

Cytogenetics of seven species of dragonflies

A novel sex chromosome determining system in *Micrathyria ungulata*

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More than 80% of the taxonomically described species of Anisoptera (Odonata) belong to the families Libellulidae and Aeshnidae. Here the chromosome complement and male meiotic behaviour of seven species of dragonflies of these families are analyzed. *Anax amazili* and *Coryphaeschna perrensi* are $2n = 27$, $n = 13 + X$, which is characteristic of Aeshnidae. Within Libellulidae, *Planiplax erythrogyga*, *Micrathyria spuria* and *M. hesperis* have $2n = 25$, $n = 12 + X$, which corresponds to the modal chromosome number of the family. *Oligoclada laetitia* and *M. ungulata*, on the other hand, have a reduced chromosome complement ($n = 11 + X$ and $n = 10 + X_1X_2Y$, respectively). In *Micrathyria ungulata* an X_1X_2Y sex chromosome system is described, and its origin is discussed. This represents a new sex chromosome determining system in the order Odonata.

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Most species of the suborder Anisoptera (Odonata) belong to the family Libellulidae, and they differ widely in shape, size and colour (FRASER 1957). This family is the best studied from a cytogenetical point of view, and the chromosome number of more than 270 species is known (MOLA 1992; PRASAD and THOMAS 1992; SANDHU and WALIA 1994, 1995; SUZUKI et al. 1991). The modal chromosome number is $n = 13$ (84% of the species), and there are very frequently a pair of *m* chromosomes present.

Aeshnidae is another large family of Anisoptera. It includes large and vigorous dragonflies and it has representatives in almost every kind of freshwater environments (CARLE 1982). Approximately 60 species have been cytogenetically analyzed (MOLA 1992; SANDHU and MALHOTRA 1994), and the modal haploid number is $n = 14$ (70,7% of the species).

Karyotype evolution in Odonata has mainly occurred through fusions and fragmentations of holokinetetic chromosomes. Fusions between autosomes and/or fusions between the X chromosome and an autosome have been described; fragmentations, on the other hand, have only been reported for autosomes (AGOPIAN and MOLA 1984; KIAUTA 1972; MOLA 1992, 1995).

The most frequent sex chromosome determining system in the order is $X0/XX$ (male/female) and the X chromosome is generally one of the smallest elements of the complement. Until present, the only derived system described is the neo-XY; in most

species the sex chromosome pair is homomorphic or slightly heteromorphic until diakinesis, and only in a few species the neo-XY is clearly heteromorphic (MOLA 1992, 1996; MOLA and PAPESCHI 1994).

Here the meiotic behaviour of five species of Libellulidae (*Oligoclada laetitia*, *Planiplax erythrogyga*, *Micrathyria spuria*, *M. hesperis* and *M. ungulata*) and two of Aeshnidae (*Anax amazili* and *Coryphaeschna perrensi*) from Argentina are analyzed. Our results on *Oligoclada* and *Micrathyria* are compared with previous reports, and the origin of a new sex chromosome determining system in *M. ungulata* ($X_1X_2Y/X_1X_1X_2X_2$) is described and discussed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Adult males captured in the field were fixed in 3:1 (absolute ethanol:glacial acetic acid); afterwards, testes were dissected out and kept in ethanol 70% at 4°C. Slides were made by the squash method in propionic haematoxylin 2%.

Provenance and number of individuals analyzed are as follows:

Libellulidae – *Oligoclada laetitia*, 7 males from Tigre (Buenos Aires Province); *Planiplax erythrogyga*, 3 males from El Palmar National Park (Entre Ríos Province); *Micrathyria spuria*, 1 male from El Palmar National Park (Entre Ríos Province) and 1 male from Garruchos (Corrientes Province); *M. ungulata*, 2 males from El Palmar National Park (Entre Ríos Province); *M. hesperis*, 4 males from Montecarlo (Misiones Province).

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Aeshnidae – *Anax amazili*, 1 male from El Palmar National Park (Entre Ríos Province); *Coryphaeschna perrensi*, 1 male from Iguazú National Park (Misiones Province).

