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THE IDENTITY OF *ABUMARKUB KOENIGI* EICHLER, 1959 (INSECTA : MALLOPHAGA).

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[Plate VI.]

ABUMARKUB KOENIGI Eichler, 1959, a new genus for a new species, based on one male specimen allegedly obtained from a museum skin of *Balaeniceps rex* Gould (the whale-headed stork), to which Dr. Theresa Clay has kindly drawn our attention, deserves consideration because its photomicrograph represents an easily identifiable species of a not uncommon ischnoceran genus.

The generic diagnosis of *Abumarkub* is almost exclusively confined to the "clypealsignatur" which is stated to be incompletely divided by a furrow (suture) arising from its anterior margin. A detailed description is avoided on the grounds that the accompanying microphotograph of the male shows further important characters. This is hardly so: the morphological characters which are evident therein—the shape of head and dorsal anterior plate, temporal carinæ, conic, shape of thorax and abdomen, pigmentation pattern of the dorsum and the external male genitalia—are together typical of the genus *Neophilopterus*, parasitic on storks (suborder Ciconiæ). *Abumarkub* Eichler is unmistakably an absolute synonym of *Neophilopterus* Cummings, 1916.

In the genus *Neophilopterus*, under revision, two distinct species groups have been recognized; a smaller *tricolor*, group of three species and a larger, *completus*, group of the remaining species; *N. abdimius* Bedford, stated to be closest to *A. koenigi*, belongs to the *completus* group. Of the numerous morphological differences between these two species groups, the most obvious and striking difference is in the pigmentation pattern of the dorsum which in the *completus* group has a characteristic pattern resulting from transverse thickenings on lateral tergites III–VII or VIII. Eichler's fig. 1 faithfully reproduces this pattern of tergal pigmentation and settles that the form belongs to the *completus* group.

Only two species of the *completus* group, *N. completus* (Nitzsch) and *N. platyclypeatus* (Piaget), have the head longer than broad, and their males can be distinguished from one another by the pigmentation pattern of the dorsal anterior plate and details of the mesosome. In *N. platyclypeatus*, the dorsal anterior plate is markedly darker centrally and the mesosome is forked posteriorly. In Eichler's fig. 1 not only is the head longer than broad, the other two characters are also visible; the distal fork of the mesosome, not being prominent in this, is shown in

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fig. 2. Two photomicrographs (Plate VI, figs. #1 and 2) showing these characters are provided for comparison with Eichler's figures. Thus, it is clear that Eichler's specimen belongs to the species *Neophilopterus platyclypeatus* (Piaget, 1871), of which the natural host is *Anastomus lamelligerus* Temminck. No ischnoceran genus has yet been reported from the suborder Balaenicipites (Clay 1957 ; Table 8), and the male described by Eichler was certainly a straggler on *B. rex*, its alleged host.

Thus the genus *Abumarkub* Eichler, 1959 and the species *A. koenigi* Eichler, 1959, being synonyms respectively of *Neophilopterus* Cummings, 1916 and *N. platyclypeatus* (Piaget, 1871) sink as absolute synonyms. (*Synn. nov.*)

It is unfortunate that this single specimen, taken from a museum skin, has been employed in a lengthy discussion on the systematic position of its alleged host, *Balaeniceps rex*, a bird of doubtful affinities. But as the form is not a natural parasite of this bird, the deductions based on it are misleading and erroneous. As it is, the ornithologists baulk at accepting the affinities of the birds as revealed by their Mallophaga and such actions add to their scepticism besides inviting their contempt. Without contributing to the knowledge of the bird lice, *Abumarkub koenigi* Eichler, 1959 is liable to cause damage to the status of the Mallophaga.

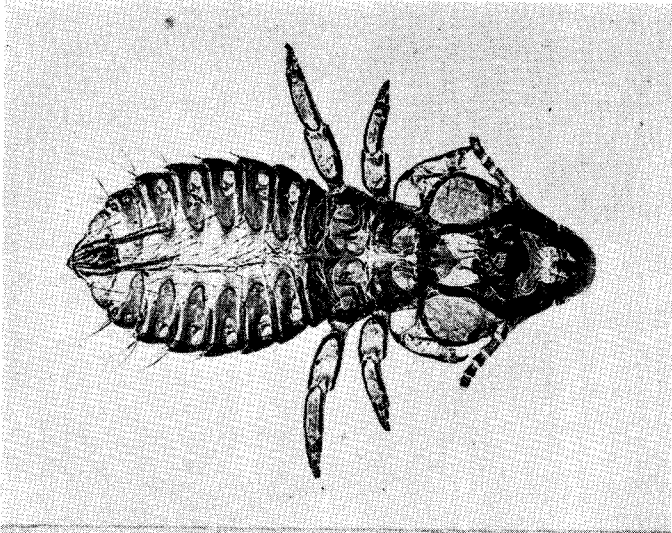
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EXPLANATION OF PLATE.

- Neophilopterus platyclypeatus* (Piaget, 1871.) 1. Male, entire. 2. Terminal part of male abdomen.

1.



2.

