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***Microcenoscelis* n. gen. (Coleoptera: Tenebrionidae: Ulomini) from tropical Africa, with description of a blind species from Zimbabwe**

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Abstract. *Microcenoscelis* n. gen. (Coleoptera: Tenebrionidae: Ulomini) *caeca* n. sp. is described from Zimbabwe, a small and completely blind species. A second known species, however with completely developed eyes, and originally described as *Uloma minuscula* Ardoin, 1969, was also placed in the new genus. *Microcenoscelis* n. gen. seems to be mostly related to the genera *Cenoscelis* Wollaston, 1867, and *Cneocnemis* Gebien, 1914.

Key words: Coleoptera, Tenebrionidae, Ulomini, *Microcenoscelis* n. gen., *Cenoscelis*, *Cneocnemis*, taxonomy, new genus, new species, new combination, blind species, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Since a longer time I had at hands a single specimen of a small blind Tenebrionidae from Zimbabwe with uncertain generic status. Waiting in vain for additional specimens, I decided to describe this single female herein as *Microcenoscelis* n. gen. of the tribe Ulomini Blanchard, 1845 (Tenebrioninae Latreille, 1802). This new taxonomic entity seems to be mostly related to the genera *Cenoscelis* Wollaston, 1867 (clypeolabral membrane broadly exposed, labrum in same plane as clypeus, male protarsus not broadened, male protibia at interior edge with a feeble angle) and *Cneocnemis* Gebien, 1914 (antennomere 3 not prolonged and as long as antennomere 4, protibia flattened, small body size 2.5–3.3 mm).

A second species, however with completely developed eyes, originally described as *Uloma minuscula* by Ardoin (1969), and preliminarily assigned to *Cenoscelis* by Schawaller (2015), is also placed in the new genus. This species with completely developed wings has a wider distribution in tropical Africa, whereas the new blind species with reduced wings is probably an endemic element in the Vumba Mountains in Zimbabwe near the border to Mozambique. This area is known for a high diversity of fauna and flora.

Reduction of morphological features might occur simultaneously within different groups of organisms due to the selection to similar environmental conditions, and therefore such characters are less of phylogenetical value. Thus the absence of eyes is not considered as generic character for *Microcenoscelis* n. gen., and a second species with completely developed eyes is assigned into the new genus too. The same conclusion was given by Kamiński (2012) based on the study of the African genera belonging to the platynotoid Tenebrionidae.

The species of Ulomini usually feed on red-rotten wood not only in forests, but also in singled trees. However, *Cenoscelis* was also found under stones and in not arboreal wood (Schawaller et al. 2013). The definite habitat of the unusual blind *Microcenoscelis* n. gen. in the sub-montane evergreen forest is unknown. Lea (1912) suggested (but not confirmed) a myrmecophile mode of life for his blind *Typhluloma* from Australia.

Material and methods

The locality data are given not verbatim, but standardised in arrangement and English language. Photographs were made by using a Leica DFC320 digital camera on a Leica MZ16 APO microscope. The digital photographs were subsequently processed by using Auto-Montage (Synscopy) software.