First Nationwide Surveillance of *Culex pipiens* Complex and *Culex torrentium* Mosquitoes Demonstrated the Presence of *Culex pipiens* Biotype *pipiens/molestus* Hybrids in Germany

**Martin Rudolf**, Martin Rudolf

**Christina Czajka**

**Jessica Börstler**

**Christian Melaun**

**Hanna Jöst**

**Heidrun von Thien**

**Marlis Badusche**

**Norbert Becker**

**Jonas Schmidt-CHANASIT**

**Andreas Krüger**

**Egbert Tannich**

**Stefanie Becker**

1 Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine Hamburg; Molecular Entomology Group, Hamburg, Germany, 2 Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine Hamburg; Department of Molecular Parasitology, Hamburg, Germany, 3 Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine Hamburg; WHO Collaborating Centre for Arbovirus and Haemorrhagic Fever Reference and Research, Hamburg, Germany, 4 Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre Medical Biodiversity and Parasitology, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 5 KABS e.V., Waldsee, Germany, 6 Bundeswehr Hospital Hamburg; Department Tropical Medicine; Entomology Group, Hamburg, Germany, 7 German Centre for Infection Research (DZIF), partner site Hamburg-Luebeck-Borstel, Hamburg, Germany

**Abstract**

Mosquitoes and other arthropods may transmit medically important pathogens, in particular viruses such as West Nile virus. The presence of suitable hosts and competent vectors for those zoonotic viruses is essential for an enzootic transmission, which is a prerequisite for epidemics. To establish reliable risk projections, it is an urgent need for an exact identification of mosquito species, which is especially challenging in the case of sibling species, such as *Culex pipiens pipiens* biotypes *pipiens* and *molestus*. To facilitate detection of different *Culex pipiens* forms and their hybrids we established a multiplex real-time PCR. *Culex pipiens* samples were obtained by egg raft collection and rearing until imago stage or adult sampling using CO2 baited traps and gravid traps. In total, we tested more than 16,500 samples collected all over Germany in the years 2011 and 2012. The predominant species in Germany are *Culex pipiens* biotype *pipiens* and *Culex torrentium*, but we also detected *Culex pipiens pipiens* biotype *molestus* and hybrids of the two *pipiens* biotypes at sites where both species occur sympatrically. This report of a potentially important bridge vector for West Nile virus might have major impact in the risk projections for West Nile virus in Germany.

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* E-mail: stefanie.mueller@bni-hamburg.de

† These authors contributed equally to this work.

**Introduction**

In the past decades, West Nile virus (WNV) has spread from Africa and conquered various regions of temperate climate with substantial outbreaks in North America and Europe. WNV belongs to the group of arthropod-borne viruses (arbovirus), and is transmitted by mosquitoes. Accordingly, the spread of WNV is dependent on the presence of suitable mosquito vectors, and knowledge of the local mosquito species and their distribution are prerequisites for regional risk assessments of possible arbovirus-outbreaks. In Europe and other temperate regions, members of the *Culex pipiens* complex are the most ubiquitous mosquito species [1,2] which serve as principal vectors for various arboviruses including WNV [3,4,5,6,7]. *Culex pipiens pipiens* (Linnaeus 1758) (*Cp*) can be subdivided into two distinct biotypes, which are morphologically indistinguishable but differ greatly in physiology and behaviour. The biotype *pipiens* is mainly ornithophilic (i.e. bird biting host preference), anautogenous (requires blood meal for first oviposition) and eurygamous (mating in outdoor swarms only), whereas the biotype *molestus* (Forskal 1775) is mammophilic (i.e. prefers biting mammals incl. humans), autogenous (first oviposition without prior blood meal) and stenogamous (ability to mate in a narrow space) [1]. In addition, *Culex torrentium*, another *Culex* species of temperate regions, exhibits virtually the same bionomic and morphological characters as *Cp*, biotype *pipiens*. Although *Cp* and *Cx. torrentium* can be differentiated by the morphology of the male hypopygia, wild-caught females of both species with a spoiled thoracic chaetotaxy (presence of specific setae and/or scales) are morphologically indistinguishable. Presently, there is ongoing discussion whether they belong to different subgroups within the *pipiens* group of the subgenus *Culex* [8], or whether they should be treated as sibling species of the *pipiens* complex [9]. Another issue of importance for WNV risk assessment is the identification of hybrids between *Cp. pipiens* and *molestus* biotypes. These hybrids show opportunistic feeding behaviour and may
serve as important bridge vectors for the transmission of viruses from infected birds to humans as revealed during outbreaks in the United States [10]. So far, hybrids of *pipiens* and *molestus* biotypes have been occasionally observed in several parts of Europe, but have not been described for Germany [11,12]. However, information is lacking for most European countries about the distribution and composition of the different *Culex* species, biotypes or biotype hybrids due to the lack of suitable protocols that allow sensitive and specific high throughput screening of large sample sizes, generated during nationwide mosquito surveys. Here we report on a newly developed multiplex real-time PCR that allows discrimination of the various morphologically indistinguishable *Culex* species and biotypes. The method was used to analyse more than 16,500 *Culex* specimens from a recent nationwide mosquito surveillance program in Germany. The results indicate an uneven distribution of *Cpp*. and *Cx. torrentium* throughout the country, sympatric occurrence of *Cpp*. *biotype pipiens* and *biotype molestus* and first detection of *Cpp*. *biotype pipiens* and *biotype molestus* hybrids at different locations in Germany.

