



## On the enigmatic *Heterolacurbs ovalis* Roewer, 1912 (Opiliones, Laniatores, Biantidae)

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In the course of conducting a systematic review of the Cuban Stenostyginae (Biantidae), it has been deemed critical to review *Heterolacurbs ovalis* Roewer, 1912 from Togo. The habitus and the enlarged metatarsus III of males (as shown in Roewer 1912: 185, fig. 42 and 1923: 143, fig. 154) of this species, which is currently placed in the Lacurbsinae, point to a close relationship with the Caribbean Stenostyginae (Pérez-González 2007). The occurrence of taxa with morphological similarities on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean demanded a detailed study of this species, mainly its penis morphology. It needed to be tested whether *H. ovalis* is in fact a member of an ancestral Gondwanan lineage, or if its morphological similarities with species from the other side of the Atlantic are due to convergence.

Despite the statement in the original description that the type series is composed of two male specimens, it was possible to locate only one of them in Roewer's collection (deposited in the Senckenberg Museum in Frankfurt, SMF). According to Roewer's lists in the SMF he actually had only one male (with the specimen number 254) available (P. Jäger, personal communication). To our great surprise, examination of this specimen revealed that *Heterolacurbs ovalis* Roewer, 1912 is a senior synonym of *Martibianta virginsulana* Šilhavý, 1973 (**new synonym**) from the U.S. Virgin Islands. As *Martibianta* Šilhavý, 1973 (**new synonym**) is a monotypic genus, the name becomes a junior subjective synonym of *Heterolacurbs* Roewer, 1912. The type corresponds perfectly to Šilhavý's description and illustration of *M. virginsulana*, and we also compared with a male specimen from Great St James in the U.S. Virgin Islands (Fig. 1A, cf. Fig. 1B). The specimen studied by Roewer is in a poor state of preservation. It apparently has dried out at some point and an incision was made ventrally to expose the penis. This has caused considerable deformation of the penis (Fig. 1C–D), therefore it was impossible to expand it and study the morphology of the capsula interna. However, we were able to expand the penis of the male from the Great St James Island. That penis (Fig. 1E–F) exhibits a very wide stragulum articulated like a jackknife dorso-distally on the truncus. When expanded, the ventral extension of the stragulum shows a spiny follis. Ventro-apically the truncus has a finger-like process (curved in the type because of dehydration) and two longitudinal rows of five setae; the two apicalmost setae are blunt and very short, the others are long and acuminate. The capsula interna is composed of a pointed stylus flanked by two basally fused conductors with two free laminar lobes apically.

One of the implications of this result is the necessity to clarify the type locality of *Heterolacurbs ovalis*. In the original description it is given as "Bismarckburg" near today's Yégué in the Republic of Togo, but we believe that this is incorrect. On the original label it can be seen that Roewer used two different types of ink, one to write the species name (given as *Heterolacurbs clavipus*, not the published name) and another to write the sex, locality, year and collection number (Fig. 1G). Probably these two actions were taken at different times. Roewer (1912) described other species from the same locality (e.g. the assamiid *Selenca aculeata* Roewer, 1912, now under *Paraselenca* Roewer, 1923) as well as from the U.S. Virgin Islands (e.g. *Pellobunus unicolor* Roewer, 1912, now under *Metapellobunus* Roewer, 1923 and with uncertain family placement). This is an indication that Roewer studied specimens from both localities at the same time, which could have led to label errors. Incorrect labeling in Roewer's collection is a well-known problem (Helvesen & Martens 1972).

The conclusion is that *Heterolacurbs ovalis* is probably not an African species but a Caribbean one. The true type locality more likely lies in the U.S. Virgin Islands, presumably on St Thomas because Roewer (1912) only described species from this island. This interpretation, however, is based only on circumstantial evidence. The types of *Martibianta*