

Molecular phylogeny and evolution of the Ectemnorhinus group of weevils in the Prince Edward Islands

by

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Molecular phylogeny and evolution of the Ectemnorhinus group of weevils in the Prince Edward Islands

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Declaration

I, Gert Grobler hereby declare that apart from the morphometric data that were generated by Dr Lindie Janse van Rensburg (included in Chapter 2), this thesis which is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Entomology) at the University of Pretoria, is otherwise my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this, or or any other tertiary institution.

Signed:.....

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Disclaimer

Each chapter of this thesis has been compiled as a separate paper for publication purposes. Chapter 2 has been published in the *Journal of Zoological Systematics and Evolutionary Research* and is formatted for the journal. Chapters 4 and 5 have been formatted for and submitted to *Antarctic Science*. Each chapter contains its own set of references. The general introduction and conclusion are tailored from the rest of the chapters and give an idea of what to expect from the thesis and about the conclusions drawn. Consequently, unavoidable overlaps may occur between chapters.

Thesis summary: All previous taxonomic studies on the *Ectemnorhinus* group of weevils have been based primarily on morphological data. While these studies are invaluable, some questions can only be addressed adequately through molecular studies. This is especially true when studying the genetic relationships and phylogeographic patterns of taxa endemic to the South Indian Ocean Province (SIP) biotas that have long been controversial. The *Ectemnorhinus* group of genera is a monophyletic unit of weevils endemic to the region. The present study focused mainly on the *Ectemnorhinus* group of weevils found on the Prince Edward Islands archipelago (PEIA). The mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase I gene was targeted when investigating relationships among members of this weevil group. On the PEIA, it is important to note that Marion Island (MI) and Prince Edward Island (PEI) differ in terms of alien invasive species, such as the introduced house mouse *Mus musculus* and in conservation management strategies. Since emergence, a series of volcanic and glaciation events have occurred on Marion Island, whilst Prince Edward Island has remained largely unaffected by glaciation. Phylogenetic analyses revealed the presence of two genetically and morphometrically distinct species of *Ectemnorhinus* weevils on PEI, whilst evidence for a single species, comprising diverse genetically discrete populations was found on MI. Based on these results, the species unique to PEI has been designated *E. kuscheli* n. sp., whilst the present study confirmed the synonymy between *E. similis* and *E. marioni*, the two species originally described from MI. *Ectemnorhinus kuscheli* appears to be restricted to PEI, whereas *E. similis* occurs on both MI and PEI. When investigating the population dynamics of the *Ectemnorhinus* weevils on the PEIA, the data indicated that PEI was the first of the two islands of the PEIA to be colonized by *Ectemnorhinus* weevils, at an estimated time of coalescence of approximately 0.3116 million years ago (MYA). The PEI population then acted as the source population for the colonization of MI by *Ectemnorhinus* weevils some time before the last glaciation, approximately 10 000 to 35 000 years ago. The separation by distance of the PEI *Ectemnorhinus* weevils from those on MI then gave rise to two species by allopatric speciation on MI. During the last glaciations, MI was extensively glaciated with only the southwestern corner of the island being free of ice. This extensive glaciation of MI would have resulted in the eradication of all *E. similis* on MI except for those occurring on the ice-free southwestern corner of the island. At the end of the last glacial maximum, when the ice started to melt, the coastal areas of MI emerged first from beneath the ice and were available for re-colonization by weevils. The movement of weevils that were isolated in the south-western corner of MI, along the coastal areas of the island, was assisted by strong, frequent south-western winds. Subsequent, post-glacial volcanism during the