**Materials and Methods**

**Mosquito samples and morphological species identification**

Mosquitoes were trapped with CO2 baited traps or gravid traps from May to September 2011 and 2012 (Table 1). In addition, mosquito eggs were collected from suitable breeding sites such as water ponds or rain barrels. Two strategies were used to obtain *a priori* identified reference samples of the different taxa: Firstly, in the case of the morphospecies *Cpp*. and *Cx. torrentium* single egg batches collected outdoors were reared and the resulting adult males hypopygia were assessed [9] to determine the identity of each egg batch. Secondly, the identity of *Cpp*. *biotype molestus* was inferred from the behaviour of wild-caught and colonised F0 females and their offspring. For instance F1 females, produced by F0 females (collected indoors), are characterized by immediate stenogamy and autogeny without adaptation or selection over several generations. Another character for distinguishing *biotype molestus* was the shape of the egg raft, which is smaller and more irregular than the boat-like rafts of *biotype pipiens* and *Cx. torrentium*. As a positive control for the *molestus*×*pipiens* hybrid detection we used the F1 progeny of a *Cpp*. *biotype pipiens*×*Cpp*. *biotype molestus* experimental cross. The *Cp. q. quinquiesquisetus* laboratory culture was obtained from Bayer HealthCare (Bayer; Germany).

With the exception of Hamburg Airport and Ohlsdorf all sampling sites within the various cluster areas are located either on public grounds for which specific permissions was not required, or on privately owned land. All owners of the private grounds gave permission to perform this study.

Permissions for Hamburg Airport and Ohlsdorf cemetery in Hamburg were given and are attached with manuscript submission.

The traps used in this study were specific for mosquitoes and did not catch any endangered or protected species.

**DNA extraction and multiplex real-time PCR assay**

Mosquitoes collected at the various study sites were frozen at −70°C and transported to the laboratory where they were first identified morphologically at the genus level [13]. Subsequently, *Culex* ssp. from individual collections were pooled to up to 25 specimens per pool. All pooled samples were placed in sterile 2-mL cryovials, and subsequently maintained at −70°C until being assayed. Each mosquito pool was triturated in 500 uL of cell culture medium (high glucose Dulbecco’s modified Eagle’s medium (Sigma-Aldrich) with 10% heat-inactivated fetal bovine serum, 100 U/mL penicillin, 100 μg/mL streptomycin, and 2.5 μg/mL amphotericin B using two stainless steel beads (5 mm; Qiagen) in a TissueLyser (Qiagen) for 2 min at 50 oscillation/s. The suspensions were clarified by centrifugation (3,000 × g for 1 min), and the supernatant was used for DNA extraction with AquaGenomic™ Solution (protocol for *Drosophila* samples, MultiTarget Pharmaceuticals) or QIAsamp viral RNA mini kit according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

