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The Cossidae (Lepidoptera) of Malawi with descriptions of two new species

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Abstract

An annotated list of Cossidae of Malawi including 30 species from 13 genera and 3 subfamilies is presented for the first time. Two new species are described: *Macrocossus grebennikovi* Yakovlev, **sp. nov.** and *Strigocossus elephas* Yakovlev, **sp. nov.** Three new synonyms are established: *Strigocossus moderatus* (Walker, 1856) = *Strigocossus leucopteris* Houlbert, 1916, **syn. nov.** = *Xyleutes sjoestedti vosseleri* Gaede, 1930, **syn. nov.** and *Strigocossus capensis* (Walker, 1856) = *Azygophleps kilimandjaræ* Le Cerf, 1914, **syn. nov.**

Key words: Cossidae, Malawi, new species, fauna, *Macrocossus grebennikovi*, *Strigocossus elephas*

Introduction

The Republic of Malawi, formerly called Nyasaland, is a country in southeastern Africa covering 118.5 thousand km². It narrowly stretches from north to south and is bordered by Tanzania to the northeast, Zambia to the west and Mozambique to the south, west and east. Much of its eastern border is made up by Lake Nyasa (Malawi). The climate in the lower areas is equatorial with the monsoons extending from November through April and dry winters. Precipitation ranges from 750–1000 mm per year in the lowlands and 2000–2500 mm in the highlands. Average temperatures vary from 14–19 °C (July) to 23–27 °C (November). The highest point is Sapitwa Mt. at 3000 m and in the tallgrass meadows at altitudes over 2000 m fogs, frost and snow may be experienced. In the north tropical forests can be divided into well-developed zones, from 1200–1500 m mixed predominantly evergreen forests are present (Fig. 1) and central and southern areas are dominated by savannas and savanna forest (Fig. 2).

The Malawian lepidoptera are poorly known in general except for a special review published only on Arctidae (Dubatolov 2010) and an overview of the Malawian mountain fauna (Mey *et al.* 1998). A.O. Majawa (1980) reported two species of Cossidae for Malawi: *Azygophleps inclusa* and *A. nebulosa* (sic!). Three species of Cossidae are reported in compilative work by A.Ö. Koçak and M. Kemal (2008): *Alophonotus rauana*, *Eulophonotus stephania* and *Oreocossus occidentalis*. Information on systematics and distribution of Cossidae in Malawi was introduced in a range of recent papers (Schoorl 1990; Yakovlev 2011; Yakovlev *et al.* 2013). New species were described from Malawi (Mulanje Mts.): *Brachylia mussi* Yakovlev, 2011 and *Meharia murphyi* Yakovlev *et al.*, 2013.

In this paper we provide the first annotated list of Cossidae recorded from Malawi and describe two new species.

Material and methods

The present paper is based on material collected by the second author, by the first author in April 2011, and by colleagues W. Mey, M. Nuss, P. Schmit, V. Kovtunovich, A. Sochivko, V. Anikin and P. Ustjuzhanin in 2000–2012.