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**Water mites delineating the Oriental and Palaearctic regions—the unique fauna of southern Iran, with description of one new genus, one new subgenus and 14 new species (Acari: Hydrachnidia)**

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## Table of contents

Table of contents	3
Abstract	4
Introduction	5
Material and methods	5
Systematics	6
Family Hydrachnidae Leach, 1815	6
Genus <i>Hydrachna</i> Müller, 1776	6
<i>Hydrachna</i> cf. <i>vallanti</i> K. Viets, 1951	6
<i>Hydrachna sistanica</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	7
Family Hydryphantidae Piersig, 1896	12
Genus <i>Diplodontus</i> Dugès, 1834	12
<i>Diplodontus silvestrii</i> (Daday, 1898)	12
Family Hydrodromidae K. Viets, 1936	13
Genus <i>Hydrodroma</i> Koch, 1837	13
<i>Hydrodroma rheophila</i> Cook, 1967	13
Family Anisitsiellidae Koenike, 1910	15
Genus <i>Nilotonia</i> Thor, 1905	15
<i>Nilotonia (Dartiella) hormozgana</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	15
Family Torrenticolidae Piersig, 1902	18
Genus <i>Torrenticola</i> Piersig, 1896	18
<i>Torrenticola (Megapalpis) asadiae</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	18
<i>Torrenticola (Torrenticola) hormozganensis</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	20
<i>Monatractides (Monatractides) martini</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	23
Genus <i>Neotractides</i> Lundblad, 1941	26
<i>Neotractides (Allotractides) calidus</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	26
Family Limnesiidae Thor, 1900	29
Genus <i>Limnesia</i> Koch, 1836	29
<i>Limnesia (Limnesia) kochi</i> Smit & Pešić, 2010	29
<i>Limnesia (Tetralimnesia) pinguipalpis</i> Cook, 1967	30
Subgenus <i>Halolimnesia</i> <b>subgen. nov.</b>	30
<i>Limnesia (Halolimnesia) diversipes</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	30
Family Hygrobatidae Koch, 1842	33
Genus <i>Iranobates</i> Pešić, Smit & Asadi, 2011	33
Genus <i>Hygrobates</i> Koch, 1837	33
<i>Hygrobates (Hygrobates) hamatus</i> K. Viets, 1935	33
Genus <i>Atractides</i> Koch, 1837	33
<i>Atractides (Atractides) biscutatus</i> Cook, 1967	33
<i>Atractides (Atractides) hormozganus</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	36
Family Unionicolidae Oudemans, 1909	40
Genus <i>Neumania</i> Lebert, 1879	40
<i>Neumania maharashtris</i> Cook, 1967	40
Family Aturidae Thor, 1900	41
Genus <i>Javalbia</i> K. Viets, 1935	41
<i>Javalbia (Javalbiopsis) persica</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	41
Genus <i>Axonopsis</i> Piersig, 1893	45
<i>Axonopsis (Hexaxonopsis) kermanica</i> Pešić & Asadi, 2010	45
<i>Axonopsis (Hexaxonopsis) manoojani</i> Pešić & Asadi, 2010	45
<i>Axonopsis (Hexaxonopsis) gloeeri</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	45
<i>Axonopsis (Axonopsis) hyporheica</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	52
<i>Haloaxonopsis</i> <b>gen. nov.</b>	54
<i>Haloaxonopsis salina</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	54
Genus <i>Albia</i> Thon, 1899	56
<i>Albia (Dentalbia) hyporheica</i> <b>sp. nov.</b>	56
Family Frontipodopsidae (Viets, 1931)	59
Genus <i>Frontipodopsis</i> Walter, 1919	59
<i>Frontipodopsis</i> cf. <i>reticulatifrons</i> Szalay, 1945	59
Family Arrenuridae Thor, 1900	59
Genus <i>Arrenurus</i> Dugès, 1834	59
<i>Arrenurus (Arrenurus) bharatensis</i> Cook, 1967	59
Acknowledgements	66
References	66

## Abstract

This paper deals with a collection of epigeal and hypogean water mites from the Hormozgan and Sistan va Baluchestan provinces in southern Iran. One new genus, *Haloaxonopsis*, is described, characterized by the presence of so-called wheel-like acetabula, a unique character so far known only in marine mites of the family Pontarachnidae. One new subgenus, *Halolimnesia*, and fourteen new species are described: *Hydrachna sistanica*, *Nilotonia hormozgana*, *Torrenticola asadiae*, *T. hormozganensis*, *Monatractides martini*, *Neoatractides calidus*, *Limnesia diversipes*, *Atractides hormozganus*, *Javalbia persica*, *Axonopsis gloeri*, *A. interstitialis*, *A. hyporheica*, *Haloaxonopsis salina* and *Albia hyporheica*. The first descriptions of the female are given for *Neumania cf. maharashtris* Cook, 1967 and *Arrenurus bharatensis* Cook, 1967. The following species are reported for the first time in Iran: *Hydrachna cf. vaillanti* K. Viets 1951, *H. globosa lacerata* Lundblad, 1969, *Diplodontus silvestrii* (Daday, 1898), *Hygrobatas hamatus* K. Viets, 1935, *Atractides biscutatus* Cook, 1967 and *Arrenurus bharatensis* Cook, 1967. The zoogeographical and ecological characteristics of the water mite fauna of southern Iran are discussed. The fauna of SE Iran is of Oriental character, and no typical Palaearctic species were found. Our study shows that this fauna is not transitional, suggesting a rather 'sharp' boundary between the Palaearctic and Oriental regions in southern Iran.

**Key words:** Acari, water mites, taxonomy, Palaearctic, Oriental, Iran