

An annotated list of the species described by Alexandre Yersin (1825-1863) and of the Yersin type material housed in the Muséum d'histoire naturelle in Geneva

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An annotated list of the species described by Alexandre Yersin (1825–1863) and of the Yersin type material housed in the Muséum d'histoire naturelle in Geneva

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The 14 species of Orthopteroid insects described by Alexandre Yersin are listed, and the Yersin type material present in the Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Genève is enumerated. Type material was positively identified for eight species. Material which could include that used by Yersin to describe two species was found, but without evidence that any specimen is actually a type. Type material was not located for four species, although the collection includes a designated neotype for one of them.

Keywords: Yersin collection, Geneva Museum, type material, Dermaptera, Mantodea, Orthoptera.

INTRODUCTION

The Vaudois entomologist Alexandre Yersin was born in Morges on the 5th of April 1825 and died, aged only 38, in Lavaux on the 2nd of September 1863. Today his scientific reputation is greatly over-shadowed by that of his son, the Alexandre Yersin who isolated the plague bacillus *Yersinia pestis* (Yersin, 1894). In his lifetime, however, Yersin was well regarded; Forel (1864) notes that, in an age when scientific endeavour was essentially the preserve of the rich, Yersin's talent and enthusiasm were sufficient to overcome his humble origins and lack of financial means. Forel (1864) and Saussure (1866) published obituary notices that list 24 papers written or co-written by Yersin between 1850 and 1863. Nearly all are entomological and deal with what was then termed the «Orthoptera» (which encompassed the currently recognised orders Dermaptera, Mantodea, Isoptera, Blattoptera, Phasmatodea and Orthoptera). The subjects of these publications range from physiology to ecology and taxonomy. Forel (1864) recounts that Yersin had a lively correspondence with Brisout [de Barneville], Perris, Dufour and Mulsant in France, Ghiliani in Italy, Fischer and Brunner [von Wattenwyl] in Germany and Imhoff, Meyer [-Dür] and Saussure in Switzerland. Yersin (1854, 1858, 1860, 1863) described 1 species of Dermaptera, 1 species of Mantodea and 12 species of Orthoptera.

The fact that father and son share the same name, and that the father died in the year the son was born, means there is some confusion in the literature about what each of them published. There also appears to be some confusion about the current location of Yersin's collection (Harz 1969; Groll 2006). The fate of the collection is referred to by Saussure (1866) in his obituary, which states that the European Orthoptera s.l. were acquired by the Geneva¹ Museum and the other material went

¹ «Il a en outre laissé des collections entomologiques considérables. Sa collection d'orthoptères européens a été acquise par la musée de Genève ou elle est conservée avec tout le soin qu'elle mérite.»

to the Musée d'histoire naturelle of Morges, which Yersin had helped to found. A list of the type material in the Muséum d'histoire naturelle in Geneva (MHNG) is therefore desirable to clear up some of the confusion.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The list is divided into the currently accepted orders, and thereafter arranged alphabetically by species name as published.

The species accounts follow the format:

species name Author, year of publication (page(s); illustrations) [original generic placement].

Type locality [further locality information, number and sexes of type(s) where indicated in the description].

Location of corresponding material in the MHNG collection. [Generic placement in the MHNG collections]. Specimen(s) (comment if necessary) «Label data» [form of label].

Currently valid binomen of taxon, based upon Eades *et al.* (2007).

Comments.

The alpha-numeric codes, which are apparently Yersin's own, are hand-written on small, originally white, card discs. The «coll. Yersin» labels are narrow, printed strips. The species identification labels, (which were affixed to nearly all of the pinned material present in the MHNG around the beginning of the 20th century,) are handwritten on blue paper.

Species described by Yersin, of which the types may be presumed to be in the MHNG but were not found there, are placed in square brackets.

DERMAPTERA

arachidis Yersin, 1860 (pp. 509–511; pl. 10, figs. 33–35) [*Forficula*]

Marseille [France; number of specimens not stated, but both sexes treated].

