





New records of the diving beetle *Rhantus simulans* Régimbart, 1908 in south-western Australia (Coleoptera, Dytiscidae, Colymbetinae)

Lars Hendrich^{1*}, Michael Balke¹

¹ SNSB-Zoologische Staatssammlung, Münchhausenstrasse 21, D-81247 München, Germany • LH: hendrich@snsb.de  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8366-0749> • MB: balke.m@snsb.de  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3773-6586>

* Corresponding author

Abstract

New distributional records of the rarely collected diving beetle *Rhantus simulans* Régimbart, 1908, an endemic species of south-western Australia, are presented. We also summarize what is known about its habitat. The occurrence of *R. simulans* indicates a high conservation value of the sampled wetland. For easier identification, we provide photographs of the habitus and male genitalia of *R. simulans* and *R. suturalis* (Macleay, 1825). *Rhantus simulans* is now recorded from 17 localities along the coast of south-western Australia. Furthermore, data on the location of other 31 diving beetle species are provided.

Keywords

Aquatic Coleoptera, endemic species, new records, *Melaleuca* wetlands

Academic editor: Kirill Makarov | Received 12 February 2021 | Accepted 31 March 2021 | Published 9 April 2021

Citation: Hendrich L, Balke M (2021) New records of the diving beetle *Rhantus simulans* Régimbart, 1908 in south-western Australia (Coleoptera, Dytiscidae, Colymbetinae). Check List 17 (2): 643–648. <https://doi.org/10.15560/17.2.643>

Introduction

The diving beetle subfamily Colymbetinae Erichson, 1837 comprises 11 genera worldwide (Miller and Bergsten 2016; Balke et al. 2017). In Australia, Colymbetinae are represented by the widespread genus *Rhantus* Dejean, 1833 (Balke et al. 2000; Miller and Bergsten 2016; Nilsson and Hájek 2017), with two species (Hendrich et al. 2019). One species, the so called “supertramp” *Rhantus suturalis* (Macleay, 1825) (Fig. 1B) is distributed over almost all of Australia, except the tropical lowlands in the north, and recorded from all states but one. On the other hand, *Rhantus simulans* Régimbart, 1908 (Fig. 1A), is endemic to the south-western corner of Western Australia (Balke et al. 2000; Watts 2002). A key to the adults was provided by Balke et al. (2000), including simple

line drawings of the relevant morphological features. The larvae of both Australian *Rhantus* species have been described by Alarie et al. (2009). Here we present new records of *R. simulans* and summarize what is known about its habitat requirements. Furthermore, both Australian species are illustrated with color photographs for a better and faster identification even in the field.

Methods

Material. This study is based on the examination of 159 specimens (137 adults and 22 larvae) of *R. simulans*. Most of the specimens were collected in the past 25 years by L. Hendrich and C.H.S. Watts (Adelaide). Furthermore,

