



The spider genus *Uroctea* Dufour, 1820 (Araneae: Oecobiidae) in Yemen

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Abstract

Three species of *Uroctea* are recorded from Yemen. *Uroctea concolor* Simon, 1882, the only species of the genus originally described from Yemen, is redescribed and illustrated based on the type specimen. *Uroctea sudanensis* Benoit, 1966, originally known only from Sudan, is first reported outside Africa. *Uroctea thaleri* sp.n. is described, illustrated and recorded from other Middle-Eastern and Asian localities based on literature data.

Key words: Eresoidea, Entelegynae, taxonomy, Afrotropical region

Introduction

The Oecobiidae Blackwall, 1862 are a relatively small spider family, with 102 described species distributed worldwide (Platnick 2006). To date, these species are divided among six genera, two of which contain most of the family's diversity, *Oecobius* Lucas, 1846 (80 species) and *Uroctea* Dufour, 1820 (17 species). Although not as speciose and widely distributed as *Oecobius*, *Uroctea* includes species that are remarkable for their size, which can reach over ten times the size of the largest species of *Oecobius*. As is the case in many spider genera, *Uroctea* is best known from its widely distributed species, such as *U. compactilis* L. Koch, 1878 and *U. lesserti* Schenkel, 1936. These species usually occur in well studied areas, such as the Mediterranean or eastern Asia, and have been repeatedly recorded, described and illustrated in the literature (Platnick 2006). The less common species are usually known only from the type localities cited in the original descriptions.

In this study we examined the spiders of the genus *Uroctea* from the not so well explored Arabian Peninsula, a region known to belong to a transitional zone between the Palearctic, Oriental and Afrotropical regions. Most of the material examined was collected during an extensive inventory of insects and spiders of Yemen. This inventory was carried out by the third author between 1990 and 2004, as part of a project on the biological control of agricultural pests.

Only one species of *Uroctea* had previously been recorded from Yemen, *Uroctea concolor* Simon, 1882, based on an adult female from Aden. Even though extensive collecting was carried out in the nearby regions of the type locality, no additional specimens were collected. Instead, the oecobiids captured during this inventory included two other species of *Uroctea*. The first species, *U. sudanensis* Benoit, 1966, was described based on a single male from Sudan, and was until now known only from the type locality. The second and most common species was as yet undescribed, although it was previously illustrated by Baum (1972), in a study of the genitalic structure of the family, and by other authors who either misidentified the species (Gajbe & Bhadra 1978) or did not assign it a species name (Bosselaers 1999). In the current paper, we redescribe and