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Introduction: Beetle Diversity on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau: the Mêdog region

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Mountain systems stand as key reservoirs for global biodiversity; their steep climatic gradients and complex habitat heterogeneity offer long-term refugia that sustain lineage diversification over deep time (Rahbek *et al*. 2019a, b). The Qinghai-Xizang Plateau and its southeastern margin beautifully exemplify these dynamics. Here, tectonic uplift and a highly dissected topography have historically reorganized biotas, forging assemblages characterized by exceptional endemism (Favre *et al*. 2015; Xing & Ree 2017). Situated at the eastern Himalayan front, the Mêdog region represents a major biogeographic transition zone bridging the Palearctic and Oriental regions. Through this landscape, the Yarlung Zangbo River carves a deeply incised canyon where a vast elevational gradient compresses entirely distinct vegetation zones into a remarkably narrow horizontal distance.

Such steep gradients have been widely shown to drive high beta diversity and rapid turnover in community composition along elevational profiles (*e.g.*, Rahbek 1995; Körner & Paulsen 2004). The spatial arrangement of glaciated peaks alongside humid subtropical valleys generates a mosaic of microhabitats and refugia, facilitating both the survival of relict lineages and local speciation events (Körner 2000; Myers *et al*. 2000). However, despite these unique ecological conditions fostering remarkable biodiversity, records of the regional entomological fauna have consistently lagged behind those of plants and vertebrates. This gap of knowledge is especially pronounced for beetles, or Coleoptera, a hyperdiverse order that forms much of the structural and functional fabric of Earth's terrestrial ecosystems (Farrell 1998; Stork 2018; Yin 2022). Given that insect lineages underwent early and extensive diversification, thorough sampling remains essential to disentangle their evolutionary history and distributions in montane systems (Misof *et al*. 2014). Unfortunately, achieving this much-needed taxonomic coverage is historically constrained by the global "taxonomic impediment," characterized by a decline in specialist expertise, logistical challenges in accessing remote field sites, and the time-consuming process of species delimitation and taxonomic revisions (*e.g.*, Giangrande 2003; Carvalho *et al*. 2005; Dubois 2010). While integrative taxonomy, particularly the application of molecular tools, has accelerated species discovery, these methodologies still rely heavily on rigorous morphological studies and reference collections (Hebert *et al*. 2003). To address these knowledge gaps, recent coordinated expeditions and intensive surveys spanning various temporal periods and spatial scales have been conducted in Mêdog. Despite frequently encountering severe weather, landslide hazards, and difficult-to-access terrain, a group of entomologists have amassed a substantial collection of specimens and associated data. This material provides the foundation for subsequent taxonomic works and phylogenetic analyses, enabling a deeper understanding of the diversity and distribution patterns of the local coleopteran fauna.

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Although the present special issue focuses explicitly on the Mêdog region, it is essential to recognize this area as an integral part of the southern slopes of the Himalaya. Any modern taxonomic endeavor here must acknowledge the pioneering and ongoing research that has systematically documented Himalayan beetle biodiversity. Historically, the monumental *The Fauna of British India* series (e.g., Gahan 1906; Jacoby 1908; Arrow 1910, 1917, 1931, 1950; Fowler 1912; Marshall 1916; Maulik 1919, 1926, 1936; Andrewes 1929, 1935; Cameron 1930, 1931, 1932, 1939) and the results of various early expeditions laid the groundwork for regional entomology. This legacy was further advanced by European entomologists through series such as the contemporary, multi-volume *Biodiversity and Natural Heritage of the Himalaya* (Hartmann & Baumbach 2003; Hartmann & Weipert 2006; 2009, 2012, 2015; Hartmann *et al*. 2018, 2021, 2024). From a theoretical perspective, Mani's (1968) classic work on high-altitude insect ecology remains a valuable resource for understanding the evolutionary drivers shaping this fauna. Furthermore, major domestic efforts by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, culminating in the monographs *Insects of Xizang* (QTP Expedition Group, Chinese Academy of Sciences 1981a, b) and *Insects of the Hengduan Mountains Region* (Chen *et al*. 1992, 1993), provided the critical baselines for the plateau faunas of China. By presenting this Mêdog-centric issue, we aim to respect and extend this rich, multifaceted scientific heritage, contributing a localized yet meaningful piece to the broader knowledge of Himalayan biogeography.

