The spittle bug *Philaenus tesselatus* Melichar, 1899 (Hemiptera, Auchenorrhyncha, Cercopidae) is a distinct species

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Abstract

*Philaenus tesselatus* Melichar, 1899, was described more than a century ago, originally from Tunisia, but later appeared to be a problematic species. In 1959, it was reduced to a geographic subspecies of the closely related *P. spumarius* (Linnaeus, 1758), with which in 1972 it was synonymized. However, *P. tesselatus* does possess constant species-level characters. We have found that: (i) both species occur in Portugal, where *P. tesselatus* is statistically significantly larger than *P. spumarius*; (ii) the best diagnostic characters are the appendages of the male aedeagus (larger in *P. tesselatus* than in *P. spumarius*); (iii) in Portugal, *P. spumarius* seems to occur in large numbers north of Lisbon, becoming rare in the south, while *P. tesselatus* occurs only south of Lisbon; and (iv) the six colour morphs appear to be identical in both species. We do not know if the two species hybridize where they occur sympatrically.

Key words: spittle bugs, *Philaenus tesselatus*, *P. spumarius*, taxonomy, morphology, ecology, polymorphism, Portugal

Introduction

The spittle bugs *Philaenus signatus* Melichar, 1896 and *P. tesselatus* Melichar, 1899 were described more than a century ago from Kerkyra-Greece and Tunisia, respectively. However, *P. tesselatus* appeared to some taxonomists a problematic species. Wagner (1959) reduced it to a geographic subspecies of the common closely related *P. spumarius* (Linnaeus, 1758) and later, in 1972, Nast reported it as a synonym of *P. spumarius* in his annotated check list of the Palaearctic Auchenorrhyncha (Homoptera).