RESULTS

Males of *Oligoclada laetitia* possess $2n = 23$, $n = 11 + X$. At spermatogonial prometaphases and metaphases a pair of small *m* chromosomes and a pair of large autosomes (almost twice the size of the next chromosome pair) are distinguished. At meiotic prophase the X chromosome is isopycnotic (Fig. 1A and B). At diakinesis and metaphase I a large bivalent and a negatively heteropycnotic *m* bivalent, slightly larger than the X chromosome, are detected; the remaining nine bivalents decrease gradually in size. All bivalents present only one chiasma subterminally located (Fig. 1B and C). At anaphase I bivalents divide equationally, and the X migrates synchronously with the autosomes (Fig. 1D and E). At metaphase II the *m* chromosome continues negatively heteropycnotic; the X chromosome is closer to

one pole (Fig. 1F) and migrates precociously at anaphase II.

Planiplax erythropyga has $2n = 25$, $n = 12 + X$. At spermatogonial prometaphase a minute pair of *m* chromosomes and a large pair of autosomes are distinguished (Fig. 2A). At prophase I the X chromosome is isopycnotic, and all bivalents present one terminal or subterminal chiasma (Fig. 2B). A large bivalent and a minute *m* bivalent are observed from diplotene to metaphase I; the remaining ten bivalents decrease gradually in size, and the X chromosome is approximately half the size of the smallest bivalent (Fig. 2B). The meiotic behaviour of the chromosomes follows the pattern previously described (Fig. 2C).

Micrathyria spuria and *M. hesperis* are both $n = 12 + X$, and meiosis proceeds as in the species already described. In *M. spuria* the X chromosome is positively heteropycnotic until pachytene; at diplotene and diakinesis all bivalents present one chiasma and decrease gradually in size, except the *m* bivalent that is clearly smaller and negatively heteropycnotic; the X chromosome is small, but larger than the *m* bivalent (Fig. 2D). In *M. hesperis* the X chromosome is

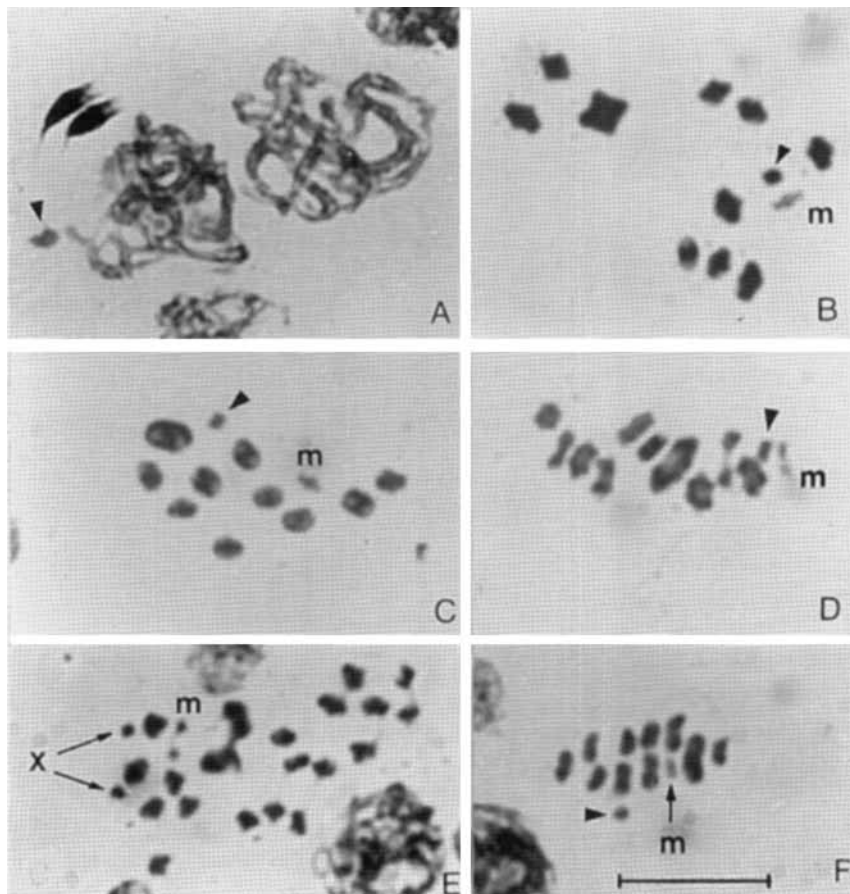


Fig. 1. A–F. Meiosis in *Oligoclada laetitia* ($n = 11 + X$). A Pachytene. B Diakinesis. C Prometaphase I. D Early Anaphase I. E Anaphase I. F Metaphase II. Arrowheads point the X chromosome, and m marks the *m* chromosomes. Bar = 10 μm .

