

Rediscovery of *Menoedius andrewesi* FAUVEL, 1903 in India, more than a century after its description (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae: Staphylininae)

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Abstract

Menoedius andrewesi FAUVEL, 1903 (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae: Staphylininae) is reported for the first time since its description. Characters for recognition are mentioned, and a photograph of the beetle in nature, taken at Lovedale (Nilgiri Mountains, Tamil Nadu, India), is provided.

Key words: Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, Staphylininae, *Eucibdelus* lineage, *Menoedius*, India, Tamil Nadu, Nilgiri Mountains, faunistics, rediscovery.

Introduction

Staphylinidae are one of the largest beetle families with more than 66,000 described species (NEWTON 2022), they are distributed worldwide and can be found in almost all types of ecosystems (BOHAČ 1999, MARKGRAF & BASEDOW 2002). Most adults of Staphylinidae are easily recognized by their relatively slender body, short elytra and flexible abdomen. There is a wide range in feeding habits, most species being predatory, however, some species feed on algae and a few are true parasitoids (CLAUSEN 1940).

Menoedius FAUVEL, 1903 is a small staphylinine genus with only three known species, all described from India: *M. andrewesi* FAUVEL, 1903 (type species), *M. abnormalis* CAMERON, 1932, and *M. subsimilis* CAMERON, 1932. *Menoedius andrewesi* was described after a single specimen from Coonoor (Nilgiri Mountains, Tamil Nadu, India), where it was collected under a rotten orange. The other two species were published without any detailed locality data except “India”. The genus belongs to the *Eucibdelus* lineage, a highly specialized and quite diverse group of larger, mostly arboricolous Staphylininae. The majority of the *Eucibdelus* lineage species that have been observed in nature turned out to be ambush predators (H. Schillhammer, personal observation).

Rediscovery of *Menoedius andrewesi*

On 10th October 2020, 10:25, a single specimen of the genus *Menoedius* was observed and photographed alive (Fig. 1) at the village of Lovedale (11.3828°N 76.7047°E, 2200 m a.s.l.) in the Nilgiri Mountains, western Tamil Nadu, South India. The specimen was not collected. Lovedale lies about 10 km northwest of Coonoor, the type locality of *M. andrewesi*.

The specimen was observed near a train track. The predominant vegetation of the surroundings is characteristic shola forest.

Although the generic characters cannot be discerned in the photographs, it was subsequently identified as *M. andrewesi* by one of the coauthors (H. Schillhammer), based on the characteristic coloration and habitus.



Fig. 1: *Menoedius andrewesi*, photograph of living specimen; Lovedale, Nilgiri Mountains, Tamil Nadu, India. Photograph by N. Moinudheen.

So far, all known specimens of this genus are historical specimens. No additional material has become known after the descriptions of the three species. In the case of *M. andrewesi*, this sighting is the first record since almost 120 years, maybe even more, if we assume that the type specimens were probably collected some years prior to the description. The rediscovery of *M. andrewesi* confirms its continued existence in the Nilgiri Mountains. Further studies are highly desirable to assess the distribution pattern of the genus *Menoedius* in India and also to study its phylogenetic relationships within the *Eucibdelus* lineage.

Recognition

The genus *Menoedius* may be recognized by the labrum lacking a semi-membranous extension and by the enlarged protibiae, both characters being characteristic for most members of the *Eucibdelus* lineage (SCHILLHAMMER 2001). Within this lineage, *Menoedius* is characterized by the tridentate medial margin of the mandibles (FAUVEL 1903, CAMERON 1932). *Menoedius andrewesi* is most similar to *M. subsimilis*, with which it shares the red elytra (*M. abnormalis* has black elytra), it differs mainly in the golden pubescence (vs silver pubescence in *M. subsimilis*). The specimens of the type series have much darker reddish elytra, but that may, for instance, be due to the killing or storage method used back in those times.

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