
<td>375 - 385 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg I</td>
<td>1875 - 2070 μm</td>
<td>1875 - 2015 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg II</td>
<td>1705 - 1755 μm</td>
<td>1725 - 1885 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg III</td>
<td>1635 - 1835 μm</td>
<td>1685 - 1835 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg IV</td>
<td>2005 - 2220 μm</td>
<td>2035 - 2225 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal opening (length)</td>
<td>130 - 135 μm</td>
<td>130 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal opening (width)</td>
<td>170 - 172 μm</td>
<td>123 - 126 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genital opening (length)</td>
<td>500 - 525 μm</td>
<td>110 - 115 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genital opening (width)</td>
<td>518 - 525 μm</td>
<td>157 - 168 μm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Diplothyrus schubarti. Overview of the ventral idiosoma. A – male, B – female.
FIGURE 3: Diplothyris schubarti. Detail of tegument, opening of Thon’s organ of female.
five immatures from Cave N4E-85 (6°02'02.6"S, 50°09'25.6"W), Carajás, coll, R. Andrade et al. 19 April 2010; one female from Cave N4WS-14 (6°03'53.8"S, 50°11'21"W), Carajás, coll, R. Andrade et al. 20 April 2010; two males from Cave N4WS-15 (6°03'59"S, 50°11'21.9"W), Carajás, coll, R. Andrade et al. 20 April 2010; one immature and a male from Cave N5S-70 (6°03'59"S, 50°11'21.9"W), Carajás, coll, R. Andrade et al. 14 April 2010; three immatures from Cave N5S-73 (6°03'59"S, 50°11'21.9"W), Carajás, coll, R. Andrade et al. 19 April 2010; nine immatures, six males and six females from Cave N5S-74 (6°06'01.2"S, 50°08'04.7"W), Carajás, coll, R. Andrade et al. 14 April 2010;

One immature from Cave N4E-44 (6°01'55"S, W50°09'50.2"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. 19 April 2010; two males and two females from Cave N4E-72 (6°01'56.6"S, 50°09'13.1"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. 19 April 2010; one male from Cave N4E-76 (6°01'59"S, 50°09'03"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. 19 April 2010; two immatures and one female from Cave N4E-89 (6°01'58.7"S, 50°09'06.4"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. 19 April 2010; one male and one female from Cave N4E-92 (6°02'21.8"S, 50°09'31.2"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. 19 April 2010; four males from Cave S11D-01 (6°23'53.9"S, 50°21'25.2"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. April 2010; one female from Cave S11D-10 (6°23'54.8"S, 50°21'25.1"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. April 2010; a female from Cave S11D-17 (6°23'55.4"S, 50°21'22.8"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. April 2010; one female from Cave S11D-74 (6°23'32.1"S, 50°19'06.6"W), Parauapebas, coll, R. Andrade et al. April 2010; three males from Cave S11-27 (6°24'42.2"S, 50°21'09.4"W), Canaã dos Carajás, coll, R. Andrade et al. April 2010. For all geographical coordenadas were used Datum-SAD 69.

The specimens are deposited in the Invertebrate Collection of Lavras (ISLA) in the Zoology Sector/Biology Department of the Federal University of Lavras (UFLA), Lavras, Minas Gerais state, Brazil (ISLA 1454-1463); The Mite Collection “Geraldo Calcagnolo” in the Instituto Biológico, Campinas, São Paulo state, Brazil (7463 e 7464); and at Museum of Zoology (MZLQ) in the Departamento de Entomologia e Acarologia, Escola Superior de Agricultura “Luiz de Queiroz”, Piracicaba, São Paulo state, Brazil (MZLQ 12300-1305).

Description of the female of the species
*Diplothyrus schubarti*

Idiosoma — The female idiosoma well sclerotized, of light brown coloration, its length 1720 –
FIGURE 5: Diplothyrus schubarti. View of the Chelicerae (A and B) and gnathosoma (C).
1760 µm and width 1160 – 1200 µm (Figure 2A and 2B).

Dorsal view — Strongly arched, hypertrichous, the entire dorsum being covered by concavities. On the lateral area of the dorsal disk, it is possible to see the stigma, a small opening located above the fourth coxa. The Thon’s organ is visible externally, however it is short (235 – 240 µm), extending to the anterior region and located above the third and fourth coxae (Figure 3).

