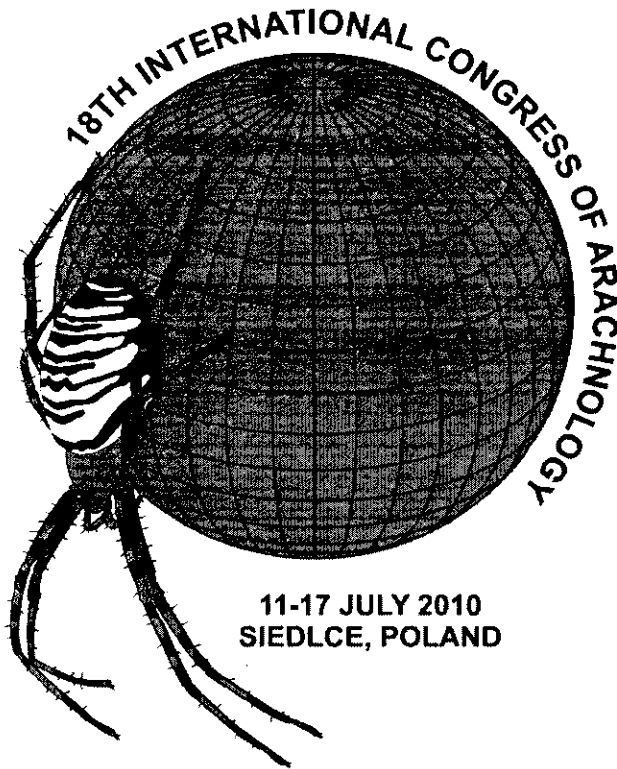


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## **Differentiation of *Nurscia albomaculata* and *N. albosignata* (Araneae: Titanoecidae): two sibling and sympatric species from Crimea, Ukraine**

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### **Introduction**

The genus *Nurscia* Simon, 1874 contains only 4 described species distributed in Palaearctic (Platnick 2010). Two species of *Nurscia* sympatrically occur in Crimea: *Nurscia albomaculata* (Lucas, 1846) and *N. albosignata* Simon, 1874. *N. albomaculata* is distributed from Europe to Central Asia, *N. albosignata* – from Bulgaria and Cyprus to Central Asia. Males of these species well differ by length of palps. However, identification of the females is very difficult, because their epigynes are similar. Comparative identification drawings for these species were never published.

### **Material and methods**

29 specimens of *N. albomaculata* and 69 specimens of *N. albosignata* collected mostly by pitfall traps in Crimea in 1995-2007 have been studied. In order to found differences in females, they were studied from samples containing both males and females. Then the identified differences were checked in females from samples without males.

### **Results**

Males of these species well differ by the length of the palp (shorter than carapace in *N. albomaculata* and longer than carapace in *N. albosignata*), by the teeth on hooked tibial apophysis (long in *N. albomaculata* and short in *N. albosignata*), and by the shape of embolus (straight in *N. albomaculata* and curved in *N. albosignata*).

Females are well distinguished by the shape of epigynal median plate, narrow in *N. albomaculata* and wide in *N. albosignata*. Septum in *N. albomaculata* is three times longer than wide; septum in *N. albosignata* is as long as wide in posterior part. Margins of epigynal septum are parallel in *N. albomaculata*, and curved and not parallel in *N. albosignata*.

These species do not differ by habitats and are frequently found in the same biotopes. Both species are found in some kinds of steppe and in salt marshes. However, these two species differ by phenology. The peaks of abundance for both species are in July, but males and females of *N. albomaculata* were collected since May, and males of *N. albosignata* – since June, females – from July. So, activity of *N. albomaculata* starts one month earlier than of *N. albosignata*. The latest males of both species were collected in

August. The latest females of *N. albomaculata* were collected also in August, and these of *N. albosignata* – in October.

### **Discussion**

It is interesting when two related species, occurring sympatrically, do not differ in geography and habitat, but only in phenology.

### **References**

Platnick N.I. 2010. The world spider catalog, version 11.0. American Museum of Natural History, <http://research.amnh.org/entomology/spiders/catalog/>.