## New Members

***I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all our new members and say a special "Thank You" to all of you who have made donations to the Society.***

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## Notes From The Andean Patagonic Forests In Northern Patagonia (Argentina) Field Trip: Research On Andean Tarantulas

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This article intends to share our observations and preliminary results from the field trip to the Andean patagonic forests in northern Patagonia (Argentina). This trip was financially supported by a British Tarantula Society grant awarded to the author. The trip comprised 7 days during October 2011 and three additional collectors were involved during the present study: Lic. Gabriel Pompozzi, Mrs. Sofía Copperi and Mrs. Leonela Schwerdt. The date chosen for the trip was in relation to the known reproductive period of some theraphosids in central and south Argentina, involving walking males commonly observed in roads.

The Andean-patagonic forests, also known as Subantarctic forests, consist of a narrow strip lying on the Andes Mountains that extend from the north of Neuquén province to Tierra del Fuego province. The highest mountains are of 4000 m in Neuquén, and are decreasing to the south, reaching heights of 800 and 1400 m. The climate is temperate to cold and humid, with heavy snow and rain over the winter and frost during almost the entire year with heavy winds from the west. The vegetation is composed of temperate-humid forests with deciduous and perennial species. The diversity of species varies with the altitude and latitude, but we can distinguish a high forest with trees of 30 to 40 metres alternating with shrubs and low forests (up to 20 metres).

Actually, there are many doubts about the distribution and presence of some theraphosid species in Argentina, particularly in the south of the country. The study of the arachnological fauna from some areas of south Argentina had allowed some authors to

**Figure 1a. Habitat where *G. doeringi* males crossed the route.**

**Figure 1b. Male of *G. doeringi*, live habitus.**

**Figure 2. First sampling site near "Mascardi" Lake.**

**Figure 3. Collecting at "San Martín" mountain near Bariloche. Note the ashes covering the soil.**

**Figure 4a. Villa Traful covered by ashes from the Puyehue volcano.**

point out new localities for some species considered as exclusively Chilean that had been collected in Argentina.

Unfortunately, after 50 years of inactivity, on 4th June 2011 began the eruption of the volcanic complex Puyehue-Cordón Caulle in the Chilean region of "Los Lagos". Although the volcanic eruption took place in Chile, the southeast winds involved much of the Argentinean Patagonia, where the landscape changed completely and many cities were covered by ash. The most affected zones comprised the provinces of Río Negro, Neuquén and Chubut, having polluted rivers and soils covered with a thick grey layer, resulting in the death of thousands of fish, sheep and other animals that inhabit the region. Moreover, in some areas, such as Bariloche or Villa La Angostura, difficulties for residents in respect of travelling the streets, power cuts and obtaining water became frequent. For these reasons, we had to reorganize the trip - we were unable to access certain areas and because of the problems associated with the volcanic ash we needed to travel to other areas less affected by the eruption.

The field trip began on 24th October at 6 am. The trip was interrupted early in the morning when, at about 9am driving on Route 22 between the localities of Río Colorado and Choele Choel (Río Negro province) in a sunny and windy morning, we started to observe males of the theraphosid *Grammostola doeringi* (Holmberg 1881) walking in the road (Fig. 1). We collected two males for future behavioural studies at the laboratory, but we recorded a total of 8 males within a distance of approximately 100 km. Eventually, we arrived at the locality of Villa Traful where the situation was discouraging and some routes were blocked, so we decided to go further south until we reached Villa Mascardi in Río Negro province approximately 1000 km from our starting point.

**Figure 4b. The ashes covering the soil and behind the stones.**

**Figure 5. Habitat type in "Curruhue Chico" Lake where male of *Euathlus* was found.**

**Figure 6. Male of *Euathlus* sp. 1, live habitus.**

The following morning we began our field work by sampling at the base of the mountains near to the "Mascardi" Lake (41°21´12.3´´S – 71°36´10.4´´W). We searched for tarantulas in a humid forest of Coihue; we looked under logs and rocks and then we ascended to about 900 metres sampling under rocks (fig. 2). Then, in the afternoon we moved to "Los Alerces" cascade and we sampled near the "Blanco" stream looking under logs and rocks. Unfortunately we did not find any theraphosids nor evidence of retreats or silk. The next day we travelled to mount "Tronador" sampling next to the "Mascardi" lake.