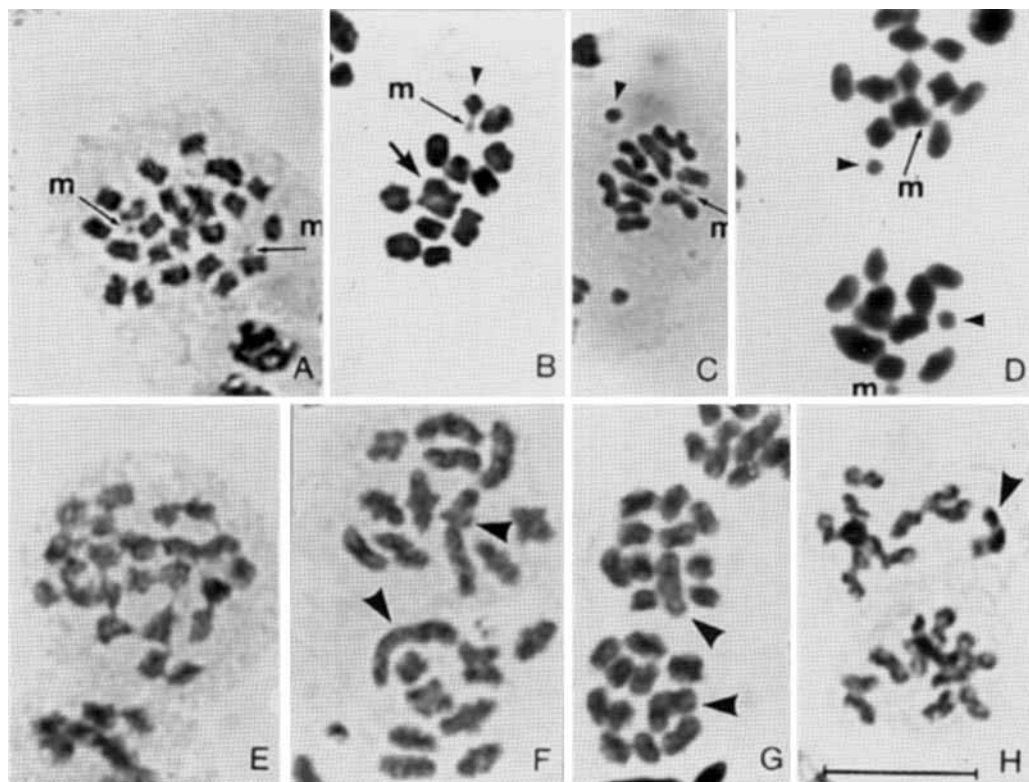


Fig. 2. A–H. Meiosis in *Planiplax erythropgya* ($n = 12 + X$) (A–C), *Micrathyria spuria* ($n = 12 + X$) (D) and *M. unglata* ($n = 10 + X_1X_2Y$) (E–H). A Spermatogonial prometaphase. B Diakinesis, arrow points the largest bivalent. C Metaphase II. D Diakinesis. In (B–D) small arrowheads point the X chromosome. E Spermatogonial prometaphase. F Diakinesis. G Prometaphase I. H Prophase II. In (F–H) arrowheads point the sex trivalent. Bar = 10 μm .

always isopycnotic; bivalents decrease gradually in size, except the *m* bivalent and the X chromosome which are the smallest elements of the complement.

