Decoupled evolution of the *Sex Peptide* gene family and *Sex Peptide Receptor* in *Drosophilidae*

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Abstract

Across internally fertilising species, males transfer ejaculate proteins that trigger wide-ranging changes in female behaviour and physiology. Much theory has been developed to explore the drivers of ejaculate protein evolution. The accelerating availability of high-quality genomes now allows us to test how these proteins are evolving at fine taxonomic scales. Here, we use genomes from 264 species to chart the evolutionary history of Sex Peptide (SP), a potent regulator of female post-mating responses in *Drosophila melanogaster*. We infer that *SP* first evolved in the *Drosophilinae* subfamily and has followed markedly different evolutionary trajectories in different lineages. Outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa*, *SP* exists largely as a single-copy gene with independent losses in several lineages. Within the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa,* the *SP* gene family has repeatedly and independently expanded. Up to seven copies, collectively displaying extensive sequence variation, are present in some species. Despite these changes, *SP* expression remains restricted to the male reproductive tract. Alongside, we document

considerable interspecific variation in the presence and morphology of seminal microcarriers that, despite the critical role SP plays in microcarrier assembly in *D. melanogaster*, appear to be independent of changes in the presence/absence or sequence of SP. We end by providing evidence that SP's evolution is decoupled from that of its receptor, SPR, in which we detect no evidence of correlated diversifying selection. Collectively, our work describes the divergent evolutionary trajectories that a novel gene has taken following its origin and finds a surprisingly weak coevolutionary signal between a supposedly sexually antagonistic protein and its receptor.

Significance

In insects, seminal fluid proteins (SFPs) induce dramatic changes in female behaviour and physiology. How this degree of male influence evolves remains a central question in sexual selection research. Here, we map the origin and diversification of the posterchild insect SFP, the *Drosophila* Sex Peptide (SP), across 264 Diptera species. We show that *SP* first evolved at the base of the subfamily *Drosophilinae* and followed markedly different evolutionary trajectories in different lineages, including accelerated change in sequence, copy number, and genomic position in the lineage leading to *D. melanogaster.* By contrast, we find only limited, uncorrelated change in the sequence of its receptor, SPR, arguing against a sexually antagonistic coevolutionary arms race between these loci on macroevolutionary time scales.

Introduction

Female post-mating changes are a taxonomically widespread – if not general – phenomenon in internal fertilisers. Often mediated by non-sperm components of the male ejaculate, such as seminal fluid proteins, the female traits subject to post-mating plasticity are numerous and diverse. For example, immune systems can be modified (*Drosophila melanogaster*, 1 ; humans, 2), ovulation stimulated (camelids, 3), and dietary preferences shifted following copulation (crickets, 4 ; *D. melanogaster*, 5). Evolutionary biologists have a long-standing interest in post-mating

53 changes as they bear intimate connections to reproductive success (e.g., 6–8), can form barriers
54 to hybridisation (e.g., 9, 10), and, through the involvement of males in their induction, can act as
55 a point of evolutionary tension between the fitness interests of males and females (e.g., 11–14).
56 Indeed, post-mating changes have provided one of the centrepieces around which much of the
57 discussion of interlocus sexual conflict has revolved, including broader consideration of the
58 relative roles of conflict and sexual selection by female choice in shaping the evolution of
59 reproductive traits (15–19).
60
61 Available data suggest that different taxa can use non-homologous proteins to induce common
62 – or at least overlapping – phenotypic endpoints in mated females. To reduce female sexual
63 receptivity, for example, the moth *Helicoverpa zea* uses pheromonostatic peptide (PSP, 20), the
64 mosquito *Aedes aegypti* uses Head Protein 1 (HP-1, 21), and *D. melanogaster* uses Sex Peptide
65 (SP, 22). Not only are these three proteins non-homologous to one another, but none have clear
66 homologs in either of the other species' genomes. This pattern suggests that regulators of female
67 post-mating change might experience a high degree of evolutionary turnover, with new regulators
68 evolving and old regulators being lost from populations through time. If so, the questions then are
69 what evolutionary forces drive this turnover, how quickly does this process occur, and how are
70 new regulators born? More fundamentally, it makes seminal proteins an exceptional model for
71 studying how newly evolved, lineage-specific genes acquire and diversify their functions.
72
73 More than 60 years on from its discovery in chromatographic extracts of *D. melanogaster*
74 accessory glands (23, 24), SP remains the best characterised insect seminal protein. Consisting
75 of two exons separated by a 65bp intron, *D. melanogaster SP* (*DmelSP*) encodes a 36aa mature
76 protein synthesised via a 55aa signal peptide-containing precursor (22, 25). DmelSP is produced
77 in accessory gland main cells and secreted into the lumen, where it is stored on abundant, lipid-
78 containing microcarriers – structures for which DmelSP acts as a key factor governing assembly

79 and, once inside females, disassembly (26–28). Following transfer to females, DmelSP binds to
80 sperm, a process mediated by a suite of additional seminal fluid proteins, and is transported into
81 the female sperm storage organs (29–33). The gradual release of DmelSP from the surface of
82 stored sperm continues to stimulate a wide range of post-mating changes, including shifts in
83 memory formation and sleep patterns, elevating appetite and changing dietary preferences,
84 reducing sexual receptivity, stimulating egg-laying, increasing aggression, and changing gut,
85 metabolic, and immune activity (reviewed in 15). At least some of these changes, namely reduced
86 sexual receptivity and stimulated egg-laying, are mediated by DmelSP binding to the Sex Peptide
87 Receptor (SPR) in a subset of neurons that innervate the female reproductive tract (34–36).
88 Different domains of mature SP appear to contribute selectively to different functions in *D.*
89 *melanogaster*: the tryptophan-rich N-terminus binds to sperm and stimulates juvenile hormone
90 synthesis (33, 37, 38), the hydroxyproline-rich mid-section elicits the innate immune response
91 (39), and, through interactions with SPR, the disulphide bridge-containing C-terminus stimulates
92 the core post-mating responses of increased oviposition and reduced sexual receptivity (40–42).
93 Consequently, different portions of the *SP* coding sequence are likely to be evolving in response
94 to different selective pressures.
95
96 *SP* is not the only member of its gene family present in *D. melanogaster.* This species also
97 encodes the paralogous *Dup99b* with which SP shares a high degree of similarity in the amino
98 acid sequence of the C-terminus (43). Both stimulate the core post-mating responses of increased
99 oviposition and reduced sexual receptivity, but SP appears to be the 'key player' showing a higher
100 binding affinity for the female reproductive tract and nervous system (41) and, in *in vitro* assays,
101 activating SPR at lower concentrations than does Dup99b (36). There are further differences
102 between the paralogs, too. While *SP* is expressed in accessory gland main cells, *Dup99b* is
103 expressed in the ejaculatory duct (44). And, unlike SP, the N-terminus of Dup99b does not
104 stimulate juvenile hormone synthesis (38). Thus, SP and Dup99b show partial redundancy but

105 different sensitivities within one region of the protein and distinct activities in other regions,
106 suggesting a degree of functional separation between the two paralogs.
107
108 SP occupies an important place in contemporary evolutionary biology, having emerged as one of
109 the preeminent systems for experimental work on the genetic basis and fitness effects of sexual
110 conflict (6, 45–47). However, comparative data on how SP sequence and function has evolved
111 and diversified through time is sparse by comparison. Losses of *SP* have been reported in three
112 *Drosophila* species (*D. grimshawi, D. albomicans,* and *D. mojavensis*) and the gene's origin has
113 been traced as far back as the most recent common ancestor of *D. virilis* and *D. melanogaster;*
114 *SP* is apparently absent from mosquitoes and insect orders beyond Diptera (25, 48, 49). This
115 contrasts with its receptor, *SPR*, which is deeply conserved among members of the Ecdysozoa
116 and Lophotrochozoa, where it interacts with a similarly well conserved class of alternative ligands,
117 the myoinhibitory peptides (MIPs)(48). MIP-SPR interactions are known to regulate diverse
118 behaviours across species, including regulating larval settlement behaviour in marine annelids
119 (50). In *Drosophila,* MIP-SPR interactions appear to be neither necessary nor sufficient for driving
120 post-mating changes in females (48, 51), but they do fulfil other functions, including regulating
121 sleep behaviour (52). Despite SP predating the group, several features of the SP-SPR system
122 appear to be collectively restricted to the *melanogaster* species group, namely robust expression
123 of *SPR* in the female reproductive tract, the ability of DmelSP to bind to female reproductive tract
124 tissue, and a reduction in sexual receptivity upon injection of conspecific SP (25). Thus, despite
125 the presence of SP orthologs beyond the group, many of the defining features of SP in *D.*
126 *melanogaster* appear to be recently derived.
127
128 Taking advantage of newly available genomes for over 250 drosophilid species, here we report
129 that *SP* is a drosophilid innovation that originated in the lineage leading to the *Drosophilinae*
130 subfamily. We show that *SP* has subsequently followed markedly different evolutionary

131 trajectories in different branches of the phylogeny, including lineage-accelerated evolution in
132 sequence, copy number, and translocation frequency in the *melanogaster* group. Despite these
133 changes, *SP* expression remains restricted to the male reproductive tract. We further fail to find
134 support for the hypothesis that change in SP presence/absence or sequence is a significant driver
135 of evolutionary change in microcarrier morphology. Finally, we fail to find a signal of coevolution
136 between *SP* and the receptor through which it induces many of its effects in females, *SPR,* arguing
137 against a sexually antagonistic coevolutionary arms race between these loci on
138 macroevolutionary time scales.
139

140 **Results**

141 ***Sex Peptide* first evolved in the *Drosophilinae* subfamily.** To pinpoint the origin of *SP,* we
142 designed a pipeline to identify *SP* orthologs in whole-genome sequences. Our approach
143 combined reciprocal blast of the *D. melanogaster* SP C-terminus sequence with protein
144 sequence, gene structure, and synteny analysis. As in a previous study (48), we failed to detect
145 *SP* in a genome from the mosquito *Aedes aegypti,* and additionally failed to detect *SP* in genomes
146 from two calyptrate members of the Brachycera suborder to which *Drosophila* belongs: *Musca*
147 *domestica* (53) and *Glossina morsitans* (54). Within the Acalyptratae, we found that *SP* was
148 restricted to the *Drosophilidae* – specifically to the subfamily *Drosophilinae* Rondani (Figure 1).
149 Within the *Drosophilinae*, *SP* was present in genomes from several species that predate the
150 *Drosophilini,* the tribe that includes all members of the *Drosophila* genus (55). These non-
151 *Drosophilini* species included members of the *Colocasiomyini* tribe, including species within the
152 *Scaptodrosophila, Lissocephala, Chymomyza,* and *Colocasiomyia* genera, but several secondary
153 losses of SP were apparent. We failed to detect *SP* in genomes from 10 members of the other
154 *Drosophilidae* subfamily, the *Steganinae* Hendel, or members of several closely related
155 outgroups, namely the genera *Liriomyza, Cirrula, Ephydra,* and *Diastata.* We therefore infer that
156 *SP* first evolved in the *Drosophilinae* subfamily.

