Zootaxa 2754: 41–50 (2011)
www.mapress.com/zootaxa/
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Article

ISSN 1175-5326 (print edition)
ZOOTAXA
ISSN 1175-5334 (online edition)

An overview of *Neogovea* species (Opiliones: Cyphophthalmi: Neogoveidae) with the description of *Neogovea virginie* n. sp. from French Guiana

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Abstract

Cyphophthalmi is a group of small to medium sized opilionids with a circumglobal distribution that have often been overlooked in biodiversity surveys due to their small size, cryptic life style and general resemblance to mites. We present an overview of the described species in the genus *Neogovea* (Neogoveidae), an identification key to the species and the description of a new species based on the material from a biodiversity survey of an inselberg in French Guyana. *Neogovea virginie* n. sp. is morphologically most similar to *N. immsi* Hinton occurring in Brazil, but differentiated by the structure of the "crown" of the spermatopositor.

Key words: Guiana, inselberg, *Neogovea*, identification key, check list

Introduction

Cyphophthalmi is a remarkable group of small opilionids (up to 7 mm) that has often been overlooked due to their small size, cryptic life style and resemblance to mites. They typically live in forest litter but some species appear to occur in caves such as *Neogovea mexasca* Shear, 1977 (Juberthie 1971).

An interesting element of these opilionids is their global distribution. Representatives occur both in temperate and tropical habitats on all continents except Antarctica. Their wide distribution makes the members of this group interesting study organisms for the detection of biogeographical patterns (Juberthie & Massoud 1976; Boyer & Giribet, 2007, Boyer *et al.* 2007). Yet, their secretive lifestyle and inconspicuousness requires specialized techniques like Winkler extraction to collect them, and this also explains why relatively few species are described at the present day. The current species count is 168 species and subspecies (Pinto da Rocha et al. 2007; Da Silva *et al.* 2010; http://giribet.oeb.harvard.edu/Cyphophthalmi/) but many more await description, especially in regions such as the Neotropics and Southeast Asia (Clouse & Giribet, 2010).

During a biodiversity survey of the inselberg (=granite outcrop) Savanna Roche la Virginie in French Guiana in 2008, 18 cyphophthalmid specimens were collected. Based on an overview of the described species in the genus *Neogovea* the collected material from French Guiana belonged to a species new to science. The species is described here and an identification key to all described *Neogovea* species is presented. We hope this overview will vitalize the attention for cyphophthalmids.

Material and methods

The material described here was collected during a 10 day fieldtrip in August 2008 to the inselberg Savanna Roche La Virginie in central French Guiana (4° 11' 24.00"N, 52° 8' 60.00"W) (Fig. 1). The field trip was organised to study the fauna and flora on this inselberg, as a rapid baseline biodiversity inventory in order to evaluate the impact of expected higher number of visitors to the site after the recent construction of a new road between Regina and St. Georges. Cyphophthalmid specimens were collected on the inselberg from small patches of vegetation, dominated

Accepted by A. Perez Gonzalez: 22 Nov. 2010; published: 1 Feb. 2011