

**Nomenclatural notes on two species of *Nicrophorus* FABRICIUS  
(Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, Silphinae, Nicrophorini) named in a  
publication authored by Johann Dietrich Herschel**

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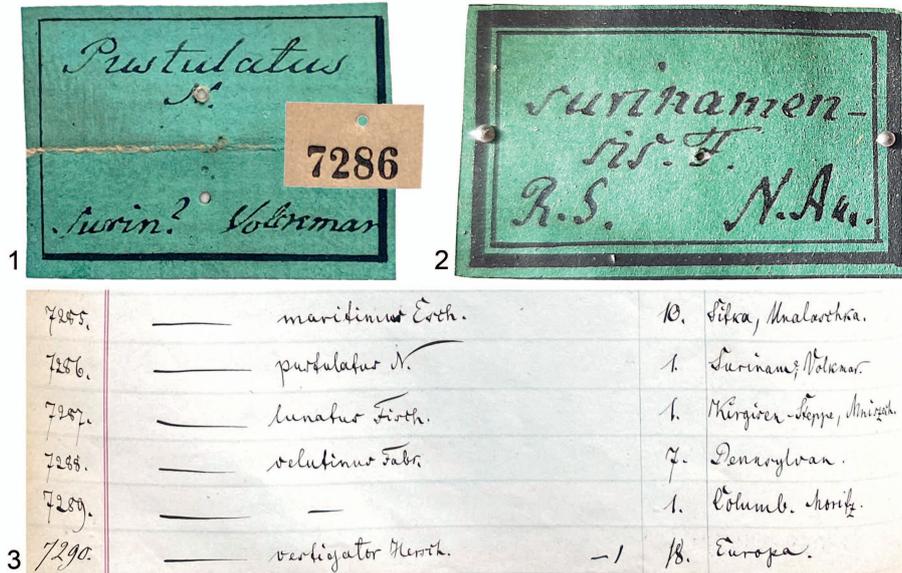
**A b s t r a c t :** The authorship of *Nicrophorus pustulatus* is ascribed to ILLIGER in HERSCHEL (1808). Published information about the fate of Herschel's Coleoptera Collection is documented along with known repositories housing potential syntypes. A specimen has been found in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, presumed to be the holotype of *N. pustulatus*, which has incorrect, apparently subsequently modified label data. Syntypes of *N. vestigator* HERSCHEL, 1808 could not be located.

**K e y w o r d s :** Historical collections, Friedrich Reußmann, Göttingen

SIKES et al. (2002), in their world catalogue of Nicrophorinae, noted that the types of several nominal species could not be located in known repositories and that the whereabouts of certain historical collections remain entirely unknown. A small but exemplary facet of this circumstance are two names made available in a paper by Johann Dietrich Herschel, one for a widespread Palaearctic species, the other for a North American species. Herschel is known to have provided beetles, mostly North American, for descriptive works of contemporary entomologists (MADGE 1994), such as Johann Fabricius, Friedrich Hausmann, Johann Herbst, and Friedrich Weber, but nothing has come to light about Herschel's collection itself.

First, two nomenclatural aspects need attention. I follow here HINRICHS (1808, p. 70) and the argumentation in WTAXA (2020) [under Bibliographic Search: Illiger, after 1806] that, despite the year 1807 on the title page, the journal issue seems to have been published in 1808. Regarding the authorship of the two names established in HERSCHEL (1808), it should be noted that all footnotes therein were made [and initialed] by Karl Illiger, the journal editor. I consider these additions as Illiger's personal opinion rather than a result of joint research. Because (i) the name *N. pustulatus* was used nowhere else than in Illiger's footnote on page 271, (ii) the specimen was described from the collection of Illiger's mentor and father-in-law Hellwig, and (iii) the title of Herschel's paper refers to one [i.e., *N. vestigator*] rather than two new species, the authorship should be attributed to Illiger, not Herschel. It remains uncertain whether MELSHEIMER (1853) recognized the correct authorship [as interpreted by SIKES et al. (2003)] or merely referenced Illiger's Magazin [as done elsewhere in the catalog] without authority. *Nicrophorus vestigator*, the second species named in HERSCHEL (1808), was introduced on page 274 [to which most authors refer] with a Latin description in a footnote. This footnote has Illiger's initial, so the above argument regarding the authorship may also apply to *N. vestigator*. However, a key issue of the paper was the distinction of *N.*

*vestigator* from *N. vespillo* (LINNAEUS), with which it had been lumped before. The thorough discussion of morphological and historical aspects on the next two pages and the title of the paper clearly are original and authored by Herschel. Strictly speaking, Illiger translated in his editorial footnote diagnostic criteria from Herschel's German text into Latin but otherwise did not contribute to the scientific aspect itself, so the authorship of *N. vestigator* should be attributed to Herschel alone, with page number 275.