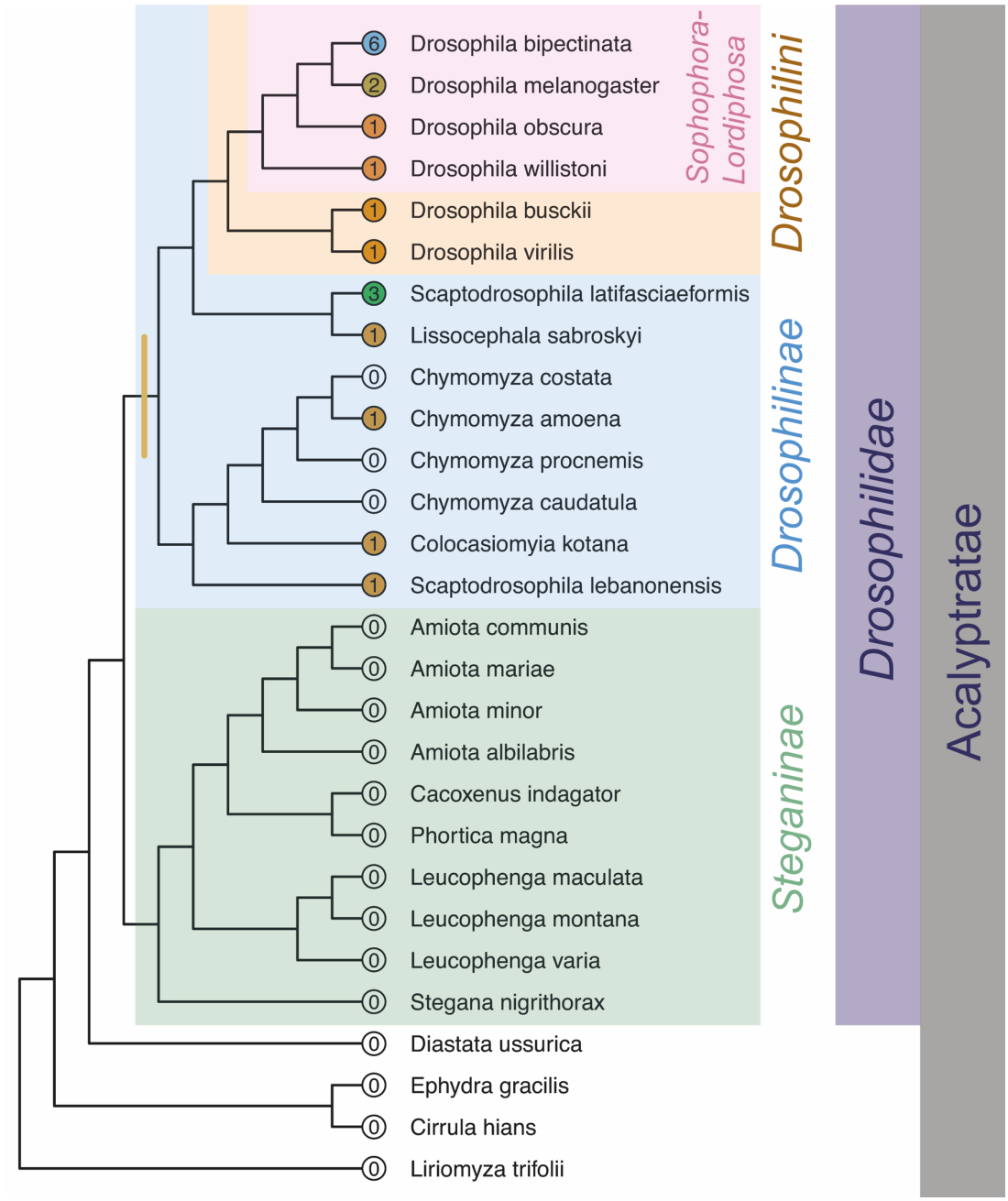

Figure 1. *SP* first evolved in the *Drosophilinae* subfamily. A phylogeny of species from across the *Drosophilidae* and closely related lineages. The number of *SP* genes detected is given in coloured circles at the tip of each branch. A brown bar denotes the branch on which we infer *SP* to have first evolved.

157

158 ***Sex Peptide* has been repeatedly lost and rarely duplicated outside of the *Sophophora-***

159 ***Lordiphosa* radiation.** Within our phylogenetic sample, the *Drosophilini* splits into two lineages.

160 The first contains the *Lordiphosa* genus and *Sophophora* subgenus (which we collectively refer
161 to as the '*Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation'), the latter of which includes the *melanogaster,*
162 *obscura, willistoni,* and *saltans* groups (see *SI Appendix Fig. S1* for an overview of the
163 *Sophophora* taxonomic terminologies used in this paper). The second lineage includes, among
164 others, the genera *Scaptomyza* and *Zaprionus* and the Hawaiian*, virilis, repleta, immigrans,*
165 *cardini,* and *quinaria* groups (the *Drosophila* genus is paraphyletic (55, 56)).
166
167 Outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation*,* we observed several features of *SP*'s evolution.
168 First, *SP* has been repeatedly and independently lost—four times in our phylogenetic sample.
169 Once in a monophyletic lineage of 29 species covering the *annumilana, bromeliae*, *nannoptera*,
170 *mesophragmatica*, and *repleta* groups (Figure 2; *SI Appendix, Fig. S2*). The other three separately
171 covered all 55 Hawaiian species in our dataset (Figure 2; *SI Appendix, Fig. S3*), a monophyletic
172 lineage within the *Scaptomyza* (Figure 2; *SI Appendix, Fig. S3*), and a species-specific loss in
173 *Hirtodrosophila duncani* (Figure 3). The second trend was that duplications of *SP* were rare.
174 Among the 53 non-*Sophophora-Lordiphosa* species in the *Drosophilini* in which we did detect *SP,*
175 all but one had just a single copy (Figure 2). The exception was *D. paramelanica* (*melanica* group)
176 in which we detected a tandem duplication, with the two copies sharing 100% identity in predicted
177 protein sequence. Outside of the *Drosophilini,* only *Scaptodrosophila latifasciaeformis* showed an
178 expansion in *SP* copy number, bearing 3 tandemly arranged copies that diverged from one
179 another in predicted protein sequence. The third trend was that *SP* rarely translocated to new
180 genomic locations. Where *SP* was detected in non-*Sophophora-Lordiphosa* species in the
181 *Drosophilini*, in all but two we found that it mapped to a syntenic neighbourhood on Muller element
182 D, which we call 'Muller D1', that contained orthologs of *FoxK, NaPi-III,* and *mRpL2.* The
183 exceptions were *Hirtodrosophila trivittata,* where *SP* mapped to a distinct neighbourhood on
184 Muller element D that contained orthologs of *bruno3, CG3349,* and *CG17173,* and *D. repletoides*,
185 in which *SP* mapped to a neighbourhood on Muller element B containing orthologs of *halo* and

186 *haf*. Outside of the *Drosophilini,* we also detected *SP* in the Muller D1 neighbourhood in *S.*

187 *lebanonensis* and *S. latifasciaeformis,* suggesting that this may be the ancestral position of *SP.*

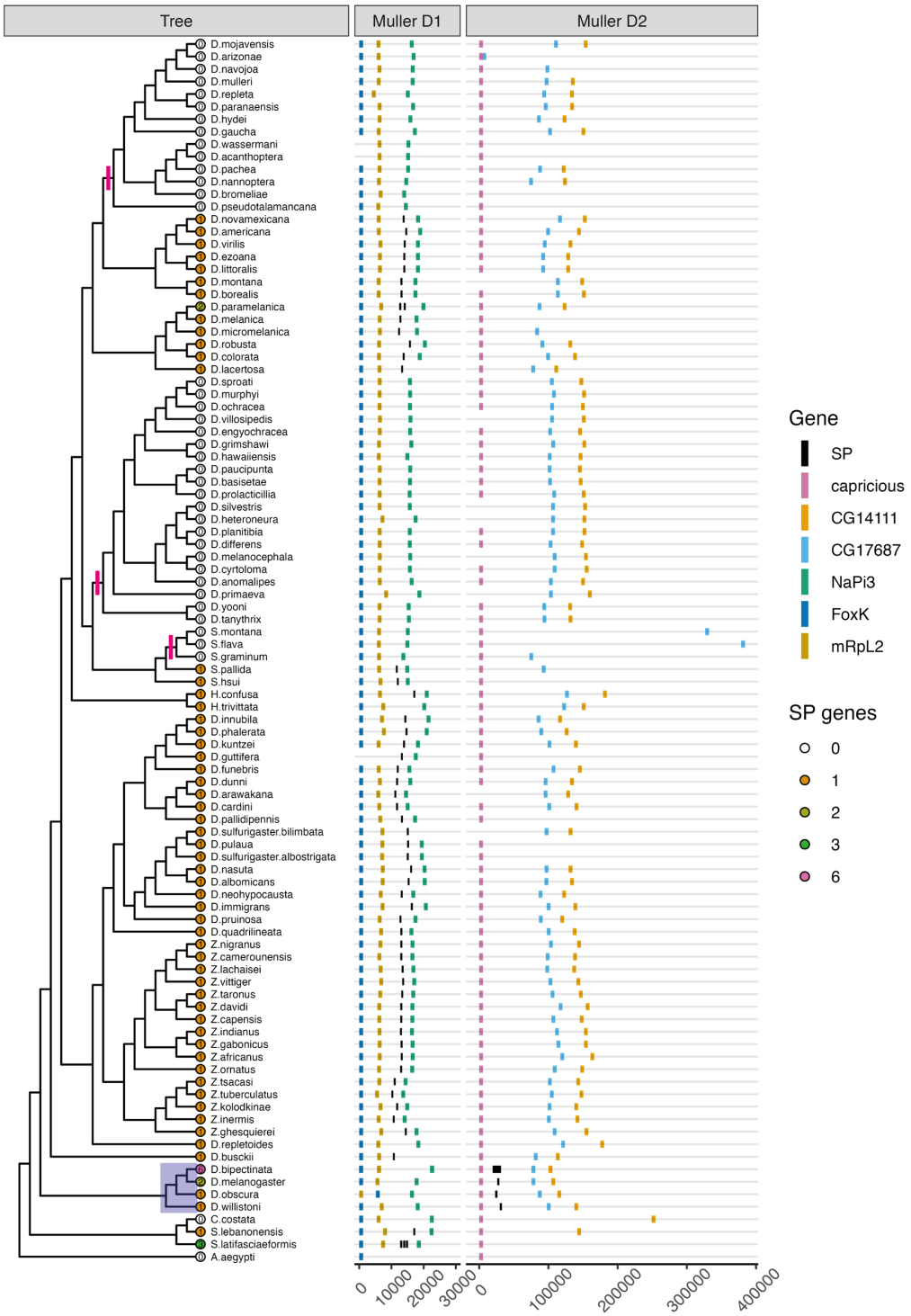

Figure 2. *Sex Peptide* family genes predate the *Drosophilini* and have been repeatedly lost outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation. (Legend continues on next page).

