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Aiyitioderus montanus gen. et sp. nov., an endemic click beetle (Coleoptera, Elateridae, Oophorini) from the mountains of the Dominican Republic

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Abstract

Aiyitioderus **gen. nov.** and *A. montanus* **sp. nov.** are described for the first time from the mountains of the Dominican Republic, Hispaniola. This species is similar to those of the heterostixus-group currently assigned to *Heteroderes* Latreille from mainland North America. The species is only known from higher elevations in mixed humid broadleaf forest to pine and cloud forest transitions. *Aiyitioderus* **gen. nov.** is the first endemic genus of Elateridae reported from the West Indies.

Key Words

Biodiversity, Caribbean, endemic, Greater Antilles, mesic forest, Neotropical, species discovery, taxonomy

Introduction

The click beetle fauna of Hispaniola has historically been inadequately studied. Biotic surveys in the Dominican Republic over the last 20 years or so revealed a number of undescribed taxa demonstrating a larger endemic fauna at the species level, with changes in taxonomy of known species, and indications of interesting biogeographic relationship patterns (e.g., Johnson 2022; Johnson and Skelley 2026; Johnson and Hodeček 2026a, 2026b; others see below). These and related studies noted below demonstrate the presence of a larger and likely ancient endemic insect biota than previously understood, with the genus proposed below adding to the 205 endemic beetle genera summarized by Ratcliffe and Cave (2015) and reported subsequently.

The most recent assessment of the arthropod fauna of Hispaniola provided by Perez-Gelabert (2020) gave the click beetle diversity as composed of 15 genera and 45 species. Of the latter 16 species, or nearly 36%, were indicated as endemic. Johnson (2022) added *Lissomus* Dalman, and *L. quisqueya* Johnson and *L. woodruffi* Johnson to the biota. Johnson and Skelley (2026) added *Lacon antillius* Johnson and Skelley and confirmed the occurrence of *L. subcostatus* (Candèze). Johnson and Hodeček (2026a, 2026b) described a new species of *Ignelater* Costa and a third species of *Lissomus*. Johnson and Hodeček (2026b) noted that a minimum of 15 additional known undescribed species remain for study in our intended series of reports that would indicate more than a 50% endemism rate for click beetle species, all from only two sampling projects cited below.

Here, a new genus and a new species of click beetle assigned to the tribe Oophorini are described from upland localities in the Dominican Republic. The type locality lies within the Reserva Científica Ébano Verde in the Cordillera Central of the Province La Vega. Entomological work in this reserve was summarized by Perez-Gelabert (2015) who documented 350 insect species representing 254 genera, 70 families, and 12 orders. The new taxon

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described here appears to represent the first click beetle reported from the reserve. Based on the summary of beetle endemicity in the West Indies (Peck and Perez-Gelabert 2012), we present the first endemic genus of Elateridae for Hispaniola and the West Indies.

Materials and methods

This study is based in part on material collected during entomological expeditions conducted in the Dominican Republic in 2021, 2023, and 2024 by Jiri Hodeček and Jiri Pirkl, together with additional specimens resulting from earlier surveys by Daniel E. Perez-Gelabert, Ruth Bastardo, and collaborators. The recent expeditions formed part of the broader biodiversity project "Distribución y Biodiversidad de Grupos de Insectos Seleccionados de la República Dominicana", carried out under collecting permits VAPB-08862, VAPB-10887, and VAPB-12695 issued by the Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales. The project targeted several insect groups, including Coleoptera, Dermaptera, Zoraptera, Ephemeroptera, Auchenorrhyncha, and selected Lepidoptera, Diptera, and Hymenoptera, and has already yielded several published results (Háva and Hodeček 2023; Lingafelter et al. 2024; Hodeček et al. 2024; Háva and Hodeček 2025; De Ketelaere and Hodeček 2025; Mengual et al. 2025; Hodeček and Haxaire 2025; Hodeček et al. 2026a, 2026b; Johnson and Hodeček 2026a, 2026b; among others).

