A new species of *Cithaeron* from South Africa (Araneae: Cithaeronidae)

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Summary

A new species of the rarely recorded genus *Cithaeron* O. P.-Cambridge, 1872 is described from South Africa. A diagnosis is provided for the new species, which appears to be most closely related to *Cithaeron delimbatus* from eastern Africa.

Introduction

The gnaphosoid family Cithaeronidae was originally created as a sub-family of the Gnaphosidae by Simon in 1893 and elevated to full family status by Caporiacco (1938). It was revised by Platnick (1991) who recognised a total of five species in two genera (*Cithaeron* O. P.-Cambridge, 1872 and *Intheron* Platnick, 1991). Subsequently, Platnick & Gajbe (1994) added one further species of *Cithaeron* and described the unknown male of *Intheron rossi* Platnick, 1991. *Cithaeron praedonius* O. P.-Cambridge, 1872 (the type species of the genus) has a wide distribution from Libya to Singapore, Australia, and Brazil. Three other species, *Cithaeron delimbatus* Strand, 1906, *C. reimoseri* Platnick, 1991, and *C. jocqueorum* Platnick, 1991 are all recorded from the northern half of the Afrotropical region, while *C. indicus* Platnick & Gajbe, 1994 is only known from India. Despite the fact that that at least one species, *C. praedonius*, was found to be abundant in certain localities in Ethiopia by the second author, members of the genus are apparently rarely encountered and are not frequent in museum collections. In this paper, we describe a new and distinctive species from South Africa.

Methods

The specimen was examined in 70% ethanol under a stereomicroscope. Measurements were made with an eyepiece micrometer and are in mm.

Abbreviations: AME, anterior median eye; ALE, anterior lateral eye; PME, posterior median eye; PLE, posterior lateral eye; Fe, femur; Pat, patella; Tib, tibia; Met, metatarsus; Ta, tarsus; RTA, retrolateral tibial apophysis

Systematics

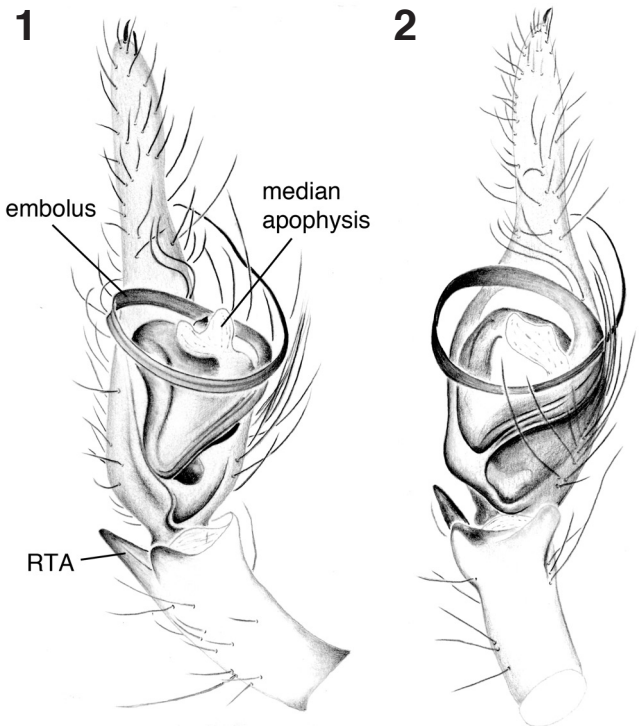
***Cithaeron contentum* n. sp.** (Figs. 1, 2)

Material examined: Holotype: ♂ SOUTH AFRICA: Mpumalanga, Blyde River Canyon, Botanical Reserve, inside house. Coll. R. Jocqué, 9 April 2009.

Description: Male total length: 6.67. Carapace: length 2.99, width 1.70; oval, tapering anteriorly, strongly flattened; fovea elongate, 0.3× length of carapace; colour pale cream with two faint darker lines extending from beside PML to anterior end of fovea; cuticle iridescent; clothed in long, grey adpressed setae; lateral margins with a few stouter black setae. Eyes: anterior row moderately procurved: AME large, oval, 2× diameter of ALE, blackened around inner margins, touching ALE and spaced by 0.5× their own diameter.; posterior row strongly procurved: PME large, almost triangular in shape with maximum width 0.5× length, separated by 0.25× their length; PLE circular, diameter 0.5× length of PME, separated from AME by 0.3× their own diameter. Chelicerae: relatively long and narrow, coloured as carapace, with a scattering of short black setae; cheliceral teeth absent, fang short. Maxillae and labium: maxillae 2× longer than broad, obliquely truncate distally, with transverse depression across distal third; cream coloured with narrow darker margin; labium subquadrate, 0.65× length of maxillae, cream suffused with grey. Sternum: scutiform, somewhat projecting between hind coxae; cream coloured with narrow darker margin. Legs: exceptionally long and thin, leg IV 8× longer than carapace; all segments pale cream.

Leg measurements:

	Fe	Pat	Tib	Met	Ta	Total
Leg I	3.75	1.25	3.75	4.00	2.33	15.08
Leg IV	3.66	1.25	4.58	4.17	2.25	16.91



Figs. 1–2: *Cithaeron contentum* n. sp., male palp. **1** retrolateral view; **2** ventral view.

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Leg spines short and sparse, confined to femur on leg I but on all segments of leg IV; legs cream to pale yellow colour.; metatarsi clearly but faintly pseudo-segmented, with feathery hairs on underside; cuticle of legs iridescent (not easy to discern in alcohol); tarsal claws short with four small teeth and a scopula beneath. Abdomen: elongate, 3× longer than maximum width, strongly tapering posteriorly; dorsally pale grey, ventrally grey with two parallel darker lines running the full length. Spinnerets: long, 0.3× length of abdomen, all six equal in length; coloured as abdomen. Male palp (Figs. 1–2): coloured as carapace; in ventral view, cymbium long and tapering to narrow distal half, densely clothed in dark setae, with a single short claw at tip; in lateral view, RTA bifid, with upper branch sharply pointed (as in *C. delimbatus*) and lower branch shorter with rounded tip; seen ventrally, embolus very long, tapering to fine tip, distal two thirds free of bulb; median apophysis with two lobes, the ventral translucent, narrowly tongue-shaped, the dorsal shorter, more sclerotized and with a notched tip with two sharp points.

Female: Unknown.

Diagnosis: *Cithaeron contentum* somewhat resembles *C. delimbatus* in the structure of the male palp but differs in the bifid RTA, the much longer embolus with the distal third not closely adpressed to the bulb and the structure of the median apophysis which is bilobed and more complex than that of *C. delimbatus*.

Etymology: The specific name derives from the Latin *contentus* meaning "happy" in reference to the type locality, Blyde River Canyon. Blyde means happy in Dutch and is cognate with the English word "blithe".

Distribution: Only known from the type locality.

Biology: Although captured within a house, this species is likely to inhabit the surrounding wooded savanna of the Blyde River area. However, the fact that the specimen was found in a house corroborates the statement of Carvalho *et al*. (2007) that the occurrence of the genus in South America, is most probably explained by its frequent presence in anthropogenic environments. Yet, it remains remarkable that, notwithstanding the massive investment in the survey of South African arachnids (Anonymous 2011), no other representatives of the family have been found there so far.

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