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The South American wolf spider genus *Birabenia* Mello-Leitão, 1941 (Araneae: Lycosidae: Lycosinae)

LUIS N. PIACENTINI¹ & ALVARO LABORDA²

¹ División Aracnología, Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales “Bernardino Rivadavia”, Av. Ángel Gallardo 470, C1405DJR, Buenos Aires, Argentina. E-mail: piacentini@macn.gov.ar

² Sección Entomología, Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad de la República, Iguá 4225, CP 11400, Montevideo, Uruguay.

Abstract

The wolf spider genus *Birabenia* Mello-Leitão, 1941 is revalidated, comprising *B. birabeniae* Mello-Leitão (type species) and *B. vittata* (Mello-Leitão) **comb. n.** The monotypic genus *Melloicosa* Roewer is synonymised with *Birabenia* by the transfer of its type species *Gnatholycosa vittata* Mello-Leitão. Three species, *Hogna taeniata* (Mello-Leitão), *Geolycosa sanogastensis* (Mello-Leitão) and *Paratrochosina murina* (Mello-Leitão) are considered junior synonyms of *B. birabeniae*. Representatives of *Birabenia* show affinities with *Trochosa* C. L. Koch but can be distinguished by the presence of one pair of apical spines or none on the ventral side of tibia I of females, the presence of four teeth on the cheliceral retromargin, a shorter furrow on the prolateral side of the tegulum on the male bulb and by having more than seven macrosetae at the tip of cymbium. *Birabenia* is distributed from north-western Argentina to southern Uruguay.

Key words: Arachnida, taxonomy, Neotropical

Introduction

The genus *Birabenia* was erected by Mello-Leitão (1941) for *Birabenia birabeniae* Mello-Leitão, from La Rioja (north-west of Argentina) and was characterised by the eye disposition and sizes, and by the shape of the cephalic region, the presence of four teeth on the retromargin of chelicerae and by having only one pair of apicoventral spines on tibiae I. The same author added to the genus a second species, *Birabenia taeniata* Mello-Leitão based on an immature female from Bell Ville, Córdoba in central Argentina. Capocasale (1990) examined the type series of *B. birabeniae* along with a male that had been determined by Mello-Leitão and was from Calchaquí, in the Vera department of Santa Fe. In that work he reillustrated the male and female genitalia and concluded that *B. birabeniae* belongs in the genus *Hogna* Simon, based on characters of the copulatory organs only, since the condition of the type series not allowed to observe somatic characters. *Birabenia taeniata* was transferred by Capocasale (1990) to the Pisaurid genus *Tetragonophthalma* Karsch, and was reinstated to *Hogna* by Silva *et al.* (2009). During the study of the collections at the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales (Buenos Aires) and Facultad de Ciencias (Montevideo) we were able to identify several specimens belonging to *B. birabeniae* and *Gnatholycosa vittata* Mello-Leitão, the type species of the monotypic genus *Melloicosa* Roewer. The aim of this work is to revalidate *Birabenia*, redescribe *B. birabeniae* and *G. vittata* and propose *Melloicosa* as a junior synonym of *Birabenia* by the transfer of its type species *B. vittata* (Mello-Leitão) **comb. n.** We also consider *Birabenia taeniata*, *Lycosa sanogastensis* (Mello-Leitão) and *Alopecosa murina* (Mello-Leitão) as junior synonyms of *B. birabeniae*.

Material and methods

Specimens and figures. Specimens are deposited in the Arachnological collection of the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales “Bernardino Rivadavia”, Buenos Aires, Argentina (MACN-Ar, curator Cristina L. Scioscia), Museo de La Plata, Argentina (MLP, curators Luis Pereira and Cristina Damborenea), the Natural History