Dermaptera drawer 11. [*Marava*]. 2 ♂♂, 8 ♀♀ (card mounted; 3 pins each with 2 ♀♀ on 1 card) «Marseille, Yersin» [handwritten]; «*S. arachidis* Yers.» 5 immatures (card mounted on one pin) «Marseille, Yersin» [handwritten]; «*S. arachidis* Yers.»; «*Sphingolabis arachidis*, type de M. Yersin» [handwritten].

Marava arachidis (Yersin, 1860).

Comments. Yersin noted that the specimens were received from Raymond, who took them from a consignment of peanuts. He suggested, correctly, that the species might be exotic; it is in fact cosmopolitan. Harz & Kaltenbach (1976) and Albouy & Caussanel (1990) stated that the type is in the Muséum Nationale d'histoire naturelle, Paris. Steinmann (1989) wrote that the whereabouts of the type is unknown («unbekannt»). Given that there are many syntypes in the MHNG, it is quite likely that Yersin sent some type material to his correspondents, and that there is now one or more syntypes in Paris.

MANTODEA

brevipennis Yersin, 1860 (pp. 511–514; pl. 10, figs. 36–40) [*Mantis*]

Hyères [France; number of specimens not stated, but both sexes treated].

Mantodea drawer 8. [*Pseudoyersinia*]. 1 ♂ «Hyères, Raymond» [handwritten]; «coll. Yersin»; «*Ameles brevipennis* Yers.» 1 ♀ «Hyères» [handwritten]; «coll. Yersin»; «*Ameles brevipennis* Yers.» Card label on separate pin stating «types» [handwritten].

Pseudoyersinia brevipennis (Yersin, 1860).

ORTHOPTERA

alpina Yersin, 1858 (pp. 111–122; pl. 4, figs. 1–9) [*Pterolepsis*]

Alpes sur Morcles [Switzerland; number of specimens not stated, but both sexes treated].

Saltatoria drawer K9. [*Analota*]. 3 ♂♂, 3 ♀♀ «a/1666»; «Morcles, Alpes» [handwritten]; «*Pterolepsis alpina* Yers.»; «Syntype» [handwritten on red card].

Anonconotus alpina (Yersin, 1958).

Comments. Somewhat mysteriously, Harz (1969) stated that the type material is in «coll. Yersin». The location of the types in the MHNG, the Musée cantonal de Zoologie in Lausanne and the ETH in Zurich was reported by Carron *et al.* (2002). The specimens in Lausanne, 1 ♂, 1 ♀, have «Morcles, Alpes» labels identical to those attached to the specimens in MHNG, but lack the alpha-numeric code labels. They also have provenance labels reading «coll. J.A.M. Yersin».

brevipennis Yersin, 1860 (pp. 519–520; pl. 10, figs. 7–9) [*Meconema*]

Hyères [France; number of specimens not stated, only female sex treated].

Saltatoria drawer C1. [*Meconema*]. 1 ♀ «a/1685»; «Hyères, Raymond» [handwritten]; «*Meconema brevipennis* Yers.».

A junior synonym of *Meconema meridionale* (Costa, 1860).

Comments. It is not clear if the single specimen in the MHNG should be regarded as a syntype or holotype. The fact that only the female was treated in the description suggests that Yersin did not have much material, which might imply that the latter is more likely.

brisoutii Yersin, 1860 (pp. 520–524; pl. 10, figs. 11–16) [*Pterolepis*]

Sicile [Italy, Sicily; number of specimens not stated, but both sexes treated].

Saltatoria drawer K1. [*Rhacocleis*]. 1 ♂, 1 ♀ «a/1697»; «Sicile» [handwritten]; «coll. Yersin»; «*Pterolepis brisoutii* Yers.»; «= *Rhacocleis annulata* Fieb.».

A junior synonym of *Pterolepis annulata* Fieber (1853).

[*fischeri* Yersin, 1854 (pp. 66–68; pl. 2, figs. 1–5) [*Odontura*]

Hyères [France; one male and two females].

Saltatoria drawer B2. [*Barbitistes*]. 1 ♂ «c/1507»; «Corse, Mayor» [handwritten]; «*Odont. fischeri* Yers.»; «*Odontura fischeri* Yersin.».

Barbitistes fischeri (Yersin, 1854).

