A NEW SPECIES OF THE GENUS OOSTERNUM AND
A KEY TO THE U. S. SPECIES (COLEOPTERA:
HYDROPHILIDAE)

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The hydrophilid genus Oosternum (Sharp, 1882, p. 112) is a rather poorly known group of minute beetles that are more abundant in tropical or subtropical regions. Of the nine species presently in the genus, only two, O. pubescens LeC. and O. costatum Shp., have been reported as occurring in the United States. Recently, John C. Moser of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Forest Insect Research, Southern Forest Experiment Station, submitted a series of Oosternum from Louisiana for identification. These undescribed specimens were collected from detritus cavities 2–8 feet underground in nests of the Texas leaf-cutting ant, Atta texana (Buck.). They were most common in moist, fresh detritus actively being broken down by inquilines but some were also found in dry detritus previously broken down. Additional specimens of this new species were also collected from detritus from a nest of the Mexican leaf-cutting ant, Atta mexicana (F. Sm.) in El Salvador. According to O. L. Cartwright, collector of this series, the entrance to the nest was located on top of a cliff, 15–20 feet above the valley floor. However, the beetles were collected at the base of the cliff in a pile (2–3 bushels) of moist detritus dropped there by the ants from an opening in the side of the cliff. Dr. Moser (in litt.) informs me that A. texana ordinarily buries detritus in special cavities inside the nest and only in rare instances deposits it outside the nest. However, many other species of Atta regularly deposit part of the detritus outside the nests. Other species of Oosternum have been collected from ants’ nests, suggesting that at least some species are myrmecophiles. The biology and
immature stages are unknown. This new species is described to make its name available for use in papers dealing with its biological or ecological relationships.

**Oosternum attacomis**, new species

_Holotype male:_ Castaneous dorsally and ventrally. Head microreticulate; with moderately coarse, widely spaced, setigerous punctures. Clypeus more densely punctate and finely margined; feebly emarginate medially. Labrum almost membranous, small, and partially hidden by clypeus. Maxillary palpi slightly shorter than antennae; penultimate segment shortest, ultimate segment equal in length to broad pseudo-basal segment. Labial palpi very small. Mentum microreticulate and depressed antero-medially. Antennae with 6 antennal segments before a 4-segmented club.

Prothorax forming a continuous arch with elytra; microreticulate and punctate similar to head; distinctly margined laterally. Inflexed portion of pronotum with oblique carina extending from coxal cavity toward lateral margin of prosternum then turning anteriorly, terminating on anterior edge of prosternum. Middle of prosternum raised abruptly to same plane as mesosternal process; with longitudinal median carina. Mesosternal process broadly oval, strongly concave medially. Metasternal area pentagonal; with coarse, setigerous punctures; feebly concave medially. Scutellum microreticulate and with few indistinct punctures.

Elytra with 10 distinct costae of equal height; costae each surmounted with a series of coarse, setigerous punctures; intervals with a series of coarse punctures.

First abdominal segment with distinct, longitudinal, median carina extending entire length of segment.

Length 1.3 mm; greatest body width 0.8 mm.

_Alloptype female:_ Similar to male except the metasternal area is not concave.

_Distribution:_ Holotype male and allotype from **LOUISIANA**, 1½ miles south of Melder, T1NR3WS11, 18 January 1960, in detritus cavity of _Atta texana_, 8 ft beneath surface, J. C. Moser. Type No. 65672 in the U. S. National Museum. Paratypes: same data as holotype, 58♂♀, 21♀♂; same locality and collector, 24 March 1960, 1♂, 2♀♀; same locality and collector, 16 May 1960, 7♂♀, 2♀♀; Rapides Parish, La., 10 mi SE Flatwoods, 6 February 1959, in detritus cavity of _A. texana_, J. C. Moser, 1♀. **EL SALVADOR:** San Salvador, 2 June 1959, in detritus ex nest of _A. mexicana_, O. L. Cartwright, 18♂♂, 14♀♀.

Paratypes will be distributed to the following museums: British Museum (Natural History); California Academy of Sciences; Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique; and also the collections of the State Plant Board of Florida and Louisiana State University.

This species is similar to _O. pubescens_ LeC. and _O. costatum_ Shp. but may be distinguished from both by the following key:
A New Species of the Genus Oosternum

Figs. 1–3. Oosternum pubescens LeC.: 1.—Pronotum. 2.—Prosternum. 3.—Aedeagus, lateral and ventral view. Figs. 4–6. Oosternum attacomis, new species: 4.—Dorsal view. 5a.—Aedeagus, lateral view. 5b.—Aedeagus, ventral view. 6.—Prosternum. Figs. 7–9. Oosternum costatum Shp.: 7.—Pronotum. 8.—Prosternum. 9.—Aedeagus, lateral and ventral views.
1. Middle of prostemum raised abruptly to same plane as mesosternum (Figs. 6, 8); pronotum coarsely and densely or sparsely punctate; median lobe of aedeagus broad for entire length (Figs. 5b, 9) ................................................................. Middle of prostemum gradually raised to same plane as mesosternum (Fig. 2); pronotum finely, densely punctate; median lobe of aedeagus broad at base but acicular in apical third (Fig. 3) ................................................................. *pubescens* LeC.

2. Elytral costae all of equal height; pronotal punctation sparse, moderately coarse (Fig. 4); apex of median lobe of aedeagus slightly turned up in lateral view (Fig. 5a) .......................... *attacomis* sp. nov. Alternate elytral costae (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) distinctly higher than intervening ones; pronotal punctation very dense, coarse (Fig. 7); apex of median lobe of aedeagus turned down in lateral view (Fig. 9) ................................................................. *costatum* Shp.

**Literature Cited**