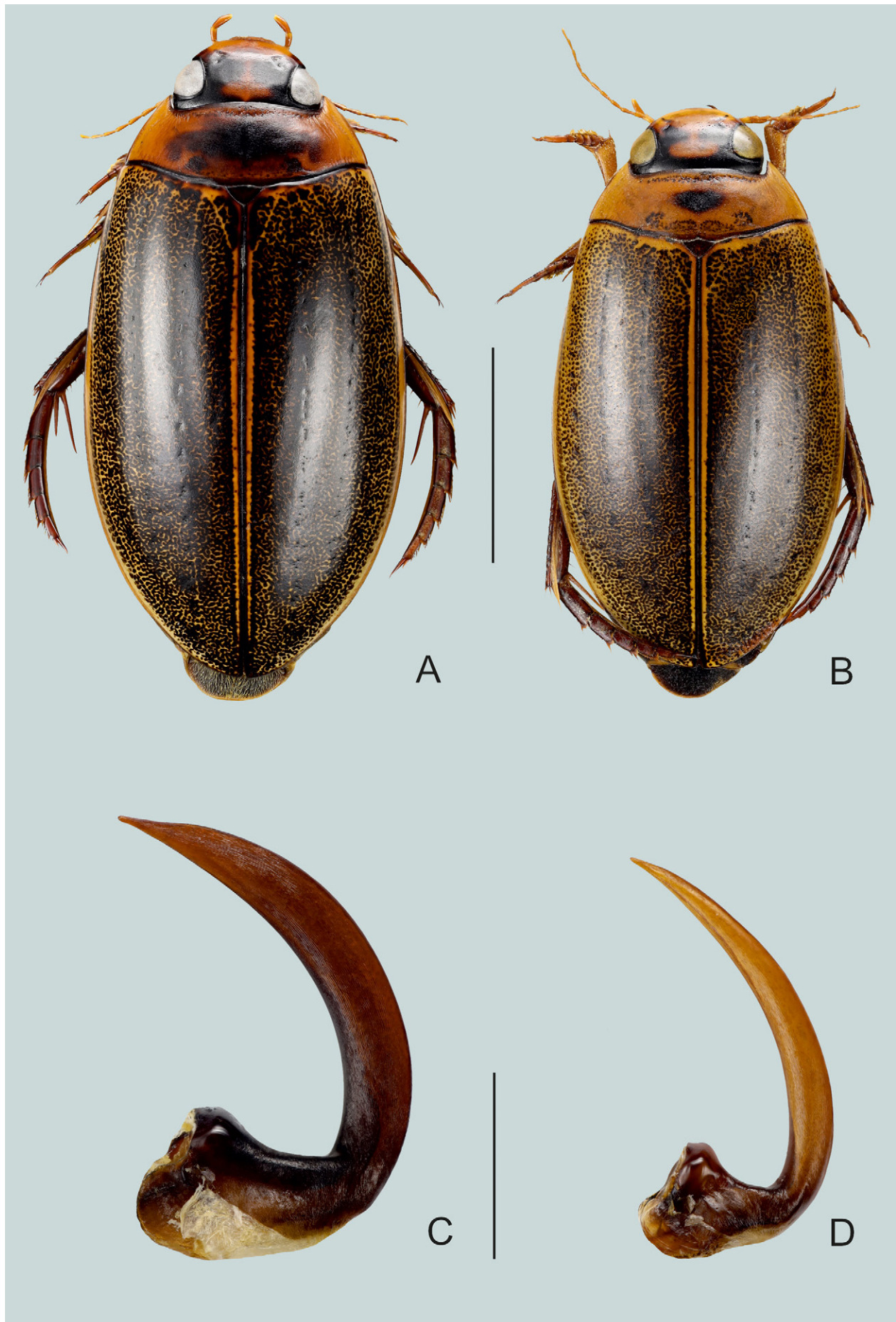


Figure 1. **A.** Habitus of *Rhantus simulans* from Beeliar Reserve in Perth. **B.** Habitus of *Rhantus suturalis* from the Stirling Range in Western Australia, scale bar = 5 mm **C.** Median lobe of *R. simulans*, lateral view. **D.** Median lobe of *R. suturalis*, lateral view, scale bar = 1 mm.

the first author has studied all available specimens stored in relevant Australian museums and in the reference collection of the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Kensington, Australia.

Photos and illustrations. Images were taken with a Canon EOS R camera fitted with a 10× Mitutoyo objective (genitalia), or a MPE 65 macro lens (habitus), attached to a Stackmaster (Stonemaster: <https://www.stonemaster-onlineshop.de/>) macro rail. Illumination was with three LED segments SN-1 from Stonemaster. Image stacks were generated using the Stackmaster macro rail, and images were then assembled with Helicon Focus 4.77TM software.

Coordinates. These are given in decimal notation unless cited verbatim from labels. Besides various Australian road maps, we also used Google Earth (<http://earth.google.com>) to locate several localities. Our map is based on “Microsoft Encarta World-Atlas 2000”.

