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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A new genus of Amycterini from the Pilbara region of Western Australia (Coleoptera: Curculionidae: Cyclominae)

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Abstract: *Xenommamycterus* **gen. nov.** is described/diagnosed, and *Talaurinus capito* Pascoe, 1874 is designated its type-species. This genus is considered monospecific at present. Its distribution appears to be restricted to the tropical rock desert of the western Pilbara region of Western Australia, based on available specimens. Evidence suggests that F.H. DuBoulay collected the holotype of *T. capito*, and that its type-locality of “Champion Bay” is in error for Nickol Bay. Limited observations on its imaginal food-plants, behaviour, habitat preferences and relationships are provided, as well as possible reasons for the evolution of its unusual eye structure.

Key words: New genus, Curculionidae, reniform eyes, Pilbara, Western Australia, taxonomy, relationships, distributions, habitat, holotype collection history.

Introduction

Pascoe (1874: 17) described the amycterine weevil species *Talaurinus capito* (type-locality: “Champion Bay”) in a short fifteen-line diagnosis/brief description (mostly in Latin). He also figured this species in two reasonable quality illustrations (Plate 2, Figures 7, 7a) as part of his description. His Figure 7 is a dorsal habitus view of the entire animal while Figure 7a is an outline diagram of the head only, in frontal view. Pascoe described *T. capito* as having small eyes (“oculis parvis”) and Figure 7a illustrated the eyes as being round in shape. He considered the primary diagnostic character of this species to be “the large size of the head”, when compared to other previously described *Talaurinus* W.J. Macleay species, and selected its specific epithet to reflect this feature. Ferguson (1913: 379) essentially reiterated Pascoe's description/illustration of the eye as "small, round" in his redescription of this species, and "round, set low" in his earlier key to *Talaurinus* (Ferguson 1912: 97), after examining a *T. capito* specimen "referred by the British Museum authorities".

In the last 40 years, while doing biological survey work in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, I have collected a small number of amycterine weevils that are assignable to *Talaurinus capito* when compared to the original description (particularly Figure 7), the redescription in Ferguson (1913: 378) and the habitus photographs of the female holotype of this species in Zimmerman (1991: Plate 159, Figures 5, 6). Closer examination of these *T. capito* specimens revealed that they possess the unusual, highly distinctive, morphological character of a reniform-shaped eye with the ventral margin of the eye-surface directed dorsad by a bell-shaped projection, not previously described/commented upon in the aforementioned publications or for any amycterine taxon.

Subsequently I was able to obtain a close-up photograph of the head of the *T. capito* female holotype, housed in the Museum of Natural History in London, which confirmed that it possessed this unusual eye structure. This feature was not evident in Pascoe's description, Ferguson's key/redescription or Zimmerman's photos. Additional specimens of *T. capito* were examined in the Australian National Insect Collection, including some that were collected by the Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation as part of the Pilbara Biological Survey. Detailed examination of all of these specimens, and comparison with all other described *Talaurinus* species and Amycterini genera, has confirmed that they represent a new undescribed genus. It is described below. I also review the occurrence of "*Talaurinus capito* Pascoe" in Western Australia, for the benefit of future students of the group, and redescribe and rediagnose this species in detail through the generic description.

Material and Methods

Abbreviations for collections of specimens examined are as follows:

ANIC – Australian National Insect Collection, Canberra, A.C.T., Australia.
BMNH – Museum of Natural History, London, U.K..
MPWA – Author's personal Coleoptera collection, Perth, Western Australia.

Abbreviations: Fig./Figs. = Figure/Figures; HQ = headquarters; N.P. = National Park; TL = total length from anterior of rostrum to elytral apex; SL = standard length from anterior margin of pronotum to elytral apex; TW = total width at widest part of body.

Measurements were taken using vernier calipers (accuracy ± 0.02mm).

For nomenclatorial and taxonomic actions, the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1999) is followed.

Results

Xenommamycterus Peterson **gen. nov.** (Figs. 1-5)

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Type species: *Talaurinus capito* Pascoe, 1874: 17; Plate 2, Figs. 7, 7a; by present designation.

Diagnosis: Moderately large terrestrial flightless black Amycterini with sparse white and brown pubescence; with ventral margin of their eyes directed dorsad by a bell-shaped projection, eyes reniform/lunate in shape (long axis nearly horizontal) curving ventrad over this laterally projecting almost hemispherical ridge located just beneath centre of eye, with narrowest rounded end of eye located anteriorly, and with circa 235 facets per eye (Fig. 1); rostrum broad (Fig. 2) with maximum rostral width 97% of head width, internally with a pair of large parallel callouses which are surrounded and longitudinally separated along the rostral midline by a very narrow distinct sulcus, and with external rostral ridges sinuous and maximum width between outer margins of ridges 56% of head width; antennal scape very long, reaching to anterior margin of pronotum, cylindrical and strongly clavate apically; anterior margin of prothorax in both sexes forming almost straight line, without lateral post-ocular lobes; elytra punctate-granulate with sparse pubescence; mid-tibiae shorter than fore/hind tibiae; underside of all tarsites on all legs in both sexes with black setal pads present, but without specialized spongiose pulvilli (with paler setae) set in pit; male ventrite 2 with a low mound on each side; the new genus is closest to the genera *Lataurinus* Ferguson, 1913 and *Ophthalamycterus* Ferguson, 1913 (see Discussion).

