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Fernando Pederzani

STERNOPRISCUS WATTSI N. SP. FROM SW AUSTRALIA

(Insecta Coleoptera Dytiscidae)

Riassunto

[Sternopriscus wattsi *n. sp. dell'Australia sud-occidentale*]
Si descrive una nuova specie del genere australiano *Sternopriscus*, che si distingue dalle congeneri per la forma anomala delle apofisi metacoxali, oltre che per i caratteri dell'edeago. La nuova specie ha scarso dimorfismo sessuale, in vista dorsale, e può essere confusa con esemplari piccoli di femmine del comune *Sternopriscus browni* Sharp.

Abstract

A new species of *Sternopriscus* from SW Australia is described. In dorsal view it is similar to the female of *Sternopriscus browni* Sharp, but has distinctive characters in the metacoxal processes and in the aedeagus.

Key-words: Coleoptera, Dytiscidae, *Sternopriscus*, new species, Australia.

Introduction

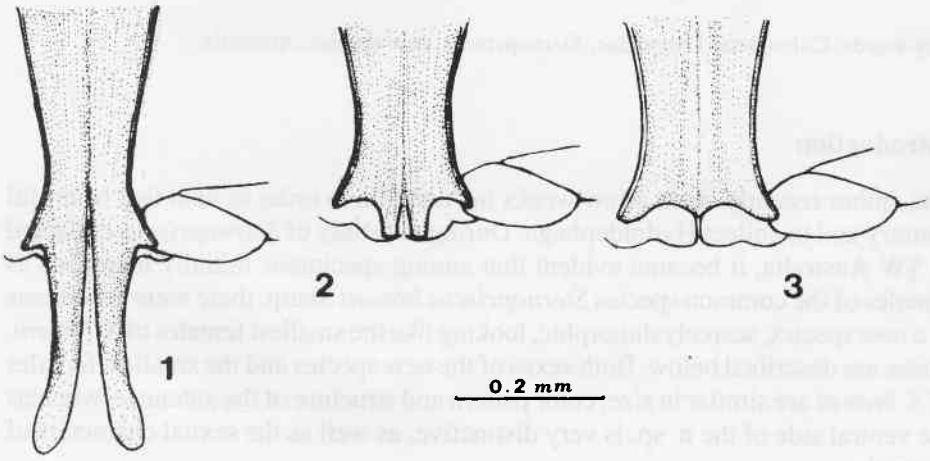
The author recently spent a few weeks in Australia in order to visit that beautiful country and to collect Hydradephaga. During the study of *Sternopriscus* collected in SW Australia, it became evident that among specimens initially identified as females of the common species *Sternopriscus browni* Sharp, there were specimens of a new species, scarcely dimorphic, looking like the smallest females of *S. browni*. These are described below. Both sexes of the new species and the smallest females of *S. browni* are similar in size, color pattern and structure of the antennae, whereas the ventral side of the n. sp. is very distinctive, as well as the sexual characters of the male.

Sternopriscus wattsi **n. sp.**

Materials - Holotype (male): Pemberton, W Australia, irrigation pond, Della Franca farm, 3.XII.1998, deposited in the South Australian Museum, Adelaide. Paratypes: 2 males and 3 females, same data as holotype; 1 male and 1 female, Pemberton, W Australia, creek crossing the Vasse Hwy, about midway between Pemberton and Nannup, 30.XI.1998; 4 females, Nannup, W Australia, roadside creek, 1.XII.1998. The paratypes are in collection Pederzani and in collection Hendrich (Berlin); a female paratype is deposited with the holotype in the South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Size - Length range of 4 males: 2.77 to 2.85 mm, mean length 2.81 mm.
Length range of 8 females: 2.30 to 2.81 mm, mean length 2.57 mm.
Mean width males: 0.54 mm; mean width females: 0.51 mm.