Codens.

AUS: Australian Museum Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

CFP: Collection Fernando Pederzani, Ravenna, Italy

CLH: Collection Lars Hendrich, Berlin, Germany; property of the NMW

CYA: Collection Yves Alarie, Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada

DPAW: Department of Parks & Wildlife, Kensington, Australia

SAMA: South Australian Museum, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

WAM: Western Australian Museum, Perth, Western Australia, Australia

ZSM: Zoologische Staatssammlung München, Munich, Germany

Results

Rhantus simulans Régimbart, 1908

Rhantus simulans Régimbart 1908 (type locality: Albany): 313; Watts 1978: 114, 1985: 25; Balke 1993: 63; Balke et al. 2000: 224.

Rhantus impar Guignot 1956 (type locality: Rockingham): 491; Watts 1985: 25; Balke 1993: 63.

Material studied.

Published records (8 localities). AUSTRALIA – **Western Australia** • 21 km west of Albany, near Torbay (loc. WA 40); 35°01'S, 117°39'E; alt. 10 m; 28.XI.1996; Hendrich leg.; 2 sex indet., CLH • D'Entrecasteaux National Park, 5 km south of Northcliffe; 35°01'S, 117°39'E; alt. 20 m; 3.I.2000; Hendrich leg.; 2 sex indet., CLH • D'Entrecasteaux National Park, 20 km south of Northcliffe; 34°48'S, 116°04'E; alt. 20 m; 5.I.2000; Hendrich leg.; 2 larvae (LA III), CYA • D'Entrecasteaux National Park, 15 km south of Northcliffe; 34°48'S, 116°04'E; alt. 15 m; 4.I.2000; Hendrich leg.; 24 sex indet., CLH, SAMA, WAM, ZSM • 10 km south of

Northcliffe; 3.XII.1998; F. Pederzani leg.; 2 sex indet., CFP • Lake Muir Nature Reserve, Byenup Lagoon; 34°30'S, 116°44'E; alt. 183 m; 6.I.2000; Hendrich leg.; 15 sex indet., CLH, WAM • Lake Muir Nature Reserve, Byenup Lagoon; 34°30'S, 116°44'E; 183 m; 21.IX.2000; C.H.S.Watts leg.; 1 sex indet., SAMA. Old records from Albany (type locality), Rockingham (type locality of *R. impar*) and Swan River near Perth (see Balke et al. 2000).

New records (12 localities). AUSTRALIA – **Western Australia** • Denmark; 34°57'S, 117°21'E; 24.I.1997; McMillan leg.; at light; 1 sex indet., WAM • Midlands, Gingin, Gingin Brook Wetland Board Walk (Loc. WA 33/197); 31°20'S, 115°54'E; 11.IX.2002; Hendrich leg.; 1 sex indet., CLH • 70 km south of Lancelin; 31°37'S, 115°42'E; 6.I.1991; M.S. & B.J. Moulds leg.; 1 sex indet., AUS • Manjimup, Bannister Road; 34°26'S, 116°08'E; 16.X.2010; Pennifold leg., QC092302, WAR16, South-west Forest Monitoring; 1 sex indet., DPAW • Lake Pleasant Nature View; 34°49'S, 118°10'E; 17.IX.2000; C.H.S. Watts leg.; 2 sex indet. SAMA • Coorinup Swamp; 34°29'S, 116°48'E; 21.IX.2000; C.H.S. Watts leg.; 1 sex indet. SAMA • South Coast Hwy 10 km W Albany, Marbelup Brook (WA 161); 34°59'S, 117°43'E; alt. 14 m; 3.I.2007; L. & E. Hendrich; 4 sex indet., CLH, ZSM • D'Entrecasteaux National Park, 15 km south of Northcliffe (WA 163); 34°48'S, 116°04'E; alt. 25 m; 5.I.2007; L. & E. Hendrich leg., large pool without any vegetation; 20 sex indet., ZSM • D'Entrecasteaux National Park, 11 km S Northcliffe (WA 162); 34°44'S, 116°05'E; alt. 77 m; 4.I.2007; L. & E. Hendrich leg., *Melaleuca* swamp; 8 sex indet., CLH, ZSM • D'Entrecasteaux National Park, 5 km NE Northcliffe, road to Quininnup (WA 164); 34°34'S, 116°08'E; alt. 120 m; 5.I.2007; L. & E. Hendrich leg.; 3 sex indet., ZSM • Beeliar Recreation Park, Paperbark Swamp at Branch Crescent (loc. 2); 32°08'S, 115°50'E; alt. 21 m; 10–20.XII.2009; L. Hendrich leg., bottle traps, kitchen strainer; 25 sex indet., CLH, ZSM • Perth, Success, Beeliar Recreation Park (WA 1/15); 32°08'S 115°50'E; alt. 19 m; 21–31.X.2015; L. Hendrich leg., shallow peaty puddle; 14 sex indet. and 20 larvae (LA III), ZSM • Perth, Success, Beeliar Recreational Park (WA 2/15); 32°08'S, 115°50'E; alt. 21 m; 21–31.X.2015; L. Hendrich leg., Paperbark Swamp; 10 sex indet., CLH, ZSM.

