

A note on *Philopterus kalkalichi* Ansari, 1955 (Phthiraptera: Ischnocera: Philopteridae)

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Abstract The status of *Philopterus kalkalichi* Ansari, 1955—type host *Dicrurus macrocercus*—is discussed in view of its multiple descriptions as a new species. The description of *Philopterus kalkalichi* as a “sp. nov.” by Ansari in 1958 clearly refers to a species of *Brueelia* which is, at present, an unidentifiable *nomen dubium* and clearly different from *Brueelia dicruri* described by Ansari in 1955. These two species of *Brueelia* have the same type host, *D. macrocercus*, but this bird species may not be the regular and natural host for one or both of them.

Keywords Phthiraptera; Philopteridae; *Philopterus kalkalichi*; *Brueelia dicruri*; unidentifiable *Brueelia* sp.; lice; *nomen dubium*; multiple descriptions

Ansari (1955, p. 58; 1956a, p. 396; 1958, p. 60) described the louse *Philopterus kalkalichi* three times as a new species from the black drongo, *Dicrurus macrocercus* Vieillot, 1817, but his first two descriptions (Ansari 1955, 1956a) do not include any illustration. In a fourth paper, Ansari (1956b,

p. 17, fig. 30–32) dealt with *P. kalkalichi* again, not calling it a new species, but including illustrations showing it as a typical *Philopterus*. However, all 10 figures published by Ansari (1958, fig. 66–75), labelled as “*Philopterus kalkalichi*, sp. nov.”, clearly belong to a species of *Brueelia* Kéler, 1936, another louse genus quite different from *Philopterus* Nitzsch, 1818. Thus, the taxon “*Philopterus kalkalichi* Ansari, 1955” was confirmed by Ansari (1956b) as belonging to the genus *Philopterus* 2 years before Ansari (1958) illustrated it as belonging to *Brueelia*. In conclusion, “*Philopterus kalkalichi* Ansari, 1958” is a preoccupied junior homonym of *Philopterus kalkalichi* Ansari, 1955, and actually represents an unidentifiable species of *Brueelia* that remains a *nomen dubium*.

In addition, Ansari (1955, p. 53; 1956a, p. 395; 1956b, p. 13) also described the louse *Brueelia dicruri* three times as a new louse species from *Dicrurus macrocercus*. Judging from the illustrations published by Ansari (1956b, fig. 6–10), that species clearly belongs to *Brueelia*, but it is a very different species from the unidentifiable species of *Brueelia* that Ansari (1958) illustrated and erroneously named “*Philopterus kalkalichi*, sp. nov.”. Considering that the majority of hosts parasitised by *Brueelia* lice harbour only one species of that genus (see Price et al. 2003, p. 152), *D. macrocercus* may not be the regular and natural host for one or both of the two species mentioned above. Furthermore, it is puzzling that Ansari (1958) made no mention of *Brueelia dicruri*, not even listing it among the lice recorded from *D. macrocercus* in his “Index of bird-hosts with their mallophagan parasites” (Ansari 1958, p. 101).

Several publications by Ansari (1955, 1956a, 1956b, 1958) contain over 50 instances of multiple descriptions of the same louse species as new species. The rationale behind such an unusual practice escapes any logical explanation. The case discussed here is yet another illustration of how careful workers must be when dealing with lice described as new species by M. A. R. Ansari.

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