FIRST RECORD OF THE GENUS EUSAPROECIUS BRANCO
FROM WEST AFRICA
(COL., SCARABAEIDAE, CORPINAE)

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ABSTRACT

Eusaproecius Branco, 1989, is a dung beetle genus of the tribe Onthophagini with seven described species. These species are rarely collected and have been recorded from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, the former Zaire, Central African Republic, Gabon and from Cameroon (Branco, 1992). Now, we have found the central African species *Eusaproecius congolanus* (Balthasar, 1963) in northern Côte d’Ivoire.

1♂ Eusaproecius congolans: Côte d’Ivoire, Parc National de la Comoé, gallery forest of the river Iringou, 8°50’22”N, 3°46’14”W; 01.vii.2001, leg. S. Krell-Westerwalbesloh. We found the specimen in the soil between 1–10 cm deep. For identification we used Branco’s key (1992), checked the aedeagus (including endophallus) and compared it with the specimen from Gabon (in the Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle, Paris). Our specimen is deposited in The Natural History Museum, London.

DISCUSSION

Balthasar (1963) described *E. congolanus* on the basis of three males from eastern Congo (former Zaire; Yangambi [locus typicus] and Kibali-Ituri). Branco (1992: 151) published the record of a fourth male collected near Libreville, Gabon. The northwesternmost record of the genus is one female of the central African species *E. punctulatus* (Boucomont, 1928) from Johann-Albrechtshöhe in Cameroon (now Kumba, 4°38’N, 9°25’E) (Branco, 1992: 149). Hence, our specimen of *E. congolanus* from the savanna region of Côte d’Ivoire is the first record of this genus from West Africa.

Hardly any information on the ecology of Eusaproecius Branco has been published. One specimen of *E. dudleyi* Branco, 1992, was found in cow dung (Branco, 1992: 106). Decelle collected the two *E. congolanus* in Yangambi on the ground (soil?) in the forest (“A terre en forêt”) (Branco, 1992: 150). All previous collecting localities are in the rain forest region. Our collecting site is normally a wet gallery forest (Mabsberg 1997), a relatively rare habitat at these latitudes. When the specimen was collected (July, 2001), the forest was, however, very dry since the precipi-
tation during the preceding eleven months was much lower than average and there were no heavy rainfalls during the rainy season. The area is at the border between Guinea and Sudan savanna.

There was no dung on the soil where we found our specimen. It was in a soil cube of about $12 \times 12cm^2$ surface and 10cm depth. In this soil cube, minor termite workers of *Odontotermes* sp. were present, probably indicating the nearby centre of the colony (P. Eggleton, pers. comm.). From 30.vi. to 02.vii.2001 we ran seven pitfall traps baited with human faeces along a 100m transect at the same site. Human faeces are attractive for most dung beetle species. Since no *Eusaproecius* specimen went into these traps, we can be relatively sure that *E. congolanus* is not a generalist coprophage, but it may be associated with termites as supposed for other taxa of the genus group by former authors (Branco, 1992). Occurrence in subterranean nests of fungus growing termites would explain the extraordinary rarity of this species in collections.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Paul Eggleton, Natural History Museum London, for the identification and valuable information on the termites. Field work was supported by a grant of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (programme BIOLOG, project BIOTA E09) and permitted by the Ministère de l’Agriculture et des Ressources Animales de Côte d’Ivoire, Abidjan.

REFERENCES


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