Distribution. South-western Australia. Coastal plains and swamps south of a line from Gingin north of Perth to Albany in the southeast (Fig. 2).

Identification. Differential diagnosis of Australian *Rhantus*, modified after Balke et al. (2000):

Rhantus simulans: Always larger than *R. suturalis*. Body length minus head 12.8–13.5 mm; pronotum with medial patch strongly expanded laterally (Fig. 1A); median lobe in lateral view broader (Fig. 1C).

Rhantus suturalis: Always smaller than *R. simulans*. Body length minus head 9.3–12.2 mm; pronotum with medial patch oval, not strongly expanded laterally (Fig. 1B); median lobe in lateral view slender (Fig. 1D).

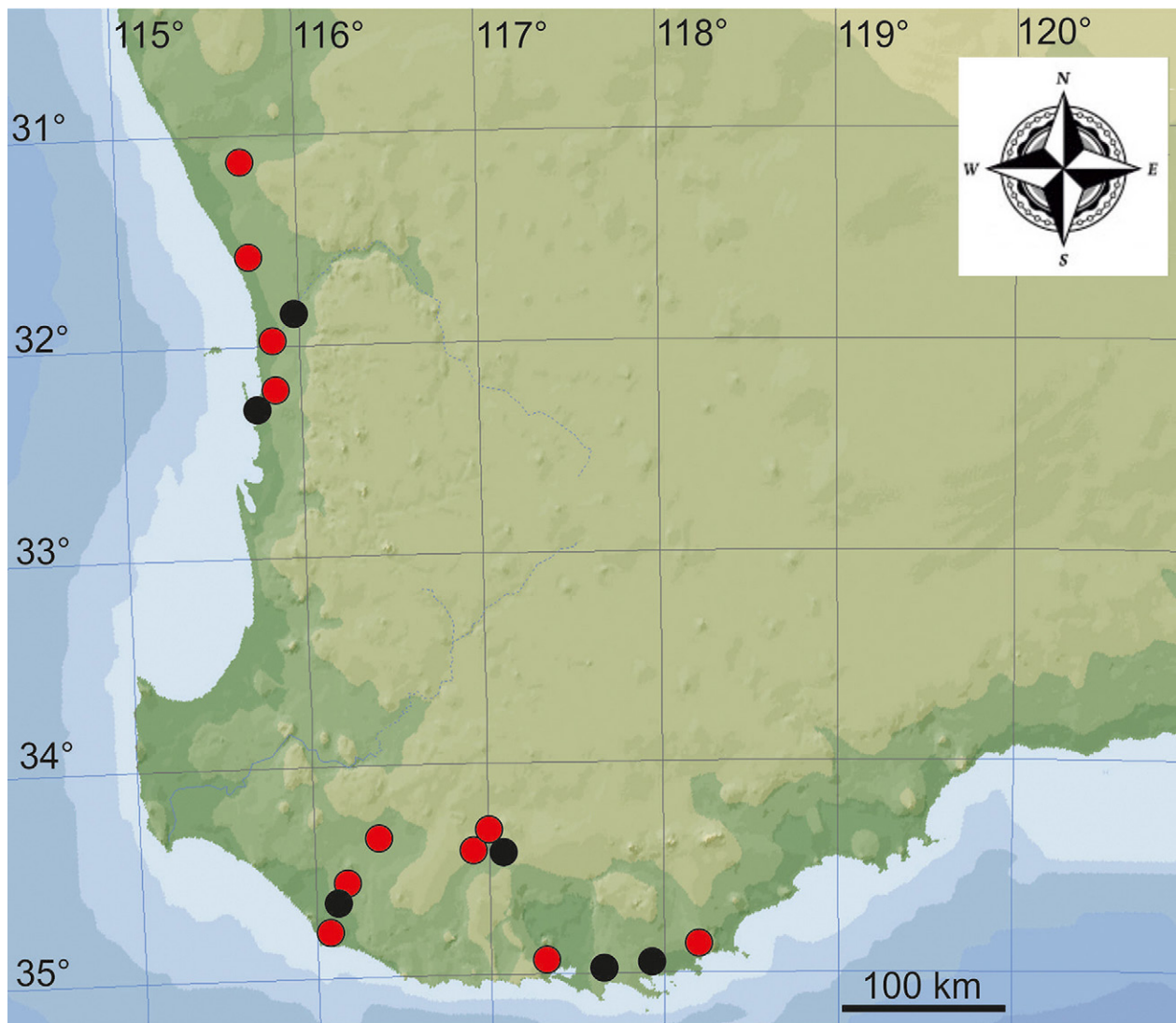


Figure 2. Distribution of *R. simulans* in south-western Australia. Black dots = published records, red dots = new records.

Discussion

Both Australian species of *Rhantus* are lentic. The common and widespread *R. suturalis* inhabits a large variety of standing waters such as flooded meadows, farm dams, ditches, and peatlands, and it is often one of the first dytiscids colonizing a newly formed body of water (Balke et al. 2009).

In contrast, for the successful development of larger populations, *R. simulans* (Fig. 3B) always requires the presence of swamp forests (Fig. 3A, E), dominated by swamp paperbark trees (*Melaleuca raphiophylla* Schauer), which also provide enough water in the dry, summer months to