Figure 2. *Sex Peptide* family genes predate the *Drosophilini* and have been repeatedly lost outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation. This figure focuses on the non-*Sophophora-Lordiphosa* members of the *Drosophilini* (see Figure 1 and *SI Appendix, Fig. S1* for overviews of drosophilid taxonomy). A selection of *Sophophora* species, shaded in blue, are included for comparison. Also included are four non-*Drosophilini* dipterans: *Aedes aegypti* and three non-*Drosophilini* members of the *Drosophilinae* subfamily: *Chymomyza costata, Scaptodrosophila lebanonensis,* and *S. latifasciaeformis.* The number of *SP* genes detected in a representative of each species' genome is given at the tree tips. Losses are marked with a pink bar. For each species, the structures of two syntenic gene neighbourhoods are plotted. The first, Muller D1, is the canonical neighbourhood in which *SP* genes are detected outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa.* The second, Muller D2, is the canonical position in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa.* Positions of each gene are given relative to the first gene in the neighbourhood (*FoxK* or *capricious*). Absence of a flanking neighbourhood gene (*e.g., FoxK* in *D. wassermani*) doesn't necessarily mean the gene has been lost – it more likely means that a contig breakpoint fell within the neighbourhood. Note that *SP* in *Hirtodrosophila trivittata* and, independently, *D. repletoides,* has translocated out of the Muller D1 neighbourhood. See *SI Appendix, Figs S2 and 3* for expanded views of the losses in the *repleta* and *Hawaiian* groups, respectively.

188

189 ***Sex Peptide* has repeatedly duplicated in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation.** Within the
190 *Sophophora-Lordiphosa, SP* has followed a markedly different evolutionary trajectory. For one,
191 and despite denser taxon sampling in this part of the phylogeny, we detected at least one copy in
192 all species sampled—no species was entirely without *SP.* Second, we detected a clear uptick in
193 the frequency of duplication (Figure 3). In the earlier branching lineages, we detected apparently
194 independent duplications within a sublineage of the *Lordiphosa,* in *D. subobscura* (obscura group;
195 see also 57), and in *D. lowei* (*obscura* group). Within the *melanogaster* group we found much
196 greater variability in *SP* copy number, consistent with repeated, lineage-specific expansions and
197 contractions of gene family size. This variation was greatest in the "Oriental" lineage, which
198 includes *D. melanogaster,* and *ananassae* subgroup. As many as 7 tandemly arranged copies
199 were present in some *ananassae* subgroup species (Figure 4).

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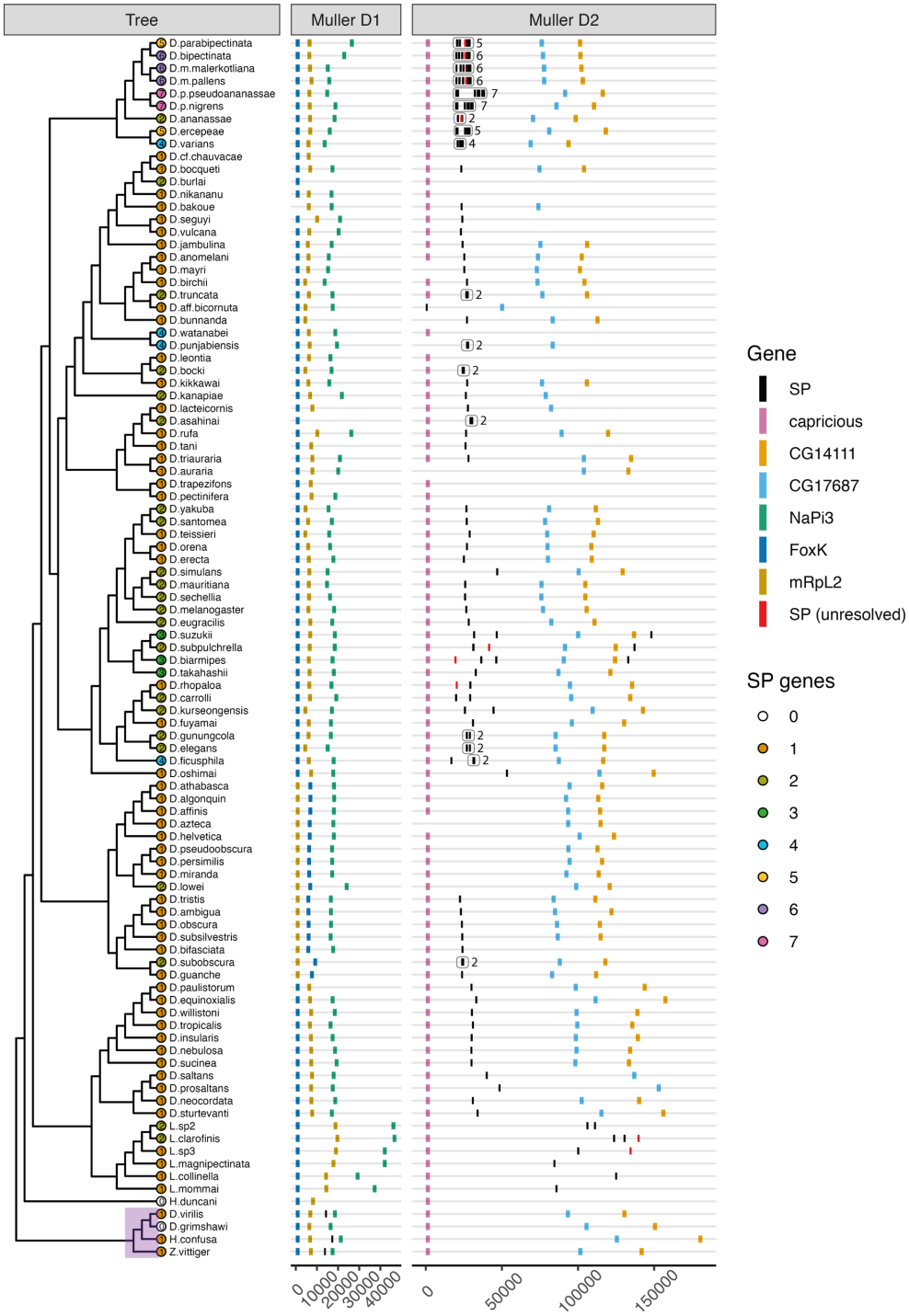

Figure 3. *Sex Peptide* copy number is markedly more variable in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation than in other branches of the phylogeny. This figure focuses on the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation to which *D. melanogaster* belongs. Four non-*Sophophora-Lordiphosa* drosophilids, shaded in purple, are included as outgroups. The structures of the Muller D1 and Muller D2 neighbourhoods are plotted as in Figure 2. Missing flanking genes are likely indicative of contig breakpoints falling within the neighbourhood. The exceptions are the *Lordiphosa* species, where substantially elevated intergenic distances meant that the whole neighbourhood would not

205

fit within the plot limits. Unresolved SP genes, shown in red, indicate genes that passed the reciprocal blast criteria and fell within one of the conserved *SP*-containing gene neighbourhoods but where a SP-like amino acid sequence couldn't be resolved (*e.g.,* due to a premature stop codon, as in the case of *D. rhopaloa*). Note that all members of the *obscura* group have an inversion that flips the relative positions of *FoxK* and *mRpL2* in the Muller D1 neighbourhood. In a number of cases, some or all copies of *SP* were found to have translocated outside of the Muller D1 and Muller D2 neighbourhoods (an *obscura* group lineage, the *melanogaster* subgroup, *D. kanapiae, D. takahashii*, and *D.eugracilis*; summarised in *SI Appendix Fig. S5*). In the shorter read *montium* subgroup assemblies, short contigs meant that in some species we couldn't identify the neighbourhood in which *SP* was located. This was the case for some *SP* genes in *D. cf. chauvacae, D. burlai, D. leontia, D. nikananu, D. pectinifera, D. punjabiensis,* and *D.watanabe*i. The *SP* genes in *D. auraria* and *D. trapezifons* could be mapped to the Muller D2 neighbourhood based on flanking sequence around the *SP* gene, but the *SP*-containing contigs were too small to include any of the neighbourhood genes.

To resolve the evolutionary relationships between *SP* paralogs within the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation, we constructed a tree of the predicted SP protein sequences (*SI Appendix, Fig. S4*). The tree supports numerous recent duplications affecting single species or species pairs, including in *D. elegans/D.gunungcola, D. takahashii, D.ficusphila, D. punjabiensis/D. watanabei, D. kanapiae,* and *D. subobscura*. The tree also suggests that there have been three separate expansions of *SP* copy number within the *ananassae* subgroup, one in the *bipectinata* complex and another in each of *D. varians* and *D. ercepeae* (*SI Appendix, Fig. S4*, coloured orange and blue, respectively), likely from an ancestral starting point of the two copies seen in *D. ananassae.* We note, however, that the sequence similarity that we observe between putative paralog pairs may be driven instead by concerted evolution.

Frequent translocations of *Sex Peptide* genes within the *Sophophora* subgenus. At the base of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation, *SP* appears to have translocated from the Muller D1 neighbourhood to a new neighbourhood ~2.1Mb away on the same Muller element (Figure 3). This syntenic neighbourhood, which we refer to as 'Muller D2', contains orthologs of *capricious, CG14111,* and *CG17687.* Despite translocation, the configuration of the ancestral Muller D1 gene neighbourhood remains intact in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa*. Thus, the mechanism of

translocation did not lead to the breakup of the Muller D1 neighbourhood via a larger scale rearrangement. Several further translocations are then present (summarised in *SI Appendix, Fig. S5*; *e.g.,* in the *obscura* group, *SI Appendix, Fig. S6*). Each of *D. suzukii, D. subpulchrella,* and *D. biarmipes*, which form a monophyletic clade within the "Oriental" lineage, bear SP copies in the canonical Muller D2 position with an additional copy just the other side of *CG14111* within the same neighbourhood (Figure 3). The protein tree supports a *Dup99b* identity for these copies that have skipped to the other side of *CG14111* (*SI Appendix, Fig. S4*, shown in pink). In *D. takahashii,* the sister species to this clade, two of the three SP genes we detected mapped to a neighbourhood on *D. melanogaster* Muller element B that contained *NLaz, robo2,* and *CG14346* orthologs. The protein tree also supports a *Dup99b* identity for these translocated copies (*SI Appendix, Fig. S4*, shown in pink). However, given the low support for internal nodes, we were not able to accurately determine the timing of the initial duplication that gave rise to separate *SP* and *Dup99b* copies.