Comments. Harz (1969) stated that the types are in the MHNG collection, but although one specimen with labels which show that it belonged to Yersin's collection was found, the locality does not correspond to the type material, and the code «c» suggests that the specimen came into Yersin's possession later.]

hyalinus Yersin, 1863 (pp. 286–289; pl. 7, fig. 6) [*Stenobothrus*]

Espagne [Spain; four specimens collected by Pictet & Meyer-Dür].

Saltatoria drawer U18. [*Stenobothrus*]. 1 ♀ «Malaga mai 1859» [printed]; «Espagne, Mr Ed Pictet» [handwritten]; «*Stenobothrus apicalis* H.-Sch.» 1 ♀ «Grenade juin 1859» [printed]; «*Stenobothrus apicalis* H.-Sch.».

A junior synonym of *Chorthippus apicalis* (Herrich-Schaeffer, 1840).

Comments. The specimens in the MHNG, whilst they were collected on the same expedition as the type material, exhibit no evidence that they were seen by Yersin and consequently have not been labelled as syntypes. This material could furnish a neotype if one was required.

maculata Yersin, 1860 (pp. 517–518; pl. 10, figs. 3–6) [*Ephippigera*]

Sicile [Italy, Sicily; number of specimens not stated but both sexes treated].

Saltatoria drawer L3. [*Steropleurus*]. 1 ♂ «a/1680»; «Sicile» [handwritten]; «coll. Yersin»; «*Ephip. maculata* Y.»; «Syntypus» [printed on red card].

A junior synonym of *Uromenus elegans* (Fischer, 1853).

provincialis Yersin, 1854 (pp. 65–66; pl. 1, figs. 9–15) [*Ephippigera*]

Hyères [France; four specimens, both sexes treated].

Saltatoria drawer L5. [*Ephippiger*]. 1 ♀ «Hyères, France, coll. Yersin» [handwritten]; «a/1506»; «Hyères» [handwritten]; «provincialis type Yers.» [handwritten on white card]; «*Ephippiger provincialis* Yers.»; «Syntypus» [printed on red card]. 1 ♂ «a/1506»; «Hyères» [handwritten]; «*Ephippiger provincialis* Yers.»; «coll. Yersin»; «Syntypus» [printed on red card]. 1 ♀ «Hyères, France, coll. Yersin»; «a/1506»; «Hyères» [handwritten]; «*Ephippiger provincialis* Yers.»; «Syntypus» [printed on red card]. 1 ♂ «Hyères, France, coll. Yersin» [handwritten]; «b/1506»; «Hyères» [handwritten]; «provincialis type Yers.» [handwritten on white card]; «*Ephippiger provincialis* Yers.» 2 ♀♀ «b/1506»; «Hyères» [handwritten]; «*Ephippiger provincialis* Yers.».

Ephippiger provincialis (Yersin, 1854).

Comments. Harz (1969) stated that there is a syntype in Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna. It seems probable that Yersin's labels indicate that specimens with «a» belong to the first series he obtained: thus only three of the four syntypes are in the MHNG; the other could have been sent to a correspondent whose collection is now in Vienna. If this is the case the male labelled as «b» is not actually a syntype, notwithstanding the other labels.

raymondi Yersin, 1863 (pp. 289–291; pl. 7, fig. 7) [*Stenobothrus*]

Hyères [France; number of specimens not stated].

Coll. Harz drawer 104. [*Omocestus*]. 1 ♂, 1 ♀ «17.8.66, St. Crépin, France,

Chr. Walther» [printed]; «*Omocestus raymondi* (Yersin) K. Harz d.» [printed]; «Neotypus» [handwritten on red card].

Omocestus raymondi (Yersin, 1863).

Comments. There is no material in the MHNG that corresponds to Yersin's type material. Harz (1975) stated that the types are presumed lost («verschollen»), and designated neotypes (sic). It is not clear which, if either, of the two specimens thus labelled in his collection is a valid neotype.

[*raymondii* Yersin, 1860 (pp. 524–526; pl. 10, figs. 17–20) [*Pterolepis*]

Hyères [France; number of specimens not stated but both sexes treated].

Saltatoria drawer K6. [*Pterolepis*].

Yersinella raymondii (Yersin, 1860).