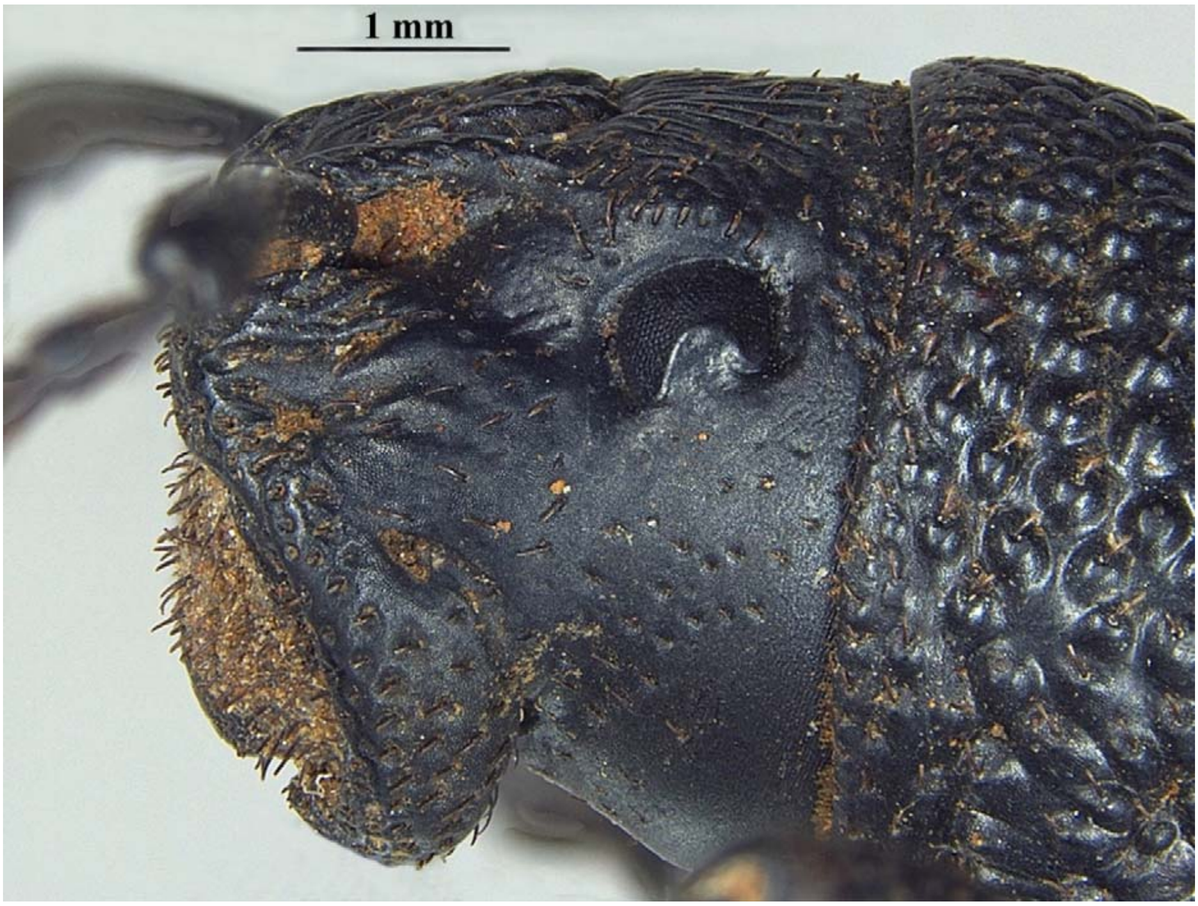

Figure 1. *Xenommamycterus capito* (Pascoe) ♂ head, lateral view. Photo: N. Banks.

Description

Measurements: Females (n=3): TL: 18.84-19.60 mm; SL: 15.96-17.02 mm; TW: 6.94-7.40 mm; Males (n=2): TL: 17.48-18.74 mm; SL: 15.14-15.90 mm; TW: 6.32-6.42 mm.

Body (Fig. 3): male body narrower at maximal mid-elytral width than female body; exoskeleton cuticle (including all sensory and ambulatory appendages) black.

