RE-EVALUATION OF AUSTRALIAN AND SOUTH AMERICAN *UNIONICOLA* HALDEMAN (ACARI: UNIONICOLIDAE)

Malcolm F. Vidrine[1], Arthur E. Bogan[2] and Sheila R. Hazelton-Robichaux[1]

1. Division of Sciences, Louisiana State University at Eunice, Eunice, LA 70535, USA (e-mail: mvidrine@lsue.edu); 2. North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences, Research Laboratory, 4301 Reedy Creek Road, Raleigh, NC 27607, USA (e-email: arthur.bogan@ncmail.net).

ABSTRACT - The genus *Unionicola* Haldeman in the family Unionicolidae is distributed worldwide, with more than half of the known species recorded as parasites of freshwater mussels (Mollusca: Bivalvia: Unionoida). Re-evaluation of the morphology and biogeography of the genus in Africa, Australia and South America extends our knowledge of host selection and host-specificity among *Unionicola*. New host and geographic records for *Unionicola* (*Kovietsatax*) *walkeri* Viets are *Velesunio angasi* in Western Australia. The subgenus *Australatax* Vidrine is re-evaluated. A new subgenus, *Hyricola* **n. subgen.**, is erected for Australian members of the subgenus *Australatax sensu lato*. Discrete differences in leg chaetotaxy, pedipalp morphology, and female genital field chaetotaxy clearly separate the newly redefined *Australatax* from *Hyricola*. These changes provide an opportunity to re-evaluate all the gill mites in the Southern Hemisphere.
Key words - Acari, Unionicolidae, *Australatax, Hyricola, Kovietsatax*,*Unionicola*, freshwater mussels, co-evolution, biogeography, Australia.

Abstract # 8
Internat. J. Acarol. 33(1): 49 - 52.