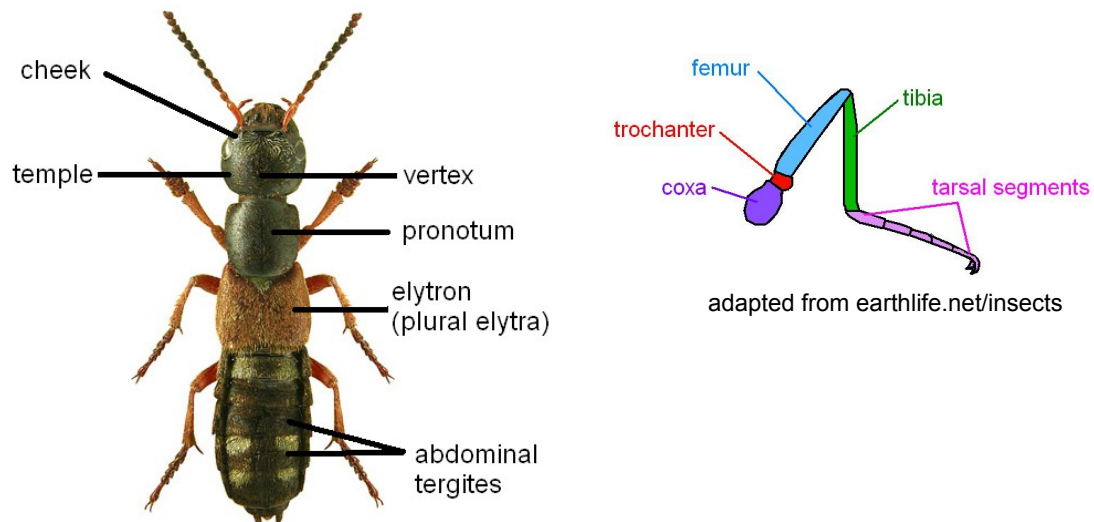


Family Staphylinidae

This is the largest family of beetles in Britain and is split into a number of subfamilies, some of which are very easy to recognise. The following key is based on that of Tottenham (1954) and updated to the current checklist.

Reference:

Tottenham (1954) Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects Volume 4, Part 8a



Checklist of subfamilies

From the Checklist of Beetles of the British Isles, 2012 edition, edited by A. G. Duff. (available from www.coleopterist.org.uk/checklist.htm).

ALEOCHARINAE Fleming, 1821
EUAESTHETINAE Thomson, C.G., 1859
HABROCERINAE Mulsant & Rey, 1876
MICROPEPLINAE Leach, 1815
OMALIINAE MacLeay, 1825
OXYPORINAE Fleming, 1821
OXYTELINAE Fleming, 1821
PAEDERINAE Fleming, 1821
PHLOEOCHARINAE Erichson, 1839
PIESTINAE Erichson, 1839

PROTEININAE Erichson, 1839
PSELAPHINAE Latreille, 1802
PSELAPHINAE Latreille, 1802
PSEUDOPSINAE Ganglbauer, 1895
SCAPHIDIINAE Latreille, 1806
SCYDMAENINAE Leach, 1815
STAPHYLININAE Latreille, 1802
STENINAE MacLeay, 1825
TACHYPORINAE MacLeay, 1825
TRICHOPHYINAE Thomson, C.G., 1858

Image Credits

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Family Staphylinidae

Key to British subfamilies

- 1 Elytra covering most of the abdomen, leaving at most 1-2 segments of the abdomen exposed. ...
..... Subfamily **SCYDMAENIDAE**
Small shining beetles sometimes with oval elytra, clothed with fine sparse hairs. Found near water, under stones or bark.



Elytra shortened so that at least three segments of the abdomen are exposed.2

2¹ Tarsi with three segments. Abdomen not particularly hardened and tending to collapse on drying; elytra usually much broader than the pronotum. Last segment of the antennae and of the palps often conspicuously enlarged or with appendages. Length under 3 mm.
..... Subfamily **PSELAPHINAE**
One genus has only five segments to the antennae.

