



The family Epicriidae in Slovakia: annotated faunal synopsis and description of a new species of *Epicrius* (Acari, Mesostigmata, Epicriidae)

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Abstract

Eight species of the family Epicriidae, all in the genus *Epicrius* Canestrini & Fanzago, 1877, are documented from Slovakia: *E. bureschi* Balogh, 1958, *E. mollis* (Kramer, 1876), *E. monticola* Bregetova, 1977, *E. resinae* Karg, 1971, *E. schusteri* Błaszak & Alberti, 1989, *E. simoni* sp. nov., *E. sophiae* Bregetova, 1977, and *E. tauricus* Bregetova, 1977. A new species is here described (*E. simoni* sp. nov.), and one other species is redescribed and illustrated for the first time (*E. sophiae*). *Epicrius kargi* Solomon, 1978 is synonymised with *E. tauricus*. Two of the species are recorded from Slovakia for the first time (*E. schusteri* and *E. sophiae*), and one has been wrongly recorded from Slovakia (*E. stellatus* Balogh, 1958). Information on ecology and regional distribution is provided for the most common and abundant species, *E. monticola*, *E. resinae*, *E. schusteri*, and *E. tauricus*. A key to the Slovakian species of *Epicrius* is also provided.

Key words: Acari, Mesostigmata, *Epicrius*, Epicriidae, fauna, ecology, distribution, Slovakia

Introduction

The Epicriidae is a Holarctic family of free-living mesostigmatic mites, and an important component of the fauna, especially in forest litter microhabitats. In Europe, the occurrence of two epicriid genera has been recorded, viz. *Epicrius* Canestrini & Fanzago, 1877 and *Berlesiana* Turk, 1943. The first reviews of knowledge on the family Epicriidae, with illustration or re-illustration of known species, were by Evans (1955), Karg (1971) and Bregetova (1977). The most comprehensive study of the Epicriidae has been carried out by Moraza and Johnston (2004) and Moraza (2005a, 2005b, 2006), who reviewed the world epicriid fauna. Those works form the basis of the present taxonomic investigation.

The genus *Epicrius* currently comprises not more than 35 Palearctic species known from Europe, Central Asia, China and Japan. To the present, 22 identifiable species of the genus have been described from Europe: Kramer (1876) and Karg (1971) each described one species from Germany, Haller (1881) and Schweizer (1922) each one species from Switzerland, Willmann (1953) one species from Austria, Evans (1955) one species from the British Isles, Balogh (1958) three species from Bulgaria, Athias-Henriot (1961) six species from Spain, Bregetova (1977) three species from Ukraine (Carpatho-Ukraine and Crimea) and Russia (Caucasian region), Solomon (1984) one species from Romania, Błaszak & Alberti (1989) one species from Austria, Iavorschi (1995) one species from Israel, and Moraza (2005b) one species from Spain.

From Slovakia, only fragmentary data can be found in numerous faunistic papers dealing with investigations of edaphic mites in nature reserves and other areas of Slovakia. Till now, a total of six species of the family have been recorded from Slovakia, *Epicrius bureschi*, *E. mollis*, *E. monticola*, *E. resinae*, *E. stellatus*, and *E. tauricus* (for references see below).