**Figure 7. Habitat type where *Acanthogonatus confusus* was found.**

Then, we arrived at the "Ventisquero Negro" glacier and the sampling was made at the base of the mount "Tronador" looking under rocks. In the afternoon, we ascended to a mountain in front of the glacier (41°12´8.1´´S – 71°49´34.2´´W) at approximately 1041 m, but a new volcanic eruption of the "Puyehue" forced us to leave quickly, the sky being covered with ashes.

**Figure 8a. Entrance of the silk tube made by *A. confusus*.**

Because of the negative results we decided then to go north to the zone most affected by the volcano and locate the areas where we knew that some theraphosids had been recorded by previous collectors. We moved to the locality of Bariloche and we began sampling in "San Martín" mountain out of the city (41°6´23.3´´S – 71°26´10.8´´W) at approximately 840 m next to the Limay River, a mountain with many shrubs, but the ash layer over the soil was around 5 cm (fig. 3).

In the afternoon, we drove to Junín de los Andes, making a stop in the locality of Villa Traful (40°40′6″S - 71°24′21″W), which was the locality most affected by the volcanic eruption. We looked for tarantulas under stones in two mountains but the layer of ash covering the soil was up to 10 cm and due to the fine particles of the ash it also got under the stones (fig. 4).

The following day we moved to the Lanin National Park, reaching "Huechulafquen" Lake. We sampled under logs and stones in a hilly forest of the "Chivo" mountain (39°45´26.5´´S – 71°25´33.2´´W) at approximately 927 m. In the afternoon, we moved to the lakes

"Curruhue Chico" and "Curruhue Grande" sampling under rocks in mountains of around 1042 m in an open and not wooded area (39°54′28.1′′S – 71°19′58.3′′W) (fig. 5). In this area we found a male of an unidentified species of the genus *Euathlus* sp. 1 (fig. 6) living under a stone but with no evident burrow or shelter. The area was surrounded by a characteristic Andean-patagonic forest of Lenga and Coihue and some areas are characterized by Pehuenes.

The next day we travelled to San Martín de los Andes next to "Lacar" Lake. We looked for tarantulas in "Colorado" mountain (40°6′55.8′′S – 71°24′52.7′′W) at about 949 m next to the lake. We reached the "Hua-Hum" River, sampling in a *Notophagus* forest (fig. 7), a very humid place and with much leaf-litter. This place is on the border with Chile. In this area we found the nemesiid *Acanthogonatus confusus* Goloboff 1995 living in silk tubes and deep burrows under fallen logs (fig. 8).

Finally, on the last day we continued moving north and travel to the National Park Laguna Blanca in Zapala where the patagonic steppe is the dominant landscape. We sampled under rocks in an arid zone with small shrubs at the "Mellizo" mountain (fig. 9), where we found three juveniles of an unidentified species of *Euathlus* sp. 2 (fig. 10) living under rocks in loose soil with no burrow or silk tube.