The extracted DNA was analyzed by a newly designed multiplex real-time PCR using the primers for *Culex pipiens F* (5’-GGG GCCCA AAATTTGAGACCT-3’; nucleotide [nt] position 3 to 22 [the nt positions are given according to the numbering in the *Culex* reference strain 259c; GenBank accession number gb/DQ470148.1) and *Cx. pipiens R* (5’-CGTGCCTGAAACATCGCAGACA-3’; nt position 146 to 165) and probes *Cx. pipiens all* (5’- Cy55- GGAAACATGTTGAGCCTCGGK-BHQ1-3’; nt position 77 to 95), *Cx. pipiens pipiens biotype pipiens* (5’- JOE GCCTCGGTAAGGGTTGTG-T BHQ1-3’) nt position 89 to 108 and *Cx. pipiens pipiens biotype molestus* (5’- Rox- TGAAACCCTCGTAAGGTATCAACATC- BHQ2-3’; nt position 41 to 67; Reference strain 284g, GenBank accession number gb/470150.1) of the microsatellite locus CQ11. *Cx. torrentium DNA* was detected using the primers *Cx. torrentium F* (5’-GACACAGGACGACAGAAA-3’; nt position 86 to 103), *Cx. torrentium R* (5’- GCCTACCGAACTACAAA-3’; nt position 363 to 380) and the probe *Cx. torrentium* (5’-FAM- CGAT-GATGCCCTGTTGCCTAACA-BHQ1-3’; nt position 112 to 131) of the ace2 gene (*Cx. torrentium* reference strain, GenBank accession number gb/AY497525.1). Multiplex real-time PCR was performed in a 20 μL reaction volume using HotStarTaq® Master Mix Kit according to the manufacturer’s protocol (Qiagen). The specific primer molarities and sequence alignments of the loci used for primer design are shown in Figure S1.

**Results and Discussion**

**Multiplex real-time PCR for simultaneous detection and differentiation of *Cpp*. biotypes and *Cx. torrentium***

Molecular assays to differentiate *Cpp*. and *Cx. torrentium* or to distinguish between the *Cpp*. biotypes reported so far are based on gel electrophoretic analyses of particular DNA fragments amplified by PCR [14,15,16]. These assays are time-consuming and prone to laboratory contamination, which are major drawbacks for the analysis of large sample sizes. To circumvent those problems we have developed a multiplex real-time PCR that allows differentiation of otherwise indistinguishable *Culex* mosquitoes in a single PCR reaction in a closed tube format. The assay targets the gene locus for acetylcholinesterase 2 (*ace2*) to discriminate between *Cx. torrentium* and *Cpp*. and the CQ11 microsatellite locus for discrimination between *Cpp*. biotypes [14,16,17]. Using a large collection of about 350 well-defined mosquito specimens (consisting of 227 *Cpp*. *pipiens*, 3 *Cpp*. *molestus* and 119 *Cx. torrentium* samples), the assay was evaluated and revealed 100% specificity for the respective *Culex* species or biotypes. Moreover, the PCR clearly identified hybrids generated by laboratory crosses between *Cpp*. *biotype pipiens* and *biotype molestus*. There was no or only little signal reduction when the assay was run with mixed DNA samples from the two *Cpp*. biotypes and *Cx. torrentium* as indicated by the similarity of Ct-values for mixed versus single DNA preparations (Figure 1A). As samples from surveillance programs are often analysed as pools of morphological identical mosquitoes, the multiplex real-time PCR was assessed.
Table 1. Trapping-sites of the nationwide surveillance program selected for the study.