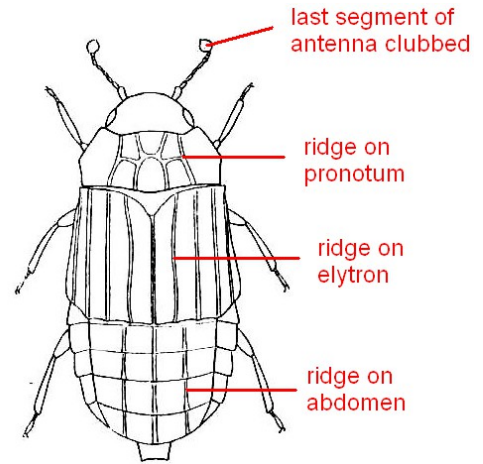


Tarsi with five segments (occasionally four or three, but if with three then not agreeing with the other characters above).[3](#)

3² Antennae with nine segments, the last segment forming a distinct club. Pronotum, elytra and abdomen with distinct ridges or keels; size 1-2 mm.

..... Subfamily **MICROPEPLINAE**

Genus *Micropeplus*



Antennae with eleven segments (rarely with ten in Hypocyptini, subfamily Aleocharinae). Pronotum, elytra and abdomen with or without ridges, keels or furrows. 4

4³ Last segment of the labial palps very large, dilated and somewhat crescent shaped; mandibles very large, held forward (but crossed) in repose.

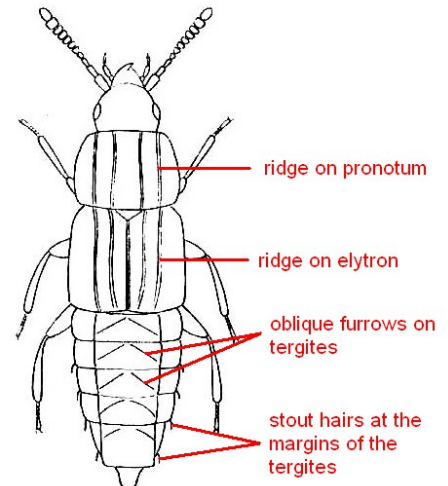
..... Subfamily **OXYPORINAE**

Only one species *Oxyporus rufus*. Length 6-10 mm. Found in the gills of fungi. Local but widespread, sometimes common.



Labial palps with the last segment about equal in thickness with the previous one; mandibles smaller.5

- 5⁴ Pronotum and elytra with distinct ridges.
Abdominal tergites with oblique furrows from
the middle of the base towards the apical
angles and with stout bristle-like hairs at the
sides which are curved backwards. Brown
species with a distinctive appearance.
..... Subfamily **PSEUDOPSINAE**
A single species in Britain, *Pseudopsis sulcata*.



Pronotum and elytra without ridges or not *both* having distinct ridges.[6](#)

6⁵ Male (illustrated on the left) with large curved extensions on the mandibles. Rather flat species, more or less parallel-sided and of characteristic appearance; from below the front coxae are circular.

..... Subfamily **PIESTINAE**

One species which is sometimes common, *Siagonium quadricorne*, found under damp bark, especially elm in the winter. Hairless, with small prominent eyes. Antennae with all the segments elongate, more so in males than females. Pronotum rather diffusely punctured with large and small punctures. Length 4.0-5.5 mm.



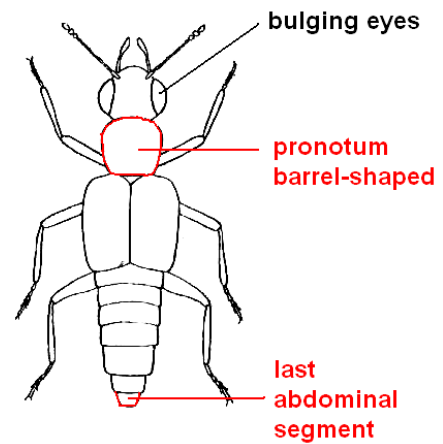
Mandibles without curved extensions.7

7⁶ Antennae inserted on the upper surface of the head,
at or near the level of the front margin of the eyes. ..[8](#)



Antennae inserted otherwise, under the side margin or on the front.[9](#)
When the antennae are inserted on the front they are sometimes on a small projection

8⁷ Head large and broad; eyes large, bulging, occupying most of the sides of the head; pronotum more or less barrel-shaped without a side border. Last segment of the abdomen long nearly parallel-sided, appearing sheared off or rounded at the apex. Insects of distinctive appearance.
..... Subfamily **STEININAE**



Head comparatively smaller without bulging eyes not bulging; side of head usually continuing behind the eyes (forming the temples). Pronotum not barrel-shaped. Last segment of the abdomen otherwise.
..... Subfamily **ALEOCHARINAE**