Holocene was then responsible for the fragmentation of the new migrants, resulting in small population pockets surrounded by fresh, uninhabitable lava and subsequent divergence of each populations. When the Holocene black lava became re-colonizeable, the weevils from the different isolated populations migrated to the remainder of the island. Currently, members of the different genetically-identified populations occur in sympatry and in some cases even on the same plant, but no noticeable geneflow was detected between them. It is thus suggested that the time of isolation, before the post-glacial black lava during Holocene became hospitable, was sufficiently long and the populations sufficiently small that a number of genetically-discrete populations arose. Consequently, the present study recognises two genetically discrete populations of *E. kucheli* on PEI and seven discrete *E. similis* populations on MI that are morphologically indistinct. When examining the relationships among 13 species from five different islands within the South Indian Ocean Province (SIP) that are representative of 22 populations within the genera *Palirhoeus*, *Bothrometopus* and *Ectemnorhinus*, there was little support for separating the genus *Palirhoeus* from *Bothrometopus*, and no support for the morphologically-delineated species groups currently recognized within *Bothrometopus*. The present study shows that colonization of the Prince Edward Islands is likely to have occurred repeatedly from other islands within the SIP and that *Bothrometopus parvulus* on the PEIA comprises two species that are not sister taxa. The second novel con-generic species was therefore designated *Bothrometopus huntleyi* n. sp. and examination of the genetically identified specimens resulted in the identification of distinguishing morphological characteristics. The analyses indicated that *B. huntleyi* arose approximately 0.5 million years ago from a high-altitude population that is still present on MI. The first major intra- and inter-island dispersal event occurred ~0.338 MYA, coinciding with the glaciation-free second volcanic stage on MI. Apart from this early inter-island colonisation, only one other between-island dispersal event, corresponding with the glaciation-free seventh volcanic stage, was detected. Genetically discrete weevil complexes on each of the islands of the PEIA together with the low levels of inter-island gene flow reaffirm the need to control alien invasive mice, which are restricted to MI, and which prey on these weevil species.

Key words: Ectemnorhinus group of weevils, mtDNA, COI gene, conservation, biogeography, dispersal, speciation, invasion biology, phylogeography, Prince Edward Island, Marion Island, Coleoptera, Curculionidae, evolution, phylogeny, Southern Ocean islands, sub-Antarctic.

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Another adventure came to an end.....

Let the next adventure begin.....

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	iii
Disclaimer	iv
Thesis summary	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Table of contents	ix
List of figures.....	xi
List of tables.....	xiv

Chapter 1:	General Introduction, Rational and Key Questions	1
Chapter 2:	Molecular and morphometric assessment of the taxonomic status of <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> weevil species (Coleoptera: Curculionidae, Brachycerinae) from the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands	14
Chapter 3:	The population dynamics of <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> weevils from the Prince Edward Island Archipelago	46
Chapter 4:	Cryptic species, biogeographic complexity and the evolutionary history of the <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> group in the sub-Antarctic, including a description of <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> , n.sp	157
Chapter 5:	Inter-island dispersal of flightless <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) from the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Island archipelago	190
Chapter 6:	Concluding comments on the Phylogenetic relationships and phylogeographic patterns as observed within the <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> -group of weevils (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) from the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands	214

List of Figures and appendeces

Chapter 2

Figure 1. Map indicating <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> weevil sampling localities on Marion Island and Prince Edward Island that correspond to the coordinates summarised in Table 1.....	19
Figure 2. Minimum Evolution (ME) tree based on 885 base pairs of the mitochondrial COI gene and inferred using the Tamura-Nei distance correction algorithm for the combined data set.....	27
Figure 3. Ultrametric tree obtained with BEAST.....	28
Figure 4. Components I and II from a principal components analysis of <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> species collected from both Marion Island and Prince Edward Island, indicating no distinct separation with reference to the two currently recognized <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> species nor with regard to island of origin.....	29
Figure 5a. Components I and II from a principal components analysis based on genetically identified individuals.....	31
Figure 5b. Components I and II from a canonical variates analysis (CVA) showing a more pronounced separation of genetically identified individuals from Prince Edward Island, <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> group A and <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> group B with no separation in the Marion Island samples.....	31
Figure 6a. Components I and II from a principal components analysis of <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> species collected from Marion Island, indicate no separation based on either size or shape variables.....	32
Figure 6b. Components I and II from a principal components analysis of <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> species collected from Prince Edward Island indicate separation between two group based on size variation. Genetically identified <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> group A and <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> group B are indicated.....	33
Appendix A description of <i>Ectemnorhinus kuscheli</i> n. sp.	

