

On the identity of *Peltodytes obesus* Pechet, 1923 (Coleoptera: Haliplidae)

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Examination of the holotype of *Peltodytes obesus* Pechet, 1923, shows that Zimmermann (1924) was right, that this species of unknown provenance belongs to the nearctic fauna, and that it is conspecific with the earlier described *Peltodytes tortulosus* Roberts, 1913. *P. obesus* is therefore established as a junior synonym of the latter species. Shortly discussed are the problems created by describing new species without knowing to which faunal region they belong.

Over de identiteit van Peltodytes obesus Pechet, 1923 (kevers, watertreders) - Bestudering van het holotype van de waterkever *Peltodytes obesus* Pechet, 1923 bracht aan het licht dat Zimmermann (1924) deze soort van onbekende herkomst terecht tot de nearctische (Amerikaanse) fauna rekende, en dat deze soort conspecifiek is met de eerder beschreven *Peltodytes tortulosus* Roberts 1913. *P. obesus* wordt derhalve bestempeld als junior-synoniem van *P. tortulosus* Roberts 1913. De problemen rond het beschrijven van nieuwe soorten waarvan het faunagebied niet bekend is, worden kort besproken.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1923 Pechet described 2 new *Peltodytes*-species: *P. coomani* from Vietnam and *P. obesus*. The description of *obesus* was based on a single unlabelled specimen, originating from the Duchaine-collection, which contained palaearctic and nearctic material. Zimmermann (1924) added a note to his key to the worlds Haliplidae and although he did not see the type he considered this species to belong to the nearctic fauna and suggested a synonymy with *P. tortulosus* Roberts, 1913. No publication of any North American author is known to me, showing whether they agreed or disagreed with Zimmermann, or even noticed his vision.

SYSTEMATICS

Recently I had the opportunity to study the only type-specimen of *P. obesus*, a female (holotype

by original designation) from the Muséum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris (Fig.1). Comparison with some specimens of *P. tortulosus* from Canada proves that Zimmermann (1924) was right. I also consider *P. obesus* to be conspecific with *P. tortulosus*. *P. obesus* is a junior synonym of *P. tortulosus*. *P. tortulosus* can be distinguished from other nearctic species by the large size (4.0 - 4.5 (5.0?) mm) and by the apex of the metafemur, being uniformly yellow-brown. Distribution: Canada: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec (Larson, 1987; Wallis, 1973). United States: North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin (Gundersen & Otremba, 1988; Hilsenhoff & Brigham, 1978). Found in ponds, marshes, peatlands and stagnant margins of streams.

