



An interesting sexually dimorphic species, *Chamobates callipygis* Pavlichenko, 1991 (Acari, Oribatida, Chamobatidae), with remarks on sexual dimorphism in Ceratozetoidea

BADAMDORJ BAYARTOGTOKH^{1,*}, SERGEY G. ERMILOV^{2,3} & ALEXANDER A. KHAUSTOV^{2,4}

¹Department of Biology, School of Arts and Sciences, National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

✉ bayartogtokh@num.edu.mn

²Institute of Environmental and Agricultural Biology (X-BIO), Tyumen State University, Tyumen, Russia

³✉ ermilovacari@yandex.ru

⁴✉ alex1973khaustov@gmail.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract

Based on materials from the leaf litter of a mixed forest in Crimea, a new diagnosis for the sexually dimorphic species, *Chamobates callipygis* Pavlichenko, 1991, is presented to accommodate its previously unreported females. This is the only species in Chamobatidae showing a distinct sexual dimorphism, which is expressed by the posterior porose region on the notogaster, such that males only have a large protuberance on the posterior part of notogaster bearing a pair of fused porose areas *A3*, and a densely striated region behind them. The specific function of this structure is not yet known, but the sexual dimorphism is presumably involved in pheromonal communication facilitating sperm transfer. Also, the males of this species have a few transverse striations in the dorsomedial part of notogaster (at level of porose areas *A1* and *A2*). Further, we discuss all cases of sexual dimorphism in the superfamily Ceratozetoidea, and the possible function of this dimorphism.

Key words: oribatid mites, morphology, octotaxic system, Ceratozetoidea, Crimea

Introduction

Chamobates callipygis was proposed by Pavlichenko (1991) from Crimea, based on two male specimens. He distinguished it from other species of the genus by the structure of the posterior part of the notogaster, which has a large protuberance, the position of porose areas *A1*, *A2* and specific shape of *A3*, and the presence of transverse striations on the notogaster. However, females of this species have not been found during the past three decades. The description of both sexes of morphologically dimorphic species is very important since it helps to eliminate unreasonable cases of describing sexual forms as different species, which can happen if the collector had only one sex in his/her collections.

Based on the long and thick aggenital as well as some epimeral setae, Pavlichenko (1993) proposed a new genus, *Xiphobates*, to which he transferred *C. callipygis* and some other species of *Chamobates*. However, the generic status of *Xiphobates* is arguable. Although Behan-Pelletier (2015) accepted *Xiphobates* as a valid genus, Subías (2004, online annual updates) treated it as a subgenus of *Chamobates*. Other authors (Weigmann 2006; Norton & Ermilov 2014; Seniczak *et al.* 2018) considered *Xiphobates* as a junior synonym of *Chamobates*.

Some species of the ceratozetoid genera *Ceratozetes* Berlese, 1908, *Sacculozetes* Behan-Pelletier & Ryabinin, 1991 and *Zetomimus* Hull, 1916 also show such a character of ventral setae, and therefore using this intermittent character for separating genera in Ceratozetoidea is not very reasonable. Therefore, herein, we consider *C. callipygis* a member of *Chamobates* as originally assigned, but, in our opinion, further investigation is required, and *Xiphobates* should be reassessed based on both adult and juvenile features.

Secondary sexual dimorphism is not that common among brachypyline oribatid mites, where it is known for about 80 species from 16 families and 10 superfamilies (Behan-Pelletier 2015; Pflingstl 2015; Bayartogtokh *et al.*

2017). Among the brachypylinae oribatid taxa, the superfamily Ceratozetoidea is with 14 species the third largest among groups that are currently known to express secondary sexual dimorphism. Among the families of this superfamily, the Punctoribatidae includes the most species expressing sexual dimorphism (8 spp.), with Zetomimidae (5 spp.) and Chamobatidae (1 sp.) (Behan-Pelletier 2015; Shimano & Aoki 2019). In general, among sexually dimorphic oribatid mites expressing strong morphological differences, modifications are only found in the males, and a large number of species shows modifications in the structure of porose organs and dermal glands of the hysterosoma (Norton & Alberti 1997).

In the course of taxonomic study of oribatid mites from Crimea, we found both sexes of *C. callipygis*. The primary goal of the paper is to describe and illustrate both sexes of this species with detailed illustrations. As the present study shows a striking case of sexual dimorphism in this species, our secondary goal is to compare it with other cases in the superfamily Ceratozetoidea, and to discuss the possible function of these modifications.

Material and methods

Material examined. Substrate samples containing 16 adults (eight males and eight females) of *C. callipygis* were taken by hand from Crimea, 18°29'00.1"S; 34°02'34.6"E, soil-litter in a mixed forest near Oliva village, 2.05.2021 (collected by A.A. Khaustov). Mites were extracted using Berlese's funnels without electric lamps in laboratory conditions during five days and preserved in 70% of ethanol. All studied specimens (in 70% of ethanol with a drop of glycerol) are deposited in the Tyumen State University Museum of Zoology, Tyumen, Russia.

Observation and documentation. Specimens were mounted in lactic acid on temporary cavity slides for measurement and illustration. Body length was measured in lateral view, from tip of the rostrum to the posterior edge of the notogaster. Notogastral width refers to maximum width of the notogaster in dorsal view. Lengths of body setae were measured in lateral aspect. All body measurements are presented in micrometers. Formulas for leg setation are given in parentheses according to the sequence trochanter-femur-genu-tibia-tarsus (famulus included). Formulas for leg solenidia are given in square brackets according to the sequence genu-tibia-tarsus. Drawings were made with a camera lucida using a Leica transmission light microscope "Leica DM 2500. Images were obtained with an AxioCam ICc3 camera using a Carl Zeiss transmission light microscope "Axio Lab.A1. SEM micrographs were made with the aid of a JEOL-JSM-6510LV SEM microscope.