Chapter 3

Figure 1. The Prince Edward Archipelago in the geographical context of the nearest land masses.	50
Figure 2. Glacial and volcanic chronology from Marion Island (After McDougall <i>et al.</i> , 2001).....	51
Figure 3. Simplified geology of Marion Island (Modified after Verwoerd, 1971; Chevallier 1986; Chevallier <i>et al.</i> , 1992; McDougal <i>et al.</i> , 2001) as depicted in Boelhouwers <i>et al.</i> (2008).....	52
Figure 4. Glacial margins, striae, and moraines as identified by Hall (1978) and a proposed local cirque near Snok as depicted in Boelhouwers <i>et al.</i> (2008).....	52
Figure 5. Haplotype network based on 95% connection probability (≤ 13 steps) as estimated by TCS 1.13 (Clement <i>et al.</i> , 2000).....	58

Figure 6. Nested design according to previously described nesting rules of Templeton <i>et al.</i> , 1987 and Crandall, 1996.).....	59
Figure 7. Haplotype network of 187 <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> sequences.....	60
Figure 8. Results of the nested clade analysis of the geographical distance for COI haplotypes of <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> weevils from the PEIA.....	61
Figure 9. <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> individuals that group into 4-step clade 4-1 mapped onto the islands according to a) sampling localities with place names for references, samples on Marion Island are indicated in green while those on Prince Edward Island are indicated in red b) sampling localities as used in the nested design c) those that share the same haplotypes nested into 0-step clades, the d) 1-step clades, e) 2-step clades f) 3 step clades and finally g) the complete 4-1 clade as depicted in Fig. 5.....	64-70
Figure 10. <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> individuals that group into 4-step clade 4-2 mapped onto the islands according to a) sampling localities with place names for references, samples on Marion Island are indicated in green while those on Prince Edward Island are indicated in red b) sampling localities as used in the nested design c) those that share the same haplotypes nested into 0-step clades, the d) 1-step clades, e) 2-step clades f) 3 step clades and finally g) the complete 4-2 clade as depicted in Fig. 5.....	71-77
Figure 11. <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> individuals that group into 4-step clade 4-3 mapped onto the islands according to a) sampling localities with place names for references, samples on Marion Island are indicated in green while those on Prince Edward Island are indicated in red b) sampling localities as used in the nested design c) those that share the same haplotypes nested into 0-step clades, the d) 1-step clades, e) 2-step clades f) 3 step clades and finally g) the complete 4-3 clade as depicted in Fig. 5.....	78-84
Figure 12. <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> individuals that group into 4-step clade 4-4 mapped onto the islands according to a) sampling localities with place names for references, samples on Marion Island are indicated in green while those on Prince Edward Island are indicated in red b) sampling localities as used in the nested design c) those that share the same haplotypes nested into 0-step clades, the d) 1-step clades, e) 2-step clades f) 3 step clades and finally g) the complete 4-4 clade as depicted in Fig. 5.....	85-91
Figure 13. <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> individuals that group into 4-step clade 4-5 mapped onto the islands according to a) sampling localities with place names for references, samples on Marion Island are indicated in green while those on Prince Edward Island are indicated in red b) sampling localities as used in the nested design c) those that share the same haplotypes nested into 0-step clades, the d) 1-step clades, e) 2-step clades f) 3 step clades and finally g) the complete 4-5 clade as depicted in Fig. 5.....	92-98
Figure 14. <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> individuals that group into 4-step clade 4-6 mapped onto the islands according to a) sampling localities with place names for references, samples on Marion Island are indicated in green while those on Prince Edward Island are indicated in red b) sampling localities as used in the nested design c) those that share the same haplotypes nested into 0-step clades, the d) 1-step clades, e) 2-step clades f) 3 step clades and finally g) the complete 4-6 clade as depicted in Fig. 5.....	99-105