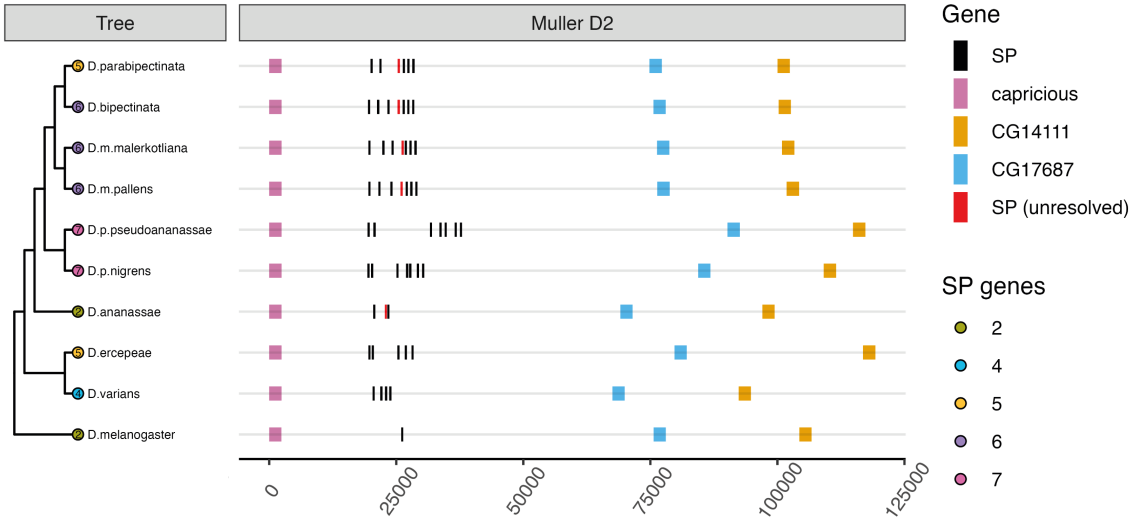

Figure 4. Repeated duplication of *Sex Peptide* genes in the *ananassae* subgroup. A phylogeny of the *ananassae* subgroup species used in this study, with *D. melanogaster* as an outgroup. The number of *SP* genes identified in each species is given at the tip of each branch. 'Unresolved' SP sequences, shown in red, are those which passed the reciprocal blast tests and fell within the syntenic Muller D2 gene neighbourhood but for which we could not resolve an SP-like protein sequence (*e.g.,* due to a premature stop codon). The structure of the neighbourhood is plotted on the right-hand side of the figure. Note that one of *D. melanogaster's SP* copies, *Dup99b,* falls outside of the Muller D2 neighbourhood.

249 In *D. melanogaster, SP* falls within the Muller D2 neighbourhood while its paralog *Dup99b* maps
250 to Muller element E in a neighbourhood that contains *dmrt99b, gycalpha99b,* and *CG34296.* This
251 arrangement appears to be ancestral to the *melanogaster* subgroup (*SI Appendix, Fig. S7A*,*B*).
252 The losses of an *SP* gene within a subset of species in this subgroup, namely *D. teissieri* (strain
253 CT02; present in 273.3)*, D. orena,* and *D. erecta,* affect the Muller element E *Dup99b* copy, rather
254 than the Muller D2 *SP* copy. In *D. eugracilis,* the *melanogaster* subgroup's sister species, *SP* is
255 present in the Muller D2 neighbourhood, with a second copy in a different position on Muller
256 element E that contains orthologs of *SmD2, CG18048,* and *Hr83*. Despite the lack of synteny, the
257 protein tree supports a *Dup99b* identity for this translocated copy (*SI Appendix, Fig. S4*).
258
259 **Male reproductive tract-biased expression is a conserved feature of *SP* genes**. Our
260 identification of *SP* genes was based on gene sequence data and synteny, leaving open the
261 question of whether and where they are expressed. For 19 species, we were able to test for
262 expression using RNA-seq datasets available through NCBI. 38 of the 42 *SP* genes we detected
263 across the 19 species were expressed, although many were un- or incorrectly annotated (*e.g.,* as
264 long non-coding RNAs) in the reference genomes (see *SI Appendix*). All 4 of those that weren't
265 expressed lacked SP-like protein sequences due to point mutations affecting either the start
266 codon or introducing premature stop codons, suggestive of pseudogenisation (*e.g.,* in *D.*
267 *rhopaloa*; *SI Appendix, Fig. S8*). Of the 38 *SP* genes we found to be expressed, all showed
268 strongly male-biased expression, including in the early branching *D. busckii* (*SI Appendix, Fig.*
269 *S9*). The one exception was detection of appreciable *SP* expression in a single *D. simulans* female
270 sample, which was due to sample contamination or mislabelling (*SI Appendix, Fig. S10*).
271
272 In all 10 species where we had tissue-specific expression data, including the distantly related *D.*
273 *virilis,* we observed clearly enriched expression of *SP* family genes in the male reproductive tract
274 (*SI Appendix, Fig. S11*). Where datasets were available for sub-portions of the male reproductive

275 tract, expression was generally substantially higher in samples labelled as accessory gland or
276 non-gonadal reproductive tissues than in samples labelled as testes. The extent of testes
277 expression was variable between samples and between species, perhaps reflecting varying
278 degrees of contamination between these closely associated tissues during dissection. Based on
279 these data, we conclude that male reproductive tract-biased expression is a conserved feature of
280 the *SP* gene family and is therefore likely the ancestral expression pattern within the *Drosophilini.*
281
282 **Accelerated evolution of Sex Peptide proteins in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation.**
283 Aligning 233 SP sequences from 148 genomes for the species shown in Figure 2 and 3, we find
284 that the C-terminus, which is responsible for stimulating post-mating responses in *D.*
285 *melanogaster* (33, 42), is highly conserved both inside and outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa*
286 radiation (*SI Appendix, Fig. S12A-C*). Several residues in this region, including the disulphide
287 bond forming cysteine residues, are present in almost all SP sequences in our dataset: within the
288 consensus sequence KWCRLNLGPAWGGRGKC, W_2, C_3, G_8, P_9, G_{12}, G_{13}, and C_{17} are each
289 conserved in >97% of sequences (*SI Appendix, Fig. S12A*). In contrast, the mid-section, which
290 has been implicated in stimulating innate immune responses (39), and the N-terminus (following
291 cleavage of the signal peptide), which is responsible for binding to sperm and stimulating juvenile
292 hormone synthesis (33), showed quite limited sequence conservation, suggesting more rapid
293 evolutionary change.
294
295 The predicted length of SP proteins showed elevated variability in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa*
296 radiation (*SI Appendix, Fig. S12D*). These differences held after *in silico* cleavage of predicted
297 signal peptides and were largely due to the introduction of additional amino acids upstream of the
298 post-mating-response-stimulating C-terminus. For 38 genes across 19 species, we were able to
299 use the RNA-seq data to validate our annotation of exon/intron boundaries. In all 38 cases our
300 predicted boundaries matched those derived from the RNA-seq data. The expression data alone

301 therefore supports a change in pre-cleavage SP sequence length between *e.g., D. virilis* (47aa)
302 and *D. rhopaloa* (60aa), as well as *D. bipectinata* expressing a set of 6 SP proteins of variable
303 length (46aa, 49aa, 54aa, 62aa, 68aa, 72aa). Moving on to SP protein sequence, a PCA
304 generated from substitution matrix scores showed a high degree of dispersion among
305 *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* orthologs relative to those from outside of the radiation (*SI Appendix,*
306 *Fig. S12E-G*). This included clear separation from the remaining sequences of SP – but not
307 Dup99b – orthologs from the "Oriental" lineage (except for the most basal species we sampled
308 from this lineage, *D. oshimai*). Their distinct clustering may be driven by their N-terminus and
309 midsection sequences, which showed limited conservation with those of other SP proteins. More
310 generally, the high degree of dispersion between sequences in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa,* and
311 particularly the *ananassae* subgroup, points to a high degree of sequence diversity within this
312 lineage.
313
314 **Microcarrier morphology is not clearly linked to the copy number of *Sex Peptide***. We next
315 wanted to explore functional consequences of the diversity in the phylogenetic distribution and
316 sequence of *SP* genes. Recently, SP was shown in *D. melanogaster* to be a key factor influencing
317 the assembly, disassembly, and morphology of microcarriers, lipid-based structures that appear
318 to store and traffic seminal fluid proteins (28). Because of this relationship between SP and
319 microcarrier structure, it was suggested that variation in SP sequence might be associated with
320 inter-specific variation in microcarrier morphology (28).
321
322 Using the neutral lipid-specific dye LipidTox, which has previously been used to stain
323 microcarriers (28), we sought to examine the relationship between SP and microcarrier structure
324 on two levels. The first was to ask whether variation in *SP* copy number is associated with a shift
325 in microcarrier morphology. For this, the *ananassae* subgroup provides an ideal system, given
326 that its constituent species encode between 2 and 7 *SP* copies. Within the *bipectinata* species

327 complex, all of the species that we looked at (*D. parabipectinata, D. bipectinata, D. m.*
328 *malerkotliana, D. m. pallens, D. p. nigrens*), which each encode between 5 and 7 *SP* copies,
329 showed small, globular microcarriers (Figure 5A-F), similar to those seen in the *obscura* group
330 (28). Curiously, however, and unlike those seen in the *obscura* group, these microcarriers
331 appeared to carry a central indentation reminiscent of the biconcave disk shape of human red
332 blood cells. This morphology was clearly distinct from that of *D. melanogaster* microcarriers, which
333 appear as a heterogeneous mix of fusiform, ellipsoid, and thread-like structures (Figure 5L). The
334 *bipectinata* complex morphology was also distinct from those of three other *ananassae* subgroup
335 species: *D. ananassae* (2 copies), which had thread-like and spiral or doughnut shaped
336 microcarriers (Figure 5G); *D. ercepeae* (5 copies), which had thread-like microcarriers (Figure
337 5H); and *D. varians* (4 copies), which displayed a highly divergent organization of the lumen's
338 contents (Figure 5I,J). In *D. varians*, LipidTox appeared to be excluded from vacuolar structures
339 that were filled with small, weakly stained droplets. The vacuoles appeared larger in the proximal
340 region of the gland, suggesting that they may fuse as they move towards the ejaculatory duct
341 (Figure 5J). We observed a similar pattern in the three-copy-encoding *D. takahashii*, a non-
342 *ananassae* subgroup species, although here the LipidTox staining was negligible (Figure 5N).
343 This contrasted with *D. takahashii*'s close relative *D. biarmipes,* which despite also encoding three
344 copies showed a unique staining pattern of strongly stained, tiny microcarriers that appeared to
345 aggregate (Figure 5M). The microcarriers of *D. biarmipes* adopted a conformation reminiscent of
346 *D. melanogaster's* following transfer to the female reproductive tract as they begin to break down
347 into smaller puncta (28). The conformation observed in *D. biarmipes* appears to be a derived state
348 as the more distantly related *D. carrolli* (Figure 5O) bears microcarriers that more closely resemble
349 those of *D. melanogaster, D. sechellia,* and *D. simulans* (Figure 5L; 23). Consequently, while the
350 *melanogaster* group shows remarkable diversity in both microcarrier morphology and *SP* copy
351 number, there appears to be no clear relationship between them.
352