On the basis of extensive field collections, the taxonomic outcomes compiled here represent a measurable advancement in our understanding of the region's fauna. Specifically, the volume describes one new genus (in Carabidae) and 99 new species distributed across 24 families (Fig. 1). Among the newly described taxa, 62 originate from Mêdog, 22 from other localities in Xizang, and 15 from regions outside Xizang. This distribution highlights Mêdog as a primary hotspot for biodiversity, while suggesting the necessity of considering a broader geographic context to trace biogeographic links across the plateau. Of the included papers, the highest number of new taxa occurs in Chrysomelidae, adding 16 species (Ding *et al*. 2026; Huang *et al*. 2026a; Liang *et al*. 2026; Peng *et al*. 2026). This is closely followed by discoveries in Tenebrionidae (14 species; Bai *et al*. 2026; Ji *et al*. 2026a, b; Wu & Yuan 2026; Zhang *et al*. 2026a; Zhou & Chen 2026; Zhou *et al*. 2026a), Coccinellidae (11 species; Jin *et al*. 2026; Xie *et al*. 2026; Ye *et al*. 2026; Zhu *et al*. 2026), and Hydrophilidae (10 species; Jia & Mai 2026a–c; Mai & Jia 2026a, b). Notable additions are also recorded for Staphylinidae (9 species; Huang *et al*. 2026b; Li *et al*. 2026a–c; Zhang *et al*. 2026b) and Scarabaeidae (8 species; Lu *et al*. 2026; Yang *et al*. 2026a).

Beyond these most species-rich groups, the remainder of the descriptions span a diverse taxonomic spectrum. Families yielding multiple new species include Cantharidae (4 species; Hua *et al*. 2026; Yang *et al*. 2026b; Zhang *et al*. 2026c) and Nitidulidae (4 species; Xu *et al*. 2026; Zhang *et al*. 2026d); Carabidae (3 species; Wang *et al*. 2026a) and Cleridae (3 species; Yang 2026); as well as Cerambycidae (2 species; Lin *et al*. 2026a; Lin & Zhang 2026), Curculionidae (2 species; Lü & Zhang 2026; Lin *et al*. 2026b), Pyrochroidae (2 species; Gao *et al*. 2026), and Lycidae (2 species; Wang *et al*. 2026b). Furthermore, the issue includes single-species descriptions across nine families: Dasytidae (Miao *et al*. 2026), Dermestidae (Zhou *et al*. 2026b), Elateridae (Qiu & Ruan 2026), Geotrupidae (Luo *et al*. 2026), Elmidae (Jiang & Chen 2026), Hybosoridae (Wang 2026a), Ripiphoridae (Wang 2026b), Ptinidae (Huang *et al*. 2026c), and Silvanidae (Liu & Li 2026). Finally, complementing these new taxa, the volume reports 53 new distributional records—36 species for China, 14 for the broader Xizang Autonomous Region, and 3 for Mêdog (Fig. 1). These records are detailed throughout the aforementioned works, alongside two treatments of Carabidae (Chen & Shi 2026) and Erotylidae (Jia *et al*. 2026).

Collectively, these contributions outline a complex species assemblage structured primarily by elevation, moisture availability, and forest composition that typically drive community assembly in mountain biodiversity hotspots (Myers 1988; Mittermeier *et al*. 1998). Viewed through this broader biogeographic lens, the newly characterized Mêdog fauna captures the intersection between the geological history of the Himalayan uplift and modern environmental gradients. The combination of steep elevational shifts, rapid climatic transitions, and the stability of humid valleys creates a selective regime that simultaneously filters specific lineages and drives species diversification. Consequently, this region serves as an effective natural laboratory for testing hypotheses related to mountain biodiversity and the role of topography in generating species richness (Rahbek *et al*. 2019a, b).