Terminology. General morphological terminology used in this paper mostly follows that of F. Grandjean: see Travé & Vachon (1975) for references, Norton (1977) for leg setal nomenclature, Norton & Behan-Pelletier (2009) for overview.

Abbreviations. *Prodorsum*: *mrt* = median rostral tooth; *lrt* = lateral rostral tooth; *lam* = lamella; *tu* = tutorium; *gt* = genal tooth; *tgt* = teeth of genal tooth; *Al* = lateral porose area; *ro*, *le*, *in*, *bs* = rostral, lamellar, interlamellar, and bothridial seta, respectively; *bos* = stalk of bothridial seta; *bo* = bothridium; *bot* = tooth of bothridium; *D* = dorso-phragma; *P* = pleurophragma. *Notogaster*: *len* = lenticulus; *nsr* = notogastral striate region; *pr* = protuberance; *c*, *dp*, *la*, *lm*, *lp*, *h*, *p* = setae; *Aa*, *A1*, *A2*, *A3* = porose areas; *ia*, *im*, *ip*, *ih*, *ips* = lyrifissures; *gla* = opisthonotal gland opening. *Gnathosoma*: *Sc* = subcapitulum; *a*, *m*, *h* = subcapitular setae; *or* = adoral seta; *as* = axillary sacculae; *Pa* = palp; *d*, *l*, *cm*, *acm*, *ul*, *su*, *lt*, *vt*, *sup*, *inf* = palp setae; ω = palp solenidion; *Ch* = chelicera; *cha*, *chb* = cheliceral setae; *Tg* = Trägårdh's organ. *Epimeral and lateral podosomal regions*: *1a*, *1b*, *1c*, *2a*, *3a*, *3b*, *3c*, *4a*, *4b*, *4c* = epimeral setae; *z* = aperture of supracoxal gland; *Am*, *Ah* = humeral porose areas; *PdI*, *PdII* = pedotectum I and II, respectively; *cus* = custodium; *dis* = discidium; *cpc* = circumpedal carina. *Anogenital region*: *g*, *ag*, *an*, *ad* = genital, aggenital, anal, and adanal seta, respectively; *iad* = adanal lyrifissure; *po* = preanal organ; *GP* = genital plate. *Legs*: *Tr*, *Fe*, *Ge*, *Ti*, *Ta* = trochanter, femur, genu, tibia, and tarsus, respectively; *tit* = tibial tooth; *get* = genual tooth; *pa* = porose area; ω , σ , φ = solenidia; ϵ = famulus; *d*, *l*, *v*, *ev*, *bv*, *ft*, *tc*, *it*, *p*, *u*, *a*, *s*, *pv*, *pl* = setae.

Taxonomy

Chamobates callipygis Pavlichenko, 1991

(Figs 1–6)

Diagnosis. *Adult*. Body size: 282–332 × 182–215. With sexual dimorphism: in males, posterior part of notogaster

with some striations near porose areas *A1*, *A2* and large posteromedian protuberance bearing pair of fused porose areas *A3*, and densely striate region behind them (females without protuberance and striations on notogaster, and with four pairs of rounded porose areas). Epimeral region granulate and longitudinally striate. Rostrum with strong lateral teeth and one small tooth at base of deep indentation between lateral teeth. Tutorial cusp with three or four teeth. Genal tooth sharply pointed, with some curved integumental ridges proximally. Rostral, lamellar and inter-lamellar setae setiform, barbed; *le* longest. Bothridial seta well developed, flattened, rounded or pointed apically, barbed. Anterior lamina of bothridium with two small teeth. Pteromorph slightly pointed laterally. Notogastral setae simple, minute. Epimeral seta *lc* bacilliform; *3a* thin, slightly stiff; *3c* setiform; *4c* simple, thinnest; *1a*, *1b*, *2a*, *3b*, *4a*, *4b* thickened. Genital, anal and adanal setae short, slightly stiff; aggenital seta bacilliform. Leg tibiae I and II with dorsoproximal tooth.

