



The little known genus *Forania* (Acari, Prostigmata, Erythraeidae)

JAIME G. MAYORAL^{1,3} & PABLO BARRANCO²

¹Department of Biological Sciences, Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA. E-mail: mayoralj@fiu.edu

²Dpto. Biología Aplicada. CITE II-B. Universidad de Almería, 04120, Almería, Spain. E-mail: pbvega@ual.es

³Corresponding author. E-mail: mayoralj@fiu.edu

Abstract

Forania (Acari: Parasitengona: Erythraeidae) is a poorly known genus parasitic on ants, recorded only twice and not since 1930. In the present work, we re-describe the only described species, *Forania mentonensis* (André). Some drawings and technical information of the types are published for the first time. A new specimen captured from the south of Spain is described as *Forania sendrai* **sp. nov.** In addition, some taxonomic and biological questions of the group are addressed.

Key words: *Forania mentonensis*, *Forania sendrai*, Almería, Spain, myrmecophile

Introduction

The Parasitengona encompass a wide variety of mites whose larvae are mostly parasitic on insects, and whose later active instars are free-living predators (Krantz 1978). Some species parasitizing a broad range of hosts (especially the erythraeid *Leptus*) have been reported also from social insects (Eickwort 1990). However, there appear to be few that have formed obligatory associations with them. The genus *Forania* (Erythraeidae) is known only from larvae that are parasitic on ants (André 1929, 1930).

In 1929 Marc André captured four larval specimens parasiting *Plagiolepis pygmaea* (Latreille) (Formicidae) in a nest in the Menton forest in Ubac Foran in the Alpes Maritimes, France. As a result of the data collected from that study, he erected a new species, *Bochartia mentonensis* André in order to differentiate it from the existing species *Bochartia kuiperi* Oudemans which parasitizes the aphid *Aphis papaveris* Fabricius. In his work, Marc André discussed the future possibility of erecting a new subgenus to accommodate *B. mentonensis*. In 1930 M. H. L. Parker captured two mites parasiting *Pheidole pallidula* (Nylander) (Formicidae) in Hyères, France. Marc André, after examining these specimens, placed them with the four larvae that he captured one year earlier belonging to *B. mentonensis* (André, 1930).

Some years later, Southcott (1961) erected the genus *Forania* with only one species *F. mentonensis*. An important reason for this decision, in addition to morphological differences, was that all of the specimens belonging to *Forania* were captured parasiting ants; on the other hand, *Bochartia* were all captured on different hosts. Since then, two more species were described (McDaniel & Bolen 1981; Zheng 2002). However, no further specimens of the genus *Forania* have been captured since the two events in 1929 and 1930.

In the present work, a larva belonging to the genus *Forania*, captured parasiting an ant in a nest in the south of Spain, is presented for the first time in 80 years. This specimen addresses some questions regarding the taxonomic status of this genus. In addition, drawings, measurements and technical data of the type series and the two specimens captured in 1930 belonging to *Forania* studied by Marc André are presented for the first time.