New Distribution Records of Ontherus brevipennis Harold, 1867 and Ontherus lichyi Martínez, 1947 (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae: Scarabaeinae) in Colombia

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Ontherus Erichson is a Neotropical genus of dung beetles belonging to the tribe Coprini (Vaz-de-Mello 2008). The genus includes 60 species of which 58 were reviewed and confirmed by Génier (1996). Two years later, a new species, Ontherus gladiador Génier, was added to the species list by Génier (1998) when reviewing specimens from the Museum of Zoology of the Universidad de Sao Paulo, Brazil. Recently, a new species, Ontherus felicitae González and Medina, was described in a revision of Ontherus species in Colombia (González and Medina 2015). In Colombia, there are 19 species distributed in all eco-regions of the country, between sea level and 3,000 m elevation (Génier 1996; Amat et al. 1997; Amézquita et al. 1999; Noriega et al. 2007, 2013; Orozco and Perez 2008; Giraldo et al. 2011; Neita and Escobar 2011; Solis et al. 2011; González and Medina 2015).

Most Ontherus species may be either coprophagous or saprophagous. In the brevipennis species-group, there are some species that have been associated with the debris of leafcutter ants of the genera Atta Fabricius or Acromyrmex Mayr (Génier 1996). This association is still uncertain; some authors suggested that this relationship could be casual (Anduaga 1978; Deloya 1998). The brevipennis species-group has ten species of which two, Ontherus brevipennis Harold and Ontherus lichyi Martínez, are recorded from Colombia (Génier 1996). To date, individuals of these species are reported in five of the 32 departments (Magdalena and Valle del Cauca for the former species and, Magdalena, Meta, and Norte de Santander for the latter species) (Génier 1996).

Herein we report locations for 43 individuals of O. brevipennis (larvae, teneral adults, and adult males and females) (Fig. 1A, B). They were collected from both surface debris (less than 10 cm deep) and inactive galleries of the leafcutter ant Atta cephalotes (Linnaeus). We reviewed galleries in four fragments of tropical dry forest between January (dry season) and July (rainy season) 2016 in three localities in the department of Sucre and one locality in the department of Córdoba, northern Colombia.

The discovery of immature O. brevipennis in leafcutter ant debris highlights the importance of ant-nest debris of leafcutter ants as habitat for dung beetles. The debris of these ants represents a substrate with high organic matter content that makes it attractive for a variety of organisms, especially arthropods (Slobodchikoff 1979; Sánchez-Piñero and Gómez 1995; Vaz-de-Mello et al. 1998). These debris piles act as an important food source in habitats where resources are limited.