

A new species of *Androctonus* Ehrenberg, 1828 from Afghanistan (Scorpiones, Buthidae)

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Abstract. A new species of scorpion belonging to the genus *Androctonus* Ehrenberg, 1828 (family Buthidae C.L. Koch, 1837), is described on the basis of a single male specimen collected in northern Afghanistan, south of Vic Shiberghan, Dasht-e-Leili. The specimen is part of the material collected in Afghanistan by the late Clas NAUMANN during the 1970s. The new species is characterised by its pale yellow colouration and narrow metasomal segments with a shallow dorsal depression.

Kurzfassung. Anhand eines einzelnen Männchens, das südlich Vic Shiberghan, Dasht-e-Leili, in Nord-Afghanistan gesammelt wurde, wird eine neue Art der Skorpiongattung *Androctonus* Ehrenberg, 1828 (Familie Buthidae C. L. Koch, 1837) beschrieben. Das Exemplar ist Teil des Materials, das von Clas NAUMANN in den 1970er Jahren gesammelt wurde. Die neue Art ist durch ihre fahlgelbe Färbung und die engen metasomalen Segmente, die eine flache dorsale Einbuchtung aufweisen, charakterisiert.

Key words. Scorpions, taxonomy, Buthidae, Middle East.

As discussed in a recent paper (LOURENÇO 2005a), the taxonomy of the genus *Androctonus* Ehrenberg has long remained complex and confused. In his contributions to the study of North African scorpions, VACHON (1948, 1952) attempted to establish a better definition of the genus *Androctonus* and its species. However, he maintained the status of several subspecies, and even described new ones for populations totally disconnected geographically. An example is provided by *Androctonus crassicauda* (Olivier) which is distributed in the Middle East, Iran, Iraq and Palestine/Israel, and *Androctonus crassicauda gonneti* Vachon, from Morocco and Mauritania. LOURENÇO (2005a) characterised both populations as distinct, and raised *A. crassicauda gonneti* to the rank of species, as *A. gonneti*. The classification proposed by VACHON (1948, 1952) for the species of *Androctonus* is therefore unsatisfactory, mainly because of the existence of several poorly defined subspecies.

In the revision of the genus by LOURENÇO (2005a), this author also attempted to clarify the taxonomic status of some of the species distributed in the Middle East. This led LOURENÇO (2005a) to separate Middle East populations of *Androctonus crassicauda* from African populations. The status of some poorly defined species such as *Androctonus amoreuxi finitimus* (Pocock) and *Androctonus amoreuxi baluchicus* (Pocock) was also reconsidered (see also VACHON 1958). These two subspecies were also raised to the rank of species as *A. finitimus* and *A. baluchicus* respectively, and one new species, *Androctonus maelfaiti* Lourenço, was described from India. Although the revision by LOURENÇO (2005a) clarified some of these problems, it was concluded that knowledge of the genus *Androctonus* in the Middle East remains incomplete, and further studies on the species of this region are necessary.

During his field trips to Afghanistan in the 1970s, the late Clas NAUMANN collected a few