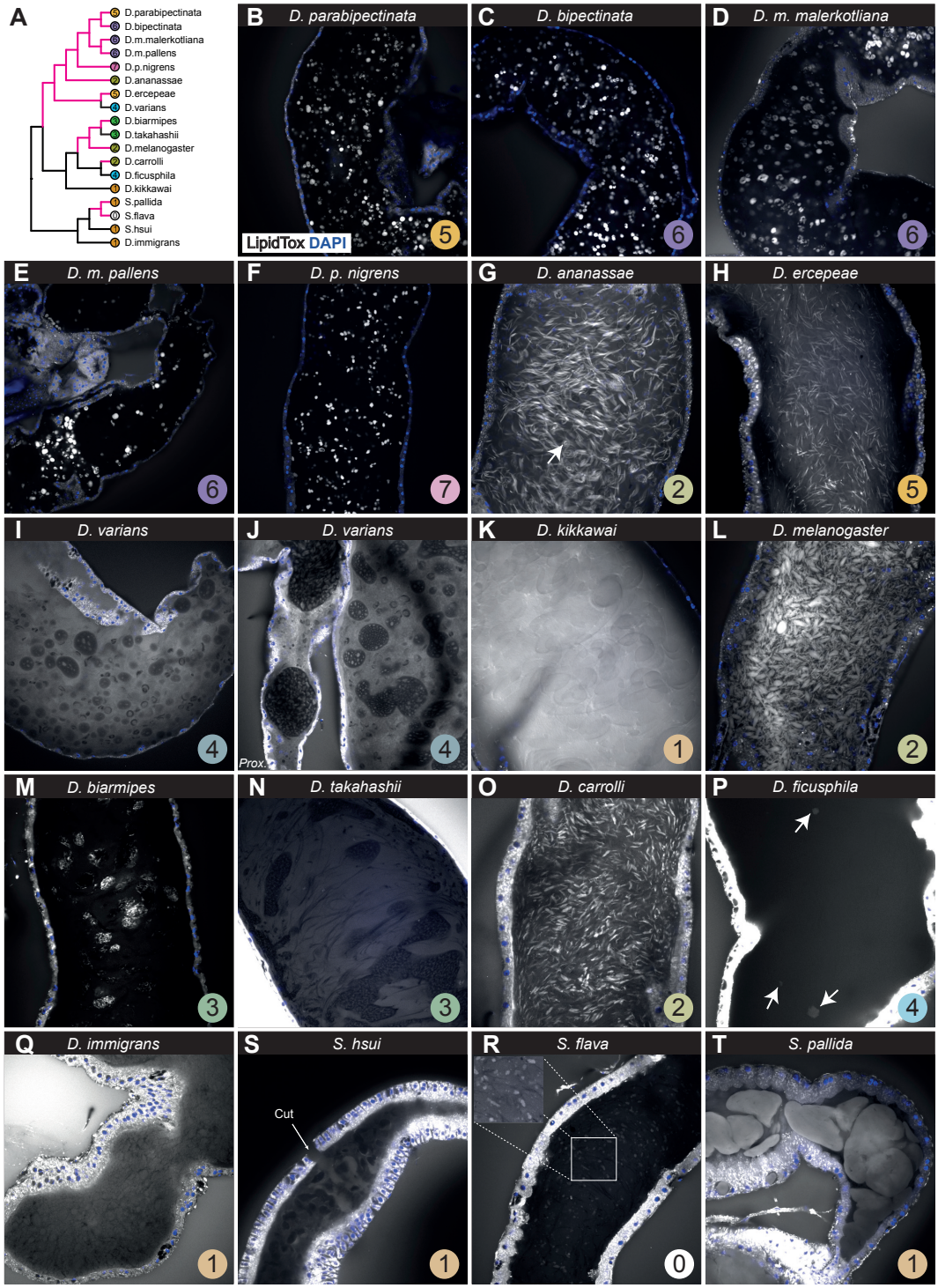

Figure 5. *Sex Peptide* is neither necessary nor sufficient for microcarriers. (A) A phylogeny of all species included in this figure. Branches coloured pink indicate species shown in B-T that demonstrate canonical (*i.e., D. melanogaster*-like) staining with LipidTox, a neutral lipid-specific dye used to selectively stain microcarriers (28). (B-T) Accessory glands stained with LipidTox and the nuclear stain DAPI (blue). The circled number in the bottom right-hand corner of each panel

353

indicates the number of *Sex Peptide* copies we detect in each species. (G) The arrow is highlighting a spiral/doughnut shaped microcarrier, a shape which is rare in comparison to the more common thread-like conformation in this species. (J) Prox. refers to the proximal region of the gland, *i.e.* the region that connects to the ejaculatory duct. (P) Arrows point to the ambiguous, sparse, and weakly stained material we observed in *D. ficusphila* glands. (S) An arrow points to a cut in the glandular epithelium, which was made to enhance dye penetration. In each case, glands were co-stained in the same well with those from *D. melanogaster* to act as a positive control.

354

355 **Detection of microcarrier-like, but LipidTox^{-}, structures within and beyond *Sophophora*.**
356 Previous staining of accessory glands from the single-copy-encoding *D. virilis* demonstrated that
357 a copy of *SP* is not sufficient for LipidTox-stained microcarriers (28). *D. virilis* instead displayed a
358 more uniform 'flocculence' within the gland's lumen that showed little evidence of LipidTox
359 staining. We observed a similar flocculent arrangement in the single-copy-encoding *D. immigrans*
360 (Figure 5Q). We also observed an essentially microcarrier-free glandular lumen in the four-copy-
361 encoding *D. ficusphila* (Figure 5P). In this species we observed only a handful of weakly stained
362 structures per gland, the rarity and structural inconsistency of which renders their classification
363 as microcarriers doubtful. Alongside these cases, we detected instances of microcarrier-like,
364 ellipsoid structures that failed to take up LipidTox in several species from diverse parts of the
365 drosophilid tree, namely the *montium* subgroup species *D. kikkawai* (Figure 5K) and the non-
366 *Sophophora* species *Scaptomyza hsui* (Figure 5S). All four of these species – *D.immigrans, D.*
367 *ficusphila, D.kikkawai,* and *S. hsui* – each encode at least one *SP* copy, providing further support
368 for the claim that a copy of *SP* is not sufficient for LipidTox^{+} microcarriers.

369

370 **Microcarriers predate the *Sophophora,* but copies of *Sex Peptide* are neither necessary**
371 **nor sufficient for their presence**. Staining glands from a species that we identified as having
372 lost the *SP* gene*, S. flava,* we observed small, globular microcarriers reminiscent of those from
373 the *obscura* group, albeit weaker in their staining (Figure 5R). Thus, *SP* is not necessary for
374 microcarriers. Moreover, the previous complement of species that had been stained suggested

375 that LipidTox$^+$ microcarriers were confined to the *obscura* and *melanogaster* groups. We now
376 show that they are present outside the *Sophophora.*
377
378 To better understand the distribution of microcarriers within the *Scaptomyza,* we also looked at
379 *S. flava*'s single-copy-encoding sister species, *S. pallida*. This species showed strong LipidTox
380 staining, but the pattern was unlike any other species we looked at (Figure 5T). Rather than the
381 lumen being filled with large numbers of small microcarriers with well-defined shapes, the *S.*
382 *pallida* lumen was filled with substantial clouds of stained secretion that in many cases spanned
383 the full diameter of the gland's internal space. This pattern was reminiscent of that observed in
384 repeatedly mated *SP* null – but not wild-type – *D. melanogaster* males (28). Thus, in the presence
385 of an *SP* ortholog we observe in *S. pallida* an apparent phenocopying of an *SP* null conformation,
386 further evidence that microcarrier morphology may, at a broad taxonomic scale, be largely
387 decoupled from evolutionary change in *SP.*
388
389 **No clear signal of episodic diversifying selection in SPR sequence among drosophilids.** If
390 SP is coevolving with the G-protein coupled receptor (GPCR) through which it induces many of
391 its effects, SPR (36), then we might predict that bursts of evolutionary change in *SP* copy number
392 and protein sequence correlate with similar bursts of change in SPR. Resolving *SPR* sequences
393 from 193 genomes (the species shown in Figures 2 and 3), we failed to detect a single instance
394 of duplication, suggesting that the mode of evolutionary change is decoupled between *SP* and
395 *SPR.* For 5 species, including two that had lost *SP* (*S. flava* and *S. montana*), we failed to resolve
396 an SPR sequence (*SI Appendix, Fig. S13*). Thus, while there is no phylogenetically repeatable
397 association in the copy number of the two genes, the loss of one can be accompanied by the loss
398 of the other.
399
400

