

Caponiidae: *Nops*

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Apparently *Nops* have a Neotropical distribution. The genus currently counts 27 extant species plus one in Dominican amber, but probably the real number of extant species is greater. *Nops* have a great richness on the Caribbean islands (14 species). Even species of Central America (4) and South America (15) are located in high proportion toward the area of the Caribbean Sea. Most species of South America are known only from the coast of Colombia and Venezuela, including the islands of Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire and Trinidad. The genus *Nops* was revised by Chickering (1967) who recorded 11 species from West Indies and Panama, including seven new. Later Alayón (1976, 1977) and Sánchez-Ruiz (2004, 2005, 2010) describe some new species from the Caribbean.

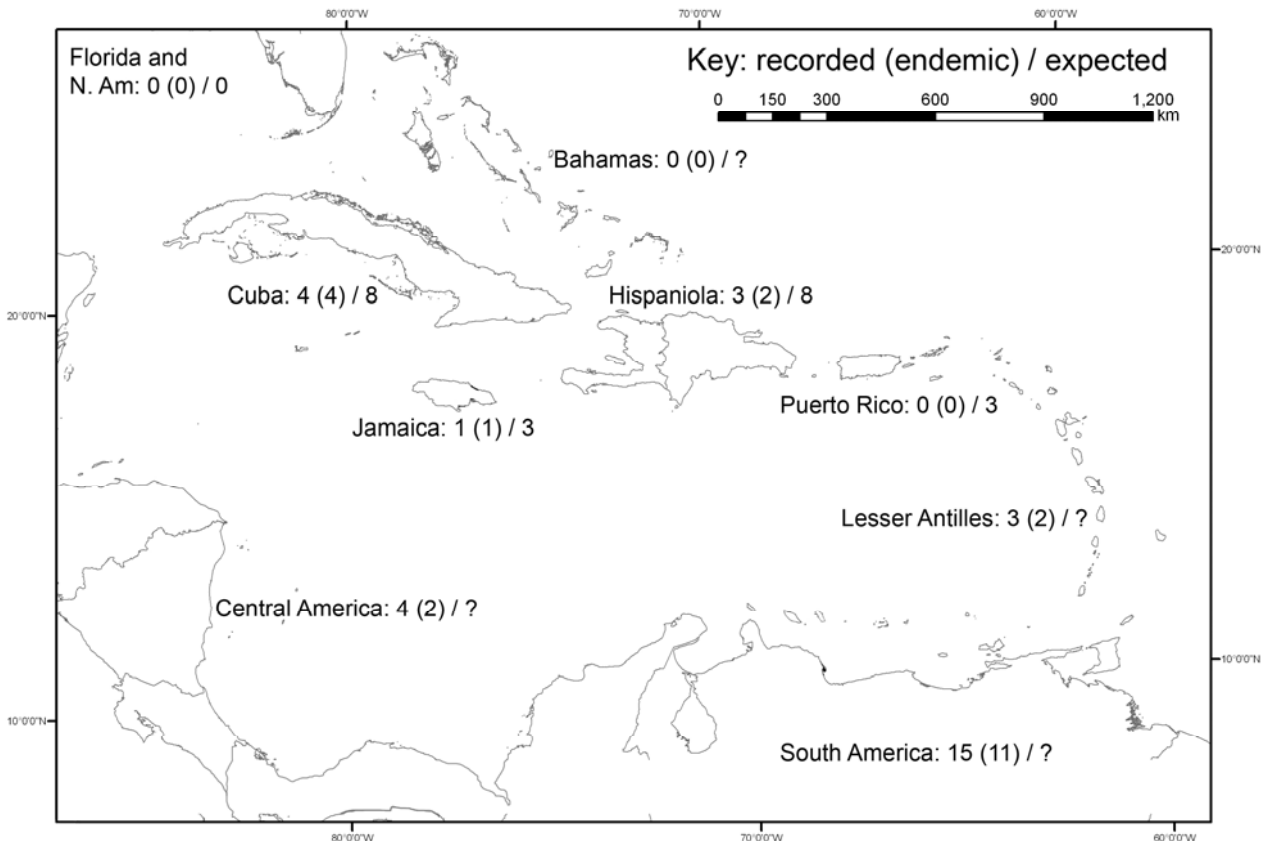


Fig. 1. Richness of *Nops* species, records extracted from Platnick (2011). The islands of Trinidad, Tobago, Margarita, Tortuga, Bonaire, Curaçao and Aruba are considered part of South America.

Monophyly. Species of *Nops* are characterized by a greatly elongated unpaired claw which is associated (in some cases) with a translucent pulvillar lobe. This character is possibly the main synapomorphy in this genus, but it remains to be seen whether all of those species actually show the same pattern of tarsal claw morphology. *Nops* belong to the Subfamily Nopinae (monophyletic group), it has the subsegmented tarsi that are considered synapomorphic for this subfamily, and it has other unusual leg characters that are often found in Nopine genera.

Amber species. The fossil fauna of Caponiidae is only represented in the Antilles by several specimens belonging to the species *Nops lobatus* Wunderlich, 1988 found in the Miocene amber of Dominican Republic. Wunderlich (1988) originally described two fossil species (*N. lobatus* and *N. segmentatus*). Later, Penney (2001) based on the length of the posterior spinnerets and the structure of the male pedipalp considers *N. segmentatus* a synonym of *N. lobatus*.