Descriptions include observations and measurements on both male and female specimens. Morphological terms and concepts generally follow Calder (1996), Costa et al. (2010), and Lawrence et al. (2010). Measurements were made with an ocular micrometer at 0.1 and 0.01 mm increments at 7–90x magnification. Body length was measured from the anterior margin of the frons to the elytral apices, and width was measured across the elytral humeri, unless specified otherwise. The ocular index, a ratio of frons width and head width inclusive of the eyes, was calculated to two decimal places. Antennomere length ratios are given for the dimorphic sexes and given as ratio strings. The ratios were calculated for antennomeres 2–11 as measured along the lateral midline from antennomere base to apex at moderate magnifications, and values are rounded to one decimal place. Pronotal length is along the midline from anterior margin to the ante-scutellar emargination and width is at the widest point at midlength or base of the hind angles. Tarsomere lengths are measured at medium-high magnifications from base to apex along the dorsum, with values rounded to two decimal places and given as a ratio string.

Dissections were made as needed by soaking each specimen in ammonia for 1.0–2.0 hr, removing the abdomen, determining the sex, and either extracting the aedeagus or the ovipositor and sclerotized bursal structures of females. Organs were rinsed in distilled water and treated in room temperature 10% KOH as needed for resolution. Abdominal ventrites and aedeagi were neutralized in water and white vinegar, dried, and glued to a small card below the specimen. Small and delicate genitalia and lightly sclerotized terminal abdominal sclerites were neutralized and preserved in plastic microvials with a drop of glycerine and attached below each specimen. Aedeagus total lengths were measured from the median lobe (penis) apex to the anterior margin of the basal piece (phallobase); lateral lobe (paramere) length from apex to the anterior-most point of the basal lobe; lateral lobe tip along midline from apex to lateral spine; and basal piece length from basal lateral angle to apex of shoulder junction with paramere. Aedeagal ratios of taxonomic value measured at higher magnifications and calculated to two decimal places are basal piece length/total length, lateral lobe length/total length, lateral lobe apex/lateral lobe length.

Label data are presented verbatim, except province names are moved to precede other data, and dates are converted to the day.month.year format for consistency, with the month in lower case Roman font. Information from separate labels is separated by a slash bracketed by single spaces. Interpolated information is given within brackets as needed for clarity or supplementation. Specimens studied came from or are deposited with these individuals and institutions below, or also cited in the acknowledgements as either loans or gifts:

DPGC	Daniel E. Perez-Gelabert, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.
FSCA	Florida State Collection of Arthropods, Gainesville, Florida, USA.
IIBZ	Instituto de Investigaciones Botánicas y Zoológicas, Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.
JHPC	Jiri Hodeček private collection, Chatel St-Denis, Switzerland.
JPPC	Jiří Pirkl, private collection, Chomutov, Czech Republic.
MCSN-VD	Muséum Cantonal des Sciences Naturelles (Département Zoologie), Lausanne, Switzerland.
MNHNSD	Museo Nacional de Historia Natural "Prof. Eugenio de Jesús Marcano," Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.
PJJC	Paul J. Johnson, private collection, Brookings, South Dakota, USA.

Results

Taxonomy

Subfamily Agrypninae
Tribe Oophorini

Genus *Aiyitioderus* Johnson, gen. nov.
https://zoobank.org/CC9E351F-DC7C-4FE0-A5AC-76D8D775C443

Type species. *Aiyitioderus montanus*, new species, here designated

Diagnosis. Body narrow, moderately convex. Integument variably brown-infuscate. Pubescence short, pale. Front broadly arcuate, extended over clypeal remnant. Antennae reaching apex hind angles of pronotum or shorter; antennomere 2 shorter than 3, together 1.4x longer than antennomere 4. Pronotum shallowly convex, integument shining; sculpture of simple punctures, interstices with small oblong simple punctures; hind angles distinctly divergent, with single strong dorsal carina near to lateral margin; mesal incisures open. Pronotosternal suture simple, closed anteriorly. Scutellar shield longer than wide, strongly inclined anterad. Elytra lateral margins subparallel, narrowing in apical third. Mesoventral fossa narrow, U-shaped. Metacoxal plate with large strongly angled posterior lobe. Tarsomere 4 with large ventral membranous lobe. Pretarsal claw with single large ventral seta, 3 dorsolateral setae. Aedeagus with median lobe spatulate, subparallel at midlength in dorsal aspect, abruptly constricted and attenuate apically, basal portion forming lateral hoods over median lobe stem, margined internally with dark arcuate margin; paramere apex obtuse, spinose; venter of paramere expanded medially, encompassing median lobe stem. Ovipositor with sclerotized coxites and rods; bursa copulatrix tubular, membranous, internally set with pairs of sharp spines; accessory glands are long, thin, and tightly coiled.