Vestiture: moderately sparse; setae of three different types occur on the somatic cuticle and their description and disposition are as follows: moderate-sized (ca 0.2 mm long) hair-like dark-brown/black setae occur singly in small pit on centre of each flattened pronotal and elytral granule but not in elytral puncta; small-sized (ca 0.05 mm long) flattened elongate-oval white setae line inside of rim of elytral puncta and are also present on vertex as a median circular patch and on sides of rostrum near antennal scrobe; small-sized (ca 0.05 mm long) flattened elongate-oval pale-brown setae occur either side of elytral suture; venter with elongate-oval white setae on ventrites, and with scattered black hair-like setae across surface; femora and tibiae with scattered elongate-oval white setae and black hair-like setae.

Head (Figs. 1, 2): both sexes with ventral margin of eye pushed dorsad by a bell-shaped projection located just beneath centre of eye and with eye surface slightly raised from head (but not “pop-eyed”), eyes small, reniform/lunate (not circular/ovate) in shape (long axis nearly horizontal) curving ventrad over this laterally projecting almost hemispherical ridge, with narrowest rounded end of eye located anteriorly, and with circa 235 facets per eye (Fig. 1); mandible apices truncate and of simple structure (unarmed, without ventrolateral tusks or lobes) in both sexes; rostrum very broad (Fig. 2), with maximum rostral width 97% of head width (female) and 84% of pronotal width; external ridges of rostrum sinuous, diverging posteriorly, and terminating posteriorly on frons just basad of rostrum above eye, with maximum width between outer margins of rostral external ridges 56% of maximum rostrum width; rostrum internally with pair of large parallel callouses near base which are surrounded and longitudinally divided along rostral midline by very narrow sulcus; frons above rostrum (between eyes) wrinkled by presence of 11-16 narrow rough irregular longitudinal carinae which reach nearly to anterior of vertex but not anterior margin of prothorax (Fig. 2), and without transverse ridge or sulcus separating it from rostrum; rostrum very short, with rostral length (from apex to posterior margin of large callouses) 57% of maximum rostral width; vertex above carinae smooth/microreticulate with small puncta, and without granules.

Antennae: both sexes with scape (basal antennomere) very long reaching to anterior pronotal margin, cylindrical and moderately thick, gradually widening from base and strongly clubbed (clavate) apically; funicle with 6 antennomeres, terminal antennal club with 5 segments, with both funicle and terminal antennal club cylindrical, and with each of the two basal funicle antennomeres twice as long as each of the remaining four.

Prothorax: subhexagonal in dorsal view (see Fig. 3), with maximum pronotal width 115% of head width; anterior margin forming almost straight transverse line, without lateral post-ocular lobes, and slightly wider than basal margin in dorsal view; pronotum with flattened granules dorsally and laterally, both sexes with 13-14 granules along midline length of pronotum.

