Occurrence of Rhithrocloeon (Baetidae: Ephemeroptera) in West Africa

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Summary

The discovery in the Ivory Coast is reported of the mayfly genus, Rhithrocloeon, previously only known from East African torrents. A description is given of the new species, Rhithrocloeon elouardi, known from the male imago only.

Key words: Insects — New species — West Africa — Ivory Coast — Fresh water.

Résumé

Présence de Rhithrocloeon (Baetidae : Ephemeroptera) en Afrique de l'Ouest

Rhithrocloeon n'était connu auparavant que des torrents de l'Afrique de l'Est. L'imago mâle d'une nouvelle espèce, Rhithrocloeon elouardi, est décrite de Côte d'Ivoire.


Kopelke (1980) described the adults of two species of Cloeon Leach, C. insuefum and C. permirum, from eastern Zaire, which were distinguished by highly unusual genital forceps. In recording the presence of one of these in Tanzania (Gillies, 1985), I transferred them both to the new genus Rhithrocloeon to which was added a third species, R indicator, also from Tanzania. The nymphs were not known at that time, but it was noted that all the material came from the vicinity of torrential waters. I was subsequently able to collect the nymphs and rear the adults of both Tanzanian species, Gillies (1988). This showed that, as had been expected, the genus is not at all closely related to Cloeon, the nymphs being adapted to life in a lotic environment.

I recently received 2 ♂ imagines of a new species of Rhithrocloeon, collected in a light-trap by Dr J.-M. Eluard in the Ivory Coast. A description of this follows.

Rhithrocloeon elouardi sp. n.

Male imago

Antennae clear, vertex cream. Turbinate eyes greyish-purple, tall, rounded in dorsal aspect, contiguous.

Thorax dark brown. Wings (fig. 1) clear, MA2 extending as far as crossvein between MA1 and


Material

Ivory Coast: holotype male imago, tributary of R. Cavally between Grabo and Tiboto, 11.II.88, J.-M. Elouard [deposited in British Museum (Natural History)]. Paratype, male imago, same provenance.

*R. elouardi* most closely resembles the Zairean species, *R. insuetum*. It differs from this in its smaller size, in the presence of a recurved spur on the inner extension of the basal segment of the forceps and the reduction in the number of marginal intercalaries in the wing.

The material came from a light-trap set up beside a small torrential stream, cascading down the hillside into the River Cavally. This suggests that, in its ecology, *elouardi* does not differ very much from that of the East African species, all of which inhabit similar waters.

*Rhithrocloeon* is one of the 4 known genera of Cloeoninae in Africa in which the hind wing has been lost, (Gillies, 1990). Identification of the adults at both the generic and the specific level therefore depends on the male terminalia. Separation of the females from *Cloeon* or from species of *Afroptilum*, in which the hind wing has been lost, may be difficult.

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References


Dimensions

Male body 3-3.3 mm, wing 3.3 mm.