

## New Species of the Earthworm Genus *Anisochaeta* (Oligochaeta: Megascolecidae) from New South Wales

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**ABSTRACT.** The number of *Anisochaeta* from New South Wales is more than doubled to 50 species in the present account. Twenty-seven species are newly described, one of which is tentatively attributed to the dubious genus *Prophetima*. A checklist is presented with the distributions of the twenty-three previously described *Anisochaeta* from NSW that were variously attributed to the genera *Perichaeta*, *Megascolex*, and *Spenceriella*. One species, *Megascolex crateroides* Boardman, 1943, is herein synonymized with *Anisochaeta gracilis* (Fletcher, 1886b). A replacement name, *Anisochaeta trichaeta*, is proposed for the homonym of the Victorian *Trichaeta australis* Spencer, 1900. A key is provided for currently known NSW species.

The generic definition of *Anisochaeta* is modified to accommodate forms with the newly discovered vesiculate nephridial condition. Several of the new species have setae between the male pores, further reducing the distinctiveness of *Prophetima* from the prior genus *Spenceriella*, which is itself currently synonymized under *Anisochaeta*.

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The current study was instigated under the biodiversity “Hot Spots” project at the Australian Museum to work on unidentified material held in their earthworm collection. The emphasis was on unidentified material in samples from State Forests and Reserves in the northeast region of NSW (mostly collected by Ed Easton in March–May, 1983), but various other specimens from around the State were also examined.

*Anisochaeta*, widespread throughout the southern states of Australia, appears from the current study to be particularly diverse in the New England region of NSW. One sample of

35 specimens from New England National Park consisted of ten new taxa. Although most NSW species appear highly localized, some have acquired greater ranges via fluvial or human-mediated transportation. Thus *A. exigua murrayana* (Fletcher, 1887a) occurs from the Riverina region of NSW and Victoria to near the mouth of the Murray River in South Australia, *A. tenax* (Fletcher, 1886b) from Sydney has been reported from the Marquesas Islands, in the South Pacific (Michaelsen, 1900: 226), while *A. sebastiani* (Blakemore, 1997b) occurs in southern Queensland and Tasmania as well as in NSW (Blakemore, 1997b: 1838).