

**Fam. HYDROPHILIDÆ.**

The family Hydrophilidæ consists of about 600 species, the majority of which are aquatic in their habits; nevertheless the family certainly cannot be correctly associated with the other aquatic families Haliplidæ, Dytiscidæ, and Gyrinidæ in the Adephagous series; it is indeed the first of a series of families of beetles that at present have not been satisfactorily combined in larger aggregates capable of exact definition; some of these families comprise but a few species, and therefore exhibit but little variety of structural characters, while others are of greater extent and may be looked on as really equivalent in value to such families as the Carabidæ. The Hydrophilidæ is intermediate in extent between these two extremes, but will probably become a family of even greater extent and importance than the Dytiscidæ; for the last-named family is rich in species in the waters of the more frigid portions of the earth's surface, while this is not the case with the Hydrophilidæ, whose species appear to be more numerous in the warmer regions. The species of this family, except those of Europe and North America, have been and are much neglected by collectors and students; and this is, in fact, the first time that any thing like a complete enumeration of the Hydrophilideous fauna of any considerable geographical region, other than the two just named, has been attempted. About 120 species have been already ascertained to be found in Mexico and Central America; and although this number will no doubt be very largely increased, it is even at present about equal to the number of species of the family known to inhabit America north of Mexico.

The classification of the family is in a very imperfect and unsettled stage, there being no conformity of opinion as to the number or limits of the tribes to be adopted in it, while the primary division of the family into two groups, Hydrophilini and Sphæridiini, based on the comparative length of the joints of the hind feet, proves on examination to be quite untenable. Under these circumstances I have not thought it necessary for the purposes of this work to make use of any true classification, but simply to arrange the genera in conformity with the order in which they appear in the Munich Catalogue of Coleoptera; in this arrangement the species most profoundly modified for aquatic existence come first, and the terrestrial members of the family are placed at the end. Some authors make of the family Hydrophilidæ a series termed Palpicornia, supposed to be the equivalent of the Adephaga, while the minor divisions of the family are made to represent the families of the Adephagous series; this course, however, has nothing to recommend it, except an appearance of uniformity gained at the expense of accuracy.