

Linyphiidae: *Mermessus* (formerly *Eperigone*)

J. Miller, March 2011

Mermessus is a common and diverse erigonine genus, especially in North America but also getting into other parts of the study area, where it has been less thoroughly documented. *Mermessus* typically build small sheet webs at ground level.



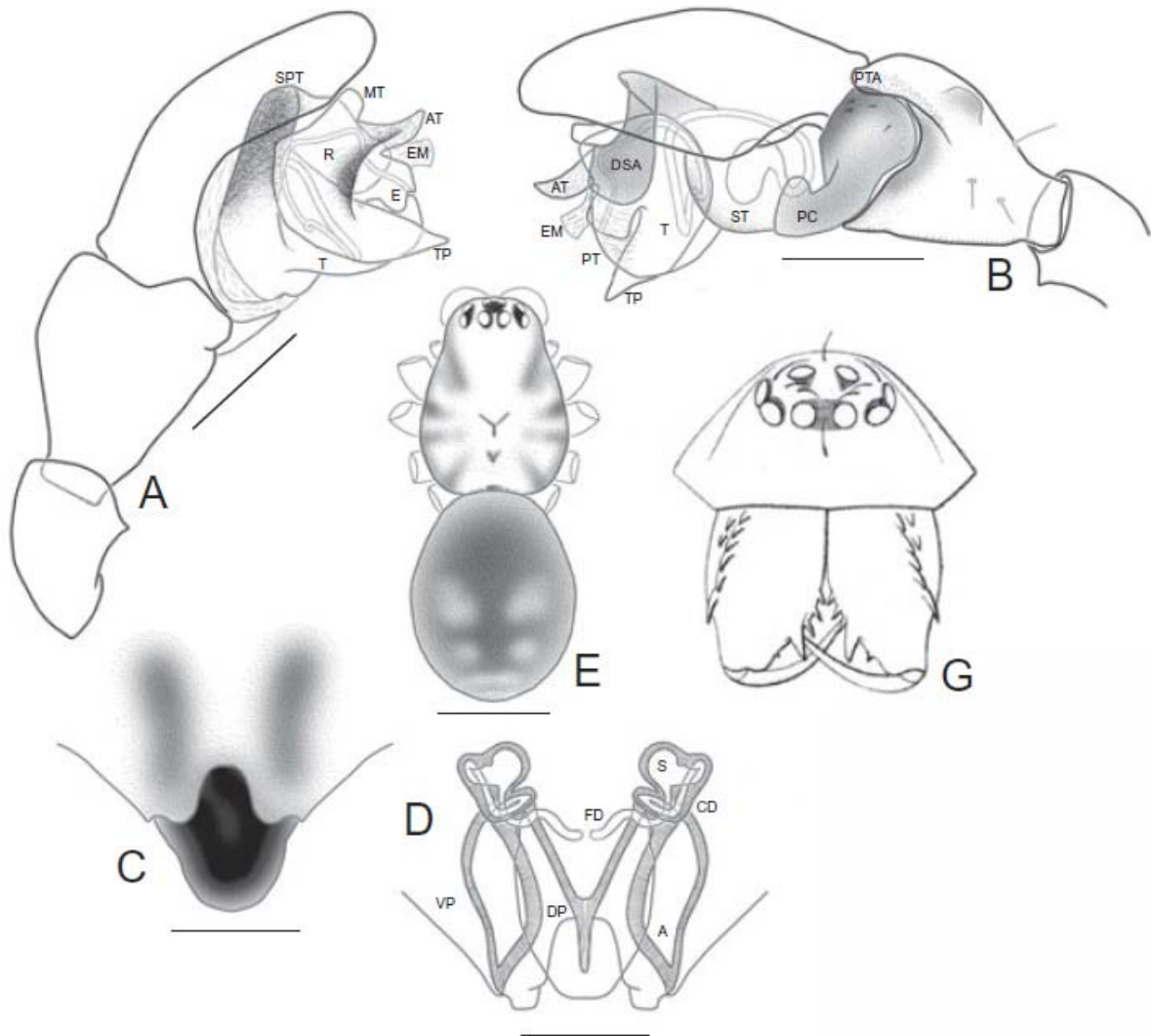
Fig 1. Distribution of *Mermessus* in the study region (based mostly on Platnick).

Monophyly. Only a rudimentary test of the monophyly of *Mermessus* has been conducted: a morphology-based phylogeny including two *Mermessus* species, which formed a clade.

Fossils. No fossil record.

Search strategy. Small spiders (1-3 mm body length), build rather inconspicuous webs, especially in leaf litter. Sifting (and other methods of leaf litter extraction) is the most productive technique.

Recognizing the group. Chelicerae often with tooth-like setal bases ectally and sometimes in front of fang region. Abdomen uniform dark or with indistinct pattern. *Male pedipalp*: radix with prolateral median excavation and ventrally recurved tailpiece; palpal tibial apophysis present. *Epigynum*: with distal notch or invagination, sometimes obscured by a tar-like copulatory plug.



Similar taxa. More or less like many other erigonine linyphiids. Close to *Erigone*, but not likely to be confused with this more distinctive genus (e.g., no conspicuous teeth around the margin of the carapace, as in *Erigone*).

Needed collecting. All areas.

References

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