401

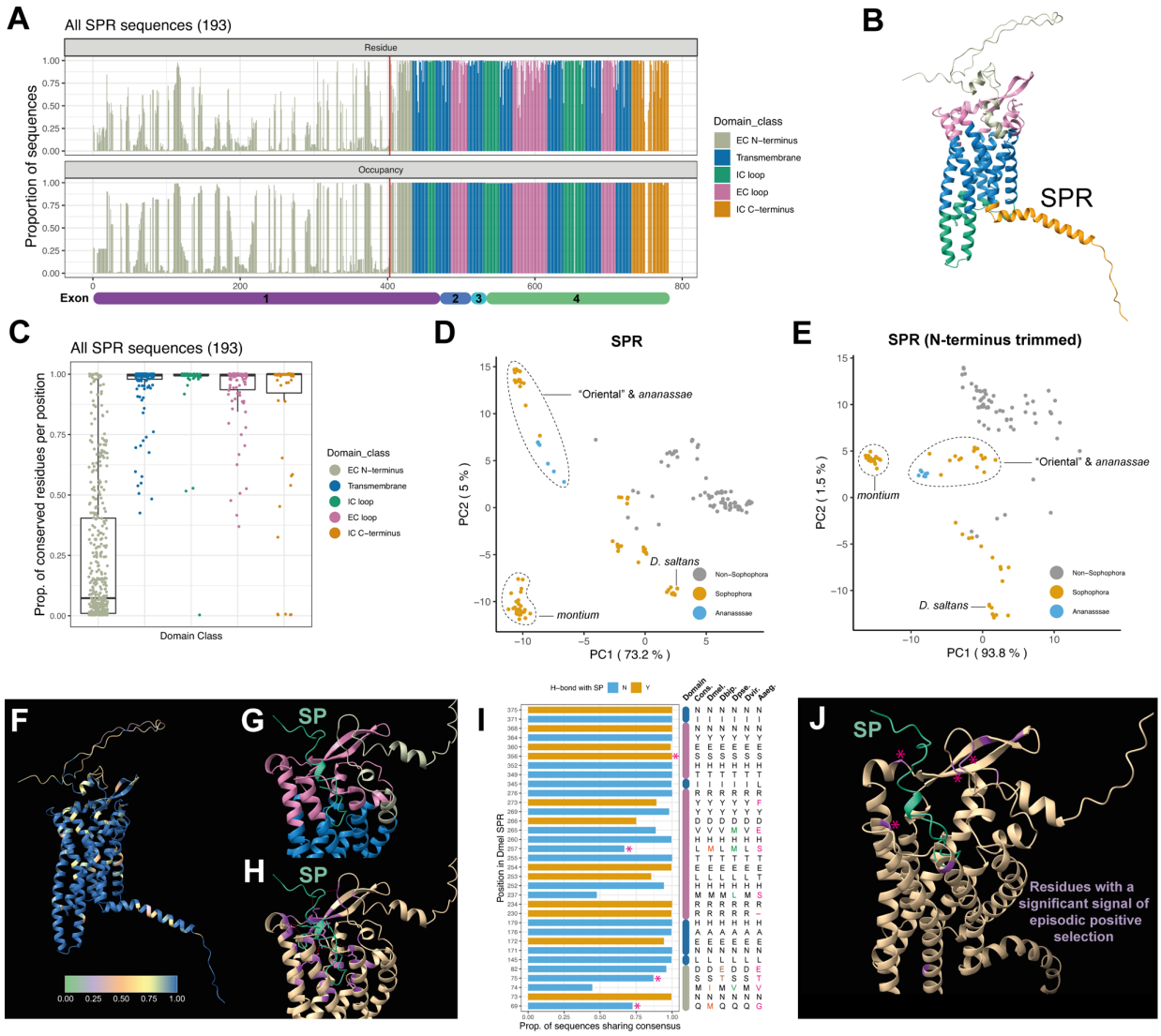

Figure 6. SPR residues showing evidence of episodic positive selection are enriched in the ligand-facing domains. (A) A consensus sequence based on MAFFT alignment of the resolvable amino acid sequences of *SPR* coding sequences. The top plot gives the proportion of sequences with the consensus amino acid in the same position, while the bottom plot gives the proportion of sequences in which each position is occupied in the alignment. Each residue is coloured based on the functional domain to which it belongs based on the UniProt annotations. The red line indicates the start of the conserved region we use in the molecular evolution analyses. Beneath the plot, we show the corresponding exon that encodes each consensus residue. EC = extracellular, IC = intracellular (B) The AlphaFold prediction of the structure of *D. melanogaster* SPR as downloaded from UniProt (AF-Q8SWR3-F1) and coloured by the domain each residue belongs to based on positions listed in the UniProt 'Features' table. (C) A boxplot showing the proportion of residues at each position that matched the consensus residue (*i.e.,* the degree of conservation at each position). Residues are plotted separately according to their domain class of origin. (D) PCA plot based on BLOSUM62 substitution scores from the MAFFT-aligned SPR protein sequences. The percentage values in the axis titles reflect the proportion of variance explained by a given PC. Points are coloured based on whether they correspond to *Sophophora-Lordiphosa,* non-*Sophophora-Lordiphosa,* or *ananassae* subgroup species. (E) As (D) but after removing the non-conserved region of the N-terminus (*i.e.,* the region preceding the red line in (A)). (F) The same prediction shown in (B) but with residues coloured by the proportion of conserved residues per position (see also Supplementary movie 1). High values indicate high conservation. (G) The ColabFold top-ranked prediction of the interactions between

SP (shown in green) and SPR (residues coloured by domain). (H) As in (G) but with predicted contact residues coloured purple and predicted hydrogen bonds between SP and SPR residues shown with red-dotted lines (See also Supplementary movies 2 and 3). (I) A bar chart showing the proportion of sequences sharing the consensus residue for each predicted contact residue. Bars are coloured by whether the residue is also predicted to form a hydrogen bond with SP. Asterisks denote predicted contact residues for which we detected evidence of episodic positive selection using *MEME.* Alongside the plot, coloured bars, using the same colour scale as in (A-C), denote the functional domain the residue falls within. The two adjacent blue bars denote separate, consecutive transmembrane domains. Alongside are the corresponding amino acid residues in each position for each of the consensus ('Cons.'), *D. melanogaster* ('Dmel.'), *D. bipectinata* ('Dbip.'), *D. pseudoobscura* ('Dpse.'), *D. virilis* ('Dvir.'), and *A. aegypti* ('Aaeg.') sequences. Residues that depart from the mode among these plotted sequences are coloured. (J) As (G) but colouring only the 10 residues in SPR for which we detected evidence of positive selection using *MEME*. Asterisks denote predicted contact residues that show evidence of positive selection.

At the sequence level, we found that evolutionary change in SPR is concentrated in the extracellular N-terminus domain, perhaps consistent with evolution under relaxed selection (see *SI Appendix, Supp. Text*), with the remainder of the protein sequence showing much stronger conservation (Figure 6A-C; *SI Appendix, Fig. S13*). PCA suggested that while the degree of diversity among SPR sequences was apparently higher in the *ananassae* subgroup and "Oriental" lineages relative to the *montium* subgroup, the overall diversity did not appear markedly elevated in these lineages compared to the full spectrum of SPR sequences (Figure 6D, E). After removing the poorly conserved N-terminus region, we found no evidence for episodic diversifying selection in *SPR* sequences using branch- (aBSREL, 58) or gene- (BUSTED, 59) level tests for selection. This held whether we formally tested all branches, only those in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation, or only those outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation (see *SI Appendix* for how to view the full output of these analyses). Thus, we fail to find evidence of a burst in evolutionary change in *SPR* that correlates with the lineage-accelerated evolutionary changes we record for *SP*.

SPR sites with evidence of episodic positive selection are disproportionately located in predicted extracellular facing domains. Several residues in the extracellular loops and

420 extracellular facing transmembrane domains – regions likely to be critical for ligand-binding –
421 showed reduced conservation (Figure 6A, F; Supplementary movie 1). To assess whether these
422 sites are under selection, we used *FUBAR* (60) to test for evidence of pervasive diversifying
423 selection at individual sites in the N-terminus trimmed SPR sequence. We detected evidence of
424 *pervasive* diversifying selection at 0/377 sites and purifying selection at 357/377. We followed this
425 analysis with a test for *episodic* positive selection at individual sites, implemented through *MEME*
426 (61). In this analysis, we detected evidence of episodic positive selection at 10/377 sites. Running
427 the same analysis separately for the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* (91 species) and non-*Sophophora-*
428 *Lordiphosa* species (89 species), we identified 4/371 and 5/376 sites respectively as showing
429 evidence of episodic positive selection (the identity of these positively selected sites did not
430 overlap between the two analyses). Therefore, we found no evidence that the proportion of sites
431 experiencing episodic positive selection was elevated in the *Sophophora*, which includes the
432 lineages in which *SP* showed greatest evolutionary change.
433
434 Intriguingly, of the 10 positively selected sites identified in the phylogeny-wide analysis, 9 fell
435 within extracellular domains: 3 in the N-terminus region close to the start of the first
436 transmembrane domain, 6 across the three extracellular loops, and then one in the third
437 intracellular loop. Using ColabFold (62–65) to generate a model of SP-SPR interactions (*SI*
438 *Appendix, Fig. S14A-C*) and ChimeraX (66), we detected 33 residues in SPR that were predicted
439 to interface with SP, of which 12 were additionally predicted to form hydrogen bonds with SP
440 residues (Figure 6G-I; Supplementary movies 2, 3). Most of these residues were highly conserved
441 across the 193 sequences: 12/33 were 100% conserved and 20/33 were >99% conserved (Figure
442 6I). But this level of conservation was not atypical among the extracellular facing residues: those
443 that neighboured the predicted contact residues were similarly well conserved (*SI Appendix, Fig.*
444 *S14E*). Of the 13 less well conserved residues, none showed clear evidence of concerted change
445 among *ananassae* subgroup, Oriental lineage, or *Sophophora* species. However, there was a

446 significant enrichment of sites showing significant evidence of episodic positive selection among
447 the 33 predicted contact residues (4/33; χ^2=12.56, *df* =1, *p*=0.0004; marked by asterisks in Figure
448 6I,J). Overall, therefore, while we do detect evidence that sites in the putative SP-binding pocket
449 of SPR have undergone episodic positive selection, the number of changes does not appear to
450 be elevated in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation where the major genomic and functional
451 changes (e.g., 25) in SP have occurred.
452
453 **A validated mutational route that SPR could take to decouple responses to SP and MIPs**
454 **remains unexploited in drosophilids**. If receipt of SP is associated with a net reduction in
455 female fitness, the potentially deleterious effects of disrupting MIP-SPR interactions may
456 constrain SPR's ability to evolve to defend against SP binding. However, substitution of certain
457 residues in SPR can have decoupled effects on the receptor's sensitivity to its different ligands.
458 Specifically, replacing the QRY motif at the boundary between the second intracellular loop and
459 third transmembrane domain with the DRY motif more widely found in class A GPCRs is
460 associated with a decrease in the responsiveness of SPR to SP, but not the ancestral MIP ligands,
461 in *in vitro* assays (51). Yet in no drosophilid did we detect change at this position. Therefore, this
462 potential avenue through which substitution of a single amino acid, albeit requiring change at two
463 nucleotide positions, could reduce sensitivity to SP without affecting pre-existing ligand
464 interactions remains unexploited.
465
466 **Discussion**
467 Over the past few decades, we've built up a detailed understanding of the function of SP in *D.*
468 *melanogaster*. We know that it is required for the normal assembly and disassembly of seminal
469 storage and trafficking structures ("microcarriers", 28); that it triggers an extensive range of
470 physiological and behavioural changes in females, at least some of which are mediated by its
471 interactions with SPR in female reproductive tract neurons (34–36); and that SP's effects in

472 females are extended via its binding to the surface of sperm, a process facilitated by a network of
473 other male-derived proteins (29, 30, 32, 33). And yet, previous work has suggested that despite
474 its integral roles in *D. melanogaster* reproduction, and despite the complex sperm-binding
475 machinery with which it interacts, *SP* is restricted to drosophilids and perhaps, therefore, a
476 drosophilid innovation (48). Consequently, *SP* represents a powerful system in which to chart the
477 origin and diversification of function in a novel gene across different lineages. The cross-species
478 analysis of *SP* and *SPR* genes that we report here makes several contributions to this.
479
480 The first relates to the phylogenetic distribution of *SP* genes. Previous work traced *SP* as far back
481 as the split between *D. melanogaster* and *D. virilis* and identified three apparently independent
482 loss events in the non-*Sophophora* species *D. grimshawi, D. mojavensis,* and *D. albomicans* (25,
483 48, 49). The data we present here pushes the origin of *SP* back to the base of the *Drosophilinae.*
484 We also showed that *SP* is present in a genome of *D. albomicans* and that the losses in *D.*
485 *grimshawi* and *D. mojavensis* are not species-specific, but instead cover much larger radiations,
486 including all 55 members of the Hawaiian radiation that we sampled and, independently, the
487 lineage leading to the *annulimana*, *bromeliae*, *nannoptera,* and *repleta* groups. Alongside, we
488 detected evidence of additional losses in *H. duncani* and a lineage of *Scaptomyza*. Given the
489 critical role of *SP* in many aspects of *D. melanogaster* reproduction these losses are intriguing
490 and may reflect a lower functional importance of *SP* outside of the *Sophophora*. Consistent with
491 this, SP injection experiments suggest that the ability of SP to reduce female sexual receptivity is
492 restricted to the *melanogaster* group (25). Where *SP* has been lost it may be that its functions
493 have been taken over by non-homologous proteins. Indeed, there is a clear precedent for non-
494 homologous reproductive proteins being used to achieve similar phenotypic endpoints in different
495 insect species (20, 21).
496

