

A Review of the Filistatid Spiders (Araneae: Filistatidae) of Australia

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ABSTRACT. Two new genera of filistatid spiders from Australia are described. *Wandella* n.gen. is widely distributed in mainland Australia and includes eleven species: *Wandella barbarella* n.sp. (type species), *W. australiensis* (L. Koch, 1873) n.comb., *W. orana* n.sp., *W. murrayensis* n.sp., *W. stuartensis* n.sp., *W. centralis* n.sp., *W. parnabyi* n.sp., *W. alinjarra* n.sp., *W. waldockae* n.sp., *W. pallida* n.sp., *W. diamentina* n.sp. *Yardiella* n.gen. is a monotypic genus for *Yardiella humphreysi*, currently known only from North-West Cape Peninsula. The affinities of these genera with *Pritha* Lehtinen, and Indo-Pacific and Indian filistatid spider faunas are noted.

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The filistatid spiders are usually placed with the Haplogynae, araneomorph spiders with simple genitalic structures, as the only cribellate members of this basal neocribellate group. The family relationships of the Filistatidae remain one of the more enigmatic problems of spider phylogeny, exemplified by the differing interpretations of Lehtinen (1986), Eskov & Zonshtein (1990) and Platnick *et al.* (1991). Filistatids have an almost worldwide distribution, with the exception of the north and south cool temperate regions. Twelve genera have been described, and further generic studies and a cladistic analysis of generic relationships are in progress.

Only one species of filistatid spider, *Filistata australiensis* L. Koch, 1873, has been described from Australia. It was based upon female specimens from mid-eastern Queensland. The present study shows that filistatid spiders are widely distributed in Australia, in habitats ranging from arid zone rangelands to rainforest.

Their biology is poorly known. Several species make small, irregular, cribellate sheet webs, with one to four more or less distinct funnel entrances (spiders and webs, Figs 1–6). These webs can be found under loose bark (notably of *Eucalyptus* spp. associated with watercourses), in leaf litter, under rocks, and in caves. Some inland species make soil burrows. J. Henschel (personal communication) has observed cribellate silk triplines radiating from burrow entrances in red dune soils in western Queensland.

Systematics

Lehtinen (1967) assigned *F. australiensis* to *Pritha* Lehtinen. At present, *Pritha* comprises a loose association of species from the southern Palaearctic, Oriental and Indo-Pacific regions, united by the common possession of a strongly procurved ('horseshoe-shaped') cymbium.