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A revision of the spider genus *Echinax* Deeleman-Reinhold, 2001 (Araneae: Corinnidae) in the Afrotropical Region

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Abstract

The cryptic arboreal castianeirine genus *Echinax* Deeleman-Reinhold, 2001 (Araneae: Corinnidae), previously known only from South-East Asia, is recorded from the Afrotropical Region for the first time. The female of *Copa longespina* Simon, 1909 is redescribed, the male is described for the first time, and the species is transferred to *Echinax* as *E. longespina* (Simon, 1909) **comb. nov.** It occurs widely throughout equatorial Africa, from Kenya and Tanzania in the east to Liberia in the west. Six new species are described from both sexes: *E. clara* **sp. nov.** from D.R. Congo and Ghana, *E. hesperis* **sp. nov.** from Ivory Coast, *E. natalensis* **sp. nov.** and *E. similis* **sp. nov.** from South Africa, *E. scharffi* **sp. nov.** from Tanzania, and *E. spatulata* **sp. nov.**, widespread across tropical Africa. The available ecological data indicates that all seven species are mainly arboreal and represent a prominent component of corinnid assemblage collected by canopy fogging, especially in forests.

Key words: arboreal, Asia, Castianeirinae, cryptic colouration, new species

Introduction

The genus *Echinax* Deeleman-Reinhold, 2001 (Corinnidae: Castianeirinae) presently includes five species of small, foliage-dwelling castianeirine spiders from South-East Asia. Three of these species were initially described in *Copa* Simon, 1885 by Deeleman-Reinhold (1995), but she subsequently established the genus *Echinax* to accommodate them and a fourth, newly described species (Deeleman-Reinhold 2001). Yang *et al.* (2004) later added a fifth species from China.

In the generic description, Deeleman-Reinhold (2001) highlighted several differences separating *Echinax* from *Copa*: (1) their smaller size; (2) thinner teguments; (3) more strongly procurved posterior eye row; (4) the presence of very long leg spines distally on all patellae and on the anterior metatarsi that are half or longer than the particular leg segment; (5) diameter of anterior median eyes three times that of the laterals, and (6) posterior median eyes usually further apart than in *Copa* and close to the posterior laterals. Based on the current revision and unpublished data on *Copa*, an improved diagnosis of *Echinax* is provided below, particularly emphasising differences in the leg spination between the two genera. The two genera are also apparently ecologically separated, *Copa* occurring on the ground and *Echinax* in the foliage of shrubs and trees (Deeleman-Reinhold 2001). Both genera have cryptic colouration: *Copa* are usually brown with black longitudinal carapace markings and black abdominal mottling to blend into leaf litter in their habitats, while live specimens of *Echinax* have a moss-green carapace that matches the colouration of mosses and lichens covering the older leaves and branches of trees they occupy (Deeleman-Reinhold 2001, see also her Plate 4 fig. 1 for a photo of *Echinax oxyopoides*).

During a present revision of the Afrotropical species of *Copa* by the author, one widespread continental species, *C. longespina* Simon, 1909, was prominent in collections from tropical Africa, particularly in canopy fogging samples. Its pale colouration, small size, very long leg spines and arboreal habits were different from typical ground-dwelling *Copa*, and further examination and comparison with Asian *Echinax* indicated that this species is misplaced and should be placed in the latter genus, thus representing the first records of *Echinax* from the region. Six new congeneric species were also discovered in material from the Afrotropical Region and are