

Introduction

The genus *Harpalus*, with approximately 480 extant species, is the largest of the genera in the tribe Harpalini (Noonan 1976). Taxa of this diverse genus occur primarily in the Nearctic and Palaearctic Regions, but approximately 56 species occur in eastern Africa and Madagascar, and approximately 10 species are found in the northern fringes of the Oriental Region. Adults are abundant and are readily collected from beneath debris on the ground in grasslands, montane meadows, and semidesert areas within America north of Mexico. This abundance has led to the description of numerous forms and recently to several revisions of groups found in the Nearctic Region north of Mexico.

Latreille (1802) described the genus, created a series of groups within it based on external features of adults, and gave examples of species belonging to these groups. Previously, DeGeer (1774) had been the first to describe a Nearctic species, *Harpalus pensylvanicus* (as a member of the genus *Carabus*). Fabricius (1775) named the second Nearctic taxon, *Harpalus caliginosus* (under the name *Carabus caliginosus*), whose adults are the largest of the genus. Authors such as Chaudoir, Dejean, Duftschmid, Haldeman, Kirby, Mannerheim, Sahlberg, and Say thereafter described Nearctic species in scattered papers. LeConte was the first worker to describe and systematically revise Nearctic species. From 1848 into 1879, he published a series of 12 papers in which he named 32 new species, 16 of which are considered valid today. His 1865 paper was the first taxonomic revision of the Nearctic species because it provided not only descriptions of new taxa but also a key. In a series of four papers, Casey (1884a, b; 1914; 1924) destroyed the order LeConte had created by naming 117 new species from America north of Mexico; only 13, or slightly less than 10%, of these taxa are regarded today as worthy of species-level rank.