Etymology. The genus name is derived from "Aiyiti", an old indigenous name for the island of Hispaniola and the suffix "*-derus*" derived from the Greek "deros" (Brown 1956) and used here to indicate a relationship to the *Conoderus* Eschscholtz species groups within the currently used *Monocrepidius* Eschscholtz complex of the Americas.

Aiyitioderus montanus Johnson, sp. nov.

https://zoobank.org/4F5A0978-9E26-49FE-8D76-BC7E11A1CB5C

Figs 1–9



Figure 1. *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov.; adult male holotype, dorsal aspect.

Type material. ***Holotype***, male. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC • **La Vega Prov.**, Ebano Verde, 1075 m, 19°01'59.67"N, 70°32'33.29"W, 11.v.2024, Leg. J. Pirkl, J. Hodeček (MCSN-VD).

Paratypes (n = 23). DOMINICAN REPUBLIC • **Bahoruco Prov.**, RD-103 Rd to Majagual, Sierra de Neiba, 669 m, 18°32.340'N, 71°18.118'W, 25.iii.2003, D. Perez, R. Bastardo, B. Hierro (n) (1, MNHNSD); • **Elías Piña Prov.**, RD-164 Trail to Loma de las Tayotas, Río Limpio, 19°13.333'N, 71°31.220'W, 844 m, 24.vii.2003, D. Perez, R. Bastardo, B. Hierro (n) (4, MNHNSD); • [**La Vega Prov.**], RD-177 El Arroyazo, Reserva Científica Ebano Verde, 25–26.xi.2003, D. Perez, R. Bastardo (1, MNHNSD); • **Embalse Presa de Blanco**, 18.8836150°N, 70.5653297°W, 7.v.2024, Leg. J. Pirkl, J. Hodeček (2, MCSN-VD); • [same data as holotype] [El Arroyazo] **Ebano Verde**, 1075 m, 19°01'59.67"N, 70°32'33.29"W, 11.v.2024, Leg. J. Pirkl, J. Hodeček (6, MCSN-VD; 1, PJJC); • 1 km NW Manabao, 5.vi.1994, coll. M. C. Thomas (2, FSCA); • 2 km E Manabao, 18.vii.1996, M. C. Thomas, R. Turnbow, ultraviolet and mercury vapor light (2, FSCA); • **La Cienega de Manabao**, Park Hdqts, 3000 ft elev., 3–5.vii.[19]99, R. E. Woodruff, blacklight (1, FSCA); • **Monseñor Nouel Prov.**, Río Blanco, Vivero de Moscoso Puello, 11–13.v.2001, blacklight trap, R. E. Woodruff (2, FSCA); • [**Puerto Plata Prov.**], RD-184 Trail to peak and Centro SOECI, Pico Diego de Ocampo, 918 m, 5.xii.2003, D. Perez, R. Bastardo, A. Maremolejos (1, MNHNSD).

Diagnosis. *Aiyitioderus montanus* is immediately recognized by its narrow body form, slightly longer than wide convex pronotum, strongly inclined and subpentagonal scutellar shield, hind angle outer dorsal carina close



Figure 2. *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov.; adult female, dorsal aspect.

to the lateral margin, obsolescent mesal carina, distinct mesal incisures demarking the hind angles, the extended lightly sclerotized and truncate apical lobe of female ventrite 5, and the aedeagal, ovipositor, and bursa copulatrix characters described and illustrated.