497 The second is our detection of substantial variation in copy number and sequence in the
498 *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation*,* a feature that was particularly pronounced in the "Oriental"
499 lineage and *ananassae* subgroup. Outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa, SP* is almost invariably
500 a single (or 0) copy gene. But inside*,* where we detect repeated, independent duplication of *SP*
501 across lineages, the story is quite different. Repeated duplication is at its most extreme in the
502 *ananassae* subgroup, where we see as many as 7 copies present in *D. pseudoananassae*
503 *nigrens.* Importantly, in this subgroup the intraspecific paralogs are not identical in sequence.
504 Instead, they generally showed considerable variation in length and amino acid composition.
505 What, then, are the functional consequences of this intraspecific diversity? If these paralogs are
506 all interacting with SPR and varying to different degrees in their C-terminal sequences, do they
507 vary in the efficiency with which they bind SPR? Or are they specialised for different receptors?
508 We know, for example, that *D. melanogaster* SP can activate another GPCR, Methusaleh (Mth*),*
509 *in vitro.* However, SP-Mth interactions don't seem to be required for the post-mating increase in
510 egg production or reduction in sexual receptivity – at least in *D. melanogaster* (67). There is also
511 evidence that SP can induce some of its effects in *D. melanogaster* independently of *SPR,*
512 pointing to the potential existence of additional, unidentified receptors (68). Thus, it's possible that
513 SP might be evolving in some lineages to make use of a wider set of receptors, a process that
514 copy number amplification might facilitate.
515
516 But what about the other regions of SP proteins, the regions beyond the post-mating response
517 stimulating C-terminus? After all, it's the N-terminus and midsection regions that we show to be
518 most variable between homologs. In *D. melanogaster*, we know that SP binds to sperm at its N-
519 terminus; the N-terminal WEWPWNR motif then remains bound to SP after the rest of the peptide
520 is cleaved (33). Our data suggest that clear variants of this motif are restricted to at least one SP
521 copy in the Muller D2 neighbourhood of each member of the "Oriental" lineage (except for *D.*
522 *oshimai*). This raises two possibilities: (1) the ability of SP to bind sperm is restricted to SP copies

523 carrying variants of this motif in this lineage; (2) the protein network that underlies SP-sperm
524 binding can facilitate attachment using a wide set of N-terminus sequences. Such flexibility might
525 stem from rapid evolution of the sequence or identity of SP network proteins, or of any sperm
526 surface proteins that SP might interact with. Indeed, there is evidence that several sex peptide
527 network proteins have experienced recurrent positive selection in the *melanogaster* group (49).
528 Flexible use of N-terminus sequences may also be due to some inherent, accommodating
529 property of the sperm binding apparatus. Consistent with this, no such WEWPWNR motif is
530 present in *D. melanogaster* Dup99b, but it nevertheless binds to sperm, albeit only to the sperm
531 head and only during the first few hours after mating, unlike SP (69). But whether Dup99b is
532 relying on the same network of proteins as SP to bind to sperm, or perhaps interacting with distinct
533 proteins on the sperm surface, remains untested. Where multiple, divergent SP copies are
534 present, as in the *ananassae* subgroup for example, we may be seeing specialisation in the N-
535 terminus region that relates to a given peptide's mechanism of interacting with the female: while
536 some may be adapted to bind sperm, others might be adapted to enter into the hemolymph, as
537 *D. melanogaster* SP has been shown to do (70).
538
539 The third relates to the genomic distribution of *SP* genes. We observed that *SP* genes have
540 frequently translocated to new genomic locations, a feature that's particularly pervasive in
541 *Sophophora.* A key question here is to what extent these translocations have shaped the evolution
542 of SP function. For example, did the 'Muller D1' to 'Muller D2' translocation at the base of the
543 *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* lineage open the door to the novel evolutionary trajectories taken within
544 this lineage? We could imagine that this translocation placed *SP* within a new *cis*-regulatory
545 environment that changed either the strength, timing, or tissue-specificity of its expression,
546 thereby exposing it to new selective forces. Our data suggest against this at a global level, at least
547 in relation to tissue-specificity, as we observed accessory gland biased expression of *SP* in *D.*
548 *virilis*, a species that pre-dates the translocation. However, it's possible that subsequent

549 translocations within some branches of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation are associated with
550 shifts in expression pattern to new subregions of the male reproductive tract. After all, the
551 translocated Muller element E copy of *SP* in *D. melanogaster* (*Dup99b*) is expressed not in the
552 accessory glands, like *SP,* but in the ejaculatory duct (44).
553
554 The fourth is our failure to detect a clear association between evolutionary change in *SP* and
555 microcarriers. The presence of LipidTox^{+} microcarriers in *S. flava,* which lacks a copy of *SP*,
556 suggests that *SP* isn't necessary for microcarriers. Moreover, the absence of canonical LipidTox^{+}
557 microcarriers in *SP*-encoding species, such as *D. immigrans*, suggests that a copy of *SP* isn't
558 sufficient. Thus, SP playing a role in structuring microcarriers might itself be a derived trait, as
559 might its association with microcarriers more broadly (*e.g.,* as a microcarrier cargo), thereby
560 casting doubt on the idea that this could be SP's ancestral function (15). This association might
561 be relatively recent, as even among many *SP*-bearing *Sophophora* species variation in *SP* copy
562 number and sequence doesn't seem to be obviously connected to variation in microcarrier
563 morphology. Our stainings also raise the issue of what exactly defines a 'microcarrier'. The
564 detection of LipidTox^{-}, ellipsoid, microcarrier-like structures and LipidTox^{-} flocculence raises the
565 question of whether these represent fundamentally different structures to microcarriers or whether
566 taking up LipidTox (an indicator that they contain large quantities of triglycerides and other
567 nonpolar lipids (28)) is a feature of some, but not all, microcarriers – a feature that our data
568 suggest appears to have been gained and lost repeatedly, perhaps in line with higher-level dietary
569 or metabolic changes.
570
571 Our data point to lineage-accelerated evolution of *SP* within the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa*
572 radiation, marked by repeated, independent rounds of gene family expansion. What forces are
573 driving this trend? And why does it appear to be so much more pervasive in these lineages? A
574 tempting response to the latter question is that it coincides with some evolutionary shift in the

575 activity of SP. A previous study of 11 drosophilid species found that the ability of conspecific SP
576 to reduce female sexual receptivity is confined to the *melanogaster* group (25). Intriguingly, this
577 gain in responsiveness to SP also appears to coincide with both the gain of robust expression of
578 *SPR* within the female reproductive tract and the ability of SP (derived from *D. melanogaster*) to
579 bind to female reproductive tract tissue (25). Viewed from a sexual conflict perspective, therefore,
580 we might be detecting the effects of a sexually antagonistic coevolutionary arms race that was
581 initiated after the acquisition of new functions by SP. If responding to SP is deleterious to female
582 fitness (*e.g.,* 43), then females might evolve resistance, in turn selecting for structurally divergent
583 copies of *SP* through which males can overcome that resistance. Indeed, the numerous,
584 structurally divergent copies of *SP* expressed by members of the *ananassae* subgroup are
585 consistent with theory suggesting that males might gain from transferring diverse sexually
586 antagonistic seminal fluid products simultaneously as a 'combination' strategy to overcome the
587 evolution of resistance (71).
588
589 But if females are evolving resistance, then we fail to find strong evidence that it is occurring
590 through *SPR*. The only region of SPR where we see extensive evolutionary change is in the N-
591 terminus. But there are reasons to believe that any role this region plays in ligand binding is
592 relatively minor (see *SI Appendix, Supp. Text*). And while we detect evidence of episodic, but not
593 pervasive, positive selection at 10 sites in SPR beyond the N-terminus, these changes were
594 distributed throughout the phylogeny and without enrichment in the lineages experiencing
595 accelerated evolution of *SP.* Why, then, are we not seeing SPR rapidly evolving in concert with
596 SP? One explanation is that the evolution of SPR is constrained by the need to maintain
597 interactions with additional ligands, such as MIPs. But we know from *in vitro* assays that there is
598 at least one mutational route for SPR that has decoupled effects on MIP and SP binding,
599 negatively affecting the latter more strongly than the former (51). And yet across 193 drosophilid
600 SPR sequences we failed to find any instance where this route has been exploited (though it

601 would require a double mutation). Another possibility is that any resistance to SP-mediated sexual
602 antagonism might be mediated up- or down-stream of SP-SPR binding, such as via mechanisms
603 that degrade SP, block it from binding, or in how the neural circuitry that SPR feeds into responds
604 to SP. One such potential action point is sperm cleavage: if females could block the cleavage of
605 SP from the surface of the sperm – the mechanism for which remains uncharacterised – then they
606 could markedly reduce the timeframe over which SP's effects are active (~10-14 days in D.
607 melanogaster; 30).
608
609 But limited evolutionary change in *SPR* is also consistent with another possibility: the role of
610 sexual conflict in driving the evolution of SP might be relatively weak. While the functions of SP
611 are often framed in terms of male manipulation of female reproductive decision-making or
612 collateral damage in the pursuit of improved performance in sperm competition (e.g., 72–75), the
613 evidence base for this is not strong (reviewed in 15). There is theoretical support for antagonistic
614 effects of seminal proteins in general (*e.g.,* 83) and empirical support in *D. melanogaster* for the
615 antagonistic effects of seminal proteins (77) and SP specifically (45, 78), but there is also empirical
616 support for positive, neutral, and context-dependent (*i.e.,* in relation to female nutritional state)
617 effects of SP on female fitness (46, 47, 79), as well as considerable uncertainty over the extent
618 to which fitness measurements made in these laboratory studies reflect those experienced by
619 wild-living populations (15, 80). Indeed, the recently demonstrated gain of both robust *SPR*
620 expression in a subset of female reproductive tract neurons and the ability of SP to bind to
621 reproductive tract tissue in the *melanogaster* group (25) suggests that females did, at least at
622 some point, benefit from responding to SP, perhaps as part of a mechanism through which the
623 receipt of sperm could be aligned with the induction of reproductive processes. Whether that may
624 have subsequently initiated conflict – and what the associated genomic consequences might have
625 been – remains to be resolved.
626

627 The high diversity we detect in SP coupled with the low diversity documented in the receptor
628 mirrors patterns that have been recorded at the morphological level. While there are instances of
629 correlated diversification between male-specific traits and female defensive traits that are
630 suggestive of coevolutionary arms races over mating rate, such as in the clasping and anti-
631 clasping structure of *Gerris* water striders (81, 82), there are also a great many male-specific traits
632 across arthropods that show rapid interspecific diversification without apparent change in the
633 female structures they contact (83). In such cases, the diversification of male traits has
634 traditionally been thought to be driven by sexual selection under female choice (17). Others,
635 notably Eberhard and Cordero, have argued that seminal proteins may similarly be evolving under
636 female choice (16, 18). In terms of SP, this may mean that a female gains from discriminating
637 between different males on the basis of the dose or sequence of SP she receives, tailoring her
638 use of sperm or overall reproductive investment in response (15, 84). This, in turn, may select for
639 diversification in SP sequence or increases in expression (perhaps via copy number amplification)
640 to meet female preferences (85).
641
642 Ultimately, sexual conflict and sexual selection by female choice needn't act entirely
643 independently (15, 86, 87). But disentangling the historical importance of these forces in driving
644 the evolution of SP-female interactions continues to present a major challenge, just as it has for
645 many other traits since work in this area began (83, 84). Our belief is that by charting the origin
646 and diversification of SP-female interactions at a mechanistic level, we may be able to draw more
647 robust inferences regarding the evolutionary forces that are shaping this recently evolved system
648 in *Drosophilinae*.
649
650 **Methods**
651 Detailed sample information and accession numbers for the 271 genomes used in this study are
652 provided at https://osf.io/24unk. SP sequences were identified by combining reciprocal blast of

