



The Iberian spider checklist (Araneae)

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Abstract

We compiled all the available information regarding spider species distribution in the Iberian Peninsula (including the Balearic Islands). At present, 1335 species are known from the region, of which 236 are Iberian endemics, in 373 genera and 55 families. Portugal presents 768 species and Spain (including Andorra and Gibraltar), 1213 species. Although the work developed during recent decades has allowed a major increase in our knowledge of this group, there are certainly many species yet to be found and, for those already listed, the distribution is largely unknown. Although linyphiids present the highest number of known species (267), dysderids present the highest endemic richness (46 species). Information regarding the provinces from where each species was referenced is also presented and reveals large differences in the knowledge about each province, with most presenting very few known records and species. This checklist is accompanied by an online catalogue where all the information here presented is exhaustively listed and regularly updated.

Key words: Arthropoda, Balearic Islands, catalogue, distribution, endemic species, Portugal, Spain, species list

Introduction

Spiders are one of the most diverse orders worldwide, with more than 40000 currently known species (Platnick 2010). Besides their role as main predators in many ecosystems, they have been suggested to be especially sensitive to habitat disturbance and to be potential indicators of future trends of other, slower responding taxa, being among the first to go extinct when habitat destruction is prevalent (Cardoso *et al.* 2010). These two characteristics combined, high richness in all kinds of habitats and sensitivity to ecological change, make them ideal candidates for conservation studies. When evaluated in equal stance to other taxa, namely vertebrates, they even rank high in conservation priority lists (Martín *et al.* 2010). Such studies, however, are often missing due to the lack of reliable data.

The current knowledge of Iberian spiders is severely incomplete. Many species remain to be discovered, part of these still undescribed. For most species already found, the known distribution is also partial and each new publication considerably expands their known range. A number of reasons may be responsible for this lack of knowledge, but the most prevalent possibly are (New 1999; Cardoso 2008): (1) the non-application of standardized and optimized sampling protocols; (2) the lack of experts in the taxonomy of the group and; (3) the lack of public awareness and political interest in the group.

Despite this situation, or because of it, having an updated repository of all known data is imperative. Only with an updated checklist (listing of species) and catalogue (distribution of species) it is possible to know what was already made and what gaps remain to be filled. Checklists and catalogues have been published for Spain (Fernández Galiano 1910; Pérez de San Román 1947) and Portugal (Bacelar 1928; Cardoso 2000, 2010). Only recently one of us (EM) began compiling updated information for the entire Iberian Peninsula