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Abstract

Strongylovelia lillyae sp. nov. is described from Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu, India and constitutes the first species of the genus from Indian subcontinent. The new species is closely related to Strongylovelia setosa Zettel & Tran and S. vasarhelyii Zettel & Tran from Vietnam. A distribution map and photographs of S. lillyae sp. nov. are presented here.

Key words: Haloveliinae, taxonomy, Kanyakumari district

Introduction

Members of the limnic genus Strongylovelia Esaki (1924), are very small tear-shaped water striders, ranging in size between 0.89 mm and 1.80 mm, and belonging to the subfamily Haloveliinae of family Veliidae. The subfamily Haloveliinae contains five known genera, of which, three are marine - Haloveloides Andersen (1992) - and two are freshwater - Strongylovelia Esaki (1924) and Entomovelia Esaki (1930). The members of Strongylovelia are distributed across the Indomalayan (Sri Lanka, India, southern and southwest China, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Borneo, Malaysia and Philippines) and Australasian (New Britain and New Guinea) regions. Presently, 27 species and 2 subspecies are recognized, including the new species described here (Esaki, 1924, 1926, Lundblad, 1933, Polhemus, 1979, Lansbury, 1993, Lansbury & Zettel, 1997, Zettel, 2003a,b, Chen et al. 2006, Zettel & Tran, 2006, 2009 and Ye et al. 2015). Strongylovelia can easily be separated from other known genera in the subfamily Haloveliinae by the presence of a single large sordid white or yellow mark (sometimes with two round or elongate yellow spots) on the mesonotum, and by the head near the dorsal eye margin sometimes bearing yellow markings (Figs. 1A, B). Moreover, Strongylovelia can be easily distinguished from its closely related limnic genus Entomovelia by the presence of a long second antennal segment, a long first hind tarsal segment, a less hirsute body (Lansbury & Zettel, 1997) and subequal hind tarsal segments.

The members of the subfamily Haloveliinae have very long middle legs and a short metathorax, which are the characters thought to be evolved from the family Gerridae (Andersen, 1982). The resemblance of Haloveliinae with the family Gerridae especially in regard to the long and slender middle femora, the hind femora much surpassing the apex of the abdomen, the middle and hind legs inserted distinctly far beyond the fore legs, led Esaki (1924) to erect the genus Strongylovelia under the subfamily Halobatinae of family Gerridae. Later, to hold the four genera Haloveloides Andersen, Xenobates Esaki, Entomovelia Esaki and Strongylovelia Esaki, the subfamily Haloveliinae was proposed by Esaki (1930), under the family Gerridae. However, Bergroth (1893) had previously described the marine genus Haloveloides within the family Veliidae. The placement of Haloveliinae within the family Veliidae was confirmed by China (1957), and the same classification was followed for Strongylovelia by J. Polhemus (1979) when recording S. formosa from Sri Lanka.

The genus Strongylovelia was previously recorded from mainland India by Andersen (1982), Thirumalai & Krishnan, (2000), Thirumalai (2002, 2004) and from Andaman Islands by Polhemus & Starmühlner (1990). However, these authors did not assign any species name to the Strongylovelia recorded from India. Thirumalai (2009) suspected that the Strongylovelia sp. recorded from Tamil Nadu, India, might be S. formosa and he mentioned the species name with a question mark. However, there is no possibility of the occurrence of S. formosa in Indian subcontinent, because the species was first described from Taiwan Province of China and so far as is now understood, this species is restricted only to Taiwan and Guangdong Provinces of China.