**Figure 8b. Female of *A. confusus*, live habitus.**

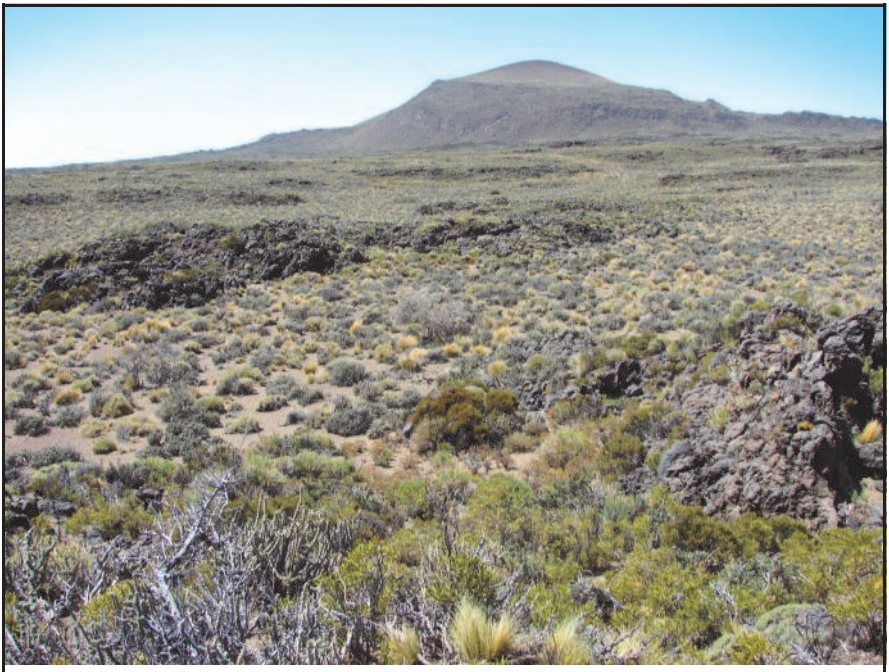

**Figure 9. Patagonic steppe at Laguna Blanca National Park.**

**Figure 10. Juvenile of *Euathlus* sp. 2, live habitus.**

Unfortunately we did not achieve the expected results due to the low number of specimens and species collected. In some areas it was impossible to access as a result of the volcanic ash leading to many routes being closed. Also, the volcanic ash is very toxic if inhaled so this clearly reduced our sampling time in the field. Many of the areas were highly affected by the ash and we did not observe any theraphosid burrow or silk threads. Maybe these extreme conditions forced the tarantulas to close their burrows under stones even during the active period. Moreover, food availability was affected and clearly we did not observe an abundance of prey, such as insects, under rocks, soil or shrubs. The male and juveniles of *Euathlus* spp. were collected in areas that were clearly less affected by the ash. We don't know how many years will be needed to restore the habitat; some specialists say as much

as 10 to 20 years. But the Andes have suffered many geological events such as volcanoes during their geological history; the fauna and flora will recover as they have done in the past - it just needs time…

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## What's In A Scientific Name?

**Ronald N. Baxter**

Early in the seventeenth century the organized study of Natural History began in earnest in Western Europe, where it was quite natural for Greek and Latin to be used to invent names by using fragments of both which, when combined, make up the names we commonly use today.

'Arachnid', for instance is derived from Latin and Greek, as are arachnid limbs; tibia from Latin, tarsus from both Latin and Greek and so on. As the number of names increased, particularly those of species, so it was necessary to have a system of nomenclature.

The Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus followed up with his monumental work entitled *Systema Naturae,* in which he perfected the work of zoologists of all nationalities who were using their own vocabulary to describe species and write papers. In the year 1758 his Tenth Edition of this work appeared and is generally accepted as the beginning of zoological nomenclature. Since it appeared in the early part of that year, all names prior to 1 January 1758 are excluded and therefore not valid in establishing priority [***Ed. - A notable exception being Clerck's spiders described in 1757***].

Every species thereafter received two names; the Linnaean or binomial system. The first name is the generic name and the second name is the specific name. Added to this is the name of the author and date. Thus, we would have as an example *Brachypelma vagans* Ausserer 1875. This would be termed the 'Latin name' for the species, however, today this term has given way to 'scientific name'.

Ideally, names should be based on geographical place names or their habitats and appearance, colour and other taxonomic details. For instance, a new species of *Aphonopelma* found in Mexico could be named *Aphonopelma mexicanum.* The specific name could be based on anything; it is simply a means to identify the species; an association of a name with an object.