

Two new species of the genus *Cheiroseius* Berlese, 1916 (Ascidae: Mesostigmata) from the Indian Thar Desert

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Abstract

Two new species, *Cheiroseius rajasthanicus* and *C. ovalis* collected from the Thar Desert of Rajasthan, are described and illustrated in this work along with their affinities. The genus is being recorded for the first time from the Thar Desert. A key to differentiate the five Indian species is provided.

Key words : *Cheiroseius*, Thar Desert, India, Key, *C. ovalis* sp. nov., *C. rajasthanicus* sp. nov.

Introduction

Species of the genus *Cheiroseius* are moderately large-sized ascid mites that are mostly associated with soil, decomposed litter and plant parts. The genus is known to have a global strength of about 80 species. Lindquist and Evans (1965) gave a well-defined generic diagnosis. The *Cheiroseius* fauna of India is very little known and consequently references on the same are very scanty. Before this work, only three species of *Cheiroseius* were known from India. Besides reporting the occurrence (Pramanik and Raychaudhuri, 1978) of two species [*C. curtipes* (Halbert, 1923) and *C. nepalensis* Evans & Hyatt, 1960] from West Bengal, Pramanik and Raychaudhuri (1977) described a new species, *C. indicus*, from West Bengal. During an exploration of soil acarine fauna from the Thar Desert, the first author collected two species of *Cheiroseius*. The genus is now recorded for the first time from the Thar Desert.