



Taxonomy and faunistics of the southern African genus *Iselma*, with the description of nine new species (Coleoptera: Meloidae: Eleticinae)

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Abstract

The genus *Iselma* belongs to the most basal subfamily Eleticinae and it is strictly distributed in the western portion of southern Africa. The taxonomy of this group was previously treated, but it is still incomplete and unclear. In this contribution we clarified some taxonomic misinterpretations and we describe nine new species: *I. audisioi* sp. n., *I. cedarbergensis* sp. n., *I. elephantula* sp. n., *I. fontisamarae* sp. n., *I. kamanjabi* sp. n., *I. kaszabi* sp. n., *I. lorenzettii* sp. n., *I. mimica* sp. n., *I. stellaris* sp. n.. The following new synonymies are proposed: *I. analis* Kaszab, 1953 = *I. simillima* Kaszab, 1953; *I. hirsuta* (Thunberg, 1791) = *I. ursus* (Thunberg, 1791). This taxonomic improvement required the proposal of a new updated key to the species. New faunistic records for several species are also included, and the phenomenon of extreme endemism in this genus is highlighted.

Key words: Meloidae, *Iselma*, southern Africa, new species, taxonomy, faunistics

Introduction

The Eleticinae is the most basal subfamily of Meloidae (Pinto et al., 1996; Bologna & Pinto, 2001; Bologna et al., 2008). This group remained almost unknown until the middle of the last century, and was usually included within the subfamily Meloinae. The detailed studies made by Kaszab (1954, 1955) on the Palaearctic genera *Iselma* Haag-Rutenberg, 1879 (partially confused with *Morphozonitis* Pic, 1922) and *Eletica* Lacordaire, 1859, as well the innovative research of Abdullah (1965a, 1965b) on the Neotropical genus *Protomeloe*, stimulated a comprehensive study of this group by Selander, who defined the subfamily Eleticinae and demonstrated its phylogenetically basal position (1964), and revised the systematics of tribes and genera (1966). Kaszab (1966), almost contemporarily, completed the taxonomic revision of the Afrotropical tribes Morphozonitini and Derideini. Selander's phylogenetic proposal was not accepted by Kaszab (1969), who preferred to maintain an "Eleticoid Meloinae" group, by defining different tribal assemblages of genera and also indicating some taxonomic errors introduced by Selander (1966).

More recently, Bologna (1991), Pinto & Bologna (1999), Bologna & Pinto (2001, 2002) and Bologna et al. (2008) accepted the subfamily Eleticinae, but adopted an intermediate tribal arrangement between those proposed by Selander and Kaszab. Particularly, as discussed by Bologna (1995), who re-examined the nomenclatorial arrangement of the subfamily, the definition of the tribe Derideini is still debated. Bologna (1991, 1995) and Bologna & Pinto (2001, 2002) included in this tribe the southern African genus *Iselma*, which is the object of the present paper.

According to Selander (1966), *Iselma* is the most basal representative of the family with its sister group, the Chilean genus *Anthicoxenus* Fairmaire and Germain, 1863. The larval morphology of *Iselma* supports its primitive position (Bologna et al., 2001; Bologna & Pinto, 2001). This genus is strictly endemic to the western