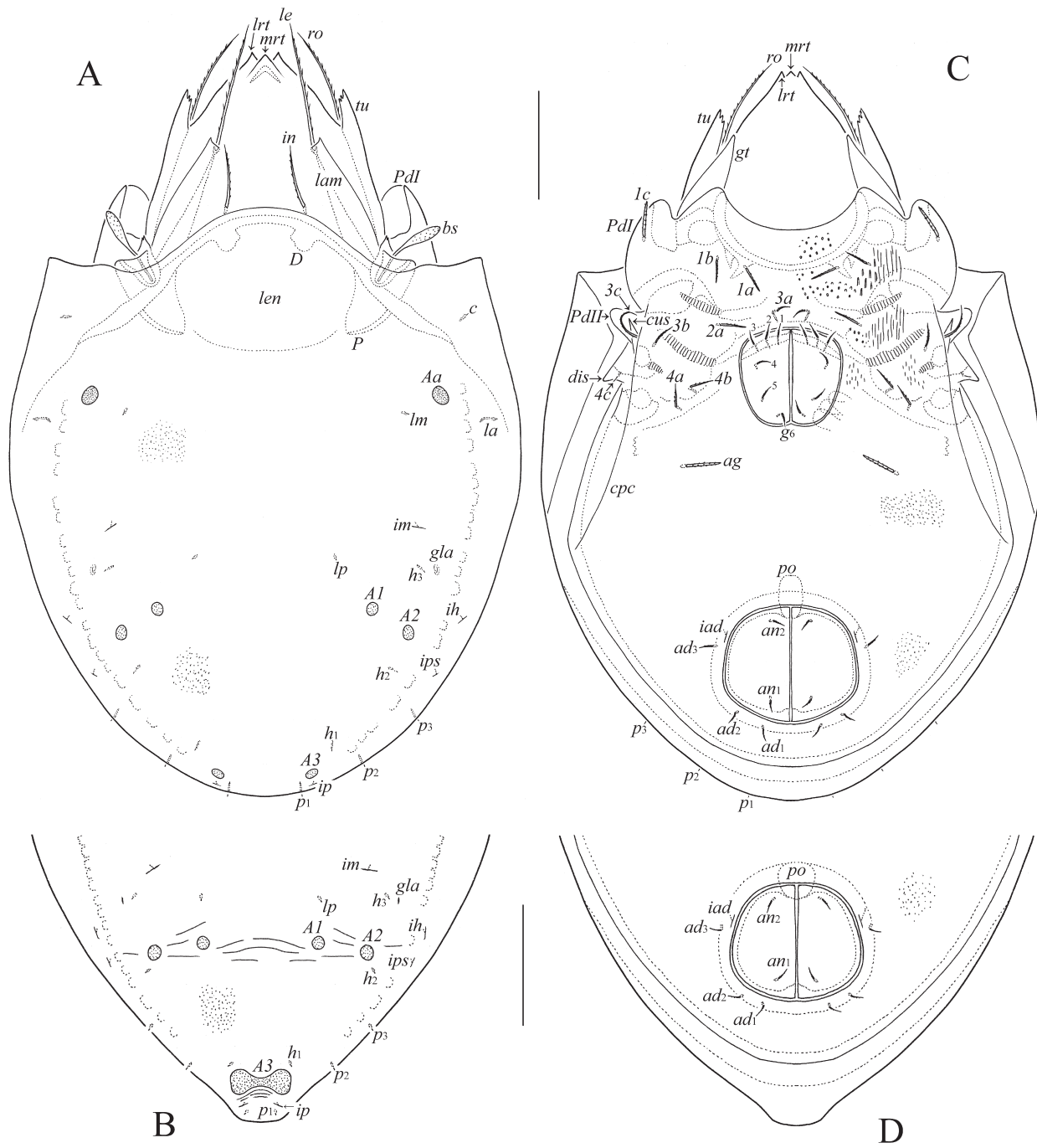


FIGURE 1. *Chamobates callipygis*, adult: A—dorsal view of female (legs not shown); B—posterior part of body in male, dorsal view; C—ventral view of female (gnathosoma and legs except trochanters not shown); D—posterior part of body in male, ventral view. Scale bar 50 μ m.