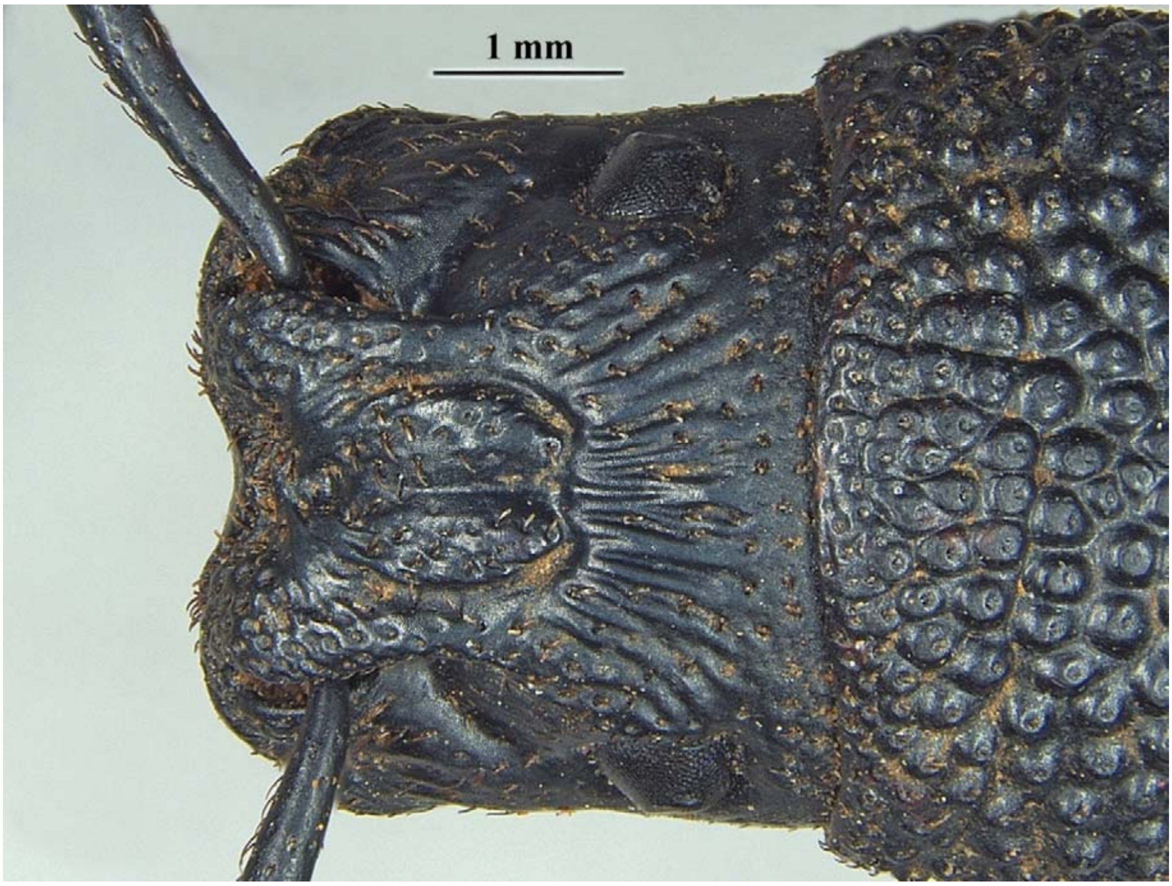

Figure 2. *Xenommamycterus capito* (Pascoe) ♂ head, dorsal view. Photo: N. Banks.

Elytra: punctate-granulate, covered with longitudinal rows of unisetigerous flattened granules and small shallow puncta; each granule with moderate-sized dark-brown decumbent hair-like seta emerging from near-central posterior pit; each puncta encircled by six granules; small humeral tubercle present on each elytron; in both sexes elytral apex rounded to elytral suture and not mucronate either side of suture.

Venter (Fig. 4): anterior margin of procoxal cavity without conical protuberance/tubercle near lateral corner; male ventrite 2 with one large anterio-lateral raised sub-triangular low mound on each side of midline, separated from each other anteriorly by narrow longitudinal flat area (circa 11% of ventrite 2 width) which substantially widens posteriorly; female ventrite 2 flat, without two low raised areas; in both sexes ventrites 3 and 4 each half length of ventrite 2; ventrite 5 in female long with rounded apex, flat and simple in structure (without depressions or other structural modifications), while in male shorter with truncate apex and longitudinal medial subcircular depression extending from 1/3 ventrite length (from basal margin) to caudal margin.

Legs: all legs in both sexes simple in structure, without sexually dimorphic structural modifications of tibiae (i.e. subapical notches); in both sexes tibiae straight with mid-tibial length shortest, and with fore-tibial length 107-109% and hind-tibial length 116-126% of mid-tibial length; underside of all tarsites on all legs in both sexes with black setal pads present, but without specialized spongiose pulvilli (with paler setae) set in pit.

Figure 3. *Xenommamycterus capito* (Pascoe) ♀ dorsal habitus, from 20°42'S, 117°08'E; TL - 18.84 mm, TW - 7.36 mm. Photo: M. Peterson.

Genitalia: female with somewhat derived ovipositor with long styli that are strongly curved outwards, dorsally wavy-carinate, and inserted dorsomedially on hemisternites in a large membranous field ringed by stout setae; male with aedeagus/median lobe as in Fig. 5 in dorsal view, and strongly curved ventrad from base to apex in lateral view.

