



A review of Afrotropical *Perasis* Hermann, 1905 (Diptera: Asilidae: Laphriinae)

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Abstract

Afrotropical species of *Perasis* Hermann, 1905 are reviewed. The two species known from the region are *P. transvaalensis* Ricardo, 1925 from Southern Africa (South Africa) and *P. carpenteri* Oldroyd, 1970 from East Africa (Uganda and Burundi). A **lectotype** is designated for *P. transvaalensis*. Illustrations of the genitalia of these closely similar species show them to be distinct. New records of *P. transvaalensis* provide a better understanding of the distribution of this rarely encountered grassland / savannah species, and it is probable that Afrotropical species may be associated with river margins.

Key words: Diptera, Asilidae, Afrotropical, *Perasis*, taxonomy, distribution

Introduction

Perasis Hermann, 1905 is an asilid genus comprising eleven described species in the world fauna, eight are palaeartic (Lehr 1988, Londt 1999), two Afrotropical (Oldroyd 1980), and one is Neotropical (Martin & Papavero 1970). According to Fisher & Wilcox (1998) there are also two undescribed nearctic species. This review of *Perasis* is confined to the Afrotropical species, which, like most other members of the genus, are rarely encountered in museum collections. They are moderately sized, shiny black flies, quite distinctive and difficult to confuse with other Afrotropical asilids (Figs 1–2). At the commencement of this study Afrotropical material had only been recorded from four localities, suggesting that special conditions may be required for their existence. An accumulation of unrecorded material in the Natal Museum prompted this contribution to our knowledge of these interesting flies.

The taxonomic history of Afrotropical *Perasis* is briefly summarized below:

Hermann (1905) — Described *Perasis* with *sareptana* n. sp. from ‘Sarepta’ (= Krasnoarmeysk near Volgograd [48°40'N 44°25'E] in the Russian Federation) as the type-species, illustrating the antenna, wing and thorax. He compared the genus with *Laphystia* Loew, 1847, pointing out features separating these taxa.

Hermann (1920) — Discussed *Perasis* listing the type-species (*sareptana*) and four other species, three palaeartic (*postica* Becker, *violacea* Becker & *maura* Macquart) and one Afrotropical (*meridionalis* Hermann).

Ricardo (1925) — Described *Perasis transvaalensis* (misspelled *transvalensis*) from South Africa. She pointed out that Hermann (1920) had mentioned *meridionalis*, also from the then province of Transvaal, but that no description of the species had ever been published.

Engel (1929) — Reported *Perasis maura* (Macquart, 1849), a palaeartic species known only from Algeria, as occurring in South Africa — his material being topotypic with that of *transvaalensis*. He listed as syn-