

RESEARCH NOTE

**A NEW GENERIC SYNONYMY IN SCORPIONS:
SCORPIOBUTHUS WERNER = *UROPLECTES PETERS*
 (SCORPIONES, BUTHIDAE)**

The genus *Scorpiobuthus* was briefly described by F. Werner (1939) from specimens lacking locality data, and it has been more or less forgotten since that time. The genus was monotypic, containing only the species *Scorpiobuthus apatris* Werner 1939, described in the same paper. Interestingly, Werner (1939) did not assign *Scorpiobuthus* to a family, but indicated it was close to *Buthoscorpio* Werner 1936 (which he regarded as a member of the Scorpionidae). The type specimens have not been subsequently studied, and no new specimens have been reported in the last 57 years. The genus name was rediscovered by Francke (1985) and listed among valid scorpion generic names in his conspectus, under Buthidae. However, it was not included in recent generic keys to buthids or other families (Stahnke 1972; Sissom 1990).

Through the kindness and enthusiastic support of Dr. Franz Krapp, the curator of the Lower Invertebrates Division of the Zoologisches Forschungsinstitut und Museum Koenig (Bonn, Germany), we were able to examine the type specimens of *S. apatris* which are deposited in this Museum. The type series consists of two adult female syntypes (dried and later rehydrated; partially damaged), Nos. 82 and 83. We hereby designate No. 83 as lectotype and No. 82 as paralectotype.

First of all, *Scorpiobuthus* is indeed a buthid. The sternum of *Scorpiobuthus* was reported to be subpentagonal (Werner 1939), but examination of the types reveals that the lateral edges of the structure are moderately convergent anteriorly—in fact, the sternum could be regarded as subtriangular, although not extremely so. Further, as in other buthids, the anterior aspect of the sternum bears a small lobe-like structure that is separated from the main portion by a distinct groove. Upon study of additional characters, it became clear to us

that the specimens are referable to *Uroplectes* Peters 1862. They share the following diagnostic characters with members of that genus: (1) the alpha-pattern of dorsal trichobothria of the pedipalp femur; (2) the presence of a distinct subaculear tooth; (3) the absence of denticles on the undersurface of the cheliceral fixed finger; (4) enlarged proximal pectinal teeth in the female (found in many *Uroplectes*); (5) the dentition pattern of the pedipalp chela fingers; (6) reduction of the carapacial carinae; and (7) the presence of tibial spurs on legs III and IV. If the sternum is regarded as subtriangular, the specimens trace easily to *Uroplectes* in Sissom's (1990) key to buthid genera. We therefore propose the following synonymy: *Scorpiobuthus* Werner 1939 = *Uroplectes* Peters 1862.

The genus *Uroplectes* is widespread in southern and eastern Africa. Checking keys published for South Africa (Hewitt 1918; Lawrence 1955), East Africa (Probst 1973) and Namibia (Lamoral 1979), we discovered a close match with *Uroplectes chubbi* Hirst 1911. This species is unusual in that all five metasomal segments are smooth and coarsely punctate, a feature found in the two specimens of *Scorpiobuthus apatris*. The specimens match other details provided in a brief description of *U. chubbi* by Hewitt (1918). Consequently, we propose the following species synonymy: *Scorpiobuthus apatris* Werner 1939 = *Uroplectes chubbi* Hirst 1911.

On a final note, the status of *U. chubbi* is somewhat uncertain and needs clarification. Hewitt (1918) suspected that *U. chubbi* was a junior synonym of *U. jutzenkai* Penther 1900. However, at the bottom of the same page he suggested that *U. chubbi* had affinities with *U. xanthogrammus* Pocock 1897, which was suggested to be a "variety" of *U. fischeri* (Karsch 1879) by Kraepelin (1913). Hewitt then stated

that *U. chubbi* was probably a variety of *U. fischeri* as well, perhaps unaware that Birula (1915) had accepted *U. xanthogrammus* as a valid species. More recently, *U. xanthogrammus* was regarded as a subspecies of *U. fischeri* by Probst (1973), and *U. jutzenkai* was synonymized with *U. vittatus* (Thorell 1876) by Newlands (1970). The latter author appeared to consider *U. chubbi* distinct from *U. vittatus*. Finally, Lamoral & Reynders (1975) recognized all three taxa (*U. vittatus*, *U. chubbi*, and *U. fischeri*) as distinct species. Clearly, the situation requires further study.

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