allow adults to survive. It seems that the larvae prefer to develop in ephemeral pools and puddles that are dry in summer (Fig. 3C), whereas the adults can also be found in permanent waters, which are often in forests or on the edge of swamp forests. The newly hatched adults remain between fallen leaves and rotting sedges in the residual water (Fig. 3D) of the slowly drying breeding waters (Fig. 3F) or migrate to more permanent waters nearby (Fig. 3A, E). They have also been caught on the banks of streams and lakes with thick

sedges (e.g., Byenup Lagoon). Larvae of the 3rd instar could be detected in the Perth area until October, and further south near Northcliffe until January. The adults were collected from September to January. *Rhantus simulans* is almost always syntopic with the other Australian species of the genus, *R. suturalis*.

Rhantus simulans is an indicator species for intact wetland fauna. The presence of *R. simulans* always indicates occurrence of other conservation-relevant, endemic diving beetles in south-western Australia such as *Antiporus hollingsworthi* Watts, 1997, *A. mcraeae* Watts & Pinder, 2000, *Brancuporus gottwaldi* (Hendrich, 2001), *Exocelina atra* (Sharp, 1882), *Gibbidessus* ssp., *Paroster pallescens* Sharp, 1882, *Spencerhydrus pulchellus* Sharp, 1882, *Sternopriscus eikei* Hendrich & Watts, 2007, *S. minimus* Lea, 1898 and *S. storeyi* Hendrich & Watts, 2004 (Table 1).

