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Caddisflies of the West Palaearctic and Afrotropical regions of Africa: Working documents

Dagmar TOBIAS & Wolfgang TOBIAS

The Trichoptera fauna of the vast African continent was widely unknown at the beginning of the last century. In his comprehensive work of 1905 on the geographical distribution of Trichoptera in "ganz Afrika nördlich und südlich vom Äquator, mit Ausnahme der westlichen Mittelmeerländer und vielleicht Südwest-Afrikas und Madagascars", ULMER was able to list only 5 publications up to that time: SAVIGNY (1809-1813), BRAUER (1875), KOLBE (1898), ULMER (1904 a,b). "Die Zahl der bisher bekannten Arten ist sehr gering, doch lässt sich kein Gegensatz zwischen Ost- und Westafrika erkennen. Phryganeiden und Limnophiliden fehlen vollständig; auch Sericostomatiden sind noch nicht beschrieben worden, ebensowenig Rhyacophiliden und Hydroptiliden. Es sind also nur Leptoceriden und Hydropsychiden bekannt, von letzteren hauptsächlich Macronematinae: 1 Polymorphanus, 1 Amphipsyche, 1 Phanostoma, 1 Aethaloptera, ca. 6 Macronema-Arten, 3 Protomacronema-Species; ferner 3 Hydropsyche-Arten, 1 Ecnomus und 4 Dipseudopsis-Arten. Hyalopsyche und Hydropsychodes sind endemisch. Im Hamburger Naturhistorischen Museum befindet sich eine kurzbeinige Hydroptiliden-Larve (von Dr. STUHLMANN in Deutsch-Ost-Afrika gesammelt), deren Gehäuse grosse Ähnlichkeit mit der Hydroptilide Brasiliens aufweist, die FR. MÜLLER in Fig. 24 abbildet. Im Gebiete kommen demnach sicher Hydroptiliden vor. Die Leptoceriden sind durch 2 Leptocerus-Arten und durch Oecetis vertreten. Von Madagascar kennt man bisher 1 Leptonema, 2 Macronema-Species, 2 Dipseudopsis-Species, von der Insel Mauritius 1 Hydropsyche; über den Charakter der madagassischen Fauna lässt sich z. Zt. also wenig sagen, ebenso wenig über den Süd-Afrikas, von wo nur 1 Molanna-Species (als Gehäuse) bekannt ist."

Caddisfly research received its first major impetus from collections and descriptions of new species from the former European colonial areas, especially those in West and Central Africa (authors such as BANKS, BARNARD, JACQUEMART, KIMMINS, MARLIER, MOSELY, NAVAS and ULMER). Since the 1950s, the extensive publications of SCOTT and later of DE MOOR have greatly expanded our knowledge of the South African species. The wealth of descriptions of new species, genera and even of four new families from this single geographical area shows the enormous potential for undiscovered taxa that undoubtedly still exists in this "dark continent". In recent years, the investigations of ANDERSEN, GIBON, KJÆRANDSEN and STATZNER in West Africa have greatly increased the number of new records and new species.

The North African fauna of the Maghreb zone is West Palaearctic in origin. VAILLANT, BOTOSANEANU, MALICKY and particularly DAKKI have played a significant role in caddis fly research in this area.

Numerous research expeditions by W. TOBIAS to remote waterbodies in Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal between 1980 and 1996 have brought back an extensive material of caddis flies, which has now been through the process of preliminary sorting for identification. In spite of the large number of recently published taxonomic works on the West African caddis flies, it is not possible to obtain an overview of the published taxa and their synonyms from this region and from neighbouring areas without an extended literature search. For this reason, D. & W. TOBIAS first began to research the widely scattered identification literature on West Africa and the sub-Saharan areas, the older items of which are generally difficult to obtain (e.g. the papers by L. NAVÁS). This quickly showed that there is a serious lack of faunistic and taxonomic investigations into the caddis flies of the African continent. The authors took this absence of information as an opportunity to collect together so far as is possible all the relevant literature on the Afrotropical region and to evaluate it from the point-of-view of systematics, taxonomy and zoogeography. This review was enlarged to include trichopterological publications dealing with the West Palaearctic areas of Africa and with the African offshore islands (see JOHANSON, RANDRIAMASIMANANA & GIBON, WEAVER III).

As part of this project, 650 individual papers up to the publication year 2006 were checked for their content. Illustrations relevant for the identification of the adults were scanned, printed and catalogued family by family together with specific data on the described taxa, the authorship, and the geographical distribution or ecological associations. Finally, the documents were stored as text and graphics files in an EDV-database. Descriptions of the larval stages are not included.

Although these literature searches were originally conceived as providing working documents for our own researches, it soon became apparent that this comprehensive catalogue of literature and illustrations should be made generally available rapidly and freely as a working tool for all those interested in working on Trichoptera material from Africa, especially for colleagues in far-distant institutes and without access to large libraries. Placing it on the internet will be the most suitable way of achieving this. The website will include all the species of the current families in a loose sequence and as HTML documents on the URL: <http://www.rz.uni-frankfurt.de/~wtobias/>. Each page will record the name of the species, its distribution, the best illustrations of its diagnostic characters available in the literature, usually of genital structures, and the appropriate original literature.

This bibliographic reference work, containing over 1200 extant species and subspecies in 26 families and 109 genera, makes no claim to be complete. The clarification of problematic systematic questions or synonyms was not one of its aims. Additions and corrections will be gratefully received.

Geographical distribution		Number of extant species
African continent	West Palaearctic Region	128
	Afrotropical Region	866
	West African Region	343
Adjacent islands	Madeira Island	14
	Canary Islands	18
	São Thomé	7
	Cape Verde Islands	4
	Seychelles	11
	Mauritius Island	7
	Réunion	10
	Madagascar	122
	Komores	6
Arabian Peninsula	Yemen	16

Table to Tobias & Tobias, Africa: Total number of currently valid species for different regions

Adress of authors: Schöne Aussicht 11, D-61348 Bad Homburg
d.tobias@vff.uni-frankfurt.de
w.tobias@vff.uni-frankfurt.de



Change of addresses

Dr. Wayne K. Gall
36 St. Mary's Street
Lancaster, NY 14086
U S A

Brian Patrick
Director Central Stories
Alexandra Museum
Box 308
Alexandra
New Zealand

Dr. Peter Zwick
Schwarzer Stock 9
D – 36110 Schlitz
pleco-p.zwick@t-online.de

Dr.J.M.Edington
Parc Isaf
Bwllfa Dare Road
Cwmdare
Aberdare CF44 8UH
U K
john.edington@virgin.net

Peter Wiberg-Larsen
National Environmental Research Institute
University of Aarhus, Dept.of Freshwater Ecology
Veilsøvej 25
DK – 8600 SILKEBORG
E-mail: pwl@dmu.dk

Dr. Peter Barnard
173 Western Road
Leigh-on-Sea
Essex SS9 2PQ
England

Mr.Yoshio Hayashi
Laboratory of Ecology and Systematics
Graduate School of Science
Osaka Prefecture University
1-1 Gakuen-cho, Nakaku, Sakai
OSAKA 599-8531
Japan

Armin Weinzierl
Karlsbader Straße 6
D – 84028 LANDSHUT (home)

Armin Weinzierl
Regierung von Niederbayern
Sachgebiet 52
Regierungsplatz 540
D – 84028 LANDSHUT (office)
Tel. 0871/808-1468
Fax 0871/808-1859
armin.weinzierl@reg-nb.bayern.de

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