



Conference Abstract

Unraveling the evolutionary history of the cave-dwelling Dysderidae in the Dinarides

Martina Pavlek^{‡,§}, Miquel A. Arnedo^l, Fulvio Gasparo[¶], Silvia Adrian[‡]

[‡] Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

[§] Croatian Biospeleological Society, Zagreb, Croatia

^l University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

[¶] Commissione Grotte 'E. Boegan', SAG-CAI, Via Donota 2, I-34121, Trieste, Italy

Corresponding author: Martina Pavlek (martina.pavlek@gmail.com)

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Abstract

Because of their size, abundance and active predatory lifestyle, spiders of the family Dysderidae are among the most conspicuous creatures in the Dinaric caves. Historically, the interest for this group dates back to 1847, to the description of the first cave spider in the world, *Stalita taenaria*, and peaks in the middle of 20th century with the works of Joseph Kratochvíl and Christa L. Deeleman-Reinhold among others. However, after all these years, an explicit phylogenetic hypothesis about the family relationships is still missing and the taxonomy of some genera is a matter of debate. Dinaric cave representatives belong to two subfamilies: Rhodinae, with 13 species from five genera (*Rhode*, *Stalita*, *Parastalita*, *Mesostalita* and *Stalitella*) and Harpacteinae, with eight species from two genera (*Folkia* and *Stalagtia*). All species are considered troglobiotic and are Dinaric endemics, with Harpacteinae restricted to the south part of the Dinaric Mountains and Rhodinae (with few exceptions) to the north part. Here, we present the results of a multi-locus phylogenetic analysis of the family combining mitochondrial and nuclear genes of the focal group along with representatives of the other dysderid genera. Our data reveal a more complex taxonomic structure than currently recognized, with several instances of paraphyly, and uncover some overlooked diversity at the species level.

Presenting author

Martina Pavlek