



Eastern Palearctic Scythrididae (Lepidoptera: Gelechioidea): description of a new genus and some new species

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Abstract

A new genus, *Bactrianoscythris* **gen. nov.**, and five new species are described from the eastern Palearctic Region: *Bactrianoscythris afghana* **sp. nov.**, *B. annae* **sp. nov.**, *B. drepanella* **sp. nov.**, *B. khinjani* **sp. nov.** and *B. ginevrae* **sp. nov.** *Scythris satyrella* Staudinger, and *S. pamirica* Passerin d'Entrèves & Roggero are transferred to the new genus, and genitalic features of *B. satyrella* are re-described. A key to species of the new genus is provided. *Scythris farsi* **sp. nov.**, of unknown affinities, is described from Iran. New records extending the known geographical distribution of another 9 species of *Scythris* and one species of *Catascythris* are also presented.

Key words: Lepidoptera, Scythrididae, new genus, new species, new record, Irano-turanian Region

Introduction

A main question in lepidopteran phylogeny concerns the cosmopolitan superfamily Gelechioidea, whose relationships are problematic and poorly understood (Hodges 1998; Kaila 2004). The classification of family-level groups of Gelechioidea remains highly unstable in spite of various hypotheses proposed in recent years to elucidate phylogenetic relationships within the superfamily (Kaila 2004). Although there is a large number of species assigned to the superfamily, the Gelechioidea remain perhaps the least known of the Lepidoptera with estimates that over half of the species are yet undescribed (Hodges 1998).

Among families, the Scythrididae show an unstable position since some authors (Hodges 1998; Bucheli and Wenzel 2005) lowered its taxonomic rank to subfamily level, while others chose to maintain it as a family, such as Kaila (2004).

Phylogenetic relationships within the Scythrididae have been investigated only for the Nearctic fauna (Landry 1991), but more recently Palearctic taxa were studied at the generic level (Passerin d'Entrèves and Roggero 2003, 2007b). Nevertheless the great majority of the described species are currently assigned the widespread genus *Scythris*. Pronounced morphological differences are present in the genitalia of both sexes, and a division into species groups was previously initiated (Jäckh 1977, 1978; Passerin d'Entrèves 1982, 1995; Bengtsson 1997).

Another problem hampering phylogenetic analysis is the overall poor knowledge of the family: regions that have otherwise relatively well-known Lepidoptera faunas are virtually unknown with regard to the scythridid fauna (Passerin d'Entrèves and Roggero 2007a). The Irano-turanian Region is a case in point: a number of taxa reaches the highest diversity in this region, but the number of known scythridid species is comparatively very low (Passerin d'Entrèves and Roggero 2008).

We are now examining the scythridid fauna of Iran and Afghanistan, an area where fewer than 40 species were recorded until now (Passerin d'Entrèves and Roggero 2008). Although past expeditions in the region