Dispersal. Dispersal capabilities in *Nops* are low, as in the rest of Caponiidae genera. The most of West Indies species are endemic of its origin islands.

Search strategy. Most species are small (4-12 mm body length). Although they have an orange attractive color, are very difficult to finding in the nature. They are wandering hunters, preferably found at ground level, under stones, *Agave*'s plants, in leaf litter or in the soil. There are two useful methods to collect these spiders: 1) intensive search on the microhabitat were they live, and 2) use the Berlese-sampler.

Similar genera. Easy to confuse in the field with *Orthonops* from North of Mexico (but possibly distribution of *Nops* don't reach this place) and with *Caponina* from Lesser Antilles and South America.

Needed collecting. The main gaps of knowledge are in Puerto Rico and Lesser Antilles. Central America is a top priority too, especially Yucatan peninsula, and since Guatemala to Panama. Fairly complete collections exist only for Cuba and Hispaniola. All other areas need new collecting.
Should be included: Bahamas, Jamaica and the Caribbean coast of Colombia and Venezuela.

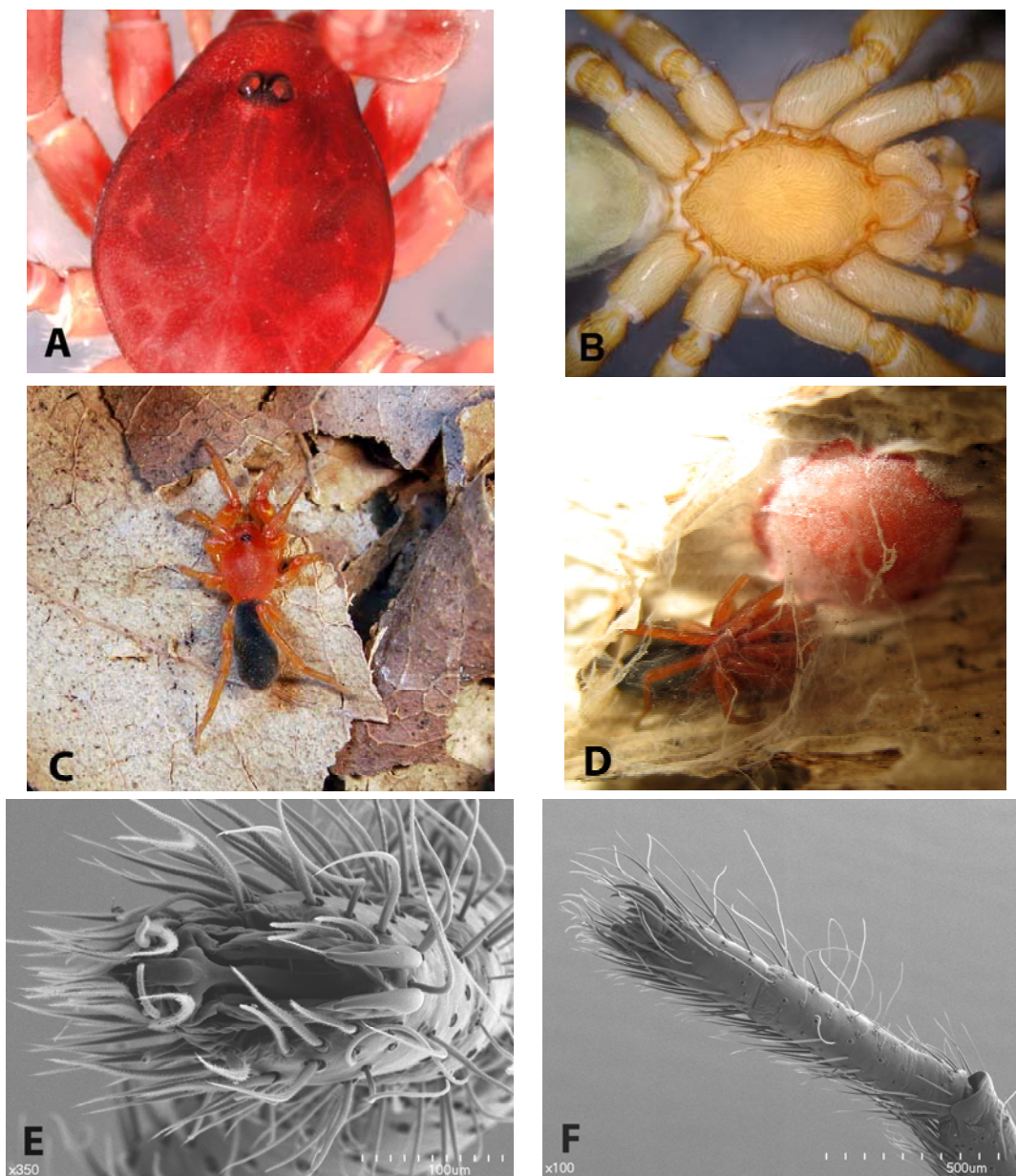


Fig. 2. A *Nops craneae* Chickering (1967), carapace. B *Nops siboney* Sánchez-Ruiz (2004), ventral view of prosoma. C *Nops guanabacoae* MacLeay (1839), a male in leaf litter. D *Nops guanabacoae* MacLeay (1839), a female with egg sac. E-F *Nops enae* Sánchez-Ruiz (2004), left tarsus IV showing the subsegmentation that distinguishes the Nopinae (F) and the unpaired claw elongated that distinguishes the genus *Nops* (E).

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