

Five new species of *Myrsidea* Waterston (Phthiraptera: Menoponidae) from bristlebills and greenbills (Passeriformes: Pycnonotidae) in Ghana

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Abstract

Five new species of chewing lice of the genus *Myrsidea* Waterston from the passerine family Pycnonotidae are described and illustrated. They and their type hosts are: *M. masoni* ex *Bleda eximius* (Hartlaub), *M. chesseri* ex *Criniger barbatus* (Temminck), *M. palmeri* ex *Andropadus curvirostris* Cassin, *M. wombeyi* ex *Bleda syndactylus* (Swainson), and *M. marksi* ex *Phyllastrephus albigularis* (Sharpe). These represent the first species of pycnonotid *Myrsidea* to be described from African hosts. Partial mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase I (COI) sequences were collected for these species and additional species of *Myrsidea*, which support the genetic distinctiveness of these new species.

Key words: chewing lice, *Myrsidea*, Phthiraptera, Menoponidae, Pycnonotidae, Africa

Introduction

Price *et al.* (2003) recognize over 200 species of *Myrsidea* Waterston, with the vast majority of these from hosts in the avian order Passeriformes. However, when Hellenthal and Price (2003) treated the *Myrsidea* of bulbuls (Pycnonotidae) and described 16 new species, they noted that they had seen no material of this genus from African members of the family. They postulated that this absence "...raises the issue as to whether collecting from these other hosts presents unusual difficulties or whether they simply are not as blessed with lice as the species of bulbuls or whether the lice are lying in collections awaiting their turn for a taxonomic study." An expedition by the senior author and colleagues to Ghana in 2003 resulted in the collection of specimens of *Myrsidea* from 6 species of bristlebills and greenbills (Pycnonotidae). We have found these to represent 5 new species and it is our purpose here to describe and illustrate them.