

Remarks on the South African endemic *Proandricus lesothoensis* species-group

(Oligochaeta: Microchaetidae)

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Abstract. Nine of fifty-three proandric South African endemic microchaetids, characterized by a location of spermathecae and their pores in testicular, and anterior to testicular segment, are discussed. Seven species: *adami*, *amphius*, *bourquini*, *lesothoensis*, *oresbiosus*, *pajori* and *sani*, with spermathecal pores in testicular and pre-testicular furrows, are accredited to the *lesothoensis* species-group. These species occur in only limited areas of the Central Drakensberg mountain range, and some of them display a discrepancy in the arrangement of setae. *P. notabilis* differing in size and shape of the body, possessing one pair of spermathecae in testicular segment 10 and other spermathecae in post-testicular segments in 11 and 12, with regular setal arrangement, is not included to this group. *P. timmianus*, in which pre-testicular spermathecae were noted only on histological slides, is also not included in the *lesothoensis* species-group, but was compared with other proandric species, e.g. *biancae*, *briani* and *ianthinos*, known from a neighboring area of *timmianus* type locality in the Eastern Cape. It is noteworthy that the presence of two rare characteristics, namely, location of spermathecae and their pores in segments anterior to testes, and irregularity in setal arrangements, are unique in South African microchaetid species and need more study.

Key words. Microchaetidae, *Proandricus*, *lesothoensis* species-group, South Africa.

Introduction

The location of spermathecae and their pores in testicular and pre-testicular segments is commonly accepted as one of the characteristics separating Microchaetidae from Glossoscolecidae (BEDDARD 1895, Plisko 1992, 1996, 2006, OMODEO 1998); ((MICHAELSEN 1900, 1918, STEPHENSON 1930, BRINKHURST & JAMIESON 1971 (as Microchaetinae)). The majority of presently known microchaetid species, holandric, metandric or proandric, have spermathecae and their pores in post-testicular segments. The discovery of a small group of proandric species characterized by spermathecal pores located in the testicular or pre-testicular segments raised the present discussion. The aim of this paper is to reveal these facts and stimulate interest for more study.

Materials

Nine proandric species of the genus *Proandricus* Plisko, 1992, in which during longitudinal dissection the spermathecae were found in testicular or pre-testicular segments, were investigated. These species were: *P. adami* Plisko, 2003, *P. amphius* Plisko, 2003, *P. bourquini* Plisko, 1996, *P. lesothoensis* Reinecke & Ryke, 1969, *P. notabilis* Plisko, 2005, *P. oresbiosus* Plisko, 2003, *P.*