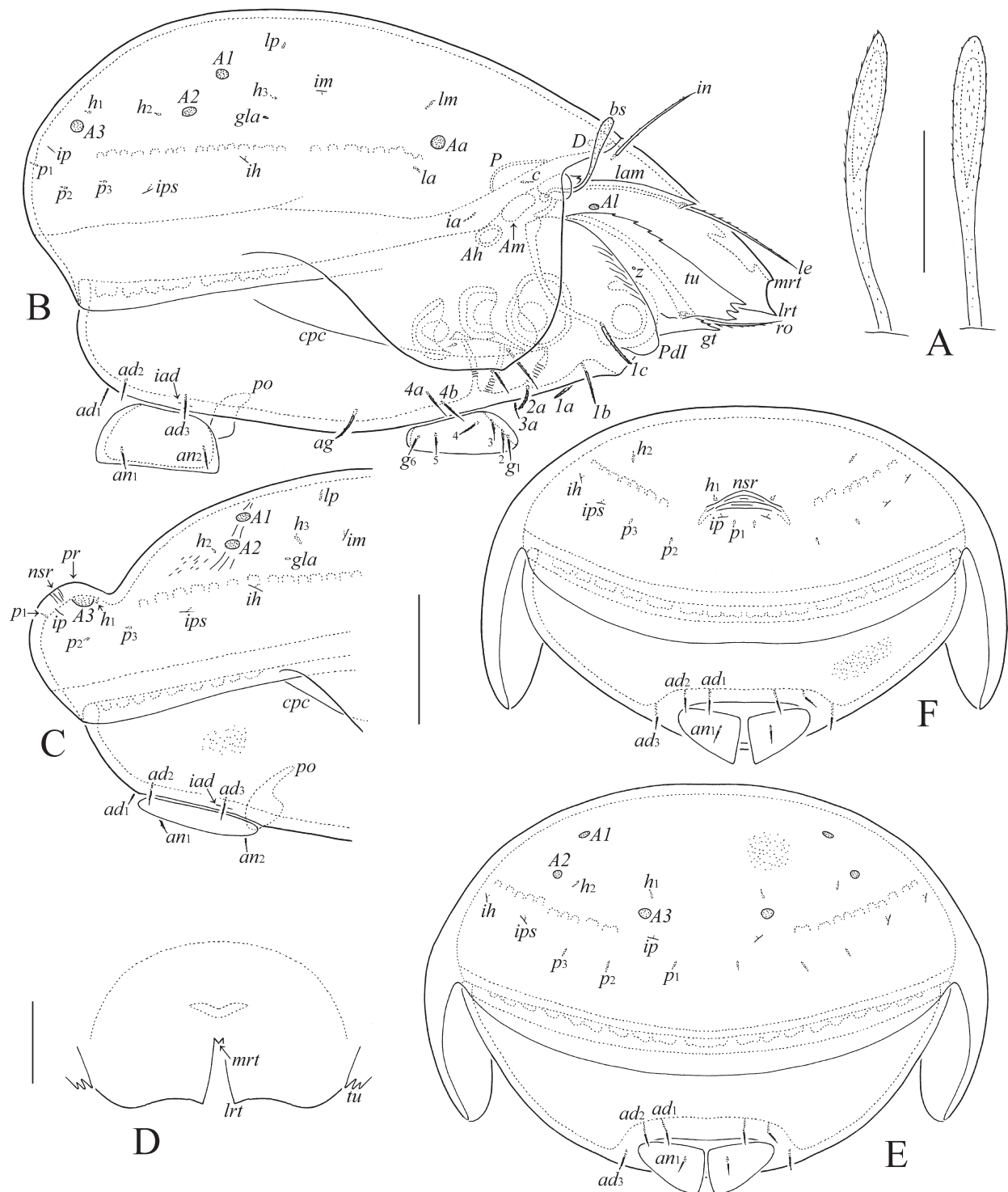


FIGURE 2. *Chamobates callipygis*, adult: A—variations of bothridial setae; B—right lateral view of female; C—posterior part of body in male, right lateral view; D—rostrum, anterior view; E—posterior view of female; F—posterior view of male (porose areas *A3* not visible due to posteromedian protuberance). Scale bar 20 μm (A, D), 50 μm (B, C, E, F).

Adult. Measurements. Body length: 282–332 (eight males and eight females); notogaster width: 182–215 (eight males and eight females). No clear difference between males and females in body size.

Integument. Body color light brown. Body surface and legs densely microsculptured. Subcapitular mentum granulate, epimeral region granulate and longitudinally striate, pedotectum I dorsally slightly striate, all leg femora striate antiaxially. In male, posterior part of notogaster sparsely transversely striate near porose areas *A1*, *A2* and densely transversely striate on posteromedian protuberance, behind porose areas *A3* (in female, striate notogastral regions absent).

Prodorsum (Figs 1A, 2A, 2B, 2D, 4A–C, 5A, 5E, 5G, 5H, 6A–C, 6H). Rostrum tridentate; lateral teeth strong, indentation between them deep; very small median tooth located at base of indentation and hanging over indentation in dorsal view (Fig. 2D). Lamella about 1/2 length of prodorsum, distally with strong lateral tooth. Tutorium (including cusp) about 4/5 of length of prodorsum, with some teeth dorsally; cusp broadly quadrangular, distally with three (rarely, with four) teeth. Genal tooth triangular, sharply pointed, with some curved integumental ridges proximally (Fig. 5E). Lateral porose area *Al* present, hardly observed, oval. Rostral (41–49), lamellar (57–65) and interlamellar (36–45) setae setiform, barbed. Bothridial seta (36–45) with flattened, rounded or pointed apically, barbed head. Anterior lamina of bothridium with two small teeth. Exobothridial seta and dorsosejugal porose area not observed.

Notogaster (Figs 1A, 1B, 2B, 2C, 2E, 2F, 4A–C, 5A–D, 6D). Anterior notogastral margin convex medially. In male, notogaster with posteromedian protuberance (in female, protuberance absent). Pteromorph slightly pointed laterally. Lenticulus present, with diffuse border. Four pairs of rounded porose areas in females (*Aa*: 6–12; *A1*, *A2*: 6–8; *A3*: 6–12); in males, *Aa*, *A1*, *A2* as for female, *A3* fused medially forming dumbbell-like structure, i.e., two rounded nodes connected centrally by a beam. All notogastral setae (2) setiform, thin, smooth. Opisthonotal gland opening and all lyrifissures distinct.

Gnathosoma (Figs 3A–C, 4D, 4E, 5E, 6E). Subcapitulum size: 77–82 × 61–65. Mentum without lateral apophysis. Subcapitular (*a*: 14–16; *m*, *h*: 18–20) and adoral (8–10) setae setiform, barbed. Palp (57–61) with typical setation (0-2-1-3-9+ ω). Postpalpal seta (4) spiniform, smooth. Axillary sacculae distinct, elongate. Chelicera (90–94) with two setiform, barbed setae (*cha*: 28–32; *chb*: 20).

Epimeral and lateral podosomal regions (Figs 1C, 2A, 4D, 4E, 5F, 6F–I). Epimeral setal formula: 3-1-3-3. Seta *1c* (20–28) bacilliform, barbed; *3a* (8–10) thin, slightly stiff, barbed, pointed apically; *3c* (20–24) setiform, barbed; *4c* (4) setiform, thin, roughened; *1a*, *1b*, *2a*, *3b*, *4a*, *4b* (14–16) thickened, barbed, pointed apically (*1a*, *2a* thicker than *1b*, *3b*, *4a*, *4b*). Humeral porose area *Am* elongate oval; *Ah* oval, distinct. Custodium narrowly tooth-like. Discidium triangular. Circumpedal carina long, reaching level of pedotectum II, not connected with custodium.

Anogenital region (Figs 1C, 1D, 2A, 2C, 2E, 2F, 4D, 4E, 5F, 5I, 6J). Genital, anal and adanal setae (8–10) thin, slightly stiff, barbed, pointed apically. Aggenital seta (16–24) bacilliform, barbed. Adanal lyrifissure located close and parallel to anal plate. Preanal organ caecum-like. Postanal porose area absent.