Micrathyria unglata, on the other hand, has $2n = 23$ (Fig. 2E). No positively heteropycnotic body is distinguished at early prophase, and at diakinesis and metaphase I ten homomorphic bivalents (with only one chiasma) and one lineal trivalent are observed (Fig. 2F and G); neither an *m* bivalent nor an X chromosome are present. The trivalent always presents two chiasmata, one generally terminal and the other subterminal (Fig. 2F, 4E). The three chromosomes of the trivalent are of different size; the larger one is always placed between the other two, and the medium sized chromosome presents a positively heteropycnotic region at the free telomeric end (not involved in the chiasma); this region represents the original X chromosome (Fig. 2F, 4E). Among bivalents one is slightly larger, and the remaining decrease gradually in size. At anaphase I all chromosomes divide synchronously and equationally, and in all cells at prophase II ten semibivalents and one semitrisomic are observed (Fig. 2H).

Anax amazili and *Coryphaeschna perrensi* (Aeshnidae) present $2n = 27$, $n = 13 + X$. In the former the

X chromosome is positively heteropycnotic until pachytene (Fig. 3A), while in *C. perrensi* it is isopycnotic or slightly positive heteropycnotic from leptotene to pachytene (Fig. 3D). In both species the X and the *m* bivalent are the smallest elements of the complement (Fig. 3B and E); the remaining bivalents decrease gradually in size and present always one chiasma. In both species chromosomes divide equationally and synchronously at anaphase I, giving rise to cells at meiosis II with 14 chromosomes (Fig. 3C and F).

DISCUSSION

The American genera *Oligoclada* and *Planiplax* (Libellulidae) are represented in Argentina by *Oligoclada laetitia*, *O. haywardii* and *Planiplax erythropgya* (CARLE 1982, RODRIGUES CAPÍTULO 1992, MUZÓN and Von ELLENRIEDER, 1998). All the species of these genera cytogenetically analyzed share a sex chromosome determining system X0/XX (male/female) (Table 1).

The population of *O. laetitia* analyzed here ($n = 11 + X$) differs karyotypically from the Brazilian specimen studied by SOUZA BUENO (1982). She re-

ported a mosaicism in the specimen with most cells having $n = 10 + X$, and a few cells with $n = 11 + X$ due to the presence of two m bivalents. Both the male from Brazil and our specimens possess a large autosomal bivalent and a small m bivalent. With the present information it is not possible to explain the origin of the different diploid number between the two samples. The reduced chromosome complement of *O. laetitia* with respect to the family modal number ($n = 12 + X$) probably originated in an autosomal fusion, which gave rise to the large autosomal pair.

Planiplax erithropyga as well as *P. sanguiniventris*, the only species of the genus cytogenetically analyzed before this work, present the modal number of Libellulidae ($n = 12 + X$) (Table 1).

From the South American genera *Anax* and *Coryphaeschna*, *Anax amazili*, *A. longipes*, *Coryphaeschna adnexa*, *C. luteipennis luteipennis* and *C. perrensi* have been cited in Argentina (CARLE 1982, RODRIGUES CAPÍTULO 1992, MUZÓN and VON ELLENRIEDER, 1998). With our results on *Anax amazili* and *Coryphaeschna perrensi*, all these taxa have been cytogenetically analyzed. Almost all the species of these genera present $n = 13 + X$; exceptions are *A. guttatus* ($n = 7 + X$) and *C. viriditas* ($n = 12 + X$) (Table 2).

A novel sex chromosome system in Micrathyria ungulata

The American genus *Micrathyria* is represented in our country by 16 species (RODRIGUES CAPÍTULO 1992, MUZÓN and VON ELLENRIEDER, 1998), ten of which have been previously studied from a cytogenetical point of view. Our results on *Micrathyria hesperis* and *M. spuria* ($2n = 25$, $n = 12 + X$) agree with previous reports on these species (FERREIRA et al. 1979, CUMMING 1964).

The two individuals of *M. ungulata* here studied present a reduced chromosome number ($2n = 23$) and a derived sex chromosome system; the original X chromosome is fused to an autosome and is involved in the trivalent observed at meiosis. These males present a sex chromosome system X_1X_2Y , which originated through two fusion events very probably in the following sequence (Fig. 4). First, the free small X chromosome became fused to an autosome giving rise to a neo-XY system ($2n = 24$, $n = 11 + \text{neo-XY}$). Later, the "neo-Y" became fused to one member of another autosomal pair originating a new large chromosome, which we refer to as "Y" chromosome. This large "Y" chromosome is always placed in a middle position in the trivalent, and after its

