

A new cryptic spider species from Africa

March 7 2013



This is a picture of female *Copa flavoplumosa* from Wildlives Game Farm, Zambia. Credit: Charles Richard Haddad

The species from the genus *Copa* are very common spiders found in the leaf litter of various habitats. Being predominantly ground-living, they occur widely in savanna woodlands but also occasionally in forests, where they are well camouflaged. They usually share the litter microhabitats with several other species of the family Corinnidae. The spiders from this cryptic, ground-dwelling genus in the continental

Afrotropical Region are revised in a study published in the open access journal *Zookeys*.

The number of continental species in the Afrotropical Region has been reduced from four to two, one of which is newly described. While *C. flavoplumosa* is widespread throughout the region (from Guineé in the west to Tanzania in the east, and from Nigeria in the north to South Africa in the south), the new species, *C. kei*, is endemic to southeastern South Africa.



This is a picture of a female *Copa flavoplumosa* from Lesideng Research Camp, Botswana. Credit: Charles Richard Haddad

The two species represent extremes regarding both vagility and

ecological flexibility. *C. flavoplumosa* provides a useful example of extreme habitat flexibility, occupying habitats from forests to semi-deserts. It is particularly prevalent in savanna habitats on the continent, but also occurs in various [forest types](#) and grasslands. They have been occasionally collected in [agroecosystems](#), specifically from the canopies of orchard crops in South Africa (avocadoes, macadamias and pistachios), which is in stark contrast to their almost exclusive ground-dwelling habits in [natural habitats](#). The reasons for this ecological divergence, however, are unknown.

The newly described species, *C. kei*, is very closely associated and believed to be endemic to the Afromontane and [coastal forests](#) in South Africa. The species has a distribution falling entirely within the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Centre of Endemism in South Africa, where an extraordinary amount of endemic species is found, with around 30 endemic reptiles and emblematic mammals such as the blue duiker antelope.



This is a picture of a male *Copa kei* from Cwebe Nature Reserve, South Africa.
Credit: Charles Richard Haddad

The new species, *C. kei*, can be easily recognised by a distinct dorsal black spot on the anterior of the abdomen. The specific name of the species refers to the type locality, the town Kei Mouth, located at the estuary of the Great Kei River in the Eastern Cape Province.

More information: Haddad CR (2013) A revision of the continental species of *Copa* Simon, 1885 (Araneae, Corinnidae) in the Afrotropical Region. *ZooKeys* 276: 1–37, [doi: 10.3897/zookeys.276.4233](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.276.4233)

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