



Two new species of *Nyctelia* Latreille (Coleoptera: Tenebrionidae) from Argentinean Patagonia with zoogeographical and ecological remarks

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Abstract

Two new species of the genus *Nyctelia* Latreille (Pimeliinae: Nycteliini) from Argentinean Patagonia, *N. sulcogranata* sp. nov. and *N. recteplicata* sp. nov., are described. Distributional maps, habitus, photographs and illustrations of genitalic features for these two new species are included, with comparisons to other known species of the genus. A discussion is presented on distributional habitat records and biogeography.

Key words: Tenebrionidae, Nycteliini, *Nyctelia*, Patagonia, Argentina, new species

Introduction

Arthropods, having great abundance and high species richness, play key roles in the food chain of arid regions (Polis 1991; Ayal 2007). Coleoptera are the most abundant and diverse non-social insects in northern Patagonia and Tenebrionidae represents the most diverse and numerous family of this order (Cheli *et al.*, 2010). Species of the tribe Nycteliini are one of the most conspicuous elements of this family in Patagonian steppes (Kuschel, 1969).

The genus *Nyctelia* Latreille belongs to the Nycteliini, a Neotropical tribe of Pimeliinae with 300 species arranged in 12 genera endemic to arid and semiarid lands of southern South America (Flores 1997; Flores & Carrara 2006). In the last revision of the Nycteliini, Flores (1997) reported 65 species of *Nyctelia*. Since then, three new species have been described (two in Flores & Carrara 2006; one in Zúñiga-Reinoso & Jerez 2012) and 4 have been synonymized (two in Flores 2007; one in Flores 2009; one in Zúñiga-Reinoso & Jerez 2012).

Thus, at the present time, *Nyctelia* is comprised of 64 species, distributed from northwestern Argentina and central Chile to the southern part of Patagonia in Argentina and Chile, with one species reaching Uruguay (Flores 1997). The known altitudinal range of the genus is from sea level to 3100 m (Flores & Carrara 2006). Species of *Nyctelia* inhabit the biogeographic provinces of Patagonia Central, Monte, Puna, Prepuna, Santiago, Maule, and Pampa (Flores 1997), with up to six species frequently being found in sympatry in lowland zones of the Patagonian steppe and Monte (Flores & Carrara 2006). Even though tenebrionids play an important role in drylands as primary decomposers (Flores 1998) some species of this genus have strong tendencies for herbivory (Flores 1997; Flores and Debandi 2004; Cheli *et al.* 2009) and there have even been records of omnivory in some of them (Mazía *et al.* 2006, Cheli, pers. obs.).

In recent years, one of us (GHC) conducted several sampling explorations using pitfall traps (Cheli & Corley 2010) in different environments of Chubut province (Argentina), and found specimens of two new species of *Nyctelia*. The objectives of this paper is to describe and illustrate these two new species of *Nyctelia* from Argentina, with distributions, habitat records and biogeographic comments. With the two new species here described the number of species of *Nyctelia* amounts to 66.

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