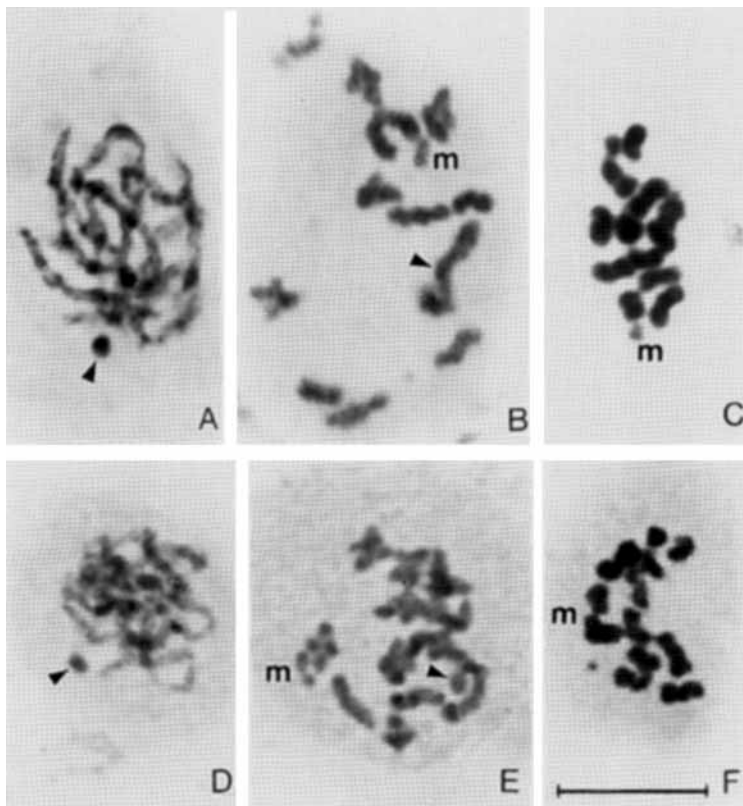


Fig. 3. A–F. Meiosis in *Anax amazili* ($n = 13 + X$) (A–C) and *Coryphaeschna perrensi* ($n = 13 + X$) (D–F). A and D Pachytene. B and E Diakinesis. C and F Prometaphase II. Arrowheads point the X chromosome. Bar = 10 μm .

Table 1. Karyotypic characteristics and provenance of the species of *Oligoclada*, *Planiplax* and *Micrathyria* (*Libellulidae*) cytogenetically analyzed

Species	n (male)	m	Provenance	References
<i>Oligoclada amphinome</i>	12+X0	+	Surinam	KIAUTA, 1979
<i>O. laetiitia</i> *	10+X0	+	Brazil	SOUZA BUENO, 1982
	11+X0	+	Argentina	this work
<i>O. monosticha</i>	11+X0	+	Brazil	FERREIRA et al., 1979
<i>O. pachystigma</i>	11+X0	-	Brazil	SOUZA BUENO, 1982
<i>Planiplax erythropgya</i> *	12+X0	+	Argentina	this work
<i>P. sanguiventris</i>	13	+	Guatemala	CRUDEN, 1968
<i>Micrathyria artemis</i> *	12+X0	+	Brazil	FERREIRA et al., 1979; SOUZA BUENO, 1982
<i>M. atra</i> *	13	+	Bolivia	CUMMING, 1964
<i>M. catenata</i> *	12+X0	+	Brazil	SOUZA BUENO, 1982
<i>M. didyma</i> *	13	+	Jamaica	CUMMING, 1964
<i>M. eximia</i> *	12+X0	+	Surinam	KIAUTA, 1979
<i>Micrathyria sp. nr. eximia</i>	11	-	Bolivia	CUMMING, 1964
<i>M. hageni</i>	13	+	Jamaica	CUMMING, 1964
<i>M. hesperis</i> *	12+X0	+	Brazil	FERREIRA et al., 1979
	12+X0	+	Argentina	this work
<i>M. hypodidyma</i> *	11+X0	+	Brazil	SOUZA BUENO, 1982
	12+X0	+	Argentina	AGOPIAN and MOLA, 1988
<i>M. iheringi</i>	12	+	Bolivia	CUMMING, 1964
<i>M. laevigata</i>	13	+	Bolivia	CUMMING, 1964
	12+X0	+	Brazil	KIAUTA and BOYES, 1972
<i>M. longifasciata</i> *	11+neo-XY	+	Argentina	AGOPIAN and MOLA, 1988
<i>M. ocellata dentiens</i> *	13	+	Bolivia	CUMMING, 1964
	12+X0	-	Brazil	SOUZA BUENO, 1982
<i>M. spuria</i> *	13	+	Bolivia	CUMMING, 1964
	12+X0	+	Argentina	this work
<i>M. starwisky</i>	2n = 23	-	Brazil	SOUZA BUENO, 1982
<i>Micrathyria sp. unguolata</i> group	12	-	Bolivia	CUMMING, 1964
<i>M. unguolata</i> *	10+X ₁ X ₂ Y	-	Argentina	this work