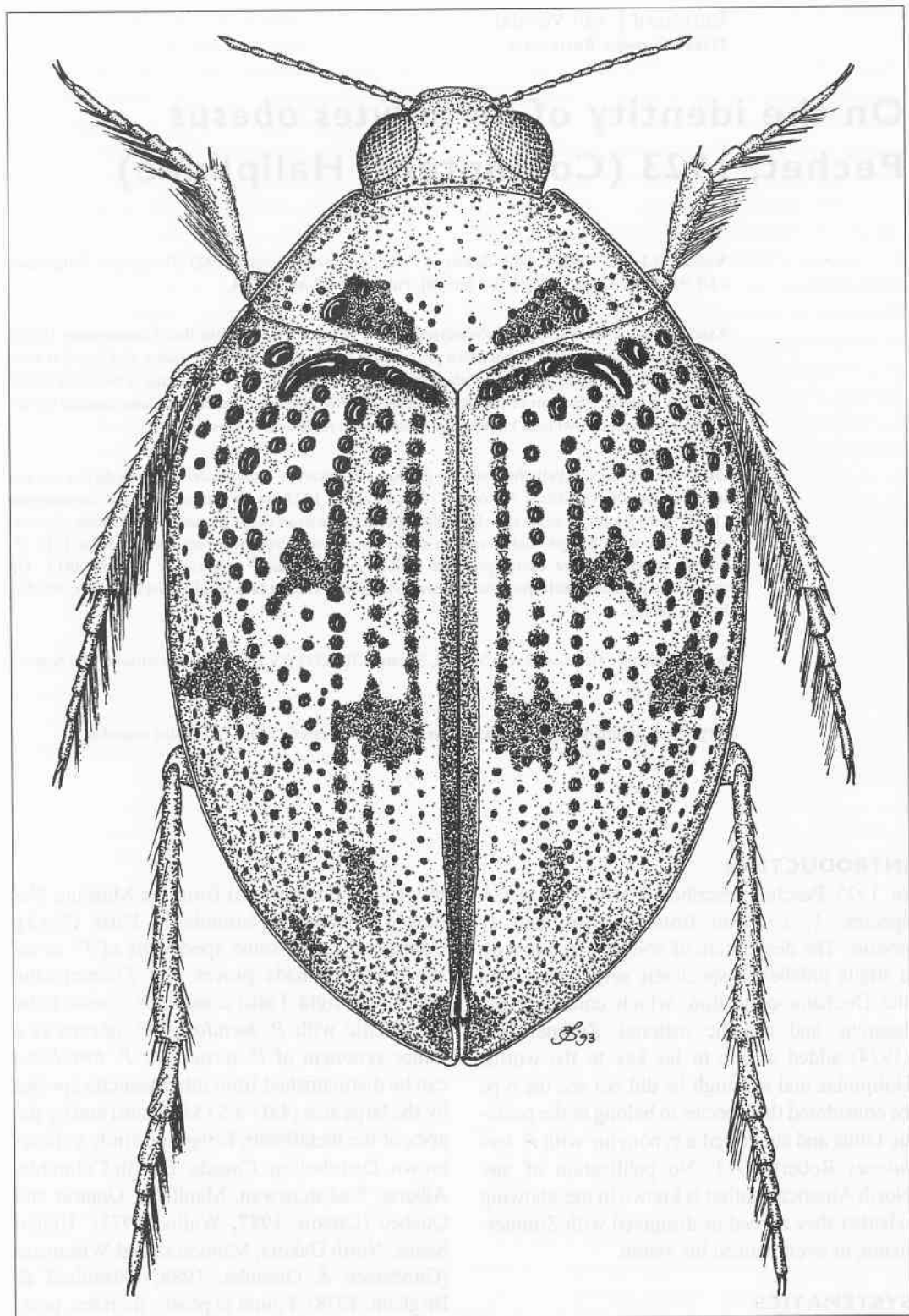


Figure 1 The type-specimen of *Peltodytes obesus* Pechet, 1923; junior synonym of *Peltodytes tortulosus* Roberts, 1913 (B.J. van Vondel)

Material examined

1, Holotype "*Peltodytes obesus* n. sp. R. Peschet. Provenance inconnu. Collection Duchaine Donckier. TYPE" (Muséum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris). 1, Canada, Aweme, Manitoba, N. Criddle, 25.IX.1923. 1, Canada, Toronto, Ontario, L.J. Milne, 17.III.1929 (both from authors collection).

PROBLEMS WITH UNLABELLED MATERIAL

In the 18th and 19th century new species were more than once described on the basis of unlabelled material. Usually it was at least known from which country or faunal region the specimens originated. In the 20th century this practice fortunately became less common. The work of entomologists, and other biologists, is often restricted to a particular faunal region. They are often not in detail familiar with the species from other faunal regions. An author who is intending to describe a new species usually takes into consideration the species of that particular group occurring in that faunal region, at least he should do so. In these cases complications are created by species like *Peltodytes obesus*, of which even the faunal region was unknown. Any author working on material of any faunal region has to reckon with this kind of 'homeless' species. In museum-practice unlabelled material is often regarded as 'non-scientific' and has to be removed from the collection or may be used for educational purposes. In the case of well known species this is understandable, but in less common material such unlabelled material might contain valuable information. That the interpretation of this kind of material is not always easy

may be true, but that must not be the only reason to dispose of such 'difficult' material.

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