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***Afroesticus*, a new Afrotropical Ommatine (Diptera: Asilidae) genus with
twenty species and two species groups**

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***Afroesticus*, a new Afrotropical Ommatine (Diptera: Asilidae) genus with twenty species and two species groups**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	4
INTRODUCTION	4
MATERIALS AND METHODS	5
KEY TO THE GENERA/SUBGENERA OF AFROTROPICAL OMMATIINAE	6
TAXONOMY	8
<i>Afroesticus</i> , gen. n. (Figs. 1–196, Tables 1, 2)	8
Key to the species of <i>Afroesticus</i>	11
TAXA	14
<i>Afroesticus abyssinia</i> , sp. n.	14
<i>Afroesticus chiastoneurus</i> (Speiser)	16
<i>Afroesticus eminentis</i> , sp. n.	20
<i>Afroesticus fulaui</i> , sp. n.	23
<i>Afroesticus hamulus</i> , sp. n.	25
<i>Afroesticus insectaris</i> , sp. n.	28
<i>Afroesticus kimerus</i> , sp. n.	30
<i>Afroesticus macroscelis</i> (Bezzi)	32
<i>Afroesticus minutus</i> (Bromley)	35
<i>Afroesticus morani</i> , sp. n.	39
<i>Afroesticus persuasus</i> (Oldroyd)	41
<i>Afroesticus sadaukii</i> , sp. n.	44
<i>Afroesticus sankofa</i> , sp. n.	47
<i>Afroesticus variabilis</i> (Engel)	49
<i>Afroesticus velatus</i> , sp. n.	57
<i>Afroesticus verutus</i> , sp. n.	61
<i>Afroesticus victus</i> , sp. n.	63
<i>Afroesticus vittatus</i> (Curran)	65
<i>Afroesticus vorax</i> , sp. n.	68
SPECIES GROUPS	69
DISTRIBUTION	70
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	73
REFERENCES	73

ABSTRACT

The new genus *Afroestricus* (Diptera: Asilidae) with 20 species, is described. Included are: *A. abyssinia* **sp. n.**; *A. chiastoneurus* (Speiser), *A. eminentis*, **sp. n.**; *A. fulaui*, **sp. n.**; *A. hamulus*, **sp. n.**; *A. insectaris*, **sp. n.**; *A. kimerus*, **sp. n.**; *A. macroscelis* (Bezzi), *A. minutus* (Bromley), *A. morani*, **sp. n.**; *A. persuasus* (Oldroyd), *A. sadaukii*, **sp. n.**; *A. sankofa*, **sp. n.**; *A. variabilis* (Engel), *A. varipes* (Curran), *A. velatus*, **sp. n.**; *A. verutus*, **sp. n.**; *A. victus*, **sp. n.**; *A. vittatus* (Curran), and *A. vorax*, **sp. n.** *Afroestricus* is distinctive in the following combination of characters: moderately gibbose face; frons with a wide, lateral, stripe of numerous setae; fore femur with a stout preapical, anteroventral bristle; and a prominent epiphallus that conceals the distiphallus dorsally, characters that are not congruent with *Ommatius*. **New combinations** include: *A. chiastoneurus*, *A. macroscelis*, *A. minutus*, *A. persuasus*, *A. variabilis*, *A. varipes*, and *A. vittatus*. **New synonymies** include: *senax* Bromley = *chiastoneurus* Speiser; *munroi* Bromley and *bevisi* Bromley = *variabilis* Engel; and *garambensis* Oldroyd = *varipes* Curran. The species are assigned to the *macroscelis* and *minutus* species groups based largely upon wing venation. The genus is largely confined to the Afrotropical region, between 17°N and 31°S latitude, with only the range of *A. vittatus* extending into western Yemen. The species show a relatively high level of sympatry. Descriptions, illustrations, and a key to the species are included. A brief discussion of the distribution and phenology of the species and a provisional key to the current Afrotropical genera and subgenera of Ommatiinae are also provided.

Key words: Asilidae, Ommatiinae, new genus, *Afroestricus*, Afrotropics, new species, species groups

INTRODUCTION

The Ommatiinae (Diptera: Asilidae) is one of the dominant elements in the world asilid fauna. The subfamily, although widely distributed, occurs predominately in semitropical and tropical areas, and is characterized by the presence of a sclerotized metacoxal bridge and a pectinate style (Hull 1962). Currently, it includes eight genera of which five occur in the Afrotropical Region (Hull 1962; Oldroyd, 1974, 1980; Tsacas and Artigas 1994; Scarbrough and Marascia 1996; Joseph and Parui 1998). Most of these genera are recognized by well-defined character states. Yet, *Ommatius* Wiedemann (1821), the most specious with its wide geographic distribution, is currently broadly defined by the subfamily character states. Recent collections from tropical areas throughout the world promise to expand and modify our understand of the genus significantly. In this paper, the new genus *Afroestricus*, one of the more distinctive new taxa encountered from the Afrotropical Region, is proposed. The genus comprises 20 species, which are assigned to two species groups. *Afroestricus* is distinctive in the following combination of characters: moderately gibbose face; frons with a wide, lateral, stripe of numerous setae; fore femur with a stout preapical, anteroventral bristle; and a prominent epiphallus that conceals the distiphallus dorsally, characters that are not congruent with *Ommatius*. In addition to introducing the new genus, descriptions, illustrations, and a key to the species are