

## RONCUS TURRESI: A NEW CAVE-DWELLING PSEUDOSCORPION SPECIES FROM SOUTHEASTERN SERBIA (NEOBISIIDAE, PSEUDOSCORPIONES)

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### Abstract

A new cave-dwelling pseudoscorpion species belonging to the genus *Roncus* L. Koch, 1873, *Roncus turresi* sp. n., from southeastern Serbia (a small unnamed cave up to Vladikine Ploče Cave, near the town of Pirot) is established in the present paper. Its main morphological characters and diagnostic features are analyzed, illustrated and compared with its closest congeners from southeastern Serbia. This new cavernicolous pseudoscorpion is endemic to a small area of Mt. Stara Planina in southeastern Serbia.

KEY WORDS: Pseudoscorpiones, Neobisiidae, *Roncus*, *Roncus turresi*, caves, southeastern Serbia

### Introduction

The majority of species of the genus *Roncus* L. Koch, 1873 (Pseudoscorpiones: Neobisiidae) in Europe inhabit southern Europe. The Iberian Peninsula, the Apennines and the Balkan Peninsula represent the three main distribution centers of this genus (Ćurčić, 1973, 1982, 1983, 1994; Ćurčić & Dimitrijević, 2002; Ćurčić *et al.*, 1993, 2004, 2010; Gardini, 2000; Harvey, 1990; Helversen, 1969; Zaragoza, 2009, 2017).

The pseudoscorpion genus *Roncus* L. Koch, 1873, is at present represented in Serbia by 32 epigeal and cave-dwelling species (Ćurčić *et al.*, 2020). Of these, 16 species are cavernicolous and all the species are endemic to Serbia, except for *Roncus parablothroides* Hadži, 1937, whose presence has been recorded in caves in Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and Azerbaijan (Ćurčić & Beron, 1981; Ćurčić *et al.*, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, 2020; Hadži, 1937; Harvey, 2013).

*Roncus pljakici* Ćurčić, 1973, was the first endemic cave-dwelling species of the genus *Roncus* recorded in Serbia (Ćurčić, 1973). In the past 48 years, 15 new cavernicolous pseudoscorpion species of this genus were erected. The majority of these species inhabit caves and hypogean habitats in the eastern, southeastern and southwestern parts of Serbia.

The increase in the number of known species of this genus in Serbia suggests that Serbian species of this genus (both epigean and cave-dwelling) have not been sufficiently studied. Future investigations of the pseudoscorpion fauna in these parts of Serbia will probably result in the establishment of new species of this genus and other genera of the family Neobisiidae.

## Materials and Methods

A careful analysis of faunistic material collected during 2016 in a small unnamed cave up to the Vladikine Ploče Cave revealed the presence of a single specimen of a new pseudoscorpion taxon – *Roncus turrei* n. sp., which was collected by hand from under a rock. The type specimen was studied in the Laboratory of the Institute of Zoology, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Biology. It was first carefully dissected and measured, then figured and finally mounted on a slide in gum-chloral medium (Swan's fluid). It is deposited in the collection of the Institute of Zoology, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Biology, Belgrade, Serbia.

The drawings were made using a Carl Zeiss Jenamed 2 light binocular stereomicroscope.

Setal and trichobothrial designations follow Beier (1963).

## Results

### Systematic part

Neobisiidae J. C. Chamberlin, 1930

*Roncus* L. Koch, 1873

***Roncus turrei*, new species** (Figs. 1 and 2; Table I)

Derivatio nominis: The new species is named after the Latin name for the town of Pirot in southeastern Serbia – Turres.

Material examined: Holotype male labeled as follows: "A small unnamed cave up to the Vladikine Ploče Cave, village of Rsovci, near Pirot, 14.05.2016, leg. Đ. Marković" (white label, printed) / Holotype *Roncus turrei* n. sp. R. Dimitrijević det. 2018" (red label, printed).

Type locality: Holotype male from a small unnamed cave up to the Vladikine Ploče Cave, village of Rsovci, Pirot, southeastern Serbia, collected by Đorđe Marković.

### Description

Carapace: Carapace longer than broad, epistome small, triangular and pointed (well developed) (Fig. 1E and 1F). Eyes and preocular microsetae absent (Fig. 1F). The carapace has 24 setae: four anterior, six ocular, eight median and six posterior setae. Carapace reticulate throughout.