| Trapping-site                      | Coordinates | Trap type | Number of individuals (number of pools) |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------------------------------------|
| **Upper Rhine valley/Baden-Württemberg** |             |           |                                        |
| Neckargerach                       | N 49° 23'   | GT        | 93 (8)                                 |
|                                    | E 9° 4'     |           |                                        |
| Heidelberg                         | N 49° 24'   | GT        | 3800 (162)                             |
|                                    | E 08° 39'   |           |                                        |
| Heidelberg                         | N 49° 24'   | GT        | 977 (85)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 39'   |           |                                        |
| Karlsruhe - Island Rott            | N 49° 09'   | EVS       | 43 (2)                                 |
|                                    | E 08° 23'   |           |                                        |
| Karlsruhe - Russheim               | N 49° 11'   | EVS       | 203 (11)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 25'   |           |                                        |
| Mümling-Grumbach                   | N 49° 46'   | GT        | 106 (9)                                |
|                                    | E 08° 59'   |           |                                        |
| Weinheim 2011                      | N 49° 31'   | GT        | 414 (19)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 38'   |           |                                        |
| Weinheim 2012                      | N 49° 31'   | GT        | 2002 (112)                             |
|                                    | E 08° 38'   |           |                                        |
| Beerfelden                         | N 49° 33'   | GT        | 33 (5)                                 |
|                                    | E 08° 57'   |           |                                        |
| Eberstadt                          | N 49° 48'   | GT        | 194 (11)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 38'   |           |                                        |
| Großsachsen 2011                   | N 49° 31'   | GT        | 418 (18)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 40'   |           |                                        |
| Großsachsen 2011                   | N 49° 31'   | GT        | 558 (31)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 40'   |           |                                        |
| Hemsbach                           | N 49° 35'   | GT        | 77 (9)                                 |
|                                    | E 08° 39'   |           |                                        |
| Waghäusel                          | N 49° 15'   | EVS       | 139 (8)                                |
|                                    | E 08° 31'   |           |                                        |
| Sandhausen                         | N 49° 20'   | GT        | 265 (13)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 39'   |           |                                        |
| **Lower-Rhine Valley/Palatine**    |             |           |                                        |
| Bad Dürkheim                       | N 49° 22'   | GT        | 52 (28)                                |
|                                    | E 08° 08'   |           |                                        |
| Bobenheim-Roxheim                  | N 49° 34'   | GT        | 222 (26)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 21'   |           |                                        |
| Dirmstein                          | N 49° 34'   | GT        | 549 (134)                              |
|                                    | E 08° 14'   |           |                                        |
| Kühkopf 2012                       | N 49° 49'   | EVS       | 36 (2)                                 |
|                                    | E 08° 24'   |           |                                        |
| Kühkopf 2011                       | N 49° 49'   | EVS       | 197 (25)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 24'   |           |                                        |
| Neustadt a. d. Weinstraße          | N 49° 22'   | GT        | 238 (74)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 08'   |           |                                        |
| Alsheim                            | N 49° 45'   | GT        | 1                                      |
|                                    | E 08° 18'   |           |                                        |
| Mettenheim                         | N 49° 44'   | GT        | 182 (10)                               |
|                                    | E 08° 19'   |           |                                        |
| Römerberg                          | N 49° 17'   | GT        | 1721 (84)                              |

Surveillance of Culex pipiens Complex in Germany
Table 1. Cont.