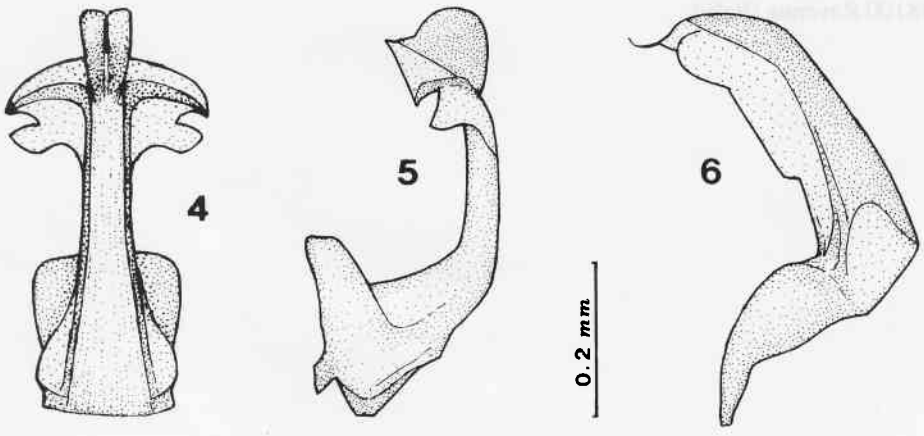
Description - Oblong, convex, dilated behind. Head reticulate with medium-size, well marked punctures, black with two yellow spots at the anterior margin. Pronotum strongly and densely rugose-punctate, with well marked latero-basal striae about ½ width of pronotum, and a well marked transverse depression between them. Sides of pronotum weakly sinuate. Color of pronotum black, widely yellow at sides, with 2 yellow spots occasionally connected in midline, the posterior spot sometimes absent. Elytron rugose-punctate, dark brown to black, with diffuse yellow mottles, sometimes absent on the disc. Sides of pronotum and elytron narrowly margined, margins weakly serrate towards apex of elytron. Underside rugose-punctate, dark brown to black, except apical sternites paler. Prothoracic



Figs. 1-3 - Metacoxal processes: 1. *Sternopriscus wattsi* n. sp., male; 2. *Sternopriscus wattsi* n. sp., female; 3. *Sternopriscus browni* Sharp, female.

process narrow, parallel sided, with shallow longitudinal depression in midline. Metacoxal lines strongly raised, weakly diverging forward. Antenna yellow with black patches, articles 5-7 and 11 darker. Legs yellow with tibiae and tarsal segments apically darkened, hind legs particularly so. Tibiae densely punctate.
Male. Protibia moderately expanded with a slight excavation near base on inside. Mesotibia slightly expanded and curved. Pro and mesotarsi moderately dilated. Antenna simple, not expanded. Metacoxal processes very long projecting backward, jointly fork-shaped (fig. 1), almost attaining the sutural line between 3rd and 4th visible sternites. Penis apically swollen, flower-shaped (fig. 4), in lateral view with apical expansion (fig. 5).
Female. Metacoxal processes shortly projecting backward (fig. 2).

Identification - The males of *Sternopriscus wattsi* n. sp. are identified by the long metacoxal processes and the aedeagus. The females of the new species and those of *S. browni* are alike, but *S. browni* is larger on the average and differ in the shape of the metacoxal processes, which do not project backward and terminate with a clearly exposed interlaminar bridge (fig. 3). The female of *Sternopriscus multimaculatus* (Clark), also collected with the new species, has a different color pattern, strongly sinuate sides of the pronotum and its metacoxal lines diverge more strongly towards the front. Besides *S. browni* and *S. multimaculatus*, two more species of *Sternopriscus* were found in association with *S. wattsi* n. sp., namely *S. marginatus* Watts, which is much larger, and *S. minimus* Lea, which is much smaller. The n. sp. can easily be distinguished from these two species, and all other *Sternopriscus*, by the shape of metacoxal processes (figs. 1-2). Unfortunately dry-mounted specimens must be unglued for identification.



Figs. 4-6 - Aedeagus of *Sternopriscus wattsi* n. sp.: 4. Penis, dorsal view; 5. Penis, lateral view; 6. Right paramere.

Ecology - The new species was collected among plants growing on soft organic substrates or soft clay, either in a lentic site, at the edges of an artificial pond, or in lotic situations, such as small quiet pools in seasonal streams.

Derivatio nominis - *Sternopriscus wattsi* n. sp. is dedicated to dr. Chris Watts, the well-known specialist of Australian water beetles, who first published a modern revision of the Australian Dytiscidae.

Acknowledgements

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Author's address:
Fernando Pederzani
via Landoni, 35
48100 Ravenna (Italy)