An annotated checklist of the South African Acanthodrilidae (Oligochaeta: Acanthodrilidae: Acanthodrilinae, Benhamiinae)

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Abstract

A checklist of acanthodrilid species known from South African biotopes is here compiled from the literature and the unpublished KwaZulu-Natal Museum database of Oligochaeta (NMSAD). Most species belong to one of the two subfamilies, Acanthodrilinae, with a total of 107 valid indigenous species and 17 subspecies, belonging to five genera (Chilota, Eodriloides, Microscolex, Parachilota, Udeina). Furthermore, eight peregrine species of Microscolex (Acanthodrilinae) and Dichogaster (Diplothecodrilus) (Benhamiinae) are included. One of them, Dichogaster (Diplothecodrilus) austeni Beddard, 1901 may occur naturally in north-eastern South Africa. For all recorded species the type localities and known records in South Africa are given. Additional environmental data, when available, are included. The present location of most of the type material is indicated. Five species of Udeina are transferred to Parachilota: Udeina avescula, U. hogsbackensis, U. septentrionalis, U. pickfordia Lungström, 1968 and U. transvaaldensis Lungström, 1972, now Parachilota avescula, P. hogsbackensis, P. septentrionalis, P. pickfordius, and P. transvaaldensis, respectively. Dubious or uncertain genera and species are listed separately, including Hegesipyle Kinberg, 1867 and its only species H. hanno, the first acanthodrilid species recorded from South Africa. Valid species names, synonyms and doubtful species are arranged alphabetically.

Key words: Earthworms, Clitellata, Annelida, megadriles, Africa, species list, taxonomy, biogeography

Introduction

In South Africa ca. 350 megadrile earthworm species are known accredited to seven families: Acanthodrilidae (Acanthodrilinae and Benhamiinae), Eudrilidae (Eudrilinae and Pareodrilinae), Glossoscolecidae, Lumbricidae, Megascolecidae, Microchaetidae and Ocnerodrilidae. Of these all 142 species of Microchaetidae and 107 species of Acanthodrilinae are indigenous to South Africa. Two further acanthodrine species and 48 other known megadrile species with world-wide distribution (Benhamiinae, Eudrilidae, Glossoscolecidae, Lumbricidae and Ocnerodrilidae) are introduced to this country. The family Acanthodrilidae is widely distributed in the southern