



Revision of Scirtidae (Insecta: Coleoptera) described by Victor Ivanovitsch Motschulsky

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Abstract

The available type material of Scirtidae described by V. I. Motschulsky was studied. New combinations are proposed for: *Hydrocyphon atratus* (*Cyphon atratus* (Motschulsky) **comb. nov.**), *Cyphon affinis* (*Scirtes affinis* (Motschulsky) **comb. nov.**), and *Cyphon ruficollis* (*Hydrocyphon rufithorax* (Gemminger) **comb. nov.**). *Cyphon infuscatus* is synonymized with *Cyphon flavescens*. *Cyphon atratus*, *Cyphon ovalis*, *Hydrocyphon rufithorax*, *Cyphon flavescens*, *Mescirtes gagatinus*, *Ora nigropunctata*, *Scirtes axillaris*, *Scirtes canescens*, and *Scirtes grandis* are redescribed and illustrated; lectotypes and paralectotypes of *Cyphon atratus*, *Scirtes axillaris*, and a neotype of *Scirtes grandis* are designated. *Scirtes californicus* belongs to Chrysomelidae: Alticinae, and *Cyphon pictus* to Melyridae: Rhadalinae. The holotype of *Scirtes convexiusculus* is badly damaged by pests, and reinterpretation of its status is impossible.

Key words: Scirtidae, Chrysomelidae, Melyridae, *Cyphon*, *Hydrocyphon*, *Mescirtes*, *Scirtes*, taxonomy, redescrptions, V. I. Motschulsky, Sri Lanka, California

Introduction

Between 1845 and 1863 the eminent Russian coleopterologist, Victor Ivanovitsch Motschulsky (1810–1871) described 14 species of Scirtidae, the majority of which originated from Sri Lanka, and were collected by Nietner. The only exception was the North American *Scirtes californicus* Motschulsky, 1845. None of the type specimens had been re-examined, and the types were considered to have been lost (“Motschulsky’s type has probably been lost”: Champion 1918: 264). *Scirtes grandis* Motschulsky, 1863 was redescribed by Champion (1918) on the basis of specimens collected in Sri Lanka (Motschulsky’s types had not been studied). It must be noted that Motschulsky was very careless in his taxonomic work what caused constant conflicts with coleopterists in western Europe, particularly with E. G. Kraatz (for the biography of Motschulsky see Herman 2001). In several cases names on labels differ from those employed in the published articles. Moreover, in the articles from 1858 and 1863, different generic names are applied to the same species without any comments. The aim of the present study is to redescribe the Scirtidae described by Motschulsky and to clarify their status.

Thanks to the kindness of Dr. Nikolai Nikitsky (Zoological Museum, Moscow State University), I was able to study the Scirtidae from the Motschulsky’s collection. A close examination has revealed that two species described by Motschulsky have to be excluded from Scirtidae. Several specimens were damaged by pests and moulds, and are therefore difficult to interpret. Additional specimens of *Cyphon infuscatus*, *Hydrocyphon rufithorax*, and *Scirtes grandis* were borrowed from other collections, providing the opportunity to observe more detailed characteristics of these taxa.

When more than one specimen was pinned on the same pin, all specimens were treated as syntypes, and in the case of *Cyphon atratum* and *Scirtes axillaris*, lectotypes were designated. The holotype of *Scirtes grandis* was severely damaged by Dermestidae, with only the ventrum and antennae partly preserved, therefore a