

Article

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***Microphorella similis* sp. nov. from Switzerland, a close relative of the type species, *M. praecox* (Loew) (Diptera: Dolichopodidae: Parathalassiinae)**

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Abstract

Microphorella similis Brooks, a new Palaearctic species, is described and illustrated. It is very closely related to *M. praecox* (Loew, 1864), the type species of the genus. The new species is known from Leuk-Pfynwald in the Swiss Alps, where it was found sympatrically with *M. praecox* on gravel in the floodplain of the Rhône River in May. A diagnosis and abridged redescription of *M. praecox* is also provided, including detailed illustrations of the male genitalia. Both *M. praecox* and the new species share several features in common with the recently described Tunisian species, *M. cassari* Gatt, 2011.

Key words: Dolichopodidae, Parathalassiinae, *Microphorella*, Palaearctic, new species

Introduction

The genus *Microphorella* Becker, as currently conceived, includes 19 species from most parts of the world, and it is expected that numerous additional species remain to be discovered and described. There is no evidence, however, that this generic concept is monophyletic. The diagnosis in use to distinguish *Microphorella* from the other described parathalassiine genera is obsolete and largely based on the possession of a reduced anal area of the wing in combination with the absence of features that characterize the other genera with this wing type (i.e., *Chimerothalassius* Shamshev & Grootaert, *Eothalassius* Shamshev & Grootaert, *Thalassophorus* Saigusa). In future revisionary studies of *Microphorella*, a detailed knowledge of the type species and its allies will be essential. The aim of the present study is to provide a contribution to this knowledge.

Microphorella praecox (Loew), the type species of *Microphorella*, was described from Silesia, Poland (Loew 1864) and was subsequently recorded from several countries in northeastern and eastern central Europe (Chvála 1988). More recently it was recorded from the Swiss Alps (Merz 1998). Dr. B. Merz sent part of his catches to the junior author (HU), who recognized two forms, or species. The discovery of these two forms is of particular interest as it affects current knowledge of the type species of *Microphorella*, its identity and possible variation. Subsequently, HU was invited by B. Merz on a joint collecting trip, and was led to the localities where numbers of specimens of both forms could be collected and preserved in ethanol in perfect condition, without shrinkage or nearly so. Most of the present study is based on this material. A detailed study of distinctive characters by the senior author (SEB), including the male postabdomen, yielded sufficient differences to justify distinction of two closely related species. One species was found to agree with the type series of *M. praecox*, while the other one will be described here as new.