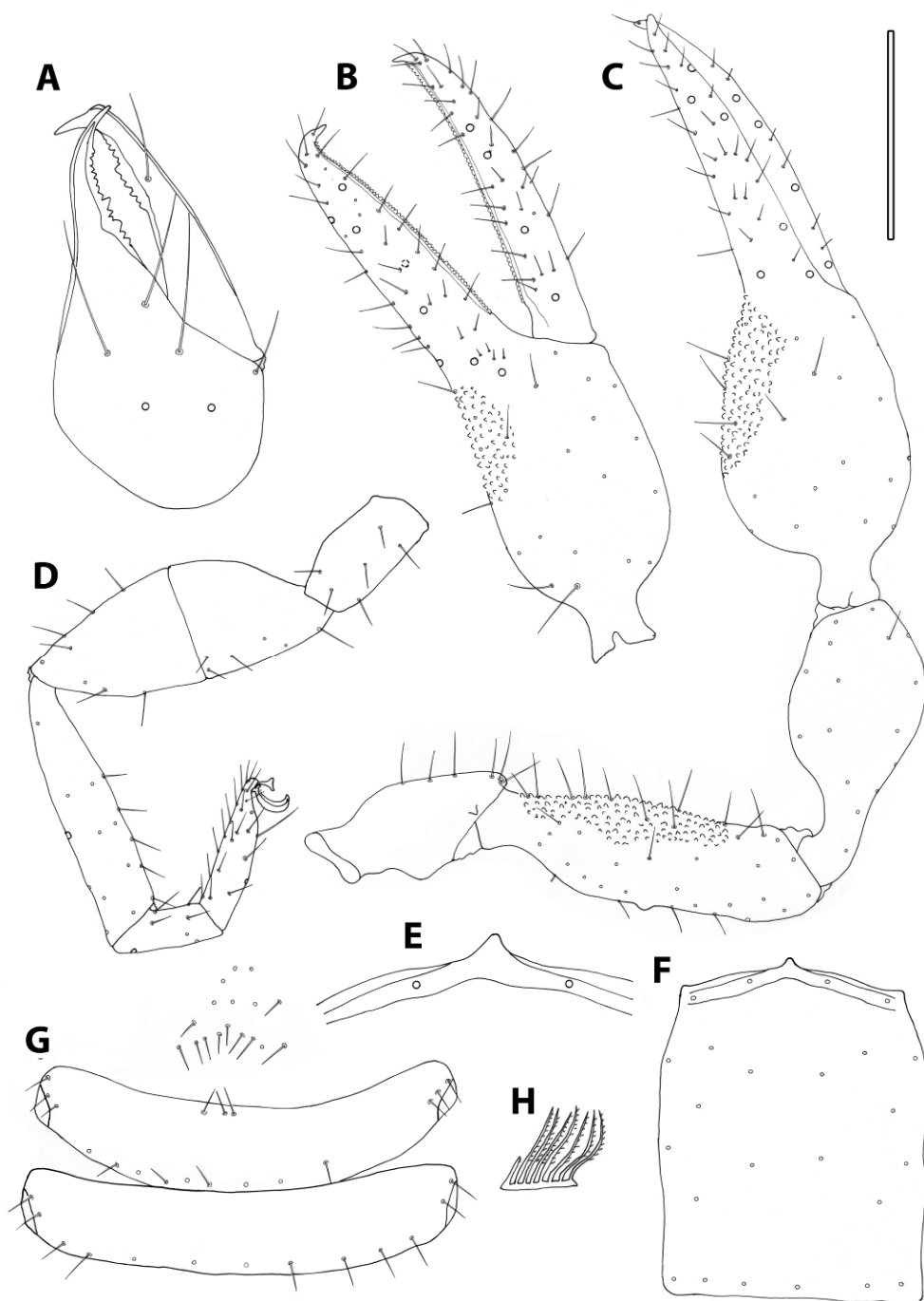


Figure 1. *Roncus turesi* n. sp., holotype male: A – chelicera, B – pedipalpal chela, C – pedipalp, D – leg IV, E – epistome, F – carapace, G – genital area, H – rallum. Scales: 0.25 (A, E, G and H) and 0.50 mm (B-D and F).

Abdomen: Each abdominal tergite with a single row of setae along the posterior margins. Tergite setation: I-X: 6-8-10-11-10-10-10-11-10-9. Pleural membrane granulostriate. Tergites uniseriate and smooth.

Male genital area: sternite II has 17 setae, sternite III with three anterior and nine posterior setae, sternite IV has nine posterior setae. Three and two suprastigmal microsetae on both sides present on sternites III and IV (Fig. 1G).

Chelicera: Cheliceral palm with six setae; movable finger with one seta (Fig. 1A). Cheliceral dentition as in Table I. Rallum eight-bladed (with one short proximal blade and seven longer blades distally); all blades pinnate along their anterior margins (Fig. 1H). Cheliceral spinneret low and rounded (Fig. 1A). Fixed and movable cheliceral fingers with 14 and 11 teeth, respectively.