Ventral view — Presents a homogeneous distribution of setae on the ventral shield. Sternal lyrifissures (if present) not observed. The ventral shield is separate from the dorsal shield by a continuous fissure. The anal opening of the female is composed by two valves, with length of 130 – 135 µm and width 170 – 172 µm.

The genital area of the female has a length of 525 – 530 µm and width of 500 – 505 µm, with rounded shape. Similar to that observed for the remainder of the body, the female genital opening presents round concavities and hypertrichy. The central plate (post-genital shield) is notably larger than the other plates located on the sides (laterogenital shield) and on the anterior area (pregenital shield) (Figure 4).

Legs — Length of the legs I-IV (female): 1875 – 2070 µm, 1545 – 1705 µm, 1635 – 1835 µm and 2005 – 2220 µm, respectively.

Subcapitulum — Length of 350 – 400 µm. Possesses 3 pairs of setae on the central region, a pair of setae on the central portion of the anterior area, a pair of setae located below the corniculi and three pairs of setae on the region of the posterior lateral margin. Gnathotectum (Figure 5C).

Palpus — Total Length 675 – 690 µm.

Chelicerae — Length 385 – 395 µm. The fixed digit is covered by two robust teeth, one on the anterior portion and the other on the central area. There is a row of small denticles between the teeth a row of small denticles is observed. Posterio to the central digit fine serrated edge is observed that is on the internal part of the fixed digit. The movable digit also possesses two robust teeth, one on the anterior portion and the other on the central area (Figure 5A and 5B).

The morphological measurements of males do not considerably differ from those of the females, with an exception for the genital plates (Table 1).

**DISCUSSION**

The main difference between *D. lecorrei* and *D. schubarti* is the presence of two dorsolateral openings that are connected in a distinct posteroventral cuticular strip towards the edge of the shield, which is only present in the species *D. lecorrei*. The females of *D. schubarti* present smaller lateral genital plates (LAG) that do not touch the pre-genital plate (PRG). *Diplothyrus lecorrei* has a membranous process on the fixed digit of the chelicera and 13 pairs of setae on the subcapitulum, *D. schubarti* does not have such a cheliceral process and carries only 8 pairs of setae on the subcapitulum.

The morphological measurements observed in the present study did not demonstrate the existence of sexual dimorphism in *D. schubarti*. This absence of differentiation in the size of the morphological structures also occurs in *D. lecorrei*, and in other species of other genera, such as *Australothyrus*. However, as it is common in this order, a differentiation between the sexes exists in the genital plates, with the females presenting a larger opening, composed by a group of four valves in the genital area, while in the male, only two small valves are observed (Van der Hammen, 1983; Klompen, 2010).

Little is known regarding the living habits of the Holothyrida species. Some specimens can be found in the soil, amid the litter and under stones. As for the eating habits, according to some authors, species of the families Allothyridae and Holothyridae are scavengers (Krantz and Walter 2009; Walter and Proctor 1998). However, the cave habit is not common among the species of Holothyrida, this being the first record of specimens belonging to the family Neothyridae in caves. The specimens found in the hypogean environment were collected associated with the organic matter in the entrance of the caves, walking on the floor in areas of partial shade and in more interior aphotic portions.

Information on the biology and the habits of *D. schubarti* is still scarce. Its geographical distribu-
tion, although wider, still remains restricted to only two areas, making it necessary that the caves, where these specimens were found, become the target of preservation action. Such a measure is indeed necessary, mainly when considering that the area is under intense mineral exploration, and the caves (and their associated species), run the risk of disappearing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are thankful to Regina Bessi and Renata Andrade for the collection and sending of the material. To researchers Maurício Sérgio Zacarias, and to Paulo Rebelles Reis for the incentive and for allowing the use of the equipment present in EPAMIG/CTSM-EcoCentro Lavras. Dr. Eduardo Alves (Microscopy Laboratory – Department of Plant Pathology - UFLA) for the use of the scanning electron microscope. Finally, we thank Dr. Pekka T. Lehtinen, Hans Klompen and an anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments.

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