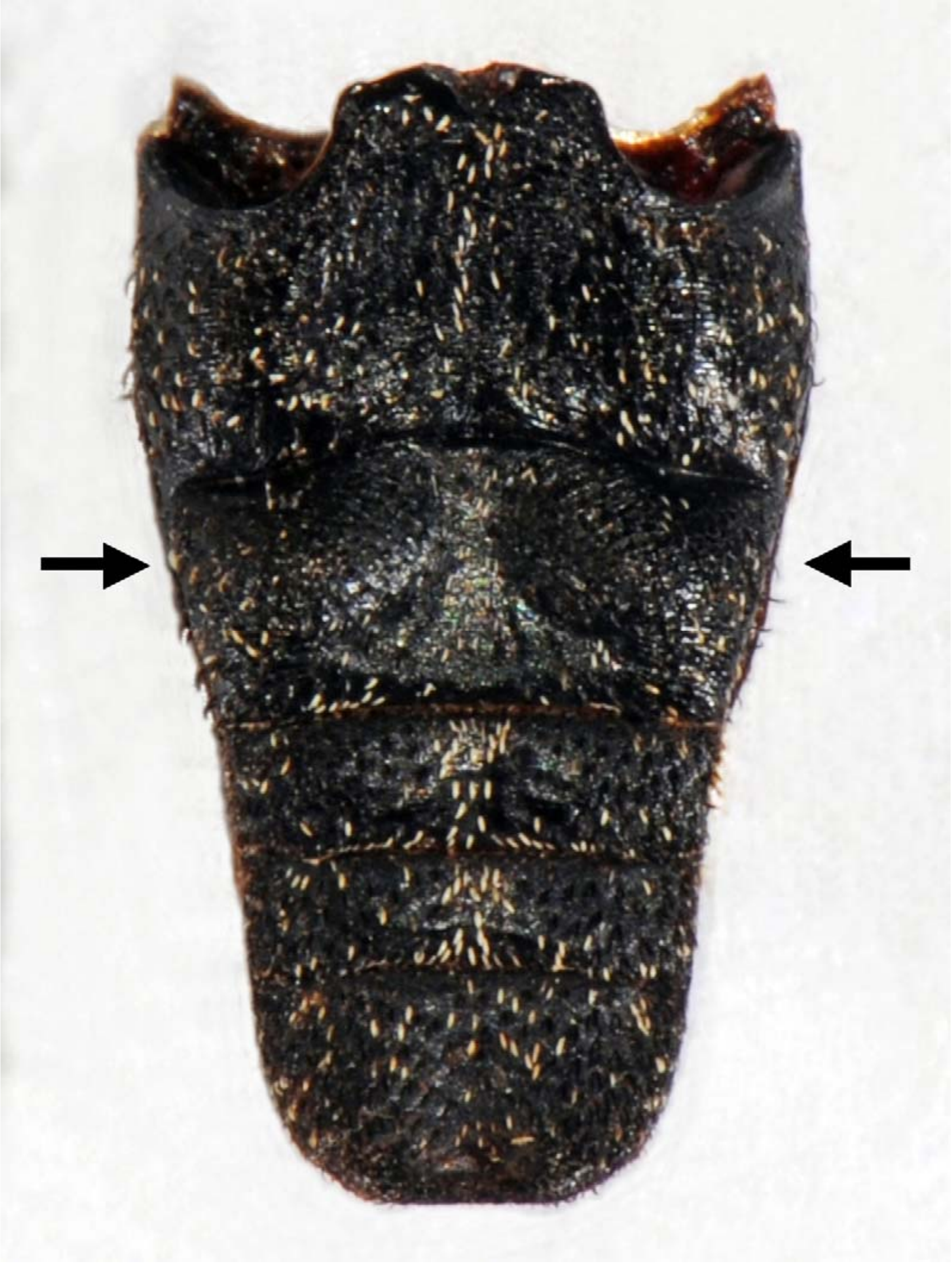

Figure 4. *Xenommamycterus capito* (Pascoe) ♂ ventrites 1-5 (dissected). Arrows indicate lateral mounds on ventrite 2. Photo: M. Peterson.

