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Revision of the genus *Epexochus* Reitter, with description of three new species (Coleoptera: Curculionidae: Lixinae: Cleonini)

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Abstract

The genus *Epexochus* Reitter is revised, its morphological characters are defined and the differences from the most closely related genera, *Leucochromus* Motschulsky and *Eurycleonus* Bedel, are outlined. All the populations of *Epexochus* from Kazakhstan and north-western China (Xinjiang) are referred to a single species, *E. lehmanni* (Ménétries). The status of *Exochus latus* Chevrolat is discussed and its name is formally synonymised with *lehmanni*. According to Art. 45.6.4.1 of the ICZN (1999), the name *lehmanni* var. *consobrinus* Faust, originally proposed for a colour variant and misidentified by Ter-Minasyan, is deemed to be subspecific and thus a synonym of *lehmanni*. Three new species are described in the genus: *E. korotyaevi* sp. n. (type locality: southern Tajikistan, Shaar-tuz region), characterised by the pronotum curved towards the elytra and by slender, lanceolate scales; *E. voriseki* sp. n. (type locality: central Uzbekistan, Gazli), characterised by small size, only slightly convex elytra and long hair-like setae, and *E. mongolicus* sp. n. (type locality: western Mongolia, Kobdoskij Aimak), characterised by large size, convex elytra with flat intervals and an elongate lamella of the aedeagus.

Key words: Taxonomy, weevils, morphological analysis, new species, central Asia

Introduction

The study of the phylogeny and biogeography of the weevil tribe Cleonini and examination of a large number of specimens housed in several museums, carried out by the senior author, allowed us to determine that the genus *Epexochus* Reitter, 1913, previously considered monotypic, in fact comprises four distinct species. This discovery, together with the considerable confusion that exists in the literature about the delimitation of the type species, *E. lehmanni*, and the status of its synonyms, prompted us to comprehensively revise the genus.

Traditionally *Epexochus* included only its type species by monotypy, *Cleonus lehmanni* Ménétries, 1849 from central Asia. Motschulsky (1860) divided *Cleonis* Dejan, 1821 (as *Cleonus* Schoenherr, 1826) into several new genera and provided a schematic key to them, but listing only their type species. *Cleonus lehmanni* was not included in this key, but according to its morphological traits it would fall into the genus *Leucochromus* Motschulsky, 1860. This combination was indeed later proposed by Chevrolat (1873), who also erected a further new genus, *Exochus*, for *E. gigas* (Marseul 1868) from northern Africa and *E. latus* Chevrolat, 1873, *E. simplicirostris* Chevrolat, 1873 and *E. persicus* Chevrolat, 1873 from central Asia. Faust (1904) recognised that *Exochus* Chevrolat, 1873 is a junior homonym of *Exochus* Gravenhorst, 1829 (Hymenoptera, Ichneumonidae) and replaced the name with *Epilectus* Faust, 1904, transferring also *L. lehmanni* to *Epilectus*. However, *Epilectus* Faust, 1904 is also a junior homonym of *Epilectus* Blackburn, 1888 (Coleoptera, Carabidae), and both *Exochus* Chevrolat and *Epilectus* Faust are now considered as synonyms of *Eurycleonus* Bedel, 1907 (Alonso-Zarazaga & Lyal 1999). Reitter (1913) eventually proposed a separate genus, *Epexochus* Reitter, 1913, for *E. lehmanni*, but its concept has never been properly defined.

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