653 the *D. melanogaster* SP C-terminus sequence with protein sequence, gene structure, and synteny
654 analysis. Signal peptides were removed from the translated protein sequences using SignalP-6.0
655 run on 'fast' mode and specifying 'Eukarya' as the organism (88). For the microcarrier stainings,
656 accessory glands were stained in 100µl of 1:50 LipidTox Deep Red Neutral Lipid Stain (Invitrogen,
657 H34477) in PBS for 1 hour with 1µl 1:100 DAPI added for the last 15 mins. Tests for selection in
658 SPR coding sequence were conducted using Datamonkey (89, 90). All code, extracted coding
659 and protein sequences, expression data, and protein models are available at https://osf.io/tzu6v/.
660 A detailed methods section is available in the *SI Appendix*.
661

662 **Acknowledgements**

663 We thank the reviewers and editor for thoughtful and valuable feedback on earlier drafts of this
664 manuscript; Clive Wilson and Mark Wainwright for helpful feedback on the microcarrier part of this
665 work; Julianne Peláez and Noah Whiteman for providing us with *Scaptomyza* stocks; and Barbara
666 Parker, Kathy Darragh, Pavitra Muralidhar, and Carl Veller for valuable discussion. This work was
667 supported by a long-term fellowship from the Human Frontier Science Program Organization
668 (LT000123/2020-L to B.R.H.), a UC Davis College of Biological Sciences Dean's Circle Summer
669 Undergraduate Research Program Fellowship to A. A-H., and National Institutes of Health F32
670 GM135998 to B.Y.K., R37-HD038921 to Mariana Wolfner, and R35 GM122592 to A.K.
671

672 **Figure legends:**

673

674 **Figure 1. *SP* first evolved in the *Drosophilinae* subfamily.** A phylogeny of species from across
675 the *Drosophilidae* and closely related lineages. The number of *SP* genes detected is given in
676 coloured circles at the tip of each branch. A brown bar denotes the branch on which we infer *SP*
677 to have first evolved.
678

679 **Figure 2. *Sex Peptide* family genes predate the *Drosophilini* and have been repeatedly lost**
680 **outside of the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation.** This figure focuses on the non-*Sophophora-*
681 *Lordiphosa* members of the *Drosophilini* (see Figure 1 and *SI Appendix, Fig. S1* for overviews of
682 drosophilid taxonomy). A selection of *Sophophora* species, shaded in blue, are included for
683 comparison. Also included are four non-*Drosophilini* dipterans: *Aedes aegypti* and three non-
684 *Drosophilini* members of the *Drosophilinae* subfamily: *Chymomyza costata, Scaptodrosophila*
685 *lebanonensis,* and *S. latifasciaeformis.* The number of *SP* genes detected in a representative of
686 each species' genome is given at the tree tips. Losses are marked with a pink bar. For each
687 species, the structures of two syntenic gene neighbourhoods are plotted. The first, Muller D1, is
688 the canonical neighbourhood in which *SP* genes are detected outside of the *Sophophora-*
689 *Lordiphosa.* The second, Muller D2, is the canonical position in the *Sophophora-Lordiphosa.*
690 Positions of each gene are given relative to the first gene in the neighbourhood (*FoxK* or
691 *capricious*). Absence of a flanking neighbourhood gene (*e.g., FoxK* in *D. wassermani*) doesn't
692 necessarily mean the gene has been lost – it more likely means that a contig breakpoint fell within
693 the neighbourhood. Note that *SP* in *Hirtodrosophila trivittata* and, independently, *D. repletoides,*
694 has translocated out of the Muller D1 neighbourhood. See *SI Appendix, Figs S2 and 3* for
695 expanded views of the losses in the *repleta* and *Hawaiian* groups, respectively.
696
697 **Figure 3. *Sex Peptide* copy number is markedly more variable in the *Sophophora-***
698 ***Lordiphosa* radiation than in other branches of the phylogeny.** This figure focuses on the
699 *Sophophora-Lordiphosa* radiation to which *D. melanogaster* belongs. Four non-*Sophophora-*
700 *Lordiphosa* drosophilids, shaded in purple, are included as outgroups. The structures of the Muller
701 D1 and Muller D2 neighbourhoods are plotted as in Figure 2. Missing flanking genes are likely
702 indicative of contig breakpoints falling within the neighbourhood. The exceptions are the
703 *Lordiphosa* species, where substantially elevated intergenic distances meant that the whole
704 neighbourhood would not fit within the plot limits. Unresolved SP genes, shown in red, indicate

705 genes that passed the reciprocal blast criteria and fell within one of the conserved *SP*-containing
706 gene neighbourhoods but where a SP-like amino acid sequence couldn't be resolved (*e.g.,* due
707 to a premature stop codon, as in the case of *D. rhopaloa*). Note that all members of the *obscura*
708 group have an inversion that flips the relative positions of *FoxK* and *mRpL2* in the Muller D1
709 neighbourhood. In a number of cases, some or all copies of *SP* were found to have translocated
710 outside of the Muller D1 and Muller D2 neighbourhoods (an *obscura* group lineage, the
711 *melanogaster* subgroup, *D. kanapiae, D. takahashii*, and *D.eugracilis*; summarised in *SI Appendix*
712 *Fig. S5*). In the shorter read *montium* subgroup assemblies, short contigs meant that in some
713 species we couldn't identify the neighbourhood in which *SP* was located. This was the case for
714 some *SP* genes in *D. cf. chauvacae, D. burlai, D. leontia, D. nikananu, D. pectinifera, D.*
715 *punjabiensis,* and *D.watanabe*i. The *SP* genes in *D. auraria* and *D. trapezifons* could be mapped
716 to the Muller D2 neighbourhood based on flanking sequence around the *SP* gene, but the *SP*-
717 containing contigs were too small to include any of the neighbourhood genes.
718
719 **Figure 4. Repeated duplication of *Sex Peptide* genes in the *ananassae* subgroup.** A
720 phylogeny of the *ananassae* subgroup species used in this study, with *D. melanogaster* as an
721 outgroup. The number of *SP* genes identified in each species is given at the tip of each branch.
722 'Unresolved' SP sequences, shown in red, are those which passed the reciprocal blast tests and
723 fell within the syntenic Muller D2 gene neighbourhood but for which we could not resolve an SP-
724 like protein sequence (*e.g.,* due to a premature stop codon). The structure of the neighbourhood
725 is plotted on the right-hand side of the figure. Note that one of *D. melanogaster's SP* copies,
726 *Dup99b,* falls outside of the Muller D2 neighbourhood.
727
728 **Figure 5. *Sex Peptide* is neither necessary nor sufficient for microcarriers.** (A) A phylogeny
729 of all species included in this figure. Branches coloured pink indicate species shown in B-T that
730 demonstrate canonical (*i.e., D. melanogaster*-like) staining with LipidTox, a neutral lipid-specific

731 dye used to selectively stain microcarriers (28). (B-T) Accessory glands stained with LipidTox and
732 the nuclear stain DAPI (blue). The circled number in the bottom right-hand corner of each panel
733 indicates the number of *Sex Peptide* copies we detect in each species. (G) The arrow is
734 highlighting a spiral/doughnut shaped microcarrier, a shape which is rare in comparison to the
735 more common thread-like conformation in this species. (J) Prox. refers to the proximal region of
736 the gland, *i.e.* the region that connects to the ejaculatory duct. (P) Arrows point to the ambiguous,
737 sparse, and weakly stained material we observed in *D. ficusphila* glands. (S) An arrow points to
738 a cut in the glandular epithelium, which was made to enhance dye penetration. In each case,
739 glands were co-stained in the same well with those from *D. melanogaster* to act as a positive
740 control.
741
742 **Figure 6. SPR residues showing evidence of episodic positive selection are enriched in**
743 **the ligand-facing domains.** (A) A consensus sequence based on MAFFT alignment of the
744 resolvable amino acid sequences of *SPR* coding sequences. The top plot gives the proportion of
745 sequences with the consensus amino acid in the same position, while the bottom plot gives the
746 proportion of sequences in which each position is occupied in the alignment. Each residue is
747 coloured based on the functional domain to which it belongs based on the UniProt annotations.
748 The red line indicates the start of the conserved region we use in the molecular evolution
749 analyses. Beneath the plot, we show the corresponding exon that encodes each consensus
750 residue. EC = extracellular, IC = intracellular (B) The AlphaFold prediction of the structure of *D.*
751 *melanogaster* SPR as downloaded from UniProt (AF-Q8SWR3-F1) and coloured by the domain
752 each residue belongs to based on positions listed in the UniProt 'Features' table. (C) A boxplot
753 showing the proportion of residues at each position that matched the consensus residue (*i.e.,* the
754 degree of conservation at each position). Residues are plotted separately according to their
755 domain class of origin. (D) PCA plot based on BLOSUM62 substitution scores from the MAFFT-
756 aligned SPR protein sequences. The percentage values in the axis titles reflect the proportion of

variance explained by a given PC. Points are coloured based on whether they correspond to *Sophophora-Lordiphosa,* non-*Sophophora-Lordiphosa,* or *ananassae* subgroup species. (E) As (D) but after removing the non-conserved region of the N-terminus (*i.e.,* the region preceding the red line in (A)). (F) The same prediction shown in (B) but with residues coloured by the proportion of conserved residues per position (see also Supplementary movie 1). High values indicate high conservation. (G) The ColabFold top-ranked prediction of the interactions between SP (shown in green) and SPR (residues coloured by domain). (H) As in (G) but with predicted contact residues coloured purple and predicted hydrogen bonds between SP and SPR residues shown with red-dotted lines (See also Supplementary movies 2 and 3). (I) A bar chart showing the proportion of sequences sharing the consensus residue for each predicted contact residue. Bars are coloured by whether the residue is also predicted to form a hydrogen bond with SP. Asterisks denote predicted contact residues for which we detected evidence of episodic positive selection using *MEME.* Alongside the plot, coloured bars, using the same colour scale as in (A-C), denote the functional domain the residue falls within. The two adjacent blue bars denote separate, consecutive transmembrane domains. Alongside are the corresponding amino acid residues in each position for each of the consensus ('Cons.'), *D. melanogaster* ('Dmel.'), *D. bipectinata* ('Dbip.'), *D. pseudoobscura* ('Dpse.'), *D. virilis* ('Dvir.'), and *A. aegypti* ('Aaeg.') sequences. Residues that depart from the mode among these plotted sequences are coloured. (J) As (G) but colouring only the 10 residues in SPR for which we detected evidence of positive selection using *MEME*. Asterisks denote predicted contact residues that show evidence of positive selection.

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