Acknowledgements

The Department of Parks and Wildlife is acknowledged for giving permission to conduct scientific research in Nature Reserves [permit numbers: SF 003017, NE



Figure 3. Habitat of *Rhantus simulans*. **A.** Beeliar Reserve, Success, Perth, eutrophic permanent paperbark swamp, with mats of floating vegetation, only adults. **B.** *Rhantus simulans*, living specimen in photo tray. **C.** Shallow, exposed and ephemeral puddle near location A, lots of newly hatched adults and instar III larvae. **D.** Almost dried pool near location A, lots of newly hatched adults in very shallow water, deep among rotten debris and floating roots of emergent vegetation. **E.** *Melaleuca* peatland swamp with sedges, 11 km south of Northcliffe, only adults. **F.** Exposed, shallow pool, 20 km south of Northcliffe, without any vegetation but rich in rotten leaves and twigs.

002348, and SF010577]. Two anonymous reviewers are thanked for reviewing and critically reading the manuscript. This work was supported by grants from Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft DFG (BA 2152/4-1, 6-1 and 7-1; HE 5729/1-1), as well as from the CLIMAQUA project funded by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) (grant # 01DR14001 to M. Balke). Lars Hendrich warmly thanks Emma Hendrich (Munich,

Germany), as well as Stephan Gottwald and Ingo Weckwerth (both Berlin, Germany) for their patience, assistance, and enthusiastic encouragement during several field trips.

Authors' Contributions

LH provided most of the specimens. LH and MB produced the photographs of morphological structures, and both authors wrote the manuscript.

Table 1. Diving beetles associated with *Rhantus simulans* in south-western Australia. A = Australia wide; E = Endemic to south-western Australia.