* species reported for Argentine.

Table 2. Karyotypic characteristics and provenance of the species of *Anax* and *Coryphaeschna* (*Aeshnidae*) cytogenetically analyzed

Species	n (male)	m	Provenance	References
<i>Anax amazili</i> *	13+X0	+	Argentina	This work
<i>A. concolor</i>	13+X0	+	Surinam	KIAUTA, 1979
<i>A. guttatus</i>	7+X0	+	Nepal	KIAUTA and KIAUTA, 1982a
<i>A. immaculifrons</i>	13+X0	+	India	SANGAL and TYAGI, 1982
<i>A. imperator</i>	13+X0	+	France	KIAUTA, 1965
	13+X0	-	Kenya	WASSCHER, 1985
<i>A. junius</i>	14	+	USA	CRUDEN, 1968; KIAUTA, 1972
	14	-	USA	CRUDEN, 1968
<i>A. longipes</i> *	14	+	USA	CRUDEN, 1968
<i>A. nigrofasciatus nigrolineatus</i>	13+X0	+	Nepal	KIAUTA, 1975
<i>A. parthenope julius</i>	13+X0	+	Japan	KIAUTA and KIAUTA, 1982b; SUZUKI and SAITOH, 1990
	13+X0	+	China	ZHU and WU, 1986
<i>Coryphaeschna adnexa</i> *	14	-	Bolivia	CUMMING, 1964
<i>C. l. luteipennis</i> *	13+X0	+	Brazil	FERREIRA et al., 1979
<i>C. perrensi</i> *	13+X0	+	Argentina	this work
<i>C. viriditas</i>	12+X0	-	Surinam	KIAUTA, 1979

* species reported for Argentine.

correct segregation (to give balanced gametes) this "Y" chromosome will always be inherited to the male progeny. The "neo-X" is the medium sized chromosome of the trivalent, and we refer to it as X_1 since it bears the original X. Finally, the autosome not directly involved in the fusion events co-segregates with the X_1 , and hence we consider it as X_2 ; both X_1 and X_2 are always inherited to the female progeny.

Micrathyria is a genus cytogenetically heterogeneous; approximately 60% of the analyzed species present the modal karyotype of the family ($n = 12 + X$). All the other species present a reduced chromosome number. The Brazilian male of *M. hypodidyma* presents an autosomal fusion in homozygous condition ($n = 11 + X$); in *M. longifasciata* an X- autosome fusion originated the neo-XY system ($n = 11 + \text{neo-XY}$), and in *M. ungulata*, both an X- autosome fusion and an autosome- autosome fusion have occurred ($n = 10 + X_1X_2Y$). In the remaining four species with a reduced chromosome complement, nothing can be said with respect to the chromosomes involved in the fusion events (Table 1).

Since only two individuals of *M. ungulata* have been analyzed, it can not be ascertained whether the

rearrangement is fixed at the population or species level. In any of these circumstances, it constitutes a new sex chromosome determining system in the order Odonata.

The X_1X_2Y sex chromosome determining system is unusual in organisms with holokinetic chromosomes. This sex chromosome mechanism has been previously reported in two populations of *Cacopsylla sorbi* ($2n = 18 + \text{neo } X_1X_2Y$) and *C. mali* ($2n = 20 + \text{neo } X_1X_2Y$) (Homoptera, Psyllidae). In both species, populations with a neo-XY sex chromosome system have also been encountered (GROZEVA and MARYANSKA-NADACHOWSKA 1995). Evidently this case has also been derived from the neo-XY system. The neo-XY system has evolutionary potential to develop further and we may expect to find it in other insect groups as well.