Pedipalps: Manducatory process with four setae. Pedipalpal articles moderately elongate, trochanter with a single small tubercle. Pedipalpal patella tulip-like. Paraxial face of femur granulated, one tubercle present at the middle of antiaxial face. Paraxial face of chelal hand granulated (Fig. 1C). Other pedipalpal segments smooth, devoid of any granulations. Fixed and movable chelal fingers with 65 and 58 teeth, respectively (Fig. 1B). Teeth on both fingers small, close-set, mostly triangular, filling almost the whole length of the fingers. Movable chelal finger longer than chelal palm and shorter than pedipalpal femur (Fig. 1C; Table I). Pedipalpal femur as long as carapace (Table I).

Trichobothriotaxy: *eb*, *esb*, *ib*, and *isb* on finger base; *it*, *et*, and *est* in proximal half of finger; *it* closer to *est* than to *et*; *ist* closer to *isb* than to *est*. Four microsetae present distally to *eb* and *esb*. Seta *sb* closer to *st*, *st* closer to *t* than to *sb*. Disposition of trichobothria as in Fig. 1B.

Legs: Tibia IV, basitarsus IV and tarsus IV each with a single tactile seta (Fig. 1D). Subterminal tarsal seta furcated, each branch with only a few spinulles (Fig. 1D).

Morphometric ratios and linear measurements of different body structures are presented in Table I.

Distribution: The newly established species is currently known only from its type locality (a small unnamed cave up to the Vladikine Ploče Cave, village of Rsovci, near the town of Pirot, southeastern Serbia) (Fig. 2).

### Diagnosis

The new species was easily distinguished from its close congeners *Roncus bauk* Ćurčić, 1991, *R. pljakici* Ćurčić, 1973, and *R. sotirovi* Ćurčić, 1982, that inhabit caves in southeastern Serbia based on differences in many features (Ćurčić, 1973, 1982, 1991): body length (2.75 mm vs. 2.64 mm vs. 2.87 mm vs. 3.315-3.65 mm, respectively); carapace length (0.825 mm vs. 0.99 mm vs. 0.89 vs. 1.015-1.11 mm); carapace breadth (0.64 mm vs. 0.73 mm vs. 0.75 mm vs. 0.93-1.01 mm); ratio of carapace length to breadth (1.29 vs. 1.36 vs. 1.19 vs. 1.10-1.19); cheliceral length (0.46 mm vs. 0.57 mm vs. 0.54 mm vs. 0.65-0.66 mm); ratio of cheliceral length to breadth (1.92 vs. 2.11 vs. 1.93 vs. 2.06-2.062); pedipalpal length (3.865 mm vs. 5.75 mm vs. 5.295 mm vs. 6.37 mm); length of the pedipalpal articles (shorter vs. longer in all compared species, Table I); ratio of pedipalpal femur length to breadth (3.75 vs. 4.555 vs. 4.58 vs. 4.57); ratio of pedipalpal femur length to carapace length (1.00 vs. 1.24 vs. 1.286 vs. 1.27); length to chela (1.36 mm vs. 1.99 mm vs. 1.96 mm vs. 2.24 mm); ratio of pedipalpal patella length to breadth (2.13 vs. 2.83 vs. 2.74 vs. 2.96-3.08); leg IV length (2.685 mm vs. 3.54 mm vs. 3.36 mm vs. 4.005-4.085mm); ratio of femur IV length to breadth (2.73 vs. 3.52 vs. 3.93 vs. 3.79-4.24); ratio of tibia IV length to breadth (5.00 vs. 6.07 vs. 7.00 vs. 5.97-6.47); ratio of metatarsus IV length to breadth (2.555 vs. 2.73 vs. 2.90 vs. 2.93-3.09); ratio of tarsus IV length to breadth (4.11 vs. 5.30 vs 4.80 vs. 4.91-5.00); and presence/absence of a small exterior and lateral tubercle on the pedipalpal femur (absent in all of the other three analyzed *Roncus* species, but present in *R. turesi*).

*Roncus turrei* differs from *R. bauk* in several morphological characters as well: in the presence/absence of a cheliceral galea (low and rounded in *R. turrei*, lacking in *R. bauk*); in the number of teeth on the fixed pedipalpal finger (65 in *R. turrei* vs. 81-82 in *R. bauk*); in form of the pedipalpal articles (more stout in *R. turrei*, more slender in *R. bauk*); granulation of the pedipalpal articles (more developed in *R. bauk* than in *R. turrei*); and presence/absence of a small exterior and lateral tubercle on the pedipalpal femur (absent in *R. bauk*, present in *R. turrei*).