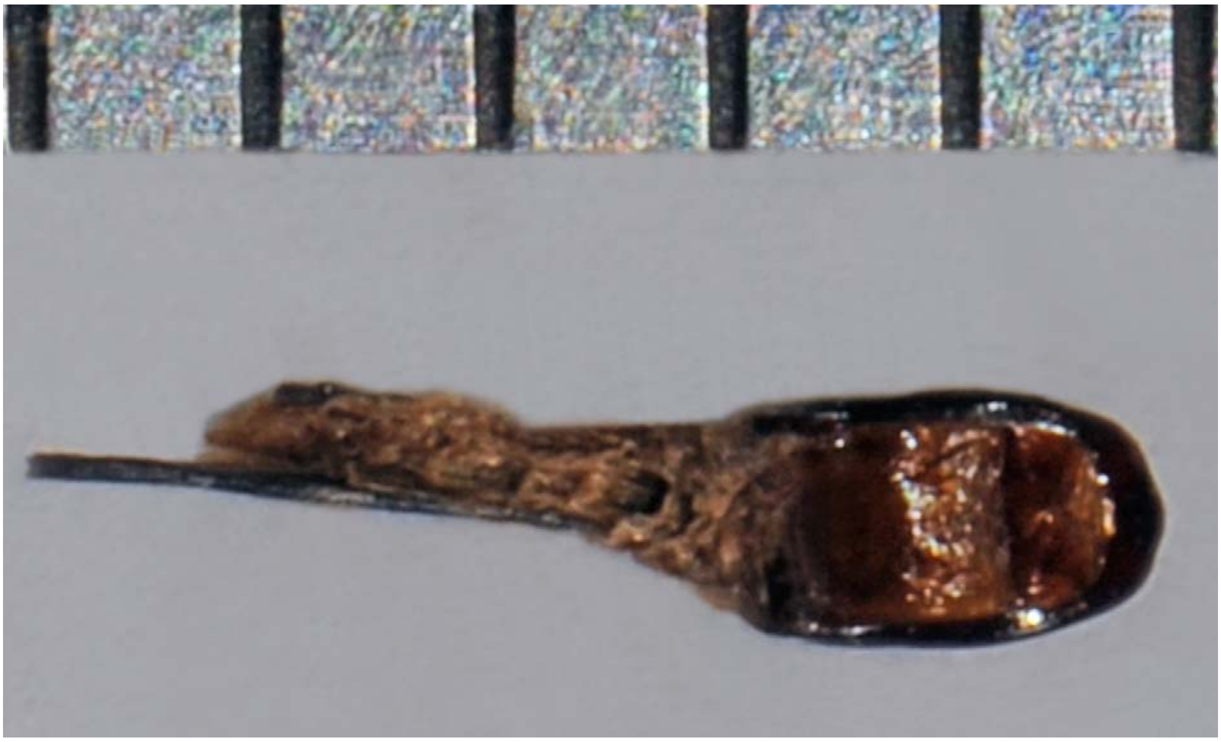

Figure 5. *Xenommamycterus capito* (Pascoe) ♂ aedeagus/median lobe in dorsal view (dissected). Scale line in mm. Photo: M. Peterson.

Included Species: Only *Xenommamycterus capito* (Pascoe, 1874) is included in this genus at present.

Distribution: *Xenommamycterus capito* is currently known from throughout the rocky parts of the Hamersley and Chichester Ranges of the western Pilbara region of Western Australia, in an area bounded by latitudes 20°42'S in the north & 22°50'S in the south and longitudes 116°15'E in the west & 118°55'E in the east, based on material examined.

Habitat/Habits: I have collected *X. capito* adults in ironstone-dominated hills/gorges/ravines from 50-800m altitude. and always in association with at least one of two *Triodia* species (Poaceae: Triodiinae): *T. wiseana* C.A. Gardner and/or *T. pungens* R.Br.. I have collected this species from underneath small ironstone rocks next to vertical crevices and observed adults grazing on new-growth green leaves of *T. wiseana* on 8 July 1992, found it underneath a *T. pungens* tussock next to a cliff in a broad riverine gorge on 7 July 2011, and found it resting in the open on a small ironstone boulder in a dry creekline in a narrow gorge at 1500hrs on 2 April 2012. Like most amycterines (particularly those from the arid zone) *X. capito* imagines are activated by rain events (potentially at any time of year), taking advantage of these unpredictable events to binge-feed on fresh growth of their preferred adult host plants, in this case *Triodia* species. Evidence of this was augmented by examination of their faeces, which were comprised of similar-sized rhomboid-shaped mandible-cut pieces of *Triodia wiseana* leaves somewhat dessicated by nutrient extraction through slow digestion in the proventriculus/gut. Larvae and larval host-plants remain unknown.

Etymology: The generic name is derived from the Greek *xenos* (strange) + *omma* (eye) + *Amycterus* (type-genus of the tribe Amycterini) and refers to the unique reniform-shaped eyes compared to any other known amycterine weevil genus, and is to be treated as masculine in gender.

Material Examined: Western Australia: 1♀, *Talaurinus capito* holotype, Champion Bay (BMNH); 1♀ & 2♂, 5.3 km south of Wickham, 20°42'S 117°08'E, 8 July 1992, M. Peterson (MPWA); 1♂, 3.5 km WNW of Mt Gregory, 12 November 2003-9 May 2004, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 2♀, 3.5 km north of Karratha Station, 28 November 2003-11 May 2004, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 2♂, 3.5 km north of Karratha Station, 22 September-28 November 2003, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 1♀, 9 km NW of Lake Poongkaliyarra, 11 November 2003-10 May 2004, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 1♀**,** 30km NE of Wodgina, 23 September 2005-15 May 2006, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 2♀ & 1♂, 1 km NNE of Python Pool, 23 November 2003-8 May 2004, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 1♀, 2.3 km ESE of Python Pool, 23 November 2003-8 May 2004, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 1♀, 5 km WSW of Python Pool, 23 November 2003-8 May 2004, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 1♂, 20 km NNW of Mt Elvire, 2 October 2005-21 May 2006, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC)**;** 1♂, 14.5 km NNW of Mt Elvire, 2 October 2005-21 May 2006, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC)**;** 1♂, Red Hill Creek Gorge, 22°05'10.02"S 116°15'25.32"E**,** 7 July 2011, M. Peterson (MPWA); 1♀, Red Hill Stn, Conservation Zone 06, 22°10'55.80"S 116°16'08.10"E**,** 20 June 2011, H. Cook (MPWA); 1♂, 12.5 km NW of Mt Berry, 26 November 2003-2 May 2004, Pilbara Biological Survey (ANIC); 1♀ & 1♂, Karijini Rangers HQ, Pilbara, 22°35'S 118°27'E, 19 April 2003, R.G. Oberprieler (ANIC); 1♂, 105 km WNW of Newman, 22°48'49.14"S 118°53'18.24"E, 2 April 2012, M. Peterson (MPWA); 1♂, Karijini N.P., 38 km south of Ranger's station, Pilbara, 22°50'S 118°31'E, 18 May 2003, A. Zwick (ANIC).