| Trapping-site                        | Coordinates | Trap type | Number of individuals (number of pools) |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------------------------------------|
| **Lake Constance/Bavaria West**      |             |           |                                        |
| Radolfzell (Lake Constance)          | N 47°43’    | EVS       | 144 (8)                                |
|                                      | E 08°59’    |           |                                        |
| **Lake Chiemsee/Bavaria East**       |             |           |                                        |
| Chieming (Lake Chiemsee)             | N 47°53’    | EVS       | 89 (6)                                 |
|                                      | E 12°31’    |           |                                        |
| Hirschauer Bucht (Lake Chiemsee)     | N 47°51’    | EVS       | 13 (2)                                 |
|                                      | E 12°31’    |           |                                        |
| Chieming (Lake Chiemsee)             | N 47°53’    | EVS       | 6 (2)                                  |
|                                      | E 12°31’    |           |                                        |
| Plattling (Isar)                     | N 48°47’    | EVS       | 83 (5)                                 |
|                                      | E 12°55’    |           |                                        |
| Stöttham (Lake Chiemsee)             | N 47°45’    | EVS       | 20 (2)                                 |
|                                      | E 12°31’    |           |                                        |
| Iffeldorf (Easter Lakes)             | N 47°46’    | EVS       | 1                                      |
|                                      | E 11°18’    |           |                                        |
| **Upper Elbe Valley/Saxonia**        |             |           |                                        |
| Coswig (Elbe)                        | N 51°51’    | EVS       | 74 (11)                                |
|                                      | E 12°26’    |           |                                        |
| **Oder Valley/Brandenburg**          |             |           |                                        |
| Oderaue (Oder)                       | N 52°47’    | EVS       | 272 (52)                               |
|                                      | E 14°14’    |           |                                        |
| **Baltic Sea/Mecklenburg**           |             |           |                                        |
| Greifswald - Eldena                  | N 54°05’    | EVS       | 1960 (78)                              |
|                                      | E 13°27’    |           |                                        |
| Greifswald - Loissin                 | N 54°07’    | EVS       | 668 (27)                               |
|                                      | E 13°30’    |           |                                        |
| **Metropolitan Region Hamburg**       |             |           |                                        |
| Langenlehsten                        | N 53°30’    | Egg       | 349                                     |
|                                      | E 10°44’    | Collection|                                        |
| Wulksfelde                           | N53°43’     | BT        | 55                                      |
|                                      | E10°6’      | GT        |                                        |
| HH/Ohlsdorf                          | N53°37’     | BT        | 23                                      |
|                                      | E10°2’      |           |                                        |
| HH/Poppenbüttel                      | N53°39’     | EVS       | 4                                       |
|                                      | E10°05’     | BT        |                                        |
| HH/Cranz                             | N53°32’     | ex- La.   | 8                                       |
|                                      | E09°46’     |           |                                        |
| HH/Hummelsbüttel                     | N53°38’     | ex- La.   | 38                                      |
|                                      | E10°02’     |           |                                        |
| HH/Airport                           | N53°37’     | BT        | 3                                       |
|                                      | E10°00’     |           |                                        |
| HH/Barmbek                           | N53°35’     | ex- La.   | 10                                      |
|                                      | E10°2’      |           |                                        |
| HH/Fuhlsbüttel                       | N53°37’     | Swarm     | 12                                      |
|                                      | E10°01’     |           |                                        |
| HH/Ohlstedt                          | N53°41’     | EVS       | 10                                      |
|                                      | E10°8’      |           |                                        |
using various numbers of *Culex* species or biotypes in mixed pools of up to 25 individuals. Although signal intensity was dependent on the number of insects to be detected, PCR specifically identified as little as single individuals in a mix of 25 mosquitoes (Figure 1B). Taken together, by combining simultaneous analyses of the two loci CQ11 and ace2, the multiplex real-time PCR reported here shows all characteristics required for large-scale analyses and differentiation of *Cpp.* biotypes and *Cx. torrentium*, respectively, in a single assay format.

### Distribution of *Cpp.* biotypes and *Cx. torrentium* in Germany

Morphologically indistinguishable *Cpp./Cx. torrentium* samples, collected in 2011 and 2012, during a nationwide mosquito surveillance programme were subjected to the newly developed multiplex real-time PCR in order to determine the distribution of *Cpp.* biotypes and *Cx. torrentium* across Germany. The 48 collection sites were selected according to the following criteria: known mosquito habitats e.g. extensive wetlands and presence of migratory birds (risk of imported WNV) and represent 10 major cluster areas, namely the Lower Rhine Valley and further sites in Palatine, the Upper Rhine Valley and further sites in Baden-Württemberg, Lake Constance, Lake Chiemsee and other sites in Bavaria, Hesse, the Upper Elbe Valley in Saxonia, the Oder Valley in Brandenburg, the Baltic Sea coast in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, Metropolitan Region Hamburg and various sites in Schleswig-Holstein (Table 1). A total of more than 16,500 *Culex* ssp. were analysed out of which 716 represent individual specimens and 1,081 represent pooled samples. A pool usually contained between 5 and 25 mosquitoes from the same trap of a given time-point. Overall the predominant *Culex* species in Germany was found to be *Cpp.*, with a mean abundance of 58% at the 48 selected sampling sites. However, considerable regional differences in species abundance and species composition were observed (Figure 2). Populations from coastal habitats in the North comprise almost exclusively *Cpp.* whereas *Cx. torrentium* is apparently absent in this region. In contrast, *Cx. torrentium* comprises up to 60% of the *Cpp./Cx. torrentium* populations and shows substantial overlaps with *Cpp.* at all other sampling sites. Moreover, biotype analyses indicated absence of *Cpp. molestus* in all samples from North and East Germany, except Hamburg metropolitan area where a small proportion of the *Culex* population of around 1.3% consisted of *Cpp. biotype molestus*. On the other hand, up to 50% of the *Culex* populations at sampling sites in South and Southwest Germany were found to consist of *Cpp. biotype molestus*.