Legs (Figs 3D–G, 6K, 6L). Median claw distinctly thicker than lateral claws, all slightly barbed dorsally. Porose area present dorsoparaxially on femora I–IV and on trochanters III, IV versus absent proximoventrally on all tarsi and ventrodistally on all tibiae. Tibiae I and II with proximodorsal tooth (Fig. 3D, 3E). Genua I and II with triangular ventrodorsal process (sometimes hardly observable on genu II). Formulas of leg setation and solenidia: I (1-5-3-4-20) [1-2-2], II (1-5-3-4-15) [1-1-2], III (2-2-2-3-15) [1-1-0], IV (1-2-2-3-12) [0-1-0]; homology of setae and solenidia as indicated in Table 1. Famulus short, erect, slightly swollen distally, inserted between seta *ft*' and solenidium ω_2 . Seta *s* on tarsus I eupathidial, located before setae *a*' and *a*". Seta *l*' on tibiae I, II and genua I, II thickened. Solenidia ω_1 and ω_2 on tarsus II and σ on genu III bacilliform; other solenidia setiform.

TABLE 1. Leg setation and solenidia of adult *Chamobates callipygis* Pavlichenko, 1991.

Leg	<i>Tr</i>	<i>Fe</i>	<i>Ge</i>	<i>Ti</i>	<i>Ta</i>
I	<i>v</i> '	<i>d</i> , (<i>l</i>), <i>bv</i> "', <i>v</i> "	(<i>l</i>), <i>v</i> ', σ	(<i>l</i>), (<i>v</i>), ϕ_1 , ϕ_2	(<i>ft</i>), (<i>tc</i>), (<i>it</i>), (<i>p</i>), (<i>u</i>), (<i>a</i>), <i>s</i> , (<i>pv</i>), <i>v</i> ', (<i>pl</i>), <i>l</i> "', ε , ω_1 , ω_2
II	<i>v</i> '	<i>d</i> , (<i>l</i>), <i>bv</i> "', <i>v</i> "	(<i>l</i>), <i>v</i> ', σ	(<i>l</i>), (<i>v</i>), ϕ	(<i>ft</i>), (<i>tc</i>), (<i>it</i>), (<i>p</i>), (<i>u</i>), (<i>a</i>), <i>s</i> , (<i>pv</i>), ω_1 , ω_2
III	<i>l</i> ', <i>v</i> '	<i>d</i> , <i>ev</i> '	<i>l</i> ', σ	<i>l</i> ', (<i>v</i>), ϕ	(<i>ft</i>), (<i>tc</i>), (<i>it</i>), (<i>p</i>), (<i>u</i>), (<i>a</i>), <i>s</i> , (<i>pv</i>)
IV	<i>v</i> '	<i>d</i> , <i>ev</i> '	<i>d</i> , <i>l</i> '	<i>l</i> ', (<i>v</i>), ϕ	<i>ft</i> "', (<i>tc</i>), (<i>p</i>), (<i>u</i>), (<i>a</i>), <i>s</i> , (<i>pv</i>)

Note: Roman letters refer to normal setae, Greek letters to solenidia (except ε = famulus); single quotation mark (') designates setae on the anterior and double quotation mark (") setae on the posterior side of a given leg segment; parentheses refer to a pair of setae.

Remarks. Generally, the original description of males by Pavlichenko (1991) was adequate except for the following traits: three teeth on rostrum; all notogastral setae and epimeral seta *4c* represented by alveoli; 18 setae on leg tarsus I. We have found rostrum with strong lateral teeth, indentation between them and additional very small median tooth in the base of indentation, but tooth in the base of indentation hangs over the indentation in dorsal view creating illusion of tridentate rostrum; notogastral setae and epimeral seta *4c* developed, but minute; 20 setae present on leg tarsus I.



FIGURE 3. *Chamobates callipygis*, adult: A—subcapitulum, ventral view; B—palp, left, antiaxial view; C—chelicera, right, antiaxial view; D—leg I, right, antiaxial view; E—leg II, without tarsus, right, antiaxial view; F—leg III, without tarsus, left, antiaxial view; G—leg IV, left, antiaxial view. Scale bar 20 μ m (A, C–G), 10 μ m (B).

