

Abc Taxa

The sawflies of Namibia and western South Africa (Symphyta, Hymenoptera)

Frank Koch, Georg Goergen
and Simon van Noort



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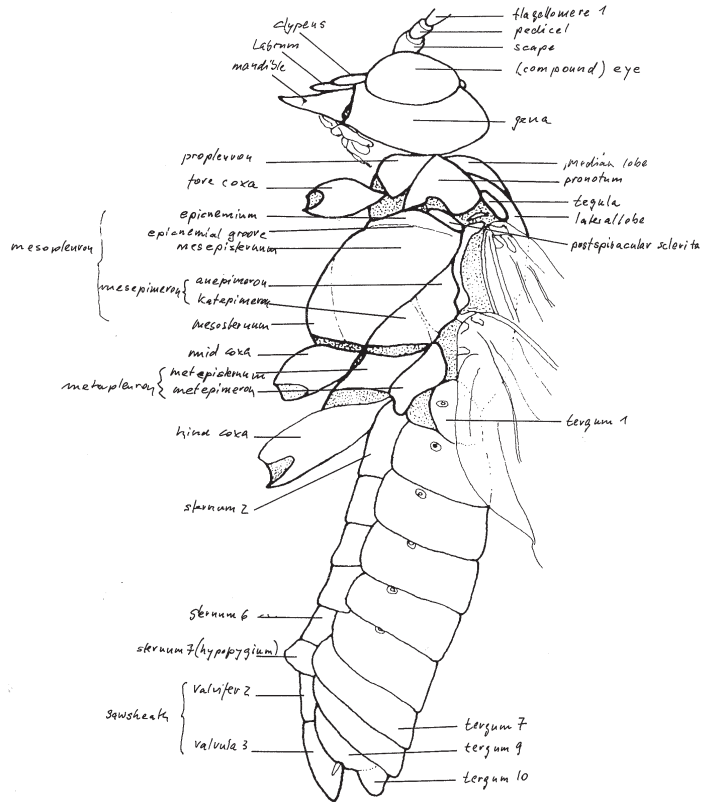
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Preface

Living organisms detected, observed and/or collected in the field deserve to be identified as soon as possible in order to advance scientific research. This underlines the crucial importance of taxonomy for fundamental as well as applied research, in particular when it comes to the understanding of the functioning of biodiversity and its conservation and sustainable use. However, even in the 21st century biologists and other stakeholders are still confronted with barriers that obstruct their work. One of the most persistent barriers encountered is the availability of updated identification tools, ideally for all parts of the world. In this context, the knowledge and know-how made available through the capacity building series *Abc Taxa* comes as highly appreciated. Volumes in this series aim to deliver not only identification keys of a taxon, but also high quality colour illustrations, biological data, and useful technical advices (for instance on collection methodology and collection management) related to the species group. Moreover, each volume is devoted to the group living in a specific geographic area, with preference for those areas that are generally underrepresented in other works, and these areas often correspond to developing countries. The latter observation explains why the Belgian Development Cooperation funds this series.

In the field, sawflies are less often encountered than other hymenopteran insects such as bees, ants and wasps. They nevertheless play a significant ecological role in many terrestrial ecosystems, because the (caterpillar-like) larvae of virtually all sawfly species are plant-feeders, their overall host range including a large range of gymnosperms, angiosperms (dicots and monocots), and ferns. Several species are significant pests of crops, in orchards, forests, etc. Sawflies are much better known in the Northern than the Southern Hemisphere, the biology and ecology of many species particularly from sub-Saharan Africa remaining simply unknown. Thus, the present, well-illustrated volume contributes to fill a gap in the study of this taxon, and will help researchers such as taxonomists studying the entomological fauna of South-Western Africa, and people involved in conservation biology to draw up biodiversity management plans.

Although 'biodiversity' is a buzzword and a keystone notion often mentioned in the frame of public, political, and economic discussions, its study continuously needs reference books such as those delivered worldwide by the series of *Abc Taxa*.

Jean-Luc Boevé
Brussels, January 2015

Abstract

This monograph includes a history of the study of the sawflies of the Afrotropical Region; recommended collecting methods; a general description of the life cycle of sawflies; and extensive references to Afrotropical sawflies. A total of 55 species of Symphyta have been reported from the study area, which comprises Namibia and the western parts of South Africa. Previously, 26 species were known from Namibia and 29 species, including four introduced species, from the South African part of this region. Only one species was recorded from both countries. Identification keys for all families, genera and species are provided. As a result of current taxonomic revisions, five new junior synonyms are proposed: *Athalia limpopo* Benson, 1962 **syn. n.** for *A. brevicornis* Benson, 1962; *A. xantha* Benson, 1962 **syn. n.** for *A. incomta* Konow, 1908; *A. elisabethae* Muehle, 1979 **syn. n.** for *A. ustipennis* Mocsáry 1909; *Distega braunsi* Enslin, 1911 **syn. n.** and *D. brunniventris* Enslin, 1913 **syn. n.** for *D. montium* Konow, 1907. Finally, *Distega nigeriae* Forsius, 1927 **sp. rev.** is a valid species and is removed from synonymy with *D. mocsaryi* Enslin, 1913. Colour images of all species are included, together with line drawings of further morphological characters, and maps displaying their known distribution.

Front cover. *Arge deckerti* on flower of *Chyphostemma congestum*. (Photo by J. Deckert).

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