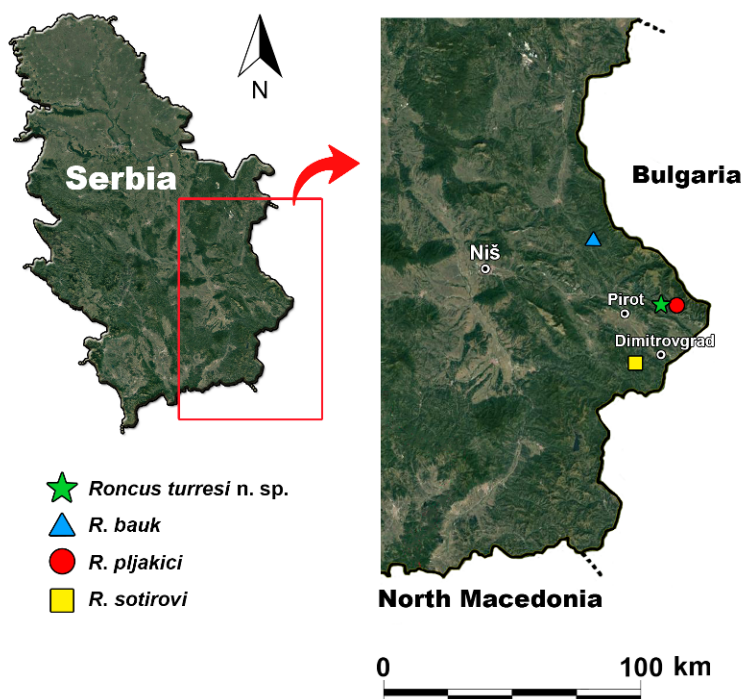


Figure 2. Type localities of *Roncus turrei* n. sp. and its close congeners.

The new species and *R. pljakici* show considerable differences in the number of teeth on the pedipalpal chela (more numerous in *R. pljakici*, fewer in *R. turrei*, Table I); in the presence/absence of a cheliceral galea (low and rounded in *R. turrei* vs. absent in *R. pljakici*); and in the form of the pedipalpal articles (more elongate and slenderer in *R. pljakici* vs. more stout in *R. turrei*).

From *R. sotirovi*, the newly erected species can also be distinguished by the presence/absence of eyes/eyespot (absent in *R. turrei*, present in *R. sotirovi*); granulation of the pedipalpal appendages (more developed in *R. sotirovi* vs. less developed and less conspicuous in *R. turrei*); and setation of sternites V-X (8-11-12-11-11-9 in *R. turrei* vs. 8-12-12-13-13-12 in *R. sotirovi*).

Table I. Linear measurements (in mm) and morphometric ratios in *Roncus turrei* n. sp., *R. bauk*, *R. pljakici* and *R. sotirovi* (Čurčić, 1973, 1982, 1991). M = male.

	<i>R. turrei</i> n. sp.	<i>R. bauk</i>	<i>R. pljakici</i>	<i>R. sotirovi</i>
Character	M	M	M	M
<b>Body</b>				
Length (1)	2.75	2.64	2.87	3.315-3.65
<b>Cephalothorax</b>				
Length (2)	0.825	0.99	0.89	1.105-1.11
Breadth (2a)	0.64	0.73	0.75	0.93-1.01
Ratio 2/2a	1.29	1.36	1.19	1.1-1.19
<b>Abdomen</b>				
Length	1.925	1.65	1.98	2.30-2.54
Chelicerae				
Length (3)	0.46	0.57	0.54	0.65-0.66
Breadth (4)	0.24	0.27	0.28	0.315-0.32
Length of movable finger (5)	0.33	0.39	0.38	0.445-0.47
Ratio 3/5	1.39	1.46	1.42	1.40-1.46
Ratio 3/4	1.92	2.11	1.93	2.06-2.062
<b>Pedipalps</b>				
Length with coxa (6)	3.865	5.75	5.295	6.37
Ratio 6/1	1.405	2.18	1.84	1.57
Length of coxa	0.55	0.82	0.58	0.89
Length of trochanter	0.48	0.69	0.65	0.73
Length of femur (7)	0.825	1.23	1.145	1.37
Breadth of femur (8)	0.22	0.27	0.25	0.30
Ratio 7/8	3.75	4.555	4.58	4.57
Ratio 7/2	1.00	1.24	1.286	1.27
Length of patella (9)	0.65	1.02	0.96	1.14
Breadth of patella (10)	0.305	0.36	0.35	0.40
Ratio 9/10	2.13	2.83	2.74	2.96-3.08
Length of chela (11)	1.36	1.99	1.96	2.24
Breadth of chela (12)	0.41	0.50	0.46	0.63
Ratio 11/12	3.32	3.98	4.26	3.55
Length of chelal palm (13)	0.63	0.94	0.89	1.08
Ratio 13/12	1.54	1.88	1.93	1.71
Length of chelal finger (14)	0.73	1.05	1.07	1.16
Ratio 14/13	1.16	1.12	1.20	1.07
<b>Leg IV</b>				
Total length	2.685	3.54	3.36	4.005-4.085
Length of coxa	0.41	0.49	0.445	0.58
Length of trochanter (15)	0.315	0.36	0.40	0.47
Breadth of trochanter (16)	0.15	0.16	0.16	0.19-0.21
Ratio 15/16	2.10	2.25	2.50	2.24-2.47
Length of femur (17)	0.71	0.95	0.905	1.06-1.10
Breadth of femur (18)	0.26	0.27	0.23	0.25-0.29
Ratio 17/18	2.73	3.52	3.93	3.79-4.24
Length of tibia (19)	0.65	0.91	0.84	1.015-1.035