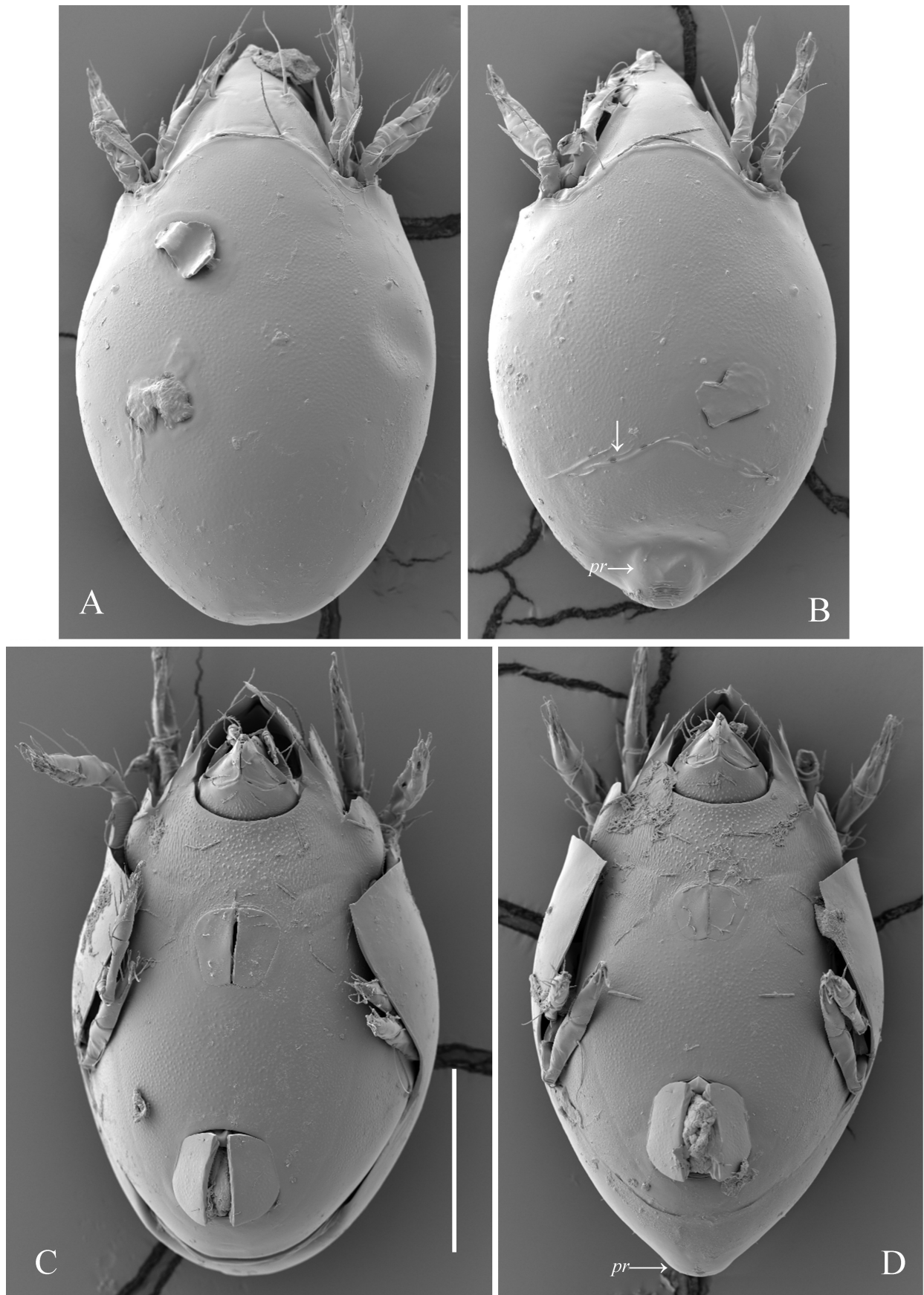


FIGURE 4. *Chamobates callipygis*, adult (A, C—females; B, D—males), SEM micrographs: A, B —dorsal view, male with transverse striations on notogaster indicated by arrow; C, D —ventral view. Scale bar 100 μm .