9^z Antennae inserted at the front of the head,
inside the base of the mandibles.[10](#)

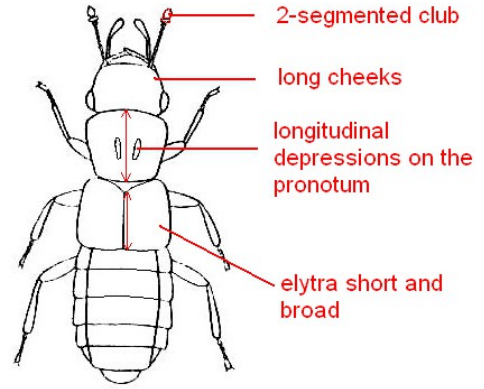


antennae inserted
between these lines

Antennae inserted under the sides of the head, or on the front, outside the
base of the mandibles.[12](#)

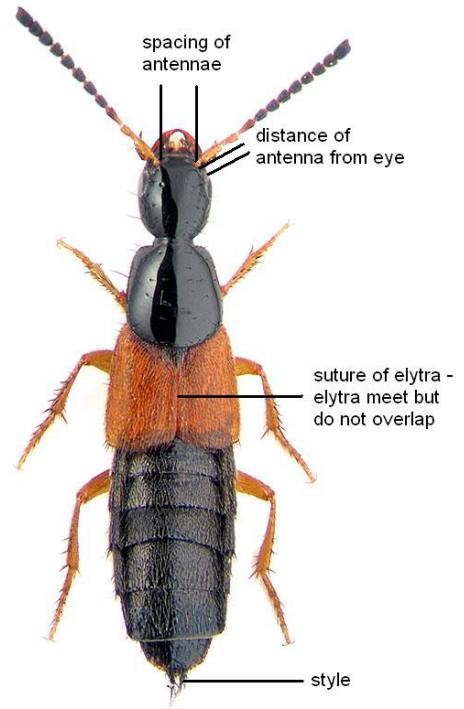


10⁹ Antennae with a club consisting of two segments. Head with the eyes removed towards the base, therefore with long cheeks. Pronotum with two longitudinal depressions. Elytra very short and broad, at suture shorter than pronotum. Front coxae very small. Tiny species not exceeding 2 mm.; with a distinctive compact appearance.
 Subfamily **EUAESTHETINAE**
 Four species in two genera



Antennae not having a club formed of two segments. Head with the eyes in the middle or removed towards the front, thus with distinct temples and short cheeks. Pronotum without longitudinal depressions. Front coxae large. Length 3-30 mm. [11](#)

11¹⁰ Antennae a long way apart, further from each other than they are from the eyes. Underneath the beetle the prosternum does not project forwards under the neck. Elytra touching at the suture but not overlapping. Last segment of abdomen with long styles.
 Subfamily **STAPHYLININAE**
 The prosternum is the plate underneath the pronotum which extends from the neck to the base of the front legs.



Antennae closer to one another than they are to the eyes. Prosternum projecting forwards to form a “neck plate”. Elytra usually overlapping at the suture. Last segment of abdomen without long styles.
 Tribe **XANTHOLININI**
 In subfamily Staphylininae

12⁹ Antennae extremely slender, with very long hairs
ringed round the tips of most segments.[13](#)



Antennae otherwise.[14](#)



13¹²Coxae of the hind legs triangular, prominent.
Pronotum and elytra without punctures or hairs and
very shining. Length 2.8-3.5 mm.

..... Subfamily **HABROCERINAE**

One species *Habrocerus capillaricornis*. Local, among dead leaves; it
runs very rapidly.



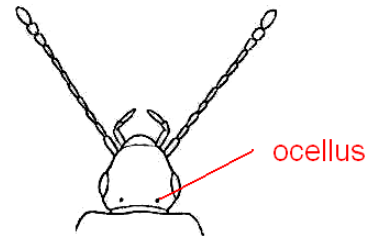
Coxae of the hind legs broader than long.
Pronotum and elytra closely punctured and hairy,
consequently dull. Length 2.5-3.0 mm.

..... Subfamily **TRICHOPHYINAE**

One species *Trichophya pilicornis*. Local in moss etc.; it very
readily takes to flight. Photograph from U Schmidt.



