



***Titanobochica*, surprising discovery of a new cave-dwelling genus from southern Portugal (Arachnida: Pseudoscorpiones: Bochicidae)**

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Abstract

The new genus *Titanobochica* is described for *Titanobochica magna* **sp. nov.** from caves of the Algarve karstic massif, in Portugal. The new genus is assigned to the family Bochicidae and its particular characteristics and geographical isolation suggest a relictual condition. A key to the genera of Bochicidae is provided. The composition of the cave-dwelling fauna of the Algarve province is also discussed.

Key words: Pseudoscorpiones, Bochicidae, relict, cave, Algarve, Portugal, Iberian Peninsula

Resumo

O novo género *Titanobochica* é descrito para incluir *Titanobochica magna* **n. sp.**, do meio hipógeo do maciço calcário Algarvio, no Sudoeste da Península Ibérica. O novo género é incluído na família Bochicidae e as suas peculiares características, associadas ao isolamento geográfico, revelam a sua condição de relíquia, atestando a sua antiguidade no território. É fornecida uma chave genérica para a família Bochicidae e são efectuadas considerações sobre a composição da fauna cavernícola do Algarve.

Introduction

An important karstic massif extends throughout the Algarve province and is composed by several lithological elements, of which the Jurassic (mainly from Liassic, Dogger and Malm) dolomitic limestone is the most important (Almeida & Romariz 1989). More than 50 caves are known, ranging from 90 m of vertical development to 2000 m long. During a year of intensive seasonal biological exploration in limestone caves of the Algarve province, southern Portugal, very interesting new cave-dwelling arthropods were discovered, including some undescribed pseudoscorpions, in particular a new genus of the family Bochicidae.

The surprising discovery of a new bochicid genus and species in southern Portugal represents the second record for this family in Europe, after the monospecific genus *Troglobisium* Beier, 1939, from eastern Spain, which was originally assigned to the Syarinidae but later transferred to the family Bochicidae (Zaragoza 2004, 2007). Both genera are highly adapted troglobionts with large size and spectacular appearance.

The known range of the family Bochicidae extends from Texas and Mexico to South America, from the Antilles to Venezuela, Guyana and Brazil, as well as in Europe (Spain) (Muchmore 1998; Mahnert 2001; Zaragoza 2004, 2007) (Fig. 1). *Troglobisium* was, up to now, completely isolated from the range of the other members of the family and, together with *Titanobochica*, presents highly interesting biogeographical implications that are discussed below.