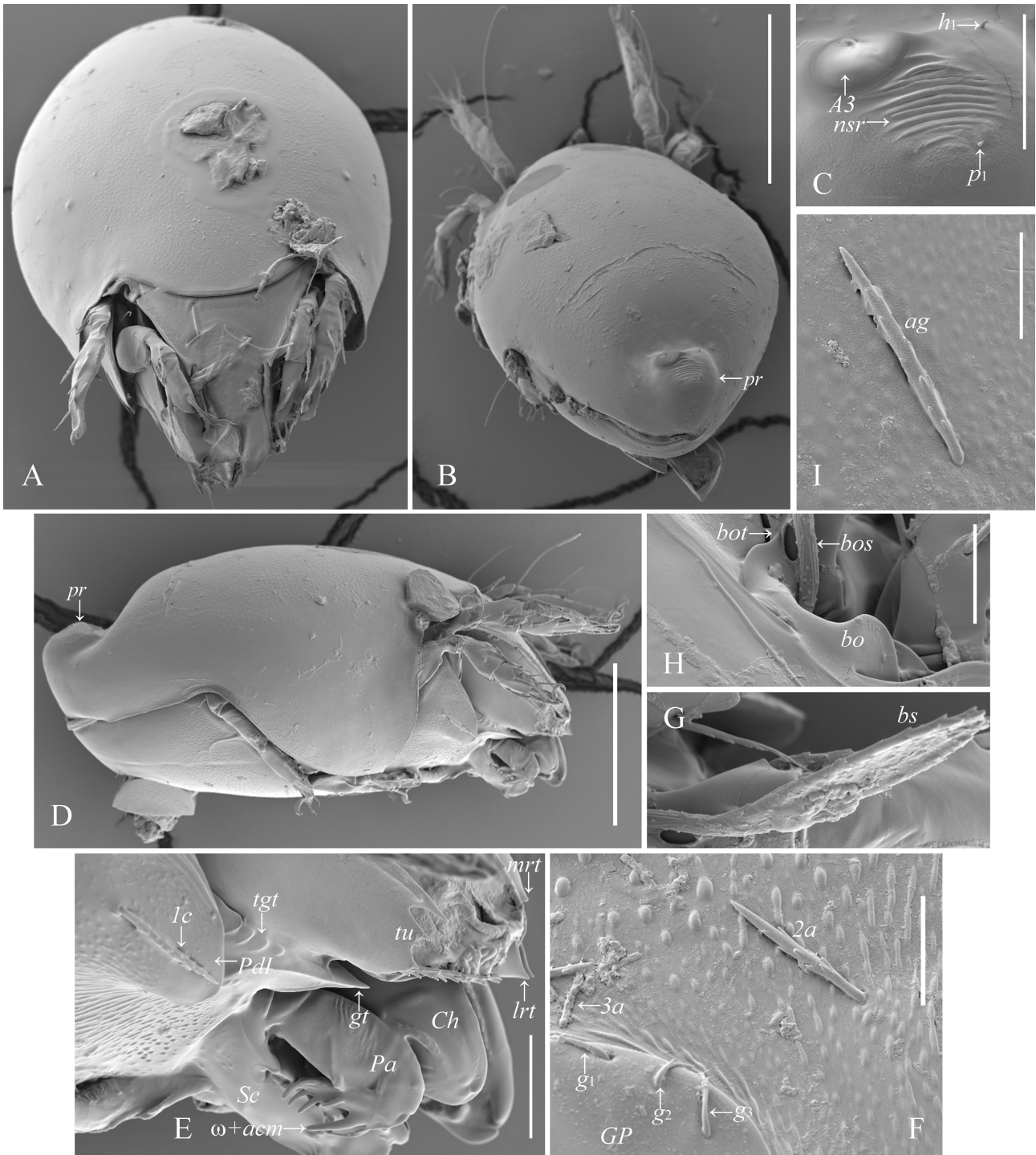


FIGURE 5. *Chamobates callipygis*, adult, SEM micrographs: A—dorsoanterior view (female); B—dorsoposterior view (male); C—posteromedian protuberance, dorsoanterior view (male); D—right lateral view (male); E—partially subcapitulum, epimeral and podosomal regions, right lateral view; F—partially epimeral and genital regions, lateral view; G—right bothridial seta, antiaxial view; H—right bothridium, dorsal view; I—partially aggenital region. Scale bar 100 μm (A, B, D), 20 μm (C, E), 10 μm (F–I).

Despite the absence of molecular analysis and without checking the type material, we have no doubt that the males and females described herein belong to *C. callipygis*. This can be confirmed by the similar structure of the rostrum and bothridial setae; the presence of unusual tooth in the dorsobasal part of tibiae I and II; the presence of a dentate tutorium (dorsally and apically); the presence of the curved integumental ridges proximally to the genal tooth; the presence of two unusual teeth in front of bothridium; and especially the specific sculpture of the epimeral

region and structure of the epimeral setae, in both sexes. Additionally, all our specimens were collected from the same habitat (in one sample). Our studied material was collected in Crimea, from where this species was originally described, and probably, is an endemic to this region as it has not been found elsewhere.

It is worth to note that according to Pavlichenko (1991), the type material of this species is at the I. I. Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. However, we did not examine the type material because the original description was quite sufficient to identify this species.

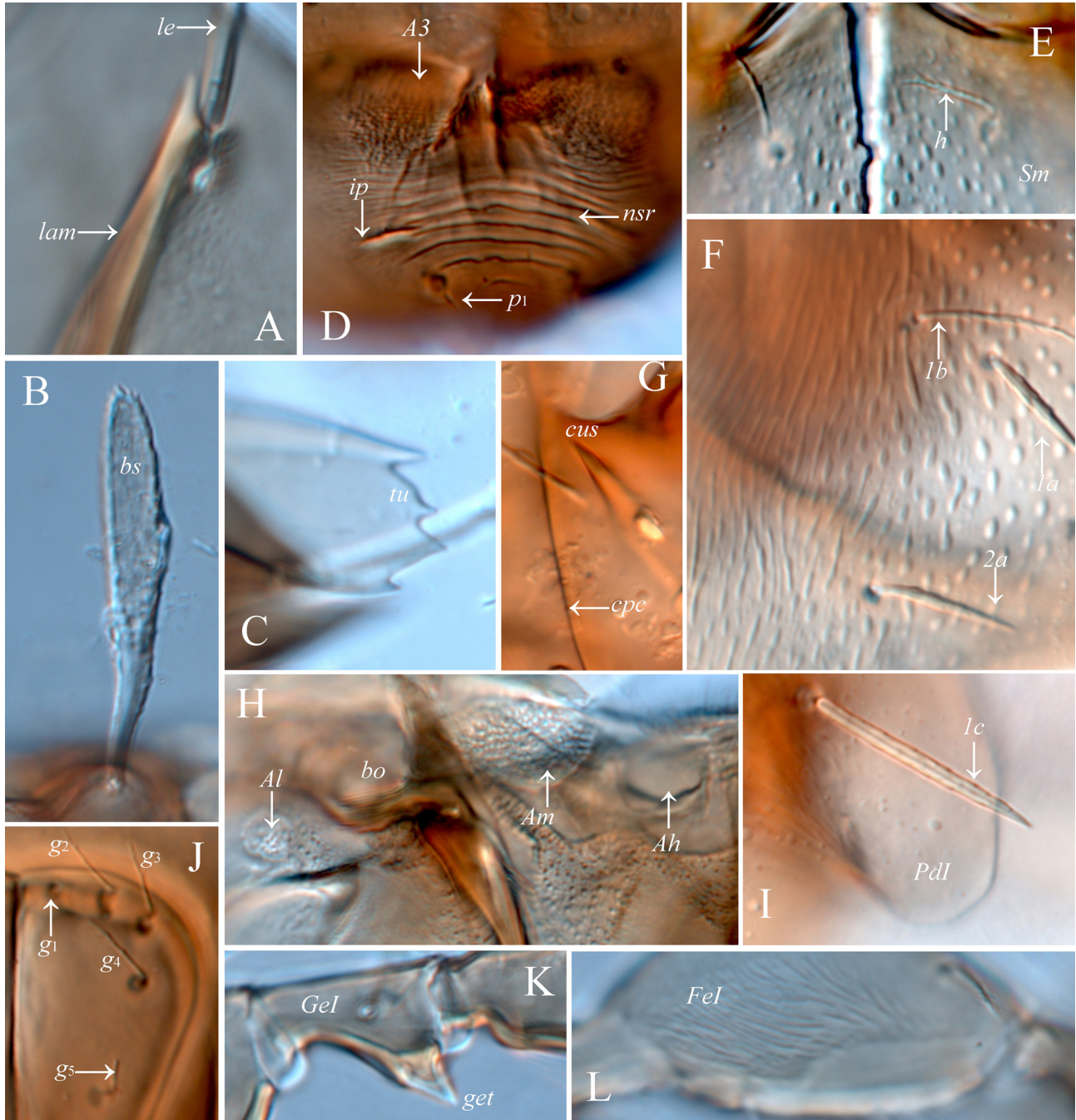


FIGURE 6. *Chamobates callipygis*, dissected adult, microscope images: A—mediiodistal part of lamella; B—bothridial seta; C—tutorial cusp; D—posteromedian protuberance in male; E—part of subcapitular mentum; F—part of epimeral region; G—part of podosomal region; H—prodorsal and humeral porose areas; I—mediiodistal part of pedotectum I; J—part of genital plate; K—leg genu I; L—leg femur I.

