



New records of araneid spiders (Araneae: Araneidae) in the Colombian Amazon Region

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Abstract

We have revised all the specimens of Araneidae from the Colombian Amazon Region in the Arachnological Collection of the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (ICN), in addition to the specimens collected between 2000 and 2004 by the authors in the lower Caquetá and Apaporis rivers (Amazonas and Vaupés, Colombia). A total of 77 new records for Araneidae in the Colombian Amazon are reported; 26 of these species are new records for the country and the region in addition to 15 more species known for Colombia but newly recorded in the region, the distribution of the remaining 36 species is expanded within the region. The genera *Encyosaccus* Simon 1865 (*E. sexmaculatus* Simon 1895), *Hingstepeira* Levi 1995 (*H. folisecens* Hingston 1932) and *Micrepeira* Schenkel 1953 (*M. fowleri* Levi 1995 and *M. tubulofasciens* Hingston 1932) are recorded for the first time in Colombia. From this revision, it is evident the great amount of new information available in museum collections. Due to the strategic geographic position of Colombia, species inventories in different localities of the Colombian Amazon Region are important to fill distributional gaps of many species in South America. This work contributes to the knowledge of geographic distribution patterns of orb-weaving species in Colombia and in the entire Amazon Region.

Key words: Species composition, distribution areas, South America, Colombia

Introduction

Spiders of the orb-weaving family Araneidae are one of the most common components in tropical rain forests. Morphologically, this family is characterized by the posterior median eyes tapetum much displaced towards the sagittal plane, the presence of a mesal cymbium, radix in the embolic division in the male palp and the presence of sustentaculum on tarsus IV (Griswold *et al.* 1998). Araneids are often easy to recognize in the field due to their vertical orb webs, although highly modified or reduced webs are common in many lineages (Griswold *et al.* 1998). In addition, the taxonomy of Araneidae in the Neotropics has been addressed by numerous studies both to genus (Levi 2002) and species level (Levi 1968, 1971, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008), providing substantial knowledge about the species richness and distribution of araneids in South America. In total, 2999 species and 170 genera within Araneidae are described worldwide (Platnick 2010) and about 1.500 species and 65 genera are reported in the Americas (Levi 2002), although estimates show that the number of species could increase up to 6000 or 7000 accounting for the high diversity in the tropics (Coddington & Levi 1991).

However, information on the composition and distribution of araneids in Colombia is still scarce. Most of the records are restricted to the Andes Region (Flórez & Sánchez 1995; Gilede-Moncayo & Bello-Silva 2000) and the species composition in other regions of the country, such as the Colombian Amazon, is practically unknown (Gilede-Moncayo & Bello-Silva 2000). In 1995, 32 genera and 182 species of araneids were known