Comments: Pascoe (1874) described "*Talaurinus capito*" from "Champion Bay" (= Geraldton) in Western Australia. No other records of *X. capito* are known from this locality. However, based on confirmed records/current knowledge, this species appears to be restricted to the tropical Pilbara region rock-deserts (between latitudes 20°40'S & 22°50'S), a very different biotope to that of the temperate area around Champion Bay (28°46'S, 114°37'E) and with the intervening habitats between these two areas also different and unsuitable for this taxon. The Pilbara has an average annual rainfall of 300-350mm, and has many zoogeographic connections with the rock ranges of both the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia and the central Australian region of the southern Northern Territory/northern South Australia/far eastern Western Australia. It is highly likely that Francis Houssemayne Du Boulay (1837-1914), who resided at Minnanooka Station (sometimes erroneously spelled Moonyoonooka) just east of Champion Bay, collected Pascoe's holotype (based on the latter's publication date) though no mention of the collector was made on the holotype labels or in Pascoe's description. Du Boulay was the first to collect various insects (particularly Coleoptera) in the Pilbara, when he explored the area from Nickol Bay (20°44'S, 116°51'E) to the mouth of the Fortescue River on horseback from 15-27 March 1866 as part of a government expedition (Sholl 1866: 3), and these Pilbara specimens were sent from Champion Bay to Britain to eventually be described by various specialists in different beetle families during the early 1870s. As an example Edward Saunders (1872: 253-254) of the British Museum named the large stigmoderine buprestid species *Temognatha* *duboulayi* (type-locality: "Nicol Bay, W. Australia") after F. H. Du Boulay, from specimens the latter collected on this trip ("named after its discoverer, from whom I obtained it"). I therefore consider the type-locality of "Champion Bay" for *X. capito* to be in error for Nickol Bay either because Du Boulay confused collection localities on his labels or simply did not label the *X. capito* type-specimen with a collection locality, and thus Pascoe labelled/assumed it as collected at Champion Bay because it was near Du Boulay's residence or was shipped from there. This genus is one of the few Amycterini members that is endemic to the tropical northern half of Australia, and knowledge of its distribution is a consequence of the more intensive recent survey work undertaken in this area that also indicates its specialization to rocky habitats.

Discussion

Xenommamycterus is easily differentated from all other described Amycterini genera by the character combination listed in its diagnosis. Its eye-structure is particularly distinctive with each eye possessing circa 235 facets, approximately half the number in those genera with circular/ovate eyes (circa 480 facets).

It is a member of the *Amycterus* generic-group (containing 20 genera), based on details of ovipositor structure (Oberprieler 2010: 9-10, Figs. 4-9). Two speciose genera of this group contain species of similar size to *X. capito* that are sympatric with it: *Amycterus* Schoenherr, 1823 (type-species: *Amycterus talpa* Schoenherr, 1823) and *Sclerorinus* W.J. Macleay, 1865 (type-species: *Sclerorinus adelaidae* W.J. Macleay, 1865). Both sexes of these two genera possess the more typical circular/ovate eyes and an anterior prothoracic margin with lateral post-ocular lobes. The males of the *Amycterus* and *Sclerorinus* species that are sympatric with *Xenommamycterus* are further distinguished from the latter by possessing caudal "forceps" or a densely-setose ventral median vitta, respectively.

Eight other genera within this generic group have close affinities with *Xenommamycterus*, but have allopatric distributions with it that are centred over southern and/or eastern Australia: the speciose genus *Talaurinus* W.J. Macleay, 1865 (type-species: *Talaurinus typicus* W.J. Macleay, 1865) and its close relatives *Lataurinus* Ferguson, 1913 (type-species: *Talaurinus rugiceps* W.J. Macleay, 1865), *Ophthalamycterus* Ferguson, 1913 (type-species: *Talaurinus laticeps* W.J. Macleay, 1866), *Dicherotropis* Ferguson, 1913 (type-species: *Talaurinus daemelii* W.J. Macleay, 1865), *Sclerorrhinella* Ferguson, 1913 (type-species: *Amycterus manglesii* Boheman, 1843) *Antalaurinus* Zimmerman, 1993 (type-species: *Talaurinus clavicornis* Ferguson, 1912) and *Talaurinellus* Zimmerman, 1993 (type-species: *Talaurinus sulciventris* Ferguson, 1912), as well as the more distantly allied *Gagatophorus* Jekel, 1865 (type-species: *Amycterus schoenherri* Hope, 1835). All species of these genera possess circular/ovate eyes in both sexes, which are present in most other amycterine genera/species, but the monospecific genus *Ophthalamycterus* and one species of *Gagatophorus* (*G. boisduvalii* (Boisduval, 1835)) have eyes that are also strongly protruberant (pop-eyed).

