

# First records of *Zercon andrei* Sellnick, 1958 and *Zerconopsis moestairi* (Schweizer, 1949) (Acari, Mesostigmata) from Bjørnøya, Svalbard

DARIUSZ J. GWIAZDOWICZ, STEPHEN J. COULSON & M. LUISA ÁVILA- JIMÉNEZ

Gwiazdowicz, D.J., Coulson, S.J. & Ávila-Jiménez, M. L. 2009. First records of *Zercon andrei* Sellnick, 1958 and *Zerconopsis moestairi* (Schweizer, 1949) (Acari, Mesostigmata) from Bjørnøya. Norwegian Journal of Entomology 56, 117–119.

This paper presents two mesostigmatid mite species that are new to Svalbard's fauna. *Zercon andrei* Sellnick, 1958 and *Zerconopsis moestairi* (Schweizer, 1949) were found in soils close to bird nests on Bjørnøya. Localities and occurrence in microhabitats according to literature are given.

Key words: Svalbard, Spitsbergen, Bear Island, Bjørnøya, Ascidae, *Zerconopsis moestairi*, *Zercon andrei*, Mesostigmata

Dariusz J. Gwiazdowicz, University of Life Sciences, Dep. Forest Protection, Wojska Polskiego 71c, 60-625 Poznan, Poland. E-mail: dagwiazd@up.poznan.pl

Stephen J. Coulson, University Centre in Svalbard, Dep. Arctic Biology, P. O. Box 156, NO-9171, Longyearbyen, Norway. E-mail: steve.coulson@unis.no

M. Luisa Ávila-Jiménez University Centre in Svalbard, Dep. Arctic Biology, P. O. Box 156, NO-9171, Longyearbyen, Norway. E-mail: mariajl@unis.no

## Introduction

Svalbard is an archipelago with the largest island, Spitsbergen, located approximately 700 km north of mainland Norway and consists of a landmass of some 61,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Bjørnøya forms the most southerly island in the archipelago, lying around 400km north of the Norwegian mainland. Air temperatures on Bjørnøya are less extreme than on Spitsbergen due to the more southerly latitude and maritime climate. Mean February air temperature on Bear Island being -7.7°C compared to -16.2 at Svalbard airport on Spitsbergen while the warmest month, July, at a mean of 4.4°C is some 1.5°C colder than the equivalent period on Spitsbergen with a July temperature of 5.9°C (DNMI).

There are few records of the mesostigmatid mite community of Svalbard with only 22 species known (Coulson & Refseth 2004, Gwiazdowicz & Gulvik 2008) and two additional records identified only to genus level, *Melichares* sp. and *Zerconopsis* sp. (Byzova et al. 1995) and from Bjørnøya and only one species of *Mesostigmata* is recorded (Summerhayes & Elton 1923). Here we report two additional species of *Mesostigmata* from Bjørnøya, *Zercon andrei* Sellnick, 1958 and *Zerconopsis moestairi* (Schweizer, 1949). In addition to being new to Bjørnøya, they are also not previously recorded from the remaining islands in the Svalbard archipelago. These represent the first records of these species from an Arctic region and bring the total known *Mesostigmata* fauna from Bjørnøya to three and from Svalbard as a whole to 24.