

A New Genus and Species of Athericidae (Diptera: Tabanoidea) from Cape York Peninsula

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ABSTRACT. The new athericid *Suraginella macalpinei* n.gen., n.sp. is described on specimens from the Claudie River and Jardine River systems in the north of Cape York Peninsula. This distinctive taxon is compared with the widespread Old World genus *Suragina* Walker, 1858, to which it has some misleading resemblances. Many differences are detailed between these genera. In the closure of wing cell m_3 , and in having dorsal setae on certain radial and cubito-anal veins in the female, *Suraginella* resembles the rare monotypic Brazilian genus *Xeritha* Stuckenberg, 1966. Although these conditions are apomorphies, they are considered unreliable for cladistic analysis. A survey of the occurrence of such setose veins in other Athericidae and in the sister-group Tabanidae shows them to be sporadic, variably developed, and probably subject to homoplasy. No sister-group of *Suraginella* can be identified. The presence of a hard, dark mass in the abdomen of half of the available females indicates with high probability that *S. macalpinei* takes bloodmeals from a vertebrate host. A test of gut contents for the presence of blood, using urological test strips, gave a strong positive result but is not conclusive. Biological considerations suggest that *Suraginella*, although occurring in both “tip-of-peninsula” and “mid-peninsula” rainforest regions of Cape York Peninsula, may be independent of the forest biome. The preferred range of the aquatic larval stages in river profiles may determine distribution. Present information suggests that *Suraginella* may be part of the old “autochthonous” element in Australia.

STUCKENBERG, BRIAN R., 2000. A new genus and species of Athericidae (Diptera: Tabanoidea) from Cape York Peninsula. *Records of the Australian Museum* 52(2): 151–159.

The Australasian Athericidae have not been the subject of any study since the monograph by Paramonov (1962) on the Rhagionidae (= Leptidae). At that time, Athericidae had not been distinguished from the Rhagionidae as a separate family; this distinction was made by Stuckenberg (1973) and is now generally accepted. Paramonov's monograph dealt only with the fauna of continental Australia and Tasmania. He thus excluded those species of the athericid

genus *Suragina* Walker, 1858, also classified then as rhagionids, which had been described from the Indonesian (Maluku) section of the Australasian Region (see Nagatomi & Evenhuis, 1989). The only athericid genus recorded by Paramonov was *Dasyomma* Macquart, 1840. A species named originally as *Atherix pusilla* Macquart, 1858, based on a specimen from Adelaide, was transferred to the widespread rhagionid genus *Chrysopilus* Macquart, 1826.