Description. ***Body*** (Figs 1, 2) elongate, narrow, lateral margins subparallel in dorsal silhouette. Length 6.8–8.9 mm, width 1.7–2.3 mm. Integument brown-infuscate, shining; pronotum disc infuscate, anterior and posterior angles brown; lateral margins of hypomeron and ventrite 5 partially brown; antennae and legs yellow-brown; punctation heterogenous dorsally and ventrally, except on elytra; setiferous, with dull pale decumbent hair-like setae.

Head. Evenly convex on vertex, frons with variable shallow paramedial impressions; frontal margin arcuate between eyes, narrowly projecting over clypeal remnant; sculpture of dense heterogenous simple punctures. Mandible stout, base with outer face excavate basally. Eyes bulging, hemispherical, coarsely faceted; ocular index 63–68. Antenna reaching pronotal posterior angle apex (female), to one antennomere beyond (male); antennomere 2 short, subcylindrical, antennomere 3 1.67× longer than antennomere 2, antennomeres 3–10 narrowly serrate; antennomere 2–11 length ratio 1.0:1.7:1.9:2.0:2.0:2.0:1.8:1.8:1.8:2.0. (male), 1.0:1.4:1.6:1.6:1.6:1.6:1.6:1.6:1.6:2.0 (female).

Pronotum. Median length 1.01× width at midlength, 0.4× elytral length, moderately convex, lateral margins widest at midlength, narrowing anteriorly, shallowly sinuate before slightly divergent posterior angles. Disc integument shining, with heterogenous subcircular to oblong, simple larger punctures separated by 1–4× own diameters, with 4–10 small punctures separated by 1.0–1.5× own diameters between larger punctures; setae long, 2–3× puncture diameter. Lateral margin of polished carina from anterior margin to posterior angle apex. Posterior declivity moderate. Hind angles divergent; flattened, oblique mesad of outer dorsal carina, narrowing to obtuse apex; demarked medially by short incisure; dorsally bicarinate, outer carina elevated, sharp, divergent from lateral margin, reaching 0.4× distance to anterior margin, 3× longer than fine mesal carina. Hypomeron narrowly rounded anteriorly, broad posteriorly; heterogenously punctate; mesal margin not carinate or polished; posterior margin with broad, angular lobe, then asymmetrically emarginate before hind angle apex; pronotosternal suture straight, closed anteriorly.

Scutellar shield. Strongly inclined; 1.4× longer than wide, subpentagonal, subtruncate anteriorly, shallowly emarginate sides, apex obtusely angulate; finely punctured.

Elytra. Moderately convex laterally to shallowly convex discally, length about 2.5× median length of pronotum, apices separately, narrowly rounded at interval 3; truncate to shallowly emarginate to sutural denticle; striae shallowly sulcate, subparallel to apices, serially punctured, each deep, elongate, asetose; intervals shallowly convex, finely scabrous, with 4–5 ranks of setiferous small shallow punctures; setae slightly shorter than pronotal setae.

Ventral thoracic sclerites. Prosternum with disc moderately convex, moderately-densely punctured; chin piece shallowly deflexed, densely punctured; intercoxal process shallowly deflexed post-coxal, attenuate, with strongly carinate coxal margins to midlength. Mesoventrite anterior portion moderately inclined, median fossa narrowly U-shaped, walls parallel; posterior portion planar with metaventrite at suture. Metaventrite heterogenously punctured, large punctures anterolaterally, small punctures medioposteriorly.

***Legs*.** Femora and tibiae slender, finely punctured, setose; tibia with stout spinose setae dorsally along length. Tarsus subfiliform, densely pubescent ventrally, tarsomeres 1–4 sequentially shorter, length ratio 1.00:0.60:0.40:0.08:0.56 (male), 1.00:0.50:0.37:0.07:0.43 (female); tarsomere 4 deeply emarginate dorsally, ventral membranous lobe broad, 0.6× length of tarsomere 5; claw long, slender, acute, basal expansion with single large ventral seta, 3 dorsolateral setae.

***Abdomen*.** Ventrites 1-5 densely, shallowly, setiferously punctured, heterogenous on ventrites 1–2, small on ventrites 3–5. Ventrite 5 apex normally broadly rounded (male), to an extended and truncate lightly sclerotized lobe with a shallow, ovoid, medial impression just anterad (female, Fig. 3).