For students seeking to comprehend the full scope of regional biodiversity, the data compiled in this issue reveal a clear reality. Despite the steady accumulation of new descriptions, the study of insect diversity in Xizang remains distinctly under-investigated. The uneven taxonomic coverage and the lack of depth across numerous beetle lineages (and probably other insect groups) clearly expose the limitations of our current knowledge base, long before we can reliably engage in large-scale data mining or theoretical ecological discussions. Therefore, the deeper contribution

of this special issue lies perhaps not merely in the species it names, but in the undocumented diversity it reveals. It is our hope that these evident gaps will draw the attention of both scholars and administrative policymakers, driving the focus and support required to bring the entomological fauna of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau to light.

Realizing the scientific potential of this natural laboratory, however, required a concerted collaborative effort. The culmination of this special issue and the maintenance of its scholarly standards rely on the expertise of the international taxonomic community. We extend our sincere gratitude to the 86 reviewers—including 16 who chose to remain anonymous—who generously contributed their time and expertise to evaluate the manuscripts in this special issue. In alphabetical order by surname, we thank the following 70 experts: Rolf Aalbu, Vitaly Alekseev, Robert Anderson, Kiyoshi Ando, Emmanuel Arriaga-Varela, Paolo Audisio, Alberto Ballerio, Justin Bartlett, Ron Beenen, Matheus Bento, Aleš Bezděk, Jan Bezděk, Chen-Yang Cai, Caroline Chaboo, Prathapan Divakaran, Hume Douglas, Martin Fikáček, Roland Gerstmeier, Guillermo González, Borislav Guéorguiev, Adam Haberski, Masakazu Hayashi, Andreas Herrmann, Oliver Hillert, Sadatomo Hisamatsu, Zafar Iqbal, Naoya Ito, Manfred Jäch, Jiří Janák, Pilar Jurado-Angulo, Gaël J. Kergoat, Alexander Konstantinov, Andreas Kopetz, David Král, Robin Kundrata, John Leavengood, Chi-Feng Lee, Pol Limbourg, Ivan Löbl, Daniel Lukic, Ryan Lumen, Kimio Masumoto, Adrian Mayor, Yûsuke N. Minoshima, Alexander Miroshnikov, José Gerardo Mondaca Escudero, Maxim Nabozhenko, Tatsuya Niisato, Shûhei Nomura, Tsubasa Nozaki, Alexander Petrov, Darren Pollock, Alexander Prosvirov, Luboš Purchart, Enrico Ruzzier, Riccardo Sciaky, Lukáš Sekerka, Paul Skelley, Sarah Smith, Xiao-Bin Song, Charles Staines, Karol Szawaryn, Gérard Tavakilian, Sergei Tshernyshev, Marco Uliana, Enrique Valenzuela, Jaroslav Větrovec, Hao Xu, Takahiro Yoshida, and Petr Zahradník.