**Figs 1-3:** Historical labels and inventory records. (1) Label of the presumed holotype of *Nicrophorus pustulatus* from the former Hellwig-Hoffmansegg Collection, with the associated number referring to the third inventory in Fig. 3; (2) label associated with specimens of *Necrodes surinamensis* received at ZMUG with the Reußmann Collection in 1848; (3) records 7285-7290 in the third inventory of the historical MfNB Coleoptera collection. Images 1 and 3 by B. Jaeger (MfNB), image 2 by G. Heinemann (ZMUG).

The distinction between two authors directs to different resources in terms of actually studied specimens. Illiger (in HERSHEY 1808) reported *N. pustulatus* from the combined collections of Hellwig and Hoffmansegg. These came to Berlin around 1810 and were purchased by the Prussian State for the Zoological Museum (now Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, MfNB) in 1819 (KÖPKE 1860, MUGGELBERG 1975). In the MfNB Coleoptera collection, only one specimen is preserved under the name *N. pustulatus*. The locality on the label, "Surin[am]?" (Fig. 1), is erroneous and stands in conflict with the North American provenance given in the description. All three existing versions of the historical inventory of MfNB Coleoptera record just this one specimen. The first inventory, with the respective page written not before 1849, attributes *N. pustulatus* to "Mus. Berol." instead to an authority; the entry in the second inventory is identical. The records of the third inventory come with new numbers, and *N. pustulatus* is listed with the same new details as on the label, with "N." after the species name, "?" after Surinam, and Volkmar as the original owner (Fig. 3), suggesting a connection between the writing of the third inventory and a possible relabeling of the specimen. If this specimen is taken

for the holotype of *N. pustulatus*, then under the assumption that it arrived at MfNB without locality data and that the erroneous provenance was added subsequently by mistake. A corresponding note with reference to this paper will be added to the specimen. It is interesting to note that all three historical inventories of MfNB Coleoptera acknowledge Herschel as the author of *N. vestigator* but not of *N. pustulatus* (Fig. 3).

HERSCHEL (1808) referred to ca. 30 specimens of *N. vestigator* collected over the years at several sites, making it likely that most if not all were from his own collection. SIKES et al. (2002) suggested MfNB as a likely type repository. However, even though Illiger (in HERSCHEL 1808) mentioned in his footnotes on pages 271 and 276 *N. vestigator* from Portugal and Prussia housed in the Hellwig-Hoffmansegg Collection, it is unlikely that these were studied by Herschel [as surmised by MADGE (1994)]. Together with curatorial assistant Bernd Jaeger, I searched in MfNB for historical specimens of *N. vestigator* attributable to Herschel but to no avail. Next I targeted the remnants of Herschel's personal collection. Friedrich Reußmann acquired the beetles in or immediately before 1818 (LOHMANN 1818) and integrated them into his own collection. The combined collections [including vertebrates] were willed to the Royal Academic Museum Göttingen in 1846 in exchange for a life annuity (ANONYMOUS 1847). The insects were transferred to this institution upon his death in 1848 (EHLERS 1901). These historical acquisitions now are housed in the Biodiversitätsmuseum Göttingen (ZMUG). Gert Tröster, the former curator and most familiar with the entomological collection, pointed out to me that labels marked "RS" or "R.S." (see Fig. 2 for an example) may indicate specimens originating from the historical "Reußmann Sammlung". This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that all species so labeled were validly named before Reußmann's death. Of the 50 species described from Herschel's beetle collection, I found potential types for seven [all described by Herbst] but none for *N. vestigator*. They might have been lost during the second half of the 19th Century (EHLERS 1901) or Herschel had given them to other collectors before he sold the collection. The latter seems to have been the case for his buprestid types described by HAUSMANN (1799) and WEBER (1801), which HERBST (1801) described again from the collection of Christoph Friedrich Wilhelm vom Hagen. Hagen was a high-ranked Prussian official with family roots in Stöckey near Göttingen, where Hausmann, Illiger, and Gravenhorst had studied in the late 1790s. He obviously owned specimens with identifications, which HERBST (1801) mistook for manuscript names.

### Zusammenfassung

Die Autorschaft für *Nicrophorus pustulatus* wird ILLIGER in HERSCHEL (1808) zugeschrieben. Es werden Veröffentlichungen zum Verbleib der Herschel-Sammlung aufgeführt sowie Angaben gemacht zu Sammlungen mit möglicherweise erhaltenen Syntypen. Der mutmaßliche Holotyp von *N. pustulatus* hat inkorrekte, wohl nachträglich ergänzte Etikettendaten. Syntypen von *N. vestigator* HERSCHEL, 1808 wurden nicht gefunden.

### Acknowledgements

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