Evidently, the use of different traps needs to be taken into account when evaluating regional species differences. Gravid traps were used more frequently within the clusters Lower and Upper Rhine valley as well as in the Hamburg metropolitan area compared to other clusters. Therefore, additional analyses were performed restricted to *Culex* specimens collected by CO₂ baited traps (EVS and BG) but excluding mosquitoes obtained by gravid traps or from reared egg batches. The results indicate some changes in the relative abundances of *Cpp.* and *Cx. torrentium* at some areas, in particular in the cluster area Upper Rhine Valley. However, the general distribution of *Cx. torrentium* and *Cpp.* across Germany was unaffected. Moreover, trapping rates of *Cpp. biotype molestus* were not altered at all using the alternative dataset (see Figure S2).
However, this study did not aim at a systematic analysis of Cpp. habitats and therefore, we can neither confirm nor reject previous data on the occurrence of Cpp. biotype molestus, such as underground breeding or their preference for urban habitats [9]. Further detailed studies are needed to highlight this topic.

Regarding Cx. torrentium, it appears that this species has spread considerably within Europe and Germany during the last 60 years. Until the 1950s Cx. torrentium was considered rare in Central and Western Europe, primarily colonizing higher altitudes [18,19,20]. In a monograph from 1969, presence of Cx. torrentium was reported only at four localities in central and southern Germany [13]. Careful analyses of previous and recent data have suggested that the apparent increase in abundance and distribution of Cx. torrentium during recent years was probably due to ecological adaptation and anthropogenic spread, rather than the result of an increased awareness of taxonomists who may have previously misidentified Cx. torrentium as Cx. pipiens. Nowadays, Cx. torrentium is widespread in Europe though the exact distribution limits remain to be determined [9].

Screen for Cpp. biotype pippens and biotype molestus hybrids in selected areas

In order to determine whether Cpp. biotype hybrids do exist in Germany a total of four sites within the Rhine-Main metropolitan region were selected where Cpp. biotype pippens and biotype molestus...
Figure 2. Classification of *Culex* samples from the German mosquito surveillance program. Graphical representation of the *Culex* species composition in Germany. 48 different trapping sites in Germany were combined according to their geographical relatedness to form 10 cluster areas shown representing Lower Rhine Valley and further sites in Palatine, Upper Rhine Valley and further sites in Baden-Württemberg, Lake Constance, Lake Chiemsee and other sites in Bavaria, Hesse, Upper Elbe Valley in Saxonia, Oder Valley in Brandenburg, Baltic Sea in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, Metropolitan Region Hamburg and various sites in Schleswig-Holstein (for more details see also Table 1)). White (Cpp. *pipiens*), black (Cx. *torrentium*) and red (Cpp. *molestus*) quarters indicate pools that were composed of a single species. Grey (Cpp. *pipiens*+Cx. *torrentium*) and dark-red (Cpp. *molestus*+Cx. *torrentium*) quarters indicate pools composed of two species. With the current set-up (i.e. using pooled samples) the composition
were found to occur sympatrically. As pooled samples are not suitable for the analyses of possible hybrids, a number of individual mosquito specimens from the region were subjected to multiplex real-time PCR. Hybrids were detected at two of the four sites with a frequency of 1.7% and 6.6% respectively (Figure 3). Moreover, analysis of individual specimens from 5 sites of the Hamburg metropolitan area revealed another site positive for Cpp. biotype hybrids with a frequency of 1.8% (Figure 3). Given the relatively low prevalence of biotype molestus at the selected study sites (7.9% in average), the results suggest that crossbreeding between the two Cpp. biotypes is a frequent event in Germany. In fact, the incidence of biotype hybrids might be even higher than established by this limited analysis of individual mosquitoes, as overlapping occurrence of both biotypes was detected in the pooled samples of four southern cluster areas. Therefore, it is likely that at least some of the pools that revealed a signal for Cpp. biotype pipiens and Cpp. biotype molestus may contain biotype hybrids. Certainly, more comprehensive analyses are required, to determine the importance of this finding for arbovirus risk assessment in Germany. In particular, more individual mosquito samples need to be analysed to evaluate realistic hybrid frequencies and the vector competence of those hybrids for the transmission of WNV and other viruses. Nevertheless, the findings presented here are of concern in light of the pools that revealed a signal for Cpp. biotype pipiens and Cpp. molestus may contain biotype hybrids. Certainly, more comprehensive analyses are required, to determine the importance of this finding for arbovirus risk assessment in Germany. In particular, more individual mosquito samples need to be analysed to evaluate realistic hybrid frequencies and the vector competence of those hybrids for the transmission of WNV and other viruses. Nevertheless, the findings presented here are of concern in light of the epidemic spread of WNV in the United States, where crossbreeds of biotype molestus and pipiens frequently occurred and facilitated transmission of WNV to humans [10,21].

