



Two new species of the orb-weaving spider genus *Alpaida* from Brazil (Araneae: Araneidae)

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Abstract

Two new species of Araneidae, *Alpaida itacolomi* n. sp. and *A. tonze* n. sp., from Ouro Preto (Minas Gerais, Brazil) are described based on both sexes.

Key words: Taxonomy, Neotropical region, Itacolomi

Introduction

The spider genus *Alpaida* O.P.-Cambridge, 1889 comprises 137 species and is restricted to the New World (Platnick 2009). Members of this genus display an impressive diversity regarding morphology, habitat and web structure (Levi 1988). In a taxonomic revision of the genus, Levi (1988) increased the number of species from 40 to 134 and suggested that *Alpaida* could eventually include 200 to 300 species. In the last twenty years, two species were transferred to *Alpaida*. *Alpaida tullgreni* (Caporiacco, 1955), originally described in *Parawixia* F.O.P.-Cambridge, 1904, was moved to the genus by Levi (1992) and redescribed by Levi (1993). *Alpaida oliverioi* (Soares & Camargo, 1948) was transferred from *Cyclosa* Menge, 1866 by Levi (1999), but not redescribed because the pedipalps of the male holotype were lost. More recently, *Araneus naviculus* (L. Koch, 1871) was transferred to *Alpaida* and considered a senior synonym of *A. roemeri* (Strand, 1908) by Framenau *et al.* (2009). The only additional record for the species revised in Levi (1988) was the description of the male of *Alpaida scribe* Mello-Leitão, 1940 by Buckup & Meyer (1993). Finally, a new species, *Alpaida guto* Abraham & Bonaldo, 2008 were recently described based on specimens from the eastern Amazonia of Brazil (Abraham & Bonaldo 2008).

The genus *Alpaida*, like most araneid genera, is among the better known spider groups in the neotropical region thanks to an extensive series of taxonomic revisions published by H.W. Levi from between 1968 and 2007 (Calixto & Levi 2006, Levi 2005a, 2005b, 2007, Santos *et al.* 2005, and references in Levi 2002: table 1). The current state of knowledge of this spider family, together with its ubiquity and wide geographic distribution, makes it an excellent candidate for ecological and biogeographic studies, as well as for conservation planning. Thus, any addition to the taxonomic revisions of Levi, including description of unknown species, would be a useful contribution towards the use of these spiders in other disciplines. In this study, we describe two new species of *Alpaida*, collected during a spider diversity inventory in south-eastern Brazil, as a part of a larger initiative of databasing and complementing the knowledge of araneid spiders in Brazil. Females of both species were easily recognised as members of *Alpaida* due to the glabrous carapace, wide *pars cephalica* and the epigynum with a wide, sclerotised transverse lip forming a median scape. Males share with other species of the genus the radix, embolus and terminal apophysis fused in a single sclerite and the mushroom-shaped paramedian apophysis (for details on genus limits, see Levi (1988)).