

On the 11.755 insect taxa named by Charles P. Alexander

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Abstract

Charles P. Alexander is the author of 11.755 insect taxa, the large majority of which are in the four families of craneflies (Diptera, Tipuloidea). After a short biography, an overview is presented of the number of taxa in relation to biogeographical regions, families, synonyms, etc. in craneflies (11.556 names) as well as in nine other families of Diptera (198 names) and one in Plecoptera. For craneflies, the Alexander taxa cover about 70% of all species names and some 46% of the genera and subgenera of the world.

Key words: Charles P. Alexander, Craneflies, Nematocera, Tipuloidea, Tipulidae

Introduction

In craneflies⁽¹⁾ there are some 16.850 species group names and about 680 genus group names (CCW: Oosterbroek 2009). These are large numbers. Therefore, it is a surprising thought that the great majority of these taxa were described and named by just one person, Charles P. Alexander, namely 11.278 species⁽²⁾ and 278 (sub)genera. In other words, about two-thirds of all cranefly taxa of the world were named by Alexander. As if this was not enough, he is also the author of 197 new taxa and one new name in nine other families of Diptera and of one species of stonefly. All together, Alexander published 1.054 papers. Below, a short biography for Alexander is given, followed by a numerical analysis of the taxa described and/or named by him. For more detailed biographic information, the reader is referred to Arnaud (1970), Byers (1981, 1982), Knizeski (1979), and Wheeler (1985).

Charles P. Alexander

Charles P. Alexander was born in 1889, in the state of New York. After studying entomology he worked a couple of years as Curator in Lawrence, Kansas and Urbana, Illinois. In 1922 Alexander moved to the University of Massachusetts and stayed there until his retirement in 1959. He started as Assistant Professor but was soon promoted to Professor, later appointed Acting Dean, and finally as Dean of the School of Science.

In 1910 Alexander published his first paper on Tipulidae⁽¹⁾, dealing with species from Fulton County (N.Y.), followed in 1911 by four papers, including his first taxa new to science, one genus and 10 species from North America. In the next year he published 14 papers, with 61 new taxa,