| Associated diving beetle fauna | 11 km south of Northcliffe | Marbelup Brook west of Albany | 15 km south of Northcliffe | Road to Quinlup | Beeliar, Paperbark swamps | Beeliar, ephemeral puddles | Gingin wetland | Byenup Lagoon | Distribution in Australia |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Family Dytiscidae | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Allodessus bistrigatus</i> (Clark, 1862) | | | | X | | | | | A |
| <i>Antiporus hollingsworthi</i> Watts, 1997 | | | | | | | | | E |
| <i>Antiporus occidentalis</i> Hawlitschek, Porch, Hendrich & Balke, 2011 | | | | | | | | X | E |
| <i>Antiporus mcraeae</i> Watts & Pinder, 2000 | | | X | | | | | | E |
| <i>Brancuporus gottwaldi</i> (Hendrich, 2001) | | | X | | | | | | E |
| <i>Cybister tripunctatus</i> ssp. <i>temnenkii</i> Aubé, 1838 | | | | | X | | | | A |
| <i>Exocelina atra</i> (Sharp, 1882) | | | X | | | X | | X | E |
| <i>Gibbidessus davidi</i> Hendrich, Watts & Balke, 2020 | X | | | | | X | | | E |
| <i>Gibbidessus rotnestensis</i> Hendrich, Watts & Balke, 2020 | | | X | | | X | | | E |
| <i>Gibbidessus pictipes</i> (Lea, 1899) | | | | | | | | X | E |
| <i>Hyphydrus elegans</i> (Montrouzier, 1860) | X | | | | | | X | | A |
| <i>Lancetes lanceolatus</i> (Clark, 1863) | X | | | | | | | X | A |
| <i>Limbodessus inornatus</i> (Sharp, 1882) | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | A |
| <i>Limbodessus shuckardii</i> (Sharp, 1882) | | | X | | | | X | | A |
| <i>Megaporus howitti</i> (Clark, 1862) | | | | | | | | X | A |
| <i>Megaporus solidus</i> (Sharp, 1882) | | | | | X | | | X | E |
| <i>Necterosoma darwinii</i> (Babington, 1841) | X | X | X | X | | | | X | E |
| <i>Onychohydrus scutellaris</i> (Germar, 1848) | | | | | X | | | X | A |
| <i>Paroster pallescens</i> Sharp, 1882 | | | | | | X | | | E |
| <i>Platynectes aenescens</i> (Sharp, 1882) | | | X | | | | | X | E |
| <i>Platynectes brownei</i> Gueorguiev, 1972 | | | X | | | | | | E |
| <i>Platynectes ocellaris</i> Lea, 1895 | | | | | | | | | E |
| <i>Rhantus suturalis</i> (Macleay, 1825) | X | | X | X | X | X | | X | A |
| <i>Spencerhydrus pulchellus</i> Sharp, 1882 | | | | | X | | | X | E |
| <i>Sternopriscus browni</i> Sharp, 1882 | X | X | X | | X | | | X | E |
| <i>Sternopriscus eikei</i> Hendrich & Watts, 2007 | | | X | | | | | | E |
| <i>Sternopriscus marginatus</i> Watts, 1978 | | X | | X | | | | | E |
| <i>Sternopriscus minimus</i> Lea, 1899 | | | X | | | | | X | E |
| <i>Sternopriscus multimaculatus</i> (Clark, 1862) | X | | | | | | | | A |
| <i>Sternopriscus storeyi</i> Hendrich & Watts, 2004 | X | | | | | | | X | E |
| <i>Sternopriscus watti</i> Pederzani, 1999 | X | | | | | | | | E |
| 31 species | 10 | 4 | 13 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 15 | |

References

- Alarie Y, Michat MC, Nilsson AN, Archangelsky M, Hendrich L (2009) Larval morphology of *Rhantus* Dejean, 1833 (Coleoptera: Dytiscidae: Colymbetinae): descriptions of 22 species and phylogenetic considerations. *Zootaxa* 2317: 1–102. <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.2317.1.1>
- Balke M, Kovac D, Hendrich L, Flechtner G (2000) Rediscovery of the New Zealand diving beetle *Rhantus plantaris* Sharp, and notes on the south west Australian *R. simulans* Régimbart, with an identification key (Coleoptera: Dytiscidae). *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* 27: 223–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03014223.2000.9518229>
- Balke M, Ribera I, Hendrich L, Miller MA, Sagata K, Posman A, Vogler AP, Meier R (2009) New Guinea highland origin of a widespread arthropod supertramp. *Proceedings of the Royal Society, B Biological Sciences* 276 (1666): 2359–2367. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2009.0015>
- Hendrich L, Lemann C, Weir TA (2019) 11. Dytiscidae Leach, 1815. In: Slipinski A, Lawrence J (Eds.) *Australian beetles*, volume 2 – Archostemata, Myxophaga, Adephaga, Polyphaga (part). CSIRO Publishing, Clayton South, 34–60.
- Miller KB, Bergsten J (2016) *Diving beetles of the world. Systematics and biology of the Dytiscidae*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA, 320 pp.
- Nilsson AN, Hájek J (2020) A world catalogue of the family Dytiscidae, or the diving beetles (Coleoptera, Adephaga). Version 1.1. 2020. <http://www.waterbeetles.eu>. Accessed on: 2020-2-8.
- Watts CHS (2002) Checklist and guides to the identification, to genus, of adults and larval Australian water beetles of the families Dytiscidae, Noteridae, Hygrobiidae, Halplidae, Gyrinidae, Hydraenidae and the superfamily Hydrophiloidea (Insecta–Coleoptera). *Identification Ecology Guide* 43. Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology, Albury, Australia, 110 pp.