Discussion

As mentioned above, Pavlichenko (1991) considered *C. callipygis* to be different from other species of *Chamobates* in the position of the porose areas, the shape of *A3*, and the transverse striations on the notogaster. However, it seems he did not consider that these were sexual characters that occur only in males. Based upon the unusual position of notogastral porose areas in males, Behan-Pelletier (2015) inferred *C. callipygis* as a sexually dimorphic species, although the females were not known, and her prediction is now confirmed here by our study. As shown in the above description, sexual dimorphism in this species is expressed by a posterior porose region on the notogaster of the male associated with clearly developed transverse striations at the level of porose areas *A1*, *A2*, and posterior to *A3*.

Certain types of sexual dimorphism, such as modifications in the octotaxic system and especially the posterior porose region of the notogaster, suggest the occurrence of associative mating, and possible courtship rituals in different oribatid mite groups (Behan-Pelletier 2015). Hypertrophied secretory porose organs on the notogaster of males is the most common of such dimorphism, and is suggestive of chemical signaling (Norton & Alberti 1997). Oliveira *et al.* (2007) observed the intricate courtship behavior of an undescribed species of *Mochloribatula*, with males having the modified terminal pair of porose areas elevated medially. The female touches the male's terminal porose areas with her palps, the stimulated male deposits a nuptial food on the substrate from his genital opening, walks forward a few body lengths, stands on his front two pairs of legs, and the female eats the nuptial food. Extensive and prolonged courtship behavior and deposition of nuptial food, but not associative mating, have also been observed in the non-brachypyline oribatid species, *Collohmanna gigantea* Sellnick, 1922 and *C. johnstoni* Norton & Sidorchuk, 2014 (Schuster 1962; Alberti & Schuster 2005; Norton & Sidorchuk 2014).

As in *Mochloribatula*, probably there is an interesting courtship behavior to go along with the modification in the development of the large posteromedian protuberance of the notogaster containing a pair of porose areas *A3*, in the males of *C. callipygis*. One can imagine the female trailing the male with her "nose in the cavity, attracted to some pheromone coming from the porose areas. Although the specific function of this structure is not yet known, the dimorphism found in *C. callipygis* may be involved in pheromonal communication allowing rapid sperm transfer. Further studies involving behavioral observation and direct examination of nuptial food are required to determine the role of modifications in the posterior porose region of the notogaster and porose area *A3*, in this species and other species with similar modifications.

Arguably, species that are strongly sexually dimorphic and living in intermittently dry habitats suggest that these are conditions where traits for associative mating are evolutionary advantageous (Norton & Alberti 1997; Behan-Pelletier 2015). *Chamobates callipygis* studied here is associated with litter of mixed or oak forests, which are often subject to periodic dryness.

Behan-Pelletier (2015) provided an important summary of all known cases of secondary sexual dimorphism in brachypyline oribatid mites. According to her review, three families of Ceratozetoidea, namely, Chamobatidae, Punctoribatidae and Zetomimidae involve sexually dimorphic species with males having distinct modification of octotaxic system or other modifications. Later, Shimano & Aoki (2019) reported another dimorphic species of Punctoribatidae from northern Japan, the males of which exhibit enlarged porose areas *A2* (mostly fused with *A1*) and *A3*.

Most sexually dimorphic species of Ceratozetoidea have only one type of modification, i.e., differently developed octotaxic system in males. Thus, all sexually dimorphic species of the families Punctoribatidae and Chamobatidae have different positions and sizes of the notogastral porose areas, and/or well-developed posterior protuberance on the notogaster. Besides *C. callipygis*, there are two species of *Nuhivabates* (Niemi & Behan-Pelletier 2004), six species of *Zachvatkinibates* (Behan-Pelletier 1988; Behan-Pelletier & Eamer 2005; Weigmann 2009; Shimano & Aoki 2019) that show sexual dimorphism of the octotaxic system of dermal glands.

By contrast, three species of *Heterozetes* (Behan-Pelletier & Eamer 2003), one species of *Naiazetes* (Behan-Pelletier 1996), and a species of *Zetomimus* (Behan-Pelletier 1998) show sexual dimorphism expressed in other characters, such as structure of rostrum, shape and position of genital papilla, and porosity of the ventral and anal plates. Thus, species of *Naiazetes* show unique sexual dimorphism, with differences in shape of the rostrum, and shape and position of genital papilla *Va* between males and females. Species of the genera *Heterozetes* and *Zetomimus* that are sexually dimorphic show anal and/or ventral plates porose in males, but not in females. Although the specific function of the modifications in the structure of rostrum and genital papilla is not yet known, the distinct

sexual dimorphism in porose organs possibly plays a role in intraspecific communication (Norton & Alberti 1997; Behan-Pelletier & Eamer 2003).

The sexually dimorphic octotaxic system, with males having modified porose areas and in a different arrangement than females, is also found in the many genera of Oripodoidea (Norton 1983; Behan-Pelletier 2015; Bayartogtokh & Ermilov 2017), and in some species of Oribatelloidea and Galumnoidea (Behan-Pelletier 2015).

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