

A Remarkable New Species of Scuttle Fly and First Record of *Microselia* Schmitz (Diptera: Phoridae) from Australia

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ABSTRACT. A remarkable new species, *Microselia lorien*, from northern coastal New South Wales, Australia is described and illustrated. This is the first record of the genus *Microselia* in Australia. With the previously described species occurring in the Afrotropical (6), Neotropical (1), Palaearctic (7), Nearctic (1) regions (Systema Dipterorum, 2022). The species discovered in Australia is new to science.

Introduction

Scuttle flies (Diptera: Phoridae) are a large family of small flies with about 4,444 species that range between 0.4–5 mm in body length (Brown, 2022). They are believed to exhibit the most diverse life histories, unrivalled by any other insect family (Disney, 1994) and yet they are profoundly understudied in Australia.

This is true, in part, because no Australian entomologist has ever specialized in the study of Phoridae (Disney, 2003). The few who made this venture were Arthur White (two species); Arthur Mills Lea (one species), and Mary Ellen Fuller and David Joseph Lee (one species), though Fuller may have contributed far more but for her early, tragic death (Evenhuis, 2010). These authors were active prior to the Second World War, over three generations ago.

Consequently, Australia has one of the least described phorid fauna for any major region of the world with a current list of 141 valid species (Australian Faunal Directory, 2022). Such a poor showing when compared to 75 species collected in Buckingham Palace Garden (17 hectares) in England (Disney, 2001).

Also, given that in 2010 there were 195 phorid workers worldwide (Evenhuis, 2010), and that this number has increased to 489 (Neal Evenhuis, personal communication), it is almost inconceivable that an Australian dipterist has not taken up the mantle.

Without a doubt, it will be contentious that we author a single species description, based on a single specimen. Should we wait until more material presents itself for a generic revision, or until a long series is available? An unlikely event, given that no other specimen has been found from the thousands of specimens collected over the last six decades.

The Australian phorid fauna is so large that attempts to make a taxonomic contribution can easily be thwarted at the very outset by the enormity of the task. Undaunted, we have chosen to start here by focusing on just one small genus and a single rare species.

In the present paper the genus *Microselia* Schmitz is reported for the first time from Australia, with the description of one species new to science (Table 1).

Keywords: *Microselia*, Phoridae, Diptera, new species, taxonomy, Australia

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