Like its close allies *Sclerorinus* and *Amycterus*, all of the numerous species of true *Talaurinus* (which *X. capito* was originally described in) differ from the new genus in possessing a narrower rostrum (with a diagnostic deep median sulcus) and anterior margin of the prothorax with lateral post-ocular lobes. *Talaurinus* has very diverse elytral sculpturing, with individual species varying from punctate-granulate, to foveate-costate to strongly tuberculate.

Ferguson (1913: 383-392) initiated limited dismemberment of *Talaurinus* sensu lato when he described the valid genera *Sclerorhinella*, *Dicherotropis, Ophthalamycterus* and *Lataurinus*, and the latter's synonym *Peritalaurinus*. Zimmerman (1993) further split *Talaurinus* by describing two more valid genera, *Antalaurinus* and *Talaurinellus*. All of these genera contain 1-2 species (except for *Sclerorrhinella*) and in this context *Xenommamycterus* follows this pattern. *Dicherotropis*, *Antalaurinus* and *Talaurinellus* are relatively small in size and also possess narrower rostra than *Xenommamycterus*, and are not considered further. All *Sclerorrhinella* species possess a diagnostic granulate vertex and tuberculate elytra, and like many *Sclerorinus* a setose median ventral vitta in males, and the genus is slightly smaller in size with a narrower rostrum than *Xenommamycterus* and is confined to south-west Western Australia.

Lataurinus appears most like *Xenommamycterus* because of its very broad rostrum and the similar punctate-granulate elytra of its second species *L. macrocephalus* (Ferguson, 1913), but differs from it by possessing: shorter, though cylindrical, antennal scapes which do not reach anterior margin of prothorax; rostrum with its two large internal callouses posteriorly converging towards each other (vs. callouses parallel to each other in *Xenommamycterus*); a granulate vertex; well-developed lateral postocular lobes on anterior margin of prothorax; the presence in males of a specialized pulvillus set in a pit on the underside of at least one tarsite on a pair of its legs.

Ophthalamycterus also appears very like *Xenommamycterus* because of its very broad rostrum and anterior prothoracic margin without lateral postocular lobes, but differs from it by possessing: shorter, though cylindrical, antennal scapes which do not reach anterior margin of prothorax; rostrum with its two large internal callouses posteriorly converging towards each other (vs. callouses parallel to each other in *Xenommamycterus*); frons between eyes and above rostrum granulate to anterior of vertex; circular and protuberant eyes; elytral structure sexually dinorphic, with males tuberculate on interstices 2,3,5 and 6 and females granulate. *Lataurinus* and *Ophthalamycterus* appear even more closely allied to each other than to *Xenommamycterus*.

The more distantly allied *Gagatophorus* is similar to *Xenommamycterus* in possessing long antennal scapes, a very broad rostrum and a straight anterior prothoracic margin without lateral postocular lobes, but differs in possessing: scapes dorsoventrally flattened; a smooth frons above rostrum without carinae or granules; prothorax with lateral postocular lobes; elytra with large strong tubercles or callouses; a mucronate elytral apex; modified mid/hind-tibial apex in males of all species, except *G. boisduvalii*; the presence in males of a specialized pulvillus set in a pit on the underside of at least one tarsite on a pair of its legs; a mostly larger size. Additionally only one of its species, the plesiomorphic *G. boisduvalii*, has a completely granulate pronotum (with 11 granules along midline length) and simple leg structure like *Xenommamycterus*, but further differs in possessing strongly protruding eyes and well developed pulvilli (with pale setae) set in a pit on all tarsites of all legs in both sexes. These last three genera are immediately distinguishable from the latter by having distributions confined to the south-west region of Western Australia.

I speculate that the dorsad-directed eye surface (with more limited lateral vision) of *X. capito* has evolved to enhance detection of potential predators above it, either from within the vertical crevices it shelters in (the more likely alternative) or from within the *Triodia* species it feeds on, though without confirmation from specific behavioural observations because of the infrequent encounters with this species. I also consider that the broad rostra possessed by some

Amycterine genera is an evolutionary consequence of feeding on very tough stemmed grasses/sedges.

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