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A preliminary account of some families of aquatic Coleoptera of Kuwait (Coleoptera: Dytiscidae, Gyrinidae, Hydraenidae, Helophoridae, Hydrophilidae)

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Abstract

An account is given of aquatic Coleoptera (Dytiscidae, Gyrinidae, Hydraenidae, Helophoridae, Hydrophilidae) taken in Kuwait in the springtime of years with adequate winter rainfall. The principal habitats are extensive shallow temporary lakes in the south of the country, and floodlands with reed beds in the Jahra (Doha) area just north of Kuwait City. Twenty-six species are recorded, of which eight are so far known only from the Jahra area, eight only from the south, seven species are common to both areas, and the remaining three are known from other localities.

Key words: Coleoptera, Dytiscidae, Gyrinidae, Hydraenidae, Helophoridae, Hydrophilidae, faunistics, Kuwait.

Introduction

A visit to Kuwait by R.B. Angus at the beginning of May 1996 provided an opportunity to visit some of the spring floodlands of the area, which W. Al-Houty has studied for years, and to collect water beetles to replace material lost from the Department of Biological Sciences of Kuwait University during the Iraqi invasion of 1991. At the same time, opportunity was taken to identify the small amount of material remaining in the collections of the University of Kuwait. This material, supplemented by that collected at various times by Al-Houty, forms the basis of this paper.

Habitats

The principal aquatic habitats in Kuwait are temporary lakes resulting from heavy winter rains. In the south of the country, beside the road to Saudi Arabia, at a distance of 15 - 25 km north of the Saudi Arabian border, there were, in early May 1996, extensive lakes, some more than one hundred metres across, and in places over a metre deep. These lakes had flooded terrestrial vegetation and some growth of algae, but no aquatic macrophytes. They had abundant Coleoptera and Heteroptera (Corixidae), but, as will be seen from the following list, only a restricted diversity. Towards the sea, near the headland of Ras AzZor (Raz az Zawr on the Map of Kuwait published by the Gulf Union Co., Kuwait) the pools are more saline, and even away from the sea the fauna was not uniform. Thus the first lakes we sampled had abundant *Gyrinus* L. and *Hygrotus* STEPHENS subgenus *Coelambus* THOMSON, but no *Eretes* CASTELNAU, while another, smaller lake had abundant *Eretes*.

In the north the main habitats sampled were the Jahra pools, an area of floodland with reedswamp near Doha at the western tip of Kuwait Bay. Again, most of the water, if not all, was temporary flooding, but the beetle fauna was different from, and richer than, that of the south. Part of this

area is protected as a nature reserve, but unfortunately this is the area worst affected by pollution from household sewage effluent.

The main additional areas sampled by Al-Houty were Kebd, an area of well-preserved natural desert vegetation just west of Kuwait city, the Manageesh oil field southwest of Kuwait city, and coastal salt marshes at Al-Khiran, just north of the border with Saudi Arabia. In both areas the habitats were floodlands comparable with those beside the road to Saudi Arabia.

List of species

Species collected by both authors in 1996 are listed simply as N or S to indicate in which of the areas they were taken. Material collected by Al-Houty (1980 - 1999) is listed as appropriate.

Dytiscidae

Hydroglyphus signatellus (KLUG): N.

Hygrotus* (*Coelambus*) *confluens (F.): N, S; common.

Hygrotus* (*C.*) sp. near *enneagrammus (AHRENS): S; 1 ♀, 25.III.1998, leg. Al-Houty.

H. Fery has checked the material and finds consistent differences between the female gonocoxae of the Kuwait material and those of *H. enneagrammus*, though the aedeagi of the two cannot be differentiated.

Hygrotus enneagrammus is listed by Nilsson (http://www.big.umu.se/biginst/www/personal/HEMISDOR/AN_BIG/CAT_main.htm) as occurring in Turkey and Iran, but is not recorded by BRANCUCCI (1984) from the Arabian Peninsula.

Hygrotus* (*C.*) *inscriptus SHARP: N, S; one of the commonest species.

Hygrotus* (*C.*) *lernaeus (SCHAUM): N; 3 exs.

Hyphoporus solieri (AUBÉ): N; several exs.

Herophydrus musicus (KLUG): N; very abundant.

