



FIRST TROGLOBITIC SPECIES OF THE GENUS *Circoniscus* (ISOPODA: SCLEROPACTIDAE) FROM SOUTHEASTERN BRAZIL.

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The suborder Oniscidea is notably diverse in Brazilian subterranean ecosystems, with the family Scleropactidae being particularly well-represented. Of the 28 genera within Scleropactidae, only four are known from Brazil: *Circoniscus* Pearse, 1917, *Amazoniscus* Lemos de Castro, 1967, *Microsphaeroniscus* Lemos de Castro, 1984, and *Heptapactes* Schmidt, 2007. The genus *Circoniscus* comprises 14 species endemic to South America, 13 of which are recorded from Brazil. While some epigeal species exhibit wide distributions, troglobitic representatives are markedly more restricted. To date, troglobitic species have been recorded exclusively from Pará, Mato Grosso, and Mato Grosso do Sul. This study provides the first record and description of a troglobitic species of *Circoniscus* from the state of Minas Gerais, southeastern Brazil. Specimens were collected from two limestone caves located in the Cavernas do Peruaçu National Park, a transitional zone between the Cerrado and Caatinga biomes. The region features a hot tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. Sampling followed standard intuitive search methods, and specimens were analyzed using optical microscopy, scanning electron microscopy (SEM), and digital illustration techniques. The new species, *Circoniscus* sp. nov., exhibits clear troglomorphic traits, including absence of eyes and body pigmentation. Diagnostic morphological features include the presence of a schisma on pereonite 1; antennula bearing seven aesthetascs; a subtriangular telson with rounded distal margins; and mandibles with dichotomized molar penicils (6–7 branches). The maxillula features an inner endite with two apical penicils and an outer lobe with a 6+6 teeth arrangement, while the maxilliped basis is rectangular with a subrectangular endite bearing a long medial seta. Pereopod 1 shows an antennal grooming brush with sparse hand-shaped setae, and the dactylus possesses an inner claw shorter than the outer. Uropods are notably enlarged, with exopod twice the length of endopod. Male sexual dimorphism includes pleopods with characteristic shapes: pleopod 1 endopod acute and slightly curved, pleopod 2 endopod flagelliform and longer than the exopod, and pleopod 5 exopod triangular with sparse setules. This discovery expands the known distribution of troglobitic *Circoniscus* species and highlights the importance of the Peruaçu karst area as a hotspot for subterranean biodiversity in Brazil.

Keywords: Cave-dwelling; Taxonomy; Oniscidea. New species.