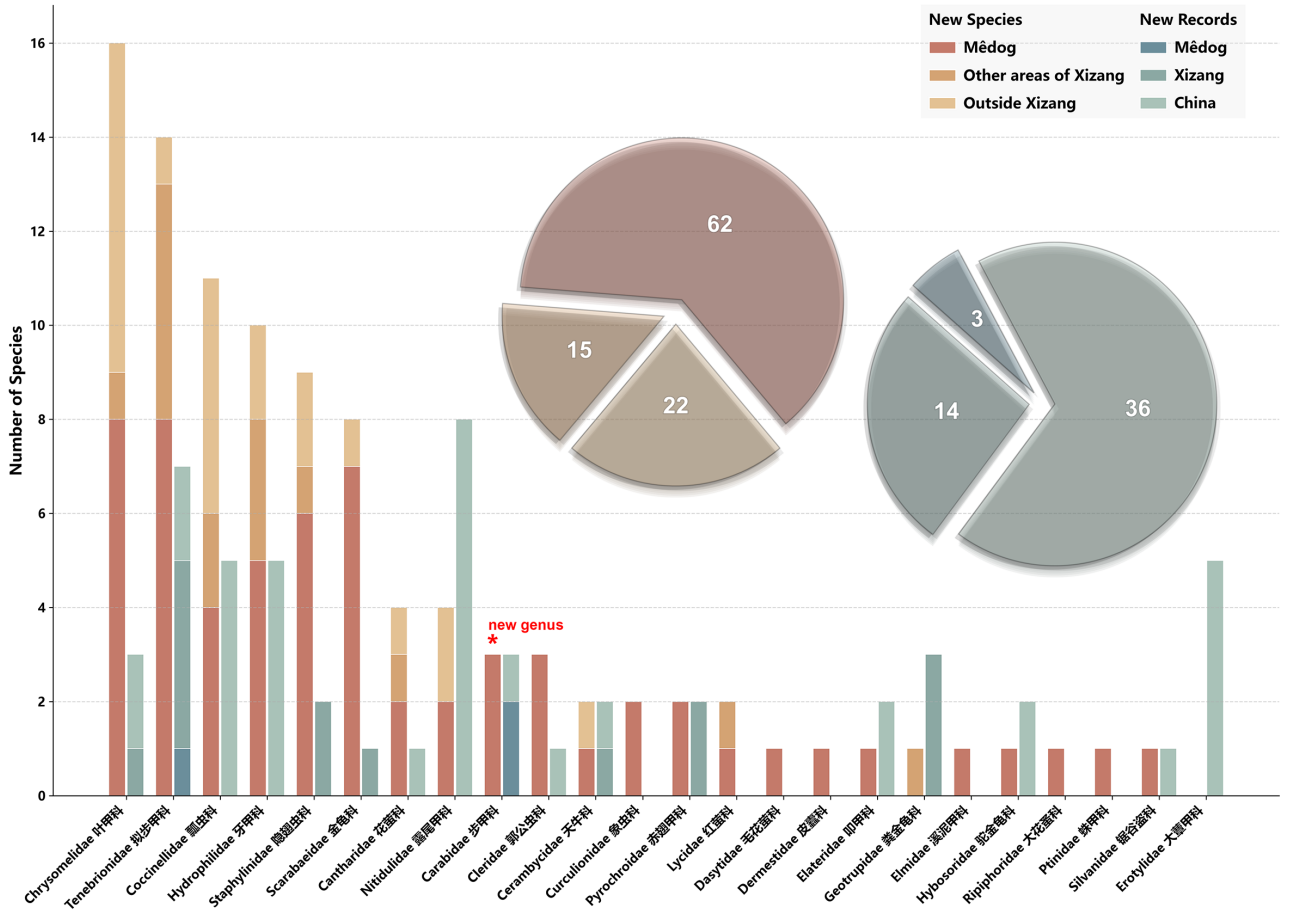

FIGURE 1. Summary of taxonomic outcomes of this issue. The main bar chart illustrates the number of newly described species (brown shades—left) and new distributional records (teal shades—right) across 24 families. A red asterisk denotes the discovery of a new genus in Carabidae. The inset pie charts provide a geographic context of these findings: the left chart details the localities for the 99 new species (Mêdog, other areas of Xizang, and outside Xizang), while the right chart categorizes the geographic scope of the 53 new records.

We further acknowledge the contributing authors for providing their research to this volume, alongside the field biologists, local guides, and logisticians whose physical efforts in the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon facilitated these collections. The extensive fieldwork underlying many of these studies, as well as the publication of this special issue, were made possible by financial support from the Biological Resources Program, Chinese Academy of Sciences; the Second Tibetan Plateau Scientific Expedition and Research Program (grant no. 2024QZKK0200); and the Institute of Plateau Biology of Xizang Autonomous Region, Lhasa, China. We extend our appreciation to the Mêdog County Government and the Mêdog County Forestry and Grassland Bureau for their strong administrative and logistical support. We are grateful to Professor Zhi-Qiang Zhang for his invaluable insights and discussions during the conceptualization and organization of this issue. Also, we are grateful to Professors Xing-Ke Yang, Guo-Dong Ren, and Li-Zhen Li, former commissioners of the Coleopterology Committee, Entomological Society of China, for their long-term guidance and encouragement. Upon the successful experience of the Committee's last special issue on the Nanling Mountains (Ge *et al*. 2024), their ongoing mentorship has been important in bringing this second collection to fruition. Finally, we extend our appreciation to the editorial and production team at *Zootaxa* for dedicating a considerable amount of time and energy to navigating the publication process of this volume.

To maintain taxonomic uniformity throughout the issue, we have adopted the updated family-group framework for Coleoptera outlined by Bouchard *et al*. (2024). Within each family, contributing articles are ordered alphabetically by genus. We implemented this approach to maximize accessibility and streamline the retrieval of taxonomic information for our readers.

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