



A new *Meteorus* Haliday species from Colombia and Ecuador (Hymenoptera: Braconidae)

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Abstract

A new species of parasitoid wasp, *Meteorus gigas* Aguirre, Shaw and Jones (Hymenoptera: Braconidae), is described from Huila and Santander Provinces in Colombia and from Napo Province, in Ecuador. The new species is diagnosed and is compared to other species in the genus. Inferences about the possible biology of this species are discussed in consideration of the collecting methods used. The new species was most frequently found from Malaise trap samples but to a lesser extent from yellow pans and maxi-net sampling. Despite extensive sampling of caterpillars at this locality, the host of this new species remains unknown.

Resumen

Una nueva especie, *Meteorus gigas* Aguirre, Shaw, and Jones (Hymenoptera: Braconidae) es descrita para Huila y Santander Provincias en Colombia y de Napo Provincia, Ecuador. La especie es analizada y comparada con otras especies del género. Inferencias sobre la posible biología de esta especie es discutida teniendo en mente los métodos de colecta utilizados.

Key words: Braconidae, *Meteorus*, Neotropical, parasitoid, Malaise traps, yellow pan traps

Introduction

Meteorus Haliday is a diverse and widespread genus of Braconidae comprising more than 250 described species worldwide. These have been described or cataloged by Muesebeck (1923, 1939), Nixon (1943), Huddleston (1980, 1983), Shaw (1995, 1997), Maetô (1990), Chen and Wu (2000), Zitani and Shaw (2002), Zitani (2003), Shaw and Nishida (2005), Yu *et al.* (2005) and Stigenberg (2008). All *Meteorus* species, where biology is known, are koinobiont endoparasitoids (Shaw & Huddleston 1991). Most attack young exposed-feeding Lepidoptera caterpillars, although some parasitize Coleoptera larvae (Maetô, 1990; Shaw & Huddleston 1991; Shaw 1995, 1997). *Meteorus* species are also noted for their diverse silk-spinning and cocoon-forming behaviors (Zitani & Shaw 2002, Zitani 2003). While most are solitary parasitoids of small caterpillars, such as Geometridae, Noctuidae and Pyralidae, several tropical *Meteorus* species are known to be gregarious parasitoids of larger caterpillars including some Sphingidae and Limacodidae (Muesebeck 1939, 1958; Nixon 1943; Zitani *et al.* 1997, 1998; Zitani 2003; Shaw & Nishida 2005). Neotropical *Meteorus* species have been the focus of recent taxonomic studies (Zitani *et al.* 1997, 1998; Shaw & Nishida 2005; Shaw & Jones 2009) but many Neotropical species still remain undescribed. The purpose of this paper is to describe a distinctive new *Meteorus* species from Colombia and Ecuador, commonly collected by Malaise and yellow pan traps.