Table I – continued

	<i>R. turesi</i> n. sp.	<i>R. bauk</i>	<i>R. pljakici</i>	<i>R. sotirovi</i>
Breadth of tibia (20)	0.13	0.15	0.12	0.16-0.17
Ratio 19/20	5.00	6.07	7.00	5.97-6.47
Length of metatarsus (21)	0.23	0.30	0.29	0.34-0.35
Breadth of metatarsus (22)	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.11-0.12
Ratio 21/22	2.555	2.73	2.90	2.93-3.09
Length of tarsus (23)	0.37	0.53	0.48	0.54-0.55
Breadth of tarsus (24)	0,09	0.10	0.10	0.11
Ratio 23/24	4.11	5.30	4.80	4.91-5.00
TS ratio - tibia IV	0.55	0.56	-	0.57-0.59
TS ratio – metatarsus	0.17	0.23	-	0.165-0.23
TS ratio – tarsus	0.33	0.39	-	0.375-0.39

## Discussion

The turbulent geomorphological and climatic events that took place in the distant past on the Balkan Peninsula enabled this area to become one of the centers of origin and differentiation of species not only of this pseudoscorpion genus, but of other genera of the family Neobisiidae (Ćurčić, 1988; Ćurčić *et al.*, 2012a).

It is most likely that divergent differentiation of the currently known cave-dwelling and endemic pseudoscorpion species of the genus *Roncus* in Serbia occurred in parallel with the origin and genesis of various forms of karst relief in Serbia (Balkan Peninsula) (Ćurčić, 1988; Ćurčić & Beron, 1981).

The discovery of a fairly large number of pseudoscorpion species of the genus *Roncus* new to science in Serbia during the past four decades corroborates the opinion that the taxonomy of this genus in Serbia is far from complete and that this genus is in the process of intensive radiation and divergent differentiation into new species (Ćurčić, 1992; Ćurčić *et al.*, 2013).

Collecting faunistic material in caves is often a slow and tedious task and sometimes results in obtaining very few specimens available for study. It is not uncommon for only a single specimen of a certain taxon to be found. Erecting a new species on the basis of examination of a single collected specimen is not rare (Beier, 1966; Dimitrijević, 2009; Henderickx & Vets, 2000; Heurtault, 1975; Mahnert, 1982; Muchmore, 2000). We hope that future faunistic investigations of the small unnamed cave up to the Vladikine Ploče Cave will provide further material for analysis, viz., females and even specimens of subadult developmental stages. Such findings will certainly ensure better insight into the intraspecific variability and postembryonic development of the species.

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# *RONCUS TURRESI*: НОВА ПЕЋИНСКА ВРСТА ПСЕУДОСКОРПИЈА ИЗ ЈУГОИСТОЧНЕ СРБИЈЕ (NEOBISIIDAE, PSEUDOSCORPIONES)

РАЈКО Н. ДИМИТРИЈЕВИЋ

## Извод

У раду је описана нова ендемична и пећинска врста псеудоскорпија из рода *Roncus* L. Koch из југоисточне Србије – *Roncus turresi* n. sp. из мале безимене пећине изнад пећине Владикине плоче близу Пирота. Њене главне морфолошке особености и дијагностичке карактеристике су анализирани и поређене са три сродне врсте истог рода из југоисточне Србије.

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