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A review of the *Silba admirabilis* McAlpine species group (Diptera: Lonchaeidae) with descriptions of thirteen new species from the Afrotropical region

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Abstract

The *Silba admirabilis* species group is diagnosed within the genus *Silba* Macquart by the combination of partly yellow tarsomeres and the distinctive features of the male genitalia. Thirteen new species within this species group are described from the Afrotropical region; namely *Silba bakongo* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba boulangi* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba bredoi* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba garamba* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba hambai* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba inimvua* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba lubumbashi* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba mbuti* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba saegeri* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba spiculata* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba tekei* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, *Silba upemba* MacGowan **sp. nov.**, and *Silba wittei* MacGowan **sp. nov.** Ten previously described species within the genus *Silba* are also identified as belonging to the *S. admirabilis* species group. One species of the genus *Lonchaea* also belonging to this group is re-assigned to *Silba*. The synonymies *Silba displata* McAlpine, 1964 = *Silba hilli* (Malloch, 1928) and *Silba fragranti* MacGowan, 2007 = *Silba chalkei* McAlpine, 1956 are established. A key and illustrations of male genitalia are provided to all species. Further information is presented relating to the taxonomy and distribution of previously described members of this species group whose range extends from the Afrotropical to Australasian regions.

Key words: Lonchaeidae, new species, Palearctic, Afrotropical, Oriental, Australasian

Introduction

The study of a large number of specimens of Afrotropical Lonchaeidae in preparation for the publication of the Manual of Afrotropical Diptera led to the identification of thirteen new species all of which are remarkably similar in morphology. This similarity extends to the male genitalia with the only clearly distinguishing features being found in the structure of the phallus. Within the large genus *Silba* Macquart, 1851 it is evident that these species, which differ in leg colouration and the structure of the male genitalia from all other *Silba* species, form a distinct species group. When other species within the genus *Silba* and *Lonchaea* Fallén, 1820 were re-assessed a further 11 species were found to share these common characters which remain stable across a distribution of species stretching from the Afrotropics to Australasia. This species group is named after *Silba admirabilis* McAlpine, 1956 the first species within the group to be described.

Material and methods

Specimens were examined from a number of museum collections. All specimens from the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium (MRAC) were from what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo and were collected during the period 1949–1952. The majority of these are from the Expedition (Mission) led by Henri de Saeger to the Parc Nationale Garamba along with specimens from the Expedition (Mission) of Gaston François de Witte to the Park Nationale Upemba in 1949. Specimens from the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS) also from what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo were collected by H. J. Brédoï in 1939. Specimens from National Collection of Insects, Zoological Museum, Tel Aviv University, Israel (TAUI) were collected in South Africa in 1995 and in Madagascar by Amnon Freidberg and Fini Kaplan (1991) and by Amnon