



A new ricinuleid of the genus *Ricinoides* Ewing (Arachnida, Ricinulei) from Ghana

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Abstract

A new species of ricinuleid, *Ricinoides atewa* n. sp., is described from the Eastern Region of Ghana. This species is the largest known extant ricinuleid. It is associated with undisturbed, closed canopy, mid-elevation evergreen forests. Comparative illustrations are provided for the related species *R. afzelii* (Thorell, 1892).

Key words: Ricinulei, *Ricinoides*, Upland Evergreen Forest, Ghana

Introduction

The West African ricinuleids (also known as tick spiders) have, over the years, received considerably less attention than their New World counterparts, although a series of comprehensive papers by Legg (1976, 1977, 1978a, 1982) and Tuxen (1974) have contributed greatly to our understanding of both the morphology and biology of this group. Currently, ten species of ricinuleids are known from Africa, all belonging to the genus *Ricinoides* Ewing. They have been recorded from a relatively narrow area in West Africa, ranging from Guinea-Bissau to southern Cameroon. By contrast, 49 species have been described from the Americas, where 30 species of the genus *Cryptocellus* Westwood range from Nicaragua to W. Brazil (Rondonia), and 19 species of *Pseudocellus* Platnick range from Texas to Panama (Harvey 2003; Pinto-da-Rocha & Bonaldo 2007; Tourinho & Azevedo 2007). The difference is probably the result of both a lesser collecting effort in West Africa and the fact that all known African ricinuleids are soil species, found only in forests, whereas the American species occur in a variety of habitats, including a number of troglobitic species (Cokendolpher & Enríquez 2004). The species described below, *Ricinoides atewa* n. sp., brings the number of West African species to 11, and the total number of known ricinuleids to 60. It is also the largest known extant member of this order.

Material and methods

The specimens were collected at several locations in eastern Ghana during a series of surveys in 2006 and 2007 conducted by the Rapid Assessment Program of Conservation International. Specimens were collected by both leaf-litter sifting and active searching under logs, rocks and termite mounds in primary and secondary evergreen forests.

Collected specimens were preserved in 95% ethanol, and some were subsequently soaked in 10% NaOH for studying their reproductive structures. Since many adult individuals were covered with thick layers of mud, such individuals were briefly soaked in warm water and cleaned with a soft brush. This procedure