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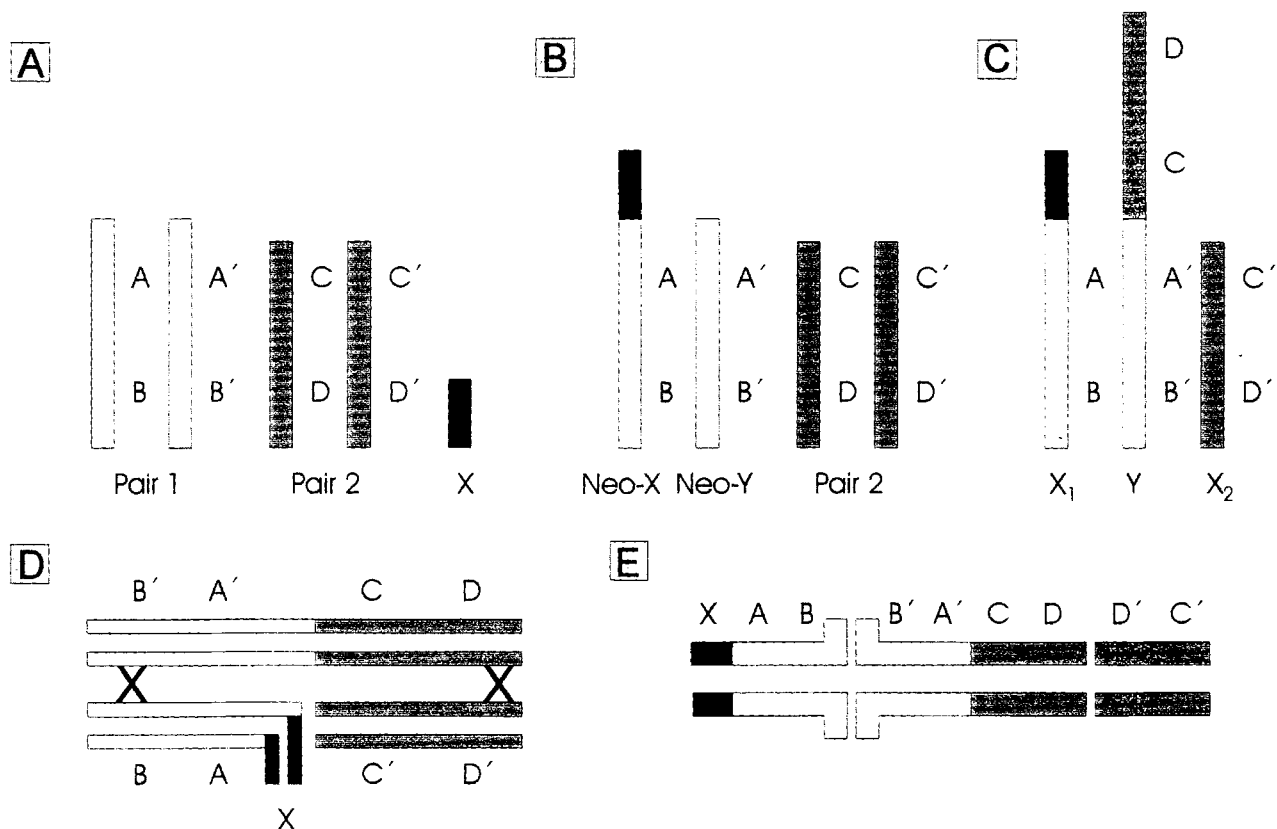


Fig. 4. A–E. Origin of the X_1X_2Y sex chromosome system in *Micrathyria ungulata*. **A** Ancestral chromosomes. **B** First fusion event (X- autosome fusion), giving rise to a neo-XY system. **C** Second fusion event (autosome- autosome fusion), giving rise to the X_1X_2Y system. **D** Pachytene pairing of the sex trivalent. **E** Diakinesis configuration of the sex trivalent.

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