Stenonartonia tekoraava sp. nov. (Hymenoptera: Vespidae: Eumeninae), a new member of a typical Amazonian mimicry ring

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Abstract

Stenonartonia tekoraava sp. nov., a new species of potter wasp is described from central Amazonia. By size and color pattern, this species falls into the typically Amazonian mimicry ring of the social wasp Polybia liliacea (Fabricius) [Vespidae: Polistinae]. Comments are made on the Müllerian mimicry rings as a common phenomenon in Hymenoptera and particularly in the family Vespidae.

Key words: Mimicry rings, species description, Amazonia, Vespidae, potter wasp

Introduction

Müllerian mimicry can be summarized as the phenomenon of superficial similarity (mostly involving size and color pattern) for two or more species with effective secondary defenses (Ruxton et al. 2004) and sharing a common (geographical/environmental) area. Although Wilson et al. (2012), state Müllerian mimicry rings as an uncommon phenomenon, the contrary statement should be said about vespid wasps, where large portions of geographically and environmentally related fauna show strongly marked mimetic patterns which have been, nevertheless, poorly summarized and mostly cursorily treated in the literature as lists or mere mentions of mimic or similarly colored species. The apple-green social and solitary wasps from Madagascar (briefly treated by Pauly et al. 2003), or the jet-black, ivory and orange-red marked solitary wasps from Chile (mentioned by Bequaert & Ruiz 1942) are just two outstanding examples of geographically related mimicry rings. As a single example, a less noted, but nevertheless very important case of a geographically and environmentally related mimicry ring is the fauna of brownish-black and reddish-brown marked social (e.g. Polybia sericea (Olivier), P. chrysothorax (Lichtenstein), Mischocyttarus drewneni Saussure, M. matogrossensis Zikán, and Polistes subsericeus Saussure) and solitary wasps (e.g. Montezumia infernalis (Spinola), M. nigriceps (Spinola), Pachymenes sericeus Saussure, as well as a number of species in the families Crabronidae, Sphecidae, Apidae, and Pompilidae) living in open and mostly humid areas all across the middle of South America. These and other geographically/environmentally related mimicry rings involving vespid wasps still await for comprehensive summaries, listings and mappings.

One of the most showy color patterns exhibited by South American wasps is that of the relatively large-bodied swarming social wasps Polybia liliacea (Fabricius) and P. striata (Fabricius). They show a black background with a moderately abundant pattern of yellow markings including very thin pronotal hind margin and metasomal apical bands, largely marked scutellum, metanotum and mid-propodeum and–most notably–a pair of broad submedial mesoscutal lines which normally meet or fuse together at the hind border. Apart from the two above mentioned species, this combination of body size and color pattern is shared by at least the following vespid species: Mischocyttarus pseudomimeticus (Schulz), M. zikaninus Richards and the “liliaciosus form” of Polistes pacificus Fabricius [Polistinae], as well as Montezumia liliacea Gribodo, M. liliaceosa Gribodo, and Pseudodynerus garcetei Hermes [Eumeninae] (Richards 1978; Willink 1982; Hermes 2010). This mimicry ring is mostly restricted to the Amazonian realm.
metanotum. Thoracic sides with downward (except on pronotal sides, where it points upward) semidecumbent to appressed whitish pile. Main area of mesepisternum with moderately long downcurved whitish setae. Sides and upper face of propodeum with a faintly yellowish white appressed pile and with some important erect thin pilosity of same color at limits of concavity behind and below. Propodeal concavity with dense whitish pile, pointing downward though not appressed, mixed with long straight setae of similar color and direction. Metasoma with almost imperceptible, very short and thin fulvous pilosity and extremely short, thin and sparse microsetae. Pilosity becoming whitish and longer ventrally.

Male unknown.


Distribution. Brazil: central Amazonia.

Etymology. The name of this species comes from the Guarani word tekora'ava (from the word roots teko = personality and ta'a [ra'a in the root form] = to imitate, together with the agentive suffix va), meaning imitator or impersonator, in direct allusion to the mimetic character of the color pattern of this wasp.

Conclusions

Based on its peculiar morphology–mainly the lack of a specialized surface on the female vertex–Stenonartonia tekoraava sp. nov., is a particularly basal species of the genus, which would well either fall basally into the basalmost S. occipitalis group (Garcete-Barrett, unpublished data), or be a sister species to the remainder of the genus. By general appearance and color pattern, it falls into one of the most visually iconic Amazonian Müllerian mimicry rings among the Hymenoptera (the ring containing the quite common Amazonian social wasps Polybia liliacea and P. striata), and reminds us how commonly extended is the geographically- and environmentally-related mimicry rings in most of this taxonomic order and particularly in the family Vespidae, but at the same time how the matter is still cursory treated, as most of these rings have yet not been thoroughly documented and geographically traced.

Acknowledgements

I am very thankful to Alexandre Somavilla and Márcio Luiz de Oliveira for allowing the examination of the collection of Eumenines housed in the Hymenoptera Laboratory of the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia (INPA), to Gabriel Melo for his support in the Hymenoptera Laboratory, and to Bruno Ferrari and Brunno Bueno for their help in the preparing of photographs. My special thanks also to Orlando Tobias Silveira, Cynthia Rivarola Sena and Ana Rivarola Sena for the encouragement given to me about using Guarani terms in naming new species. I thank two anonymous reviewers for useful suggestions.

References