Hydroporus inscitus SHARP: Jahra, common in April 1998 and 1999, leg. Al-Houty.

The specimens have been identified by H. Fery.

Nebrioporus lanceolatus (WALKER): N, S; 1 ex. from each area.

The very long anterior tarsal claws of the male leave no doubt as to its identity.

Laccophilus poecilus KLUG: N; 1 ♀.

This is the species which has generally been known (e.g. GUIGNOT 1959) as *L. variegatus* (GERMAR). However, since SILFVERBERG's (1977) discovery that this name is unavailable as it is a junior homonym of *Dytiscus variegatus* FOURCROY (*Hydroporus palustris* (L.)) it has been known firstly as *L. obsoletus* (WESTHOFF) (mistaken identity) and then as *L. ponticus* SHARP, 1882. The discovery that *L. ponticus* SHARP was conspecific with *L. poecilus* KLUG, 1834, necessitated a further name change (SALEH AHMED & ANGUS 1998). It should be noted that while European material of this species has the ground colour of the elytra almost black, contrasting sharply with the brilliant yellow flecks (truly *variegatus*), material from other parts of its range, including the Middle East, has the ground colour of the elytra more of an olive green colour, so the contrast with the yellow flecks is much less pronounced. The Kuwait female is of this more restrained colouration.

Agabus conspersus MARSHAM: S; 1 ♀, near Ras AzZor, 25.III.1998, leg. Al-Houty.

The specimen was greasy and chestnut brown when first seen by the second author, with the folded wings clearly visible through the elytra, suggesting that it might be *A. safei* ABDUL-KARIM & ALI, 1986. However, after degreasing with acetone the beetle is now yellowish with a few faint darker flecks on the elytra, which are now air-filled and not transparent. Further, *A. safei* is described as having a yellow underside, while in *A. conspersus*, as in the Kuwait specimens, the underside is black.

Rhantus suturalis (MACLEAY): N, S; common.

Colymbetes piceus KLUG: S; a long series, Al-Manageesh, 19.IV.1993, leg. Al-Houty.

Eretes sticticus (L.): N, S; common, abundant in some pools.

Cybister lateralimarginalis (DE GEER): N; Sabriyah Oil Fields, 6.X.1994, leg. Al-Houty.

Cybister tripunctatus africanus (CASTELNAU): Al-Manageesh, 18.IV.1993, leg. Al-Houty.

Gyrinidae

Gyrinus distinctus AUBÉ: S; locally common.

In general appearance, including the aedeagus, these specimens resemble ordinary *G. distinctus*, but they are immediately distinguished by the pale yellow underside (ab. *fairmairei* REGIMBART).

Hydraenidae

Ochthebius zugmayeri KNISCH: S; 6 exs., Al-Khiran, 15.V.1995, leg. Al-Houty.

Two of the specimens were identified by M.A. Jäch.

Helophoridae

Helophorus angustatus MOTSCHULSKY: N.

A very distinctive species because of its cordiform pronotum, this is one of the best swimmers in the genus.

Hydrophilidae

Paracymus relaxus REY: S; near Ras AzZor, 25.III.1998, leg. Al-Houty.

Enochrus ater KUWERT: N, S.

Identified by S. Schödl.

Enochrus segmentinotatus KUWERT: N, S.

Our material was identified and published by SCHÖDL (1998).

Enochrus sinuatus d'ORCHYMONT: S; 1 ♂, near Ras AzZor, 25.III.1998, leg. Al-Houty.

This specimen was identified by S. Schödl.

Hydrochara flavipes STEVEN: N; 1 ex., Kebd, 9.V.1980, leg. Al-Houty.

Berosus (s.str.) insolitus d'ORCHYMONT: S; a long series, near Ras AzZor, 22.XI.1992, leg. Al-Houty, and 2 exs. from the same area, 25.III.1998.

HEBAUER (1997) mentions that this rare species is immediately recognisable by its narrow cordiform pronotum. The apical spines of the elytra, broader and somehow different from those of subgenus *Enoplurus*, should also be mentioned. SCHÖDL (1993) gives its distribution as Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

***Berosus* (*Enoplurus*) *asiaticus* KUWERT**: N; a long series, Doha area, 9.IV.1992, leg. Al-Houty.

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