Figure 15. Minimum Evolution (ME) tree inferred using the Tamura-Nei distance correction algorithm.....	109
Figure 16. Bayesian phylogenetic analyses.....	111
Figure 17. Neighbour Joining (NJ) tree inferred using uncorrected p-distance values.....	112
Figure 18. Ultrametric tree obtained with BEAST 1.6.1 (Drummond & Rambaut 2007).....	114
Figure 19. Mismatch distribution estimated under the sudden expansion model for the different data sets: a) Prince Edward Islands Archipelago (PEIA), b) Marion Island (MI), c) Prince Edward Island (PEI), d) nested clade 4-1, e) clade 4-2a, f) nested clade 4-3, g) nested clade 4-4, h) clade 4-5a and i) clade 4-5b j) nested clade 4-6.....	118-120
Figure 20. Mismatch distribution estimated under the spatial expansion model for the different data sets: a) Prince Edward Islands Archipelago (PEIA), b) Marion Island (MI), c) Prince Edward Island (PEI), d) nested clade 4-1, e) clade 4-2a, f) nested clade 4-3, g) nested clade 4-4, h) clade 4-5a and i) clade 4-5b j) nested clade 4-6.....	122-124
Appendix 1. Map showing sample sites on Marion Island and Prince Edward Island.....	151

Chapter 4

Figure 1. Minimum Evolution (ME) tree of 13 species from the <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> -group of genera based on 885 nucleotides of the mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase I (COI) gene.....	167
Figure 2. Ultrametric tree obtained with BEAST with a clock rate of 2.3 % sequence divergence per million years.....	169
Figure 3. Light micrographs of the pronota of (a) <i>B. parvulus</i> : (b) <i>B. huntleyi</i> . and c) <i>B. parvulus</i> type specimen from the National History Museum, London. Both the type specimen and <i>B. parvulus</i> show granular micro sculpture on the pronotum. The pronotum of <i>B. huntleyi</i> is smoother in appearance.....	172-173
Figure 4. Scanning electron microscopic comparison of the thorax of <i>B. parvulus</i> (LHS) and that of <i>B. huntleyi</i> (RHS) using scanning electron microscopy (SEM). No distinct setal patterning can be discerned, however the <i>B. parvulus</i> specimen appears to have a more granular surface and fewer scales than <i>B. huntleyi</i> . This feature can be observed with a standard, light microscope and can be used to readily distinguish <i>B. parvulus</i> from <i>B. huntleyi</i>	173
Figure 5. Dorsal habitus of <i>B. huntleyi</i> n. sp. Male (length from anterior of eyes to posterior of elytra = 4.7 mm)	174
Figure 6. <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> n. sp. (a) Male genitalia with the aedeagus in lateral and dorsal views (scale bar = 0.5 mm) with the genital armature to the right (scale bar = 0.1 mm). (b) Female genitalia in dorsal and lateral view (scale bar = 0.5 mm). The spermatheca is shown below (scale bar = 0.2 mm)	177

Chapter 5

Figure 1. Correlation of volcanic activity and glaciation on Marion Island.....	193
Figure 2. Map indicating flightless weevil (<i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i>) sampling localities on the Prince Edward Island Archipelago and that correspond to the geographic coordinates	

summarised in Table 1.....	195
Figure 3. Neighbour-Joining (NJ) tree of <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> from Marion (MI) and Prince Edward (PEI) Islands and <i>B. brevis</i> outgroup from Heard Island , based on 885 nucleotides of the mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase I (COI) gene inferred using the HKY85 model of sequence evolution.....	201
Figure 4. Haplotype network of 73 <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> individuals from Marion (MI) and Prince Edward (PEI) Islands as estimated with TCS 1.21 (Clement et al., 2000).....	202
Figure 5. Mismatch distribution for <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> individuals from: a) Marion (MI) and b) Prince Edward Islands (PEI). Circles represent the simulated stepwise expansion model and the squares represent the observed data.....	204

