



The bee genus *Ruizantheda* (Hymenoptera: Halictidae), its scope and description of a new species

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Abstract

The South American caenohalictine genus *Ruizantheda* is understood to comprise *Halictus proximus* Spinola, *Halictus divaricatus* Vachal, and the new species *Ruizantheda centralis* from Argentina. The new species is intermediate between the first two, bridging the gap in morphology observed in these rather different species. Diagnostic characteristics for the genus are indicated; a key and a comparative table of characters for the three species are given. The new species, which occurs in the provinces of Santa Fe, Santiago del Estero and Chaco, in Argentina, is described and illustrated.

Key words: Caenohalictina, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, taxonomy

Introduction

The genus *Ruizantheda* was proposed by Moure (1964) for three species described from Chile by Spinola (1851) under the genus *Halictus*: *H. proximus* Spinola, *H. mutabilis* Spinola, and *H. nigrocaeruleus* Spinola. These species also occur in southern Argentina. Also, Moure proposed two subgenera: *Ruizantheda s. str.* for *H. proximus* and *Ruizanthedella* for the last two species, as they markedly differed from *R. proxima*. Moure characterized *Ruizantheda s. str.* by the dull, micro-sculptured integument, particularly in the female, and by several characters of the male, such as the truncate labrum, the medially projected fourth sternum, the basally expanded, simple mandible, and the deeply emarginate pygidial plate. *Ruizanthedella* was characterized by the metallic color of the head and mesosoma, and in the male, by the apically angulate labrum, the medially emarginate fourth sternum, the bidentate, not basally expanded mandible, and the shallowly emarginate pygidial plate. Moure (1964) also indicated some characters in common between *Ruizantheda* and *Pseudagapostemon*, such as the wing venation, and the structure of the inner hind tibial spur of the female.

Moure and Hurd (1987) followed the same classification with two subgenera in their catalog. Roberts and Brooks (1987), under the name “Agapostemonine group” of genera, listed and commented the genera of the subtribe Caenohalictina, and considered that *Ruizanthedella* had uncertain affinities within the group.

In 1989, Cure raised *Ruizanthedella* to the genus level, considering it related to *Pseudagapostemon*, particularly to the subgenus *Brasilagapostemon*. He considered *Ruizantheda* as related to a new genus described in that paper, *Oragapostemon*, based on *Halictus divaricatus* Vachal, a species known from the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil, and from the province of Buenos Aires in Argentina. Cure illustrated the genital capsule, the fourth sternum and the pygidial plate of the male, pointing out the similarity of these structures to those of *R. proxima*. According to Cure (1989), both genera share an obtuse epistomal suture, more than eight hamuli in the hind wing, metasoma with basilateral bands of short, appressed hairs on the terga, and a basal projection on the retrorse lobe of the male genitalia.

Michener (2000) synonymized *Oragapostemon* and *Ruizanthedella* under *Ruizantheda*, and considered unnecessary the recognition of subgenera, since there was only one species in each subgenus, maybe two in