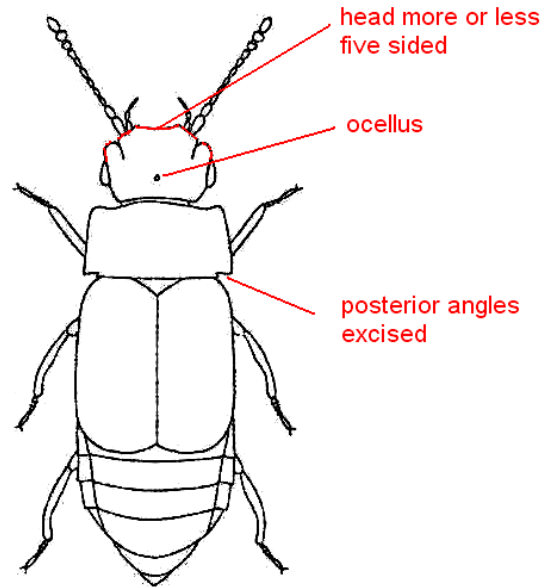
14¹²Vertex of head with one or two ocelli.[15](#)



Vertex of head without ocelli.[16](#)

15¹⁴ Vertex of head with two ocelli; tarsi 5-segmented.
..... Subfamily **OMALIINAE**

Vertex of head with one ocellus in the middle near base; head in front of eyes somewhat 5-sided. Pronotum much broader than long, the sides almost straight with feeble wide teeth and with the hind angles excised.
..... Subfamily **PROTEININAE**
Metopsia clypeata keys here - the rest of the subfamily are at couplet 19. In moss, etc.; often common, somewhat local, but widely distributed.



16¹⁴Tarsi with three segments.
..... Subfamily **OXYTELINAE**

Tarsi 4- or 5-segmented. [17](#)



17¹⁶Very small species, 1.5-2.0 mm.; tapering a little towards each end, cylindrical, covered with long grey hairs.
..... Subfamily **PHLOEOCHARINAE**

One species *Phloeocharis subtilissima*. The absence of ocelli distinguishes this from Omaliinae and from most of the Oxytelinae by its 5 segmented tarsi, and from all of them by the strongly developed posterior trochanters which are about one third of the length of the coxae (Oxytelinae - about one-fifth). Under bark in moss on trees, etc.; not common, local, but widespread.



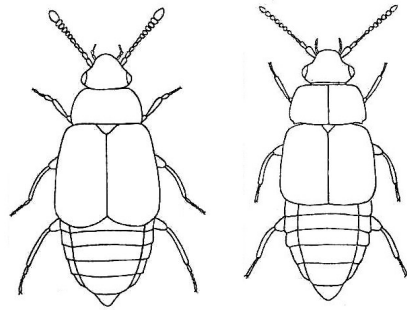
Species not very hairy, or if hairy then distinctly larger and of different appearance.[18](#)

18¹⁷ Body nearly always distinctly tapering at the front and back; the abdomen is strongly narrowed from base to apex. Head often sunk into the pronotum, hiding the temples (area behind the eyes). Front femora scarcely visible from above. Head usually broader than long, with sloping cheeks and small temples; maxillary palps normal. Hind coxae broader than long. Tarsi with four or five segments. Last segment of the female abdomen with four lobes.
..... Subfamily **TACHYPORINAE**



Body not tapering towards the front and back. [19](#)

19¹⁸ Shape of pronotum and general form as illustrated; small broad insects less than 3 mm. long.
..... Subfamily **PROTEININAE**



Shape of pronotum and general form quite different; mostly much larger species, if very small then narrow and elongate.²⁰

20¹⁹ Coxae of the hind legs broader than long; tarsi 5-segmented; last segment of abdomen without styles. Features of head not as below.

..... Subfamily **OXYTELINAE**

Syntomium aeneum, *Elonium striatulum*, *Delaeaster dichrous* and *Manda mandibularis* key here. Other genera in the subfamily have three tarsal segments and key out in couplet 16a.

Coxae of hind legs conical. Maxillary palps with the last segment extremely small and often scarcely visible; second to last segment becoming broader towards the tip. Body parallel-sided and slender. Front femora plainly visible from above, stouter than the middle and hind femora and with distinct prominence or tooth on the underside (except in *Paederus*). Head in front of the eyes usually with parallel cheeks; temples as long or longer than the eyes. Last segment of the abdomen with distinct styles.

..... Subfamily **PAEDERINAE**