List of Tables

Chapter 2

Table 1. Summary of sampling locality coordinates.....	20
Table 2. List of oligonucleotide primers used in this study.....	22
Table 3. Loadings of variables on components I and II from principal components analyses of pooled samples of <i>Ectemnorhinus marioni</i> and <i>E. similis</i> from a) Marion Island b) Prince Edward Island and c) Marion and Prince Edward Islands combined.....	30

Chapter 3

Table 1. Nested contingency analyses for geographical association showing the permutation chi-squared probabilities for geographical structure of the clades identified in Fig. 7 from 100 000 resamplings.....	62-63
Table 2. Inference chain for the results of the <i>Ectemnorhinus</i> phylogeography as indicated by the nested clade analysis from the results given in Fig. 7 and Table 1.....	63
Table 3. jModelTest results obtained for the different datasets.....	108
Table 4. BEAST statistics.....	115
Table 5. Estimates of lineage coalescence for the major clades as determined by Neighbour-Joining (NJ) uncorrected p-distance values (Fig. 16) and BEAST (Fig. 17) using a clock rate of 2.3 % sequence divergence per million years (MY) based on the arthropod mtDNA survey of Brower (1994).....	116
Table 6. Mismatch parameters estimated under the sudden expansion model.....	121
Table 7. Mismatch parameters estimated under the spatial expansion model.....	125
Table 8. Population expansion statistics showing Fu's F_s values, Tajima's D as well as Tajima's estimations for θ	126
Table 9. Summary of mitochondrial DNA diversity.....	129
Table 10. Population pairwise distance F_{ST} values as computed in Arlequin version 3.5.1.2	

(Excoffier & Lischer, 2010) using Tamura Nei (1993) distances and gamma as estimated by jModelTest 0.1.1 (Posada, 2008; Guindon & Gascuel, 2003)	130
Table 11. Hudson <i>et al.</i> 's (1992) F_{ST} values as estimated in DNASP 5.1 (Librado & Rozas, 2009)	130
Table 12. Lynch and Crease's (1990) N_{ST} / Number of migrants (Nm) as estimated in DNASP 5.1 (Librado & Rozas, 2009)	131
Table 13. Above diagonal: Average number of pairwise differences between genetically distinct clades (PiXY). Diagonal elements (indicated with grey shading): Average number of pairwise differences within genetically distinct clades (PiX). Below diagonal: Corrected average pairwise difference (PiXY-(PiX+PiY)/2)	131
Table 14. AMOVA analyses using Tamura Nei (1993) distances and gamma as estimated by jModelTest 0.1.1 (Posada, 2008; Guindon & Gascuel, 2003) as calculated by Arlequin version 3.5.1.2 (Excoffier & Lischer, 2010).....	131
Table 15. Divergence times allowing for unequal population sizes (tau) / tau P values.....	132
Appendix II: Summary of the sampling localities on Marion (MI) and Prince Edward Islands (PEI) from which the genetically characterised specimens included in the study were collected.....	152-156

Chapter 4

Table 1. Summary of the sampling localities from which the genetically characterised specimens included in this study were collected.....	163
Table 2. Mean p-distance values between and within (indicated by grey shading) species complexes estimated in MEGA version 4 (Tamura <i>et al.</i> 2007) and expressed as a percentage.....	165
Table 3. Summary of the 43 nucleotide sites in the COI gene region characterised in this study, that are consistently different between <i>B. parvulus</i> and <i>B. huntleyi</i>	180

Chapter 5

Table 1. Summary of the 19 sampling localities on Marion (MI) and Prince Edward Islands (PEI) from which the genetically characterised <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> specimens included in this study were collected.....	196
Table 2. Mismatch parameters for <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> from Marion (MI) and Prince Edward (PEI) Islands.....	205
Table 3. Summary statistics for <i>Bothrometopus huntleyi</i> from Marion (MI) and Prince Edward (PEI) Islands showing Fu's (1997) F_s values, Tajima's (1983) D as well as estimations for θ (probability values: * = $P < 0.05$, ** = $P < 0.01$, *** = $P < 0.001$).....	206