



<http://dx.doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.4057.3.5>

<http://zoobank.org/urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:C0C9AD36-9562-4068-9728-4E1BD31755CE>

Five new species of the Afrotropical dark sac spider genus *Messapus* Simon, 1898 (Araneae: Corinnidae)

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Abstract

The Afrotropical dark sac spider genus *Messapus* Simon, 1898 (Corinnidae: Corinninae) currently only comprises two described species, the type species *M. martini* Simon, 1898 and *M. natalis* (Pocock, 1898), which have both recently been redescribed. The leg and setal morphology of *Messapus* is studied using scanning electron microscopy for the first time, for *M. martini* and *M. tigris* **sp. n.**, and additional characters are provided to supplement a recent generic description. Five new species are described in the current paper: *M. megae* **sp. n.** (♂ ♀, from Zimbabwe), *M. meridionalis* **sp. n.** (♀, from South Africa), *M. seiugatus* **sp. n.** (♀, from Guinea), *M. tigris* **sp. n.** (♀, from Botswana and Namibia), and *M. tropicus* **sp. n.** (♂ ♀, from Democratic Republic of the Congo). All five species are arboreal spiders occurring on bark, lower foliage strata and the canopies of forest and savanna trees. An identification key to the seven species of the genus is provided.

Key words: arboreal, forest, identification key, savanna, taxonomy

Introduction

The family Corinnidae includes, amongst others, spiders that imitate ants and mutillid wasps, or species that are cryptically coloured (Haddad 2013; Raven 2015). These spiders are usually encountered in leaf litter and the foliage of shrubs and trees, although a few species are closely associated with the bark of trees.

The genus *Messapus* Simon, 1898 was described based on a single species, *M. martini* Simon, 1898, from KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. *Messapus* was initially placed in the Clubionidae: Micariinae (Simon 1898), later in the Gnaphosidae: Micariinae by Lehtinen (1967), Clubionidae *incertae sedis* by Reiskind (1969), and Liocranidae by Platnick (1989). Bosselaers & Jocqué (2000) provided the first redescription of the type species, and placed the genus in the Corinnidae: Castianeirinae. A recent study by Haddad (2013) showed that the syntypes of *M. martini* were not conspecific; he described the true male for the first time, transferring the genus to Corinninae, and described a new genus to include the misidentified male paralectotype of *M. martini* (*Copuetta maputa* Haddad, 2013) and more than 10 other castianeirines. In the same paper, he transferred *Corinna natalis* Pocock, 1898 (redescribed by Haddad 2005) to *Messapus* and *M. secundus* Strand, 1907 to the castianeirine genus *Merenius* Simon, 1909. Consequently, *Messapus* is presently represented by only two species, *M. martini* and *M. natalis* (Pocock, 1898).

The current study adds five new species to *Messapus* and provides an identification key to the seven species now known for the genus. Representatives of the genus (*M. martini* and *M. tigris* **sp. n.**) are also studied for the first time using scanning electron microscopy. Consistent with the biology of the two described species of *Messapus*, the five new species appear all to be predominantly arboreal, cryptically coloured and well camouflaged, and use crevices on tree trunks to hide from natural enemies (Figs 1–2).