

***Valbehanella freestatensis* gen. nov., sp. nov. (Acari, Oribatida) from South Africa**

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Abstract

A new oribatid mite genus, *Valbehanella* **gen. nov.**, with type species, *V. freestatensis* **sp. nov.**, is proposed and described from South Africa. The genus is tentatively included in Unduloribatidae, and if so would be the first record of this family from the southern hemisphere. *Valbehanella* **gen. nov.** can clearly be distinguished from the two other unduloribatid genera by lacking a lenticulus, having differently positioned notogastral setae and thinner cerotegument and simple lamellar cusps.

Key words: oribatid mites, new genus and species, Unduloribatidae, South Africa

Introduction

The small oribatid mite family Unduloribatidae (Oribatida: Phenopelopoidea) comprises two genera (*Scutoribates* Sellnick, 1918, *Unduloribates* Balogh, 1943) and seven species: *Scutoribates foliatus* (Choi, 1994) from Korea, *S. foveolatus* (Krivolutsky, 1974) from the eastern Palearctic region, *Unduloribates brevisetosus* Nübel-Reidelbach & Woas, 1992 from Nepal, *U. diana* Behan-Pelletier & Walter, 2009 from the northern Nearctic region, *U. hebes* Aoki, 1965 from the Himalayas and west-central Asia, *U. medusa* Piffel, 1972 from Nepal and *U. undulatus* (Berlese, 1914) from the Palearctic region.

During our studies of the oribatid mite collection of the National Museum (Bloemfontein, South Africa) we discovered a new genus, which is proposed herein as *Valbehanella* **gen. nov.**, with *V. freestatensis* **sp. nov.** as type species. Its family-level relationships are not obvious, but based on an analysis of generic character states and potential families, we tentatively include *Valbehanella* in Unduloribatidae, as the first reported member from the southern hemisphere.

Material and methods

Specimens were studied in lactic acid, mounted in temporary cavity slides for the duration of the study, and then stored in 70% alcohol in vials. All body measurements are presented in micrometers (µm). Body length was measured in lateral view, from the tip of the rostrum to the posterior edge of the ventral plate to avoid discrepancies caused by different degrees of notogastral distension. Notogastral width refers to the maximum width (excluding pteromorphs) in dorsal aspect. Length of body setae was measured in lateral aspect.