

***Melita lowryi*, a New Species of Melitidae (Crustacea: Amphipoda: Senticaudata) from New Zealand, and the Redescription of *Melita festiva* (Chilton, 1885) from Australia**

ROGER T. SPRINGTHORPE 

Australian Museum Research Institute,
Australian Museum, 1 William Street, Sydney NSW 2010, Australia

ABSTRACT. The identity of *Melita festiva* (Chilton, 1885) is established with the redescription and re-illustration of material collected from near the type locality Port Jackson [Sydney Harbour], New South Wales, Australia. In 1916, Chilton supplemented the original description, using misidentified material from Auckland Harbour, New Zealand. This material is described as *Melita lowryi* sp. nov. *Melita festiva* (Chilton, 1885) was tentatively placed in the genus *Ledoyeromelita* Labay, 2016, based on tenuous evidence and the reasons for the exclusion of *Melita festiva* based on current redescriptions are discussed. *Melita festiva* was previously known only from the type locality. New Australian distribution records extend its range to southern New South Wales and Victoria.

Introduction

Maera festiva Chilton, 1885, was described using material from Sydney Harbour. Chilton's original description was based on incomplete specimens and only the antennae and gnathopods were described and only the gnathopods were illustrated. The description was inadequate by modern standards to correctly assign the genus, particularly with respect to mouth parts. The species was tentatively assigned to the genus *Maera* Leach, 1814 due to the absence of third uropods (Chilton, 1885: 1029). Later, Chilton (1916: 359) obtained specimens from Rangitoto Reef, Auckland Harbour, New Zealand, which he believed were identical to *Maera festiva* from Sydney Harbour, but the presence of *Melita*-like third uropods inclined Chilton (1916) to assign *Maera festiva* to the genus *Melita* Leach, 1814. The Rangitoto Reef material together with the description and illustrations, were used to supplement the original description but were

based on misidentified specimens of a different species. The gnathopods, epimera, and urosome were described but were not critically compared with the original material. Consequently, Chilton overlooked a number of differences between the two taxa. This has led to some confusion in the literature as to the identity of New Zealand material (Hurley, 1954; Barnard, 1972; Fenwick, 1976). Furthermore Chilton's (1885) original material is currently documented as missing (Shaw & Poore, 2016). In order to allay this confusion, *Melita festiva* is redescribed from new material collected from near the type locality and the New Zealand material is described from Chilton's 1916 specimens as *Melita lowryi* sp. nov.

Labay (2016) revised the genus *Melita* and re-assigned many species to other genera. The new genus *Ledoyeromelita* Labay, 2016, was erected (based on *Melita excavata* Ledoyer, 1979) to which *Melita festiva* (Chilton, 1885) was tentatively assigned as *Ledoyeromelita festiva* (Chilton, 1885). Labay

Keywords: taxonomy, new species, *Melita*

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ORCID iD: Roger T. Springthorpe <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8617-3265>

Corresponding author: Roger T. Springthorpe Roger.Springthorpe@Australian.Museum

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