

***Cryptopone subterranea* sp. nov.**

(Figs. 1–3)

MATERIAL EXAMINED

HOLOTYPE: 1 (w), 14.vii.2009, India, Jammu and Kashmir, Surinsar, 32.7009°N 75.1512°E, 700 m a.s.l., by soil core sampler (coll. Aijaz A. Wachkoo). **Paratype** 1 (w), 18.vii.2009, India, Himachal Pradesh, Nagabari, 32.3004°N 75.8901214°E, 420 m a.s.l., by hand picking (coll. Aijaz A. Wachkoo).

WORKER

Measurements (in mm) (Holotype): TL 4.77; HL 1.11; HW 1.04; EL 0.05; WL 1.45; PL 0.33; PH 0.78; SL 0.81; GL 1.88. Indices: CI 93.69; SI 77.88

(Paratype) TL 4.59; HL 1.08; HW 1.02; EL 0.04; WL 1.39; PL 0.32; PH 0.76; SL 0.79; GL 1.80. Indices: CI 94.44; SI 77.45

Head subrectangular, slightly longer than broad, broadened posteriorly, sides convex; fronto-vertex margin shallowly concave in full-face view of the head. Mandibles elongate-triangular; bearing 9 teeth along masticatory margin; basal portion of mandible with a distinct oval fovea dorsolaterally. Antennae 12-segmented; scapes barely reaching the posterior margin of head. Eyes rudimentary, with 5–6 facets, placed at the level of antennal torulus. Anteclypeus concave in frontal view. Vertex deflexed and concave in dorsal view.

Pronotum with dorsal and lateral faces meeting at a blunt angle in dorsal view; promesonotal suture distinct, mesometanotal suture feeble; propodeum strongly constricted, distinctly narrower than mesonotum. Propodeum depressed slightly below level of mesonotum in lateral view, forming rounded angle with subvertical, evenly convex declivity. Propodeal spiracle elongate, slit-like.

Petiole a thick scale with rounded dorsolateral margins. In anterior view dorsal apex with round summit; sides strongly convex; in lateral view anterior face convex and posterior face shallowly concave. Gaster cylindrical, with tergite of first

segment rising posteriorly, remaining segments of gaster gently curved downward; a strong constriction with transverse striae separates first and second gastral segments. Sting long, sharp and upcurved.

Head and mesosoma punctate-reticulate, mesopleuron and propodeal sculpture rugulose in lateral view; propodeum punctate and shiny in dorsal view. Mandibles smooth and shiny with scattered punctures; antennae, legs and gaster densely punctate overall; declivitous face of propodeum, petiolar dorsum and posterior face shiny.

Body covered all over with dense pubescence, which does not hide body sculpturing, pubescence sparse on propodeal dorsum and lateral mesosoma; longer suberect hairs also present, more conspicuous on gaster. Dorsal (outer) surface of middle tibia and middle basitarsus with traction-enhancing thickened narrow cuticular spines mixed with the normal finer pilosity.

Dark brown; head blackish, legs red brown.

ETYMOLOGY

The species is named for its subterranean habitat.

REMARKS

Cryptopone subterranea can be easily distinguished from *C. testacea* and *C. nicobarensis*, the earlier-known species of *Cryptopone* from India, by the presence of a 9-toothed mandible, whereas both the latter possess a 6-toothed mandible. It most resembles *C. motschulskyi* Donisthorpe, 1943, but can be easily distinguished by the presence of 9 teeth on mandible and by its larger size (HW 1.02–1.04 mm), while the latter has only 6 teeth and smaller size (HW 0.64 mm).

DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

This species seems to be rare in the Shivalik range of the Northwest Himalayas: only two specimens were found, in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, during intensive surveys. One specimen was found along a small shady lakeside forest