SCIENTIFIC NOTE

REDISCOVERY OF THE GUATEMALAN TIGER BEETLE PENTACOMIA (POECILOCHILA) CHAMPIONI (BATES) (COLEOPTERA: CARABIDAE: CICINDELINAE)

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Guatemala is reflective of other Central American countries in having genera and species of tiger beetles biogeographically associated with both North and South American faunas. Currently, 27 species of tiger beetles representing 10 genera have been reported from Guatemala (Huber et al. 2006; Cassola 2011). One of these genera, Pentacomia Bates, is primarily South American in distribution and is currently undergoing a revision by J. Morovec (in litt.); thus, the total number of species inhabiting Central America is unclear. In Guatemala, the only known representative of this genus is Pentacomia championi (Bates, 1881), a small (6–9 mm) species described from specimens collected in Zapote, Guatemala. Since its description, little has been added about this species apart from Rivalier’s (1954) redescription and Huber et al. (2006) who stated that P. championi “is so rare in collections that virtually nothing is known about it”.

Recently, while identifying tiger beetles from Guatemala for Richard Zack (Washington State University), I discovered four male and five female specimens of P. championi he collected on 12 May 2013 at the Refugio del Quetzal, which is located on the slopes of Volcan Atitlán, Suchitepéquez Department. Administered by the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala in Guatemala City, the refuge is primarily cloud forest that begins at the upper elevational reaches of Finca Panamá, a large, primarily coffee plantation. Specimens were collected in weedy vegetation bordering a dirt road at approximately 1,500 m elevation. The site was partly shaded by the forest canopy and all specimens were collected along a 15-m stretch of road characterized by heavy, approximately 1-m high vegetation and an exposed road cut approximately 1 m in height. Although Dr. Zack searched more than one kilometer of road, he found specimens confined to the small area described above. In areas where roadside vegetation was low and on the same level as the road, no specimens were taken (R. Zack, in litt.).

Specimens of P. championi were collected by general sweeping activities during midday and appeared to be roosting in the vegetation. While nocturnal roosting has been documented for several species of tiger beetle, including species of the closely related genus Odontocheila Castelnau in Peru (Pearson and Anderson 1985; Knisley and Hoback 1994), diurnal roosting has been documented for only a few species in India (Bhargav and Uniyal 2008). In two evenings of mercury vapor and black light collecting within 50 m of the P. championi collection site, the only tiger beetles attracted to the lights were specimens of Odontocheila (R. Zack, in litt.). The only other diurnal tiger beetle species captured at this site were two specimens of Cicindelidia vasseleti (Chevrolat).

Identification of these recently collected specimens of P. championi was based on comparison with the original description (Bates 1881) as well as an examination, and subsequent comparison, of the internal sclerites of one male aedeagus with the illustration provided in Rivalier’s (1954) redescription. These specimens are indistinguishable from specimens of P. championi housed in the Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago, IL) from Yepocapa Municipality in south central Chimaltenago Department, Guatemala, collected 13–15 May 1948. This locality is approximately 27 air km west of the Refugio del Quetzal; both sites are located on the west slope of the Sierra Madre Mountains between 1,463 m (Chimaltenago Dept.) and 1,550 m (Suchitepéquez Dept.) elevation. Bates type locality of “Zapote” is located in Escuintla Department (Huber et al. 2006) approximately 15 km SSW of the Yepocapa Municipality records. Based on these records, P. championi is believed to be a Guatemalan endemic.

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