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Catalogue of Opiliones (Arachnida) types deposited in the Arachnida and Myriapoda collection of the Instituto Butantan, São Paulo, Brazil

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Abstract

A catalogue of the Opiliones types of the “Instituto Butantan”, São Paulo, Brazil is given, surveying the collection after severe fire damaged in 2010. Of a total of 91 species with type material listed for the collection, 69 could be located, and 22 are considered lost. The species are arranged according to their families and genera. The collection of Salvador de Toledo Piza Jr., housed at the Museu de Zoologia “Luiz de Queiroz”, was donated to the Instituto Butantan in 2009. These types received a new accession number and are listed under this new affiliation for the first time.

Key words: Arachnida, Harvestmen, Neotropics, taxonomy

Introduction

Currently, the Instituto Butantan, São Paulo (IBSP) is responsible for more than 93% of the production of antivenom and vaccines in Brazil and is recognized as one the largest research centers of its kind worldwide. It is well known for its research on venomous animals, biodiversity, systematics, ecology, natural history, clinical aspects and poisoning mechanisms (Santos & Canter 2006, Silva 2006, Kumar 2010). The institute houses four zoological collections: the Richard Hoge Herpetological Collection, the Arachnida and Myriapoda Collection, the Medical Entomology Collection and the Acarology Collection, which enable taxonomical, biological and evolutionary history studies (Martins 1994, Silva 2006). These collections are important for research, technological development, immunobiological production and disseminating information for public health (Calleffo & Barbarini 2007).

The study of Arachnology at the IBSP started with Vital Brazil Mineiro da Campanha, who began studying scorpionism in 1905, due to the large number of recorded envenomation accidents with scorpions (Fonseca 1954). Later, in 1924, Jean Vellard began studying arachnidism, systematics, biology and venoms, which resulted in the production of a therapeutic serum and the start of a collection of scorpions and spiders (Fonseca 1954). The harvestmen collection at IBSP was initiated around 1930 (Mello-Leitão 1934). At that time, it was a common practice for the local population to bring in animals in exchange for antivenom. The harvestmen were commonly confused with spiders but accepted by the Institute for exchange. Among the researchers that contributed to the growth and development of the collection we call attention to Cândido Firmino de Mello-Leitão. During the first stages, Mello-Leitão identified most of the available material and described several new species of Eupnoi (Mello-Leitão 1935b, 1938), and of Laniatores of the families Cosmetidae (Mello-Leitão 1935b) and Gonyleptidae (Mello-Leitão 1934), mainly from the subfamilies Pachylinae (Mello-Leitão 1935a, 1939) and Gonyleptinae (Mello-Leitão 1934, 1935a, 1935b). He also published identification keys for both families (Mello-Leitão 1935c, 1940).

In 2009, the Instituto Butantan received the donation of the private collection of Salvador de Toledo Piza, previously housed at the Museu de Zoologia da Escola Superior de Agricultura “Luiz de Queiroz”, Piracicaba, São Paulo (MZLQ). Piza studied harvestmen systematics from 1936 to 1950. He described several new species of Eupnoi (Piza 1946), Cosmetidae (Piza 1938b, 1947), Stygnidae (Piza 1938b) and Gonyleptidae, mainly of the Pachylinae (Piza 1938c, 1943a, 1947) and Gonyleptinae (Piza 1938b, 1938c, 1943a). He also published