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Three new species of *Paraneseuthia* Franz from Australia (Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, Scydmaeninae)

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Abstract

Three new species of the ant-like stone beetle genus *Paraneseuthia* (Eutheini) are described from Australia: *P. bernierana* sp. n. (Western Australia), *P. dilatifurculata* sp. n. (Queensland) and *P. angustifurculata* sp. n. (Queensland). Key morphological characters of the new species are illustrated and discussed. Diagnoses of these and other species within the genus having similar body forms are based mainly on morphological differences in the male genitalia. New distributional data are given for Australian *Paraneseuthia*, based not only on named species but also on females recorded from coastal and sub-coastal eastern and northern regions that are not possible to identify in the absence of males.

Key words: Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, Scydmaeninae, Eutheini, *Paraneseuthia*, new species, Australia

Introduction

Paraneseuthia Franz, 1986 is an unusual genus belonging to the tribe Eutheini, the only known taxon in Scydmaeninae characterized by maxillary palpi composed of only three, and not four palpomeres. It is also the most diverse genus of Eutheini in terms of the body form, comprising beetles flattened and elongate and also strongly convex and stout, with several examples of intermediary, elongate and convex body shapes. *Paraneseuthia* is known to occur in Melanesia (Fiji), Australia (eastern Queensland), eastern New Guinea, western Papua, Borneo, the Maluku Islands, Sumatra, Japan and the Russian Far East (Franz 1986; Jałoszyński 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; Jałoszyński & Hoshina 2004; Kurbatov 1990, 1991). Morphological structures of this interesting genus were illustrated in detail and discussed by Jałoszyński (2010), who also compared Palaearctic and Oriental groups of species and subsequently carried out a preliminary phylogenetic analysis of *Paraneseuthia* species. Basing on the results a hypothesis of a sister group relationship between the north-eastern branch (represented by Japanese and Far Russian species) and the most recently discovered Australian species was proposed, with the historical Sundaland area as the presumed center of origin of *Paraneseuthia* (Jałoszyński 2011). Members of *Paraneseuthia* are rarely collected, and even in large museum collections only small numbers of specimens are housed, often with only a few males available for positive identification. Therefore, the currently known distribution of this enigmatic genus may reflect our inadequate knowledge rather than an actual geographic range, and the preliminary phylogeographic hypotheses will certainly be modified when new specimens from other localities become available.

In the present paper three new species of *Paraneseuthia* from Australia are described, all from the northern coastal areas. These findings expand the range of known character states that can be used to clarify problems related to the presumptive colonization of Australia from a Sundaland stock. They also provide a tighter geographical (but not necessarily morphological) link between Sundaland / New Guinean and Australian *Paraneseuthia*. Moreover, the distribution of *Paraneseuthia* in Australia is summarized based not only on the named species, but also on records of undescribed representatives of this genus so far known only from females. The latter may guide future efforts to discover and describe additional new species.