



Article

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A new *Ankothrips* species (Thysanoptera: Melanthripidae) from Iran with unusually short setae

KAMBIZ MINAEI¹, FARINAZ HAFTBARADARAN¹ & LAURENCE MOUND²

¹Department of Plant Protection, College of Agriculture, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. E-mail: kminaei@shirazu.ac.ir

²CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences, Canberra, Australia. E-mail: Laurence.mound@csiro.au

Abstract

Ankothrips zayandicus **sp. n.** is described from Isfahan province, central Iran. It is unique among *Ankothrips* species, also unusual among Melanthripidae, in having no long setae on the head and pronotum. Problems are discussed in defining genera in Melanthripidae and Thripidae on the basis of pronotal setae.

Key words: *Ankothrips*, Isfahan province, Melanthripidae, new species

Introduction

Of the 6000 recognised species in the insect order Thysanoptera, 5600 are grouped into two large families, Phlaeothripidae and Thripidae, with the remaining species distributed in seven small families (Mound 2011). Melanthripidae is one of these smaller families, with 75 species listed in six genera, including several known only from fossils (Mound 2011). The four genera with extant species are: *Ankothrips* Crawford and *Cranothrips* Bagnall each with 12 species, *Dorythrips* Hood with 6 species and *Melanthrips* Haliday with 35 species (Mound 2012a). The first three of these exhibit remarkable discontinuities in geographical distribution that suggest they may represent ancient lineages. *Cranothrips* and *Dorythrips* are known only from the Southern Hemisphere. *Dorythrips* comprises four species in South America and two in Australia, whereas *Cranothrips* has one species in South Africa and 11 in Australia. In contrast, *Ankothrips* and *Melanthrips* species are mainly from the Northern Hemisphere (Hoddle *et al.* 2012). Most *Melanthrips* species are from the Palaearctic, with two known only from North America, and five from India or South Africa. *Ankothrips* comprises seven species from western North America, one from Namibia in south-west Africa, and four from Europe.

Life histories have been described for few species of Melanthripidae, but the members of this family are apparently phytophagous in flowers (Mound & Marullo 1998; Mound 2012b), with some exhibiting strong host specificity (zur Strassen 2003; De Borbon 2009; Pereyra & Mound 2009). Within the genus *Ankothrips*, the host association of the species from Namibia remains unknown, but the seven species from western North America appear to be associated with the flowers of various shrubs with one damaging the young leaves of *Yucca* species (Hoddle *et al.* 2012). Of the four species of *Ankothrips* in Europe three are associated with the flowering tissues of gymnosperm species in the genera *Juniperus* or *Cupressus* (Cupressaceae) (zur Strassen 2003). However, *A. flavidus* Pelikan is known only from one female, and neither *Juniperus* nor *Cupressus* has been found at the type locality in Slovakia (Peter Fedor, personal communication). The purpose of this article is to describe a new species of this melanthripid genus that has been taken from the flowers of a species of *Suaeda* (Chenopodiaceae) in Iran. The only Melanthripidae previously reported from Iran are five species of *Melanthrips* (Minaei & Alichy 2005; Bhatti *et al.* 2009). This new species of *Ankothrips* is interesting because, in contrast to the other known species, the major setae on the head and pronotum are short and weakly sagittate instead of long and acute. The significance of reduction in length of major setae to the systematics of Thysanoptera is discussed.