Supporting Information

Figure S1 Sequence alignment of Ace-2 and CQ11 loci and detailed qPCR reaction mixture. A) Sequence alignment for microsatellite locus CQ11 of Cpp. biotype pipiens (reference strain 258c; accession number gb/DQ470148.1) and Cpp. biotype molestus (reference strain 284b, accession number gb/470150.1). Primer binding sites for Cpp. pipiens/molestus forward and reverse primer are indicated in red, the control probe for Cpp. pipiens is indicated yellow, the species specific probes for Cpp. biotype pipiens and Cpp. biotype molestus are indicated in green and blue respectively. B) Sequence alignment for the Ace-2 locus of Cpp. biotype pipiens (reference strain isolate 41; accession number gb/JF430595.1) and Cx. torrentium (reference strain, accession number AV497523.1). The primer binding sites of Cx. torrentium forward and reverse are indicated in dark blue, the binding site of Cx. torrentium is indicated in orange. C) Detailed composition of the multiplex reaction mix used for all experiments presented in this publication. All primer and probes are colour-coded according to figure A) and B) and specific molarities in the 20 μL multiplex reaction are given.

(TIF)

Figure S2 Classification of Culex samples from the German Surveillance program without gravid trap data. Graphical representation of the species composition in Germany using the same dataset as figure 2 excluding all data derived from gravid traps. The 48 trapping sites in Germany were combined according to their geographical relatedness to form 10 cluster areas shown in the figure (Lower Rhine Valley and further sites in Palatine, Upper Rhine Valley and further sites in Baden-Württemberg, Lake Constance, Lake Chiemsee and other sites in Bavaria, Hesse, Upper Elbe Valley in Saxonia, Oder Valley in Brandenburg, Baltic Sea in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, Metropolitan Region Hamburg and various sites in Schleswig-Holstein (see also table 1)). White (Cpp. pipiens), black (Cx. torrentium) and red (Cpp. molestus) quarters indicate pools that were composed of a single species. Grey (Cpp. pipiens+Cx. torrentium) and dark-red (Cpp. molestus+Cx. torrentium) quarters indicate pools composed of two species. With the current set-up (i.e. using pooled samples) the composition of pink quarters could be either two biotypes
Culex pipiens and Culex molestus or hybrids of both biotypes. The n-numbers given in the graphs notify total numbers of individuals analysed in each cluster.

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Author Contributions

Conceived and designed the experiments: SB ET JSC AK. Performed the experiments: MR CC JB CM HJ HvT MB. Analyzed the data: MR CC JB CM HJ HvT MB. Contributed reagents/materials/analysis tools: HJ JSC NB. Wrote the paper: MR AK ET SB.

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