Comments. Harz (1969) stated that the location of the type material is unknown («unbekannt»). No specimen with labels which correspond to the type material was found in the MHNG.]

[*sepium* Yersin, 1854 (pp. 68–70; pl. 2, figs. 6–12) [*Decticus*]

Nice [France; three males and two females].

Saltatoria drawer K5. [*Decticus*].

Sepiana sepium (Yersin, 1854).

Comments. Harz (1969) stated that the location of the type material is unknown («unbekannt»). No specimen with labels which correspond to the type material was found in the MHNG.]

[*simillima* Yersin, 1860 (pp. 532–535; pl. 10, figs. 30–32) [*Porthetis*]

Sicile [Italy, Sicily; number of specimens not stated, only female sex treated].

Saltatoria drawer Y6. [*Pamphigus*]. 3 ♂♂, 7 ♀♀ «Sicile, Mr H. de Saussure» [handwritten]; «*Pamphig. simillima* Yersin.»

A junior synonym of *Acinipe calabra* (Costa, 1828).

Comments. These specimens have been relabelled in the MHNG with standard «museum» labels and may include those seen by Yersin. In the absence of evidence they can not be regarded as syntypes.

[*terrestris* Yersin, 1854 (pp. 63–65; pl.1, figs. 1–8) [*Ephippigera*]

Frejus and Grasse [France; two males and one female].

Saltatoria drawer L6. [*Ephippiger*]. 1 ♂ «Frejus» [handwritten]; «a/1505»; «*Ephippig. terrestris* Y»; «coll. Yersin»; «*E. terr. terrestris* ♂ (Yersin) det. Nadig» [typed on white card with «det. Nadig» printed]; «25 Nadig» [typed on white card with «det. Nadig» printed, «det.» being crossed through; number corresponds to slide preparation in insect box]; «Syntypus» [typed on pink card]. 1 ♂ «Hyères, France, coll. Yersin» [handwritten]; «a/1505»; «Grasse» [handwritten]; «*terrestris* type Yersin» [handwritten on white card]; «*Ephippig. terrestris* Y»; «coll. Yersin»; «*E. terr. terrestris* ♂ (Yersin) det. Nadig» [typed on white card with «det. Nadig» printed]; «26 Nadig» [typed on white card with «det. Nadig» printed, «det.» being crossed through; number corresponds to slide preparation in insect box]; «Syntypus» [typed on pink card]. 1 ♀ «Grasse» [handwritten]; «a/1505»; «*Ephippig. ter-*

restris Y»; «coll. Yersin»; «*E. terr. terrestris* ♀ (Yersin) det. Nadig» [typed on white card with «det. Nadig» printed]; «Syntypus» [typed on pink card].

Ephippiger terrestris (Yersin, 1854).

Comments. Harz (1969) stated that the type material is in the MHNG collection. The material was treated by Nadig (1980), who partially dissected the male specimens and made slide preparations, which are stored in the drawer with the specimens.

DISCUSSION

The first problem with identifying Yersin's types is that he did not state in the descriptions where the material was deposited. The obvious assumption is that all of the material was placed in his own collection, but it remains possible that specimens were returned to the collectors, (who are not always named in the descriptions, notably for the Sicilian material). The second problem is the complexity of the MHNG Orthoptera collection and its management. The collections of two 20th century experts, Kurt Harz and Adolf Nadig, have retained their independent identity, (the latter as a condition of its being deposited in the MHNG), but the earlier collections have largely been merged to form a general collection and a «Collection Régionale». The distinction between personal and museum collections was, perhaps, less rigorous than today; there is material that clearly belonged to Yersin's collection in Maerky's collection, (also now in the MHNG). These problems are further compounded by systematic re-labelling with standardised labels (see Hollier 2003). An example of this problem is afforded by the second male syntype of *E. terrestris*, which has been relabelled «Hyères» despite retaining the original locality label «Grasse».

It is clear from this list that the bulk of Yersin's Orthoptera are in the collections of the MHNG. The type material of eight of the species described by Yersin has been positively identified. No trace of type material of four species could be found, although a designated neotype for one of these is present in the MHNG collections. Material which could be that used by Yersin has been found for the remaining two species, but there is no label evidence to show that they are indeed types.

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