

**On the distinctness of *Ochtheophilus championi* (Bernhauer, 1926)  
and *O. nigerrimus* (Cameron, 1941)  
(Coleoptera: Staphylinidae: Oxytelinae)**

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MAKRANCZY Gy. 2019: On the distinctness of *Ochtheophilus championi* (Bernhauer, 1926) and *O. nigerrimus* (Cameron, 1941) (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae: Oxytelinae). *Acta Musei Moraviae, Scientiae biologicae* **104(2): 117–119**. – *Ochtheophilus championi* (Bernhauer, 1926) and *O. nigerrimus* (Cameron, 1941) are sibling species, distinguishable only by slight aedeagal characters. They are currently treated as distinct, however, recent evidence suggests that the type materials of the two nominal taxa may refer to the same species. The single type specimen of the older name is a female and therefore its identity remains in question. In lack of sufficient distributional information and any new material, also with poor knowledge of variability due to extremely small sample size no nomenclatural action is taken now.

**Keywords.** Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, *Ochtheophilus championi*, India

### Taxonomy

In the course of a revision of the Holarctic genus *Ochtheophilus* Mulsant et Rey, 1856, the status of two taxa has remained questionable because the older name, *Ochtheophilus championi* (Bernhauer, 1926) described from the West Almora area in Northern India is based on a single female and cannot be separated from its sister species, *O. nigerrimus* (Cameron, 1941) by female characters. Although never previously considered synonyms, I initially hypothesized conspecificity of these taxa. Because no other similar species had been discovered up until then the lectotype of *Ancyrophorus* (*Misancyrus*) *championi* Bernhauer, 1926, seemingly a female, remained undissected. In fact it was not until the summer of 2014 that it was decided that two very similar species existed in the studied material and although the interpretation of one of the names was uncertain, two species should be maintained. What also made this hypothesis plausible is that these species are members of the *O. vulgaris* species group without distinct inner sclerite in the aedeagi and in that assemblage closely related species have generally slight differences in aedeagal shape. No additional specimen is known to exist from the exact collecting event of the lectotype and during the past 100 years no more collecting was done there. My 2018 visit to the Field Museum (FMNH) in Chicago enabled me to ascertain the sex of the lectotype of *Ancyrophorus* (*Misancyrus*) *championi* Bernhauer, 1926 which indeed turned out to be a female. Three specimens collected in the West Almora area during roughly the same time (1919) by H.G. Champion are deposited in the Natural History Museum (BMNH), but by the summer of 2014 these had been also returned to the depository, and quick re-examination was not possible. In 2019, a visit to

London presented an opportunity to personally check the sexes of these specimens, and one of them turned out to be a male, currently the only clue regarding the true identity of the type specimen collected in that area.

It must be stated that none of H.G. Champion's three West Almora specimens in BMNH provide clear evidence on the identity of '*championi*', as records of these species are sporadic, the sample number is very low and they can easily be sympatric. The first specimen is a female from Kumaon and its labelling slightly differs from that of the lectotype (the type locality is Ranikhet, Kumaon), confirming its exclusion from the syntypes, and does not suggest it being from the exact same collecting event, either. The other two specimens are from the Upper Gumti Valley, a nearby place in the West Almora area. These are a male and a female, the aedeagus was removed and embedded in Euparal, a drawing was made in a compound microscope with drawing tube and carefully compared to the existing illustrations of both species. This aedeagus agrees well with that of '*nigerrimus*' (MAKRANCZY 2014: 603, fig. 395), rather than what was published for '*championi*' (MAKRANCZY 2014: 603, figs 398–401). With such low sample number it is impossible to draw solid conclusions, but this actually suggests that the two published names could turn out to be synonyms and, except the three West Almora specimens discussed here, all those specimens that were attributed to '*championi*' in MAKRANCZY (2014) may represent a different species. Supposing that future identified material or genetic analyses continue to support the distinctness of the two species, the specimens from Nepal and China (Yunnan) previously identified as '*championi*' will require a new name. It is beyond the current possibilities to propose such a nomenclatural change, especially in lack of hard evidence. But one day it may be possible to genetically test this hypothesis. For the time being these facts are just brought to the attention of the scientific community.

#### Material examined

The labels of the examined non-type specimens on this particular occasion are cited verbatim to enable exact comparison with the lectotype (labels are separated by the symbol “\”, while “;” means line breaks).

“W. Almora.; Kumaon.; India. H. G. C.[hampion] \Trogophl. Subg.; Chaseophorus; Championi Brh; n.sp. \ A. (Misancyrus); championi Bernh; D.E.Z 1926, 21 \ G.C. Champion coll.; B.M. 1927-409” (1♀, BMNH)

“U. Gumti Val.; W. Almora Dn.; Apr. [19]’19 HGC.[hampion] \ 2824 [stamped] \ G.C. Champion coll.; B.M. 1927-409” (1♂, 1♀, BMNH).

Out of these three specimens only one is a male and that is the only one I can safely consider conspecific with the lectotype of *Ancyrophorus nigerrimus*. The conspecificity of the female specimen from the same set (with identical labels) is at least likely.

Note that although these specimens were re-examined in 2019, no label was added to the ones from 2014. The only change proposed here is the movement of the Upper Gumti Valley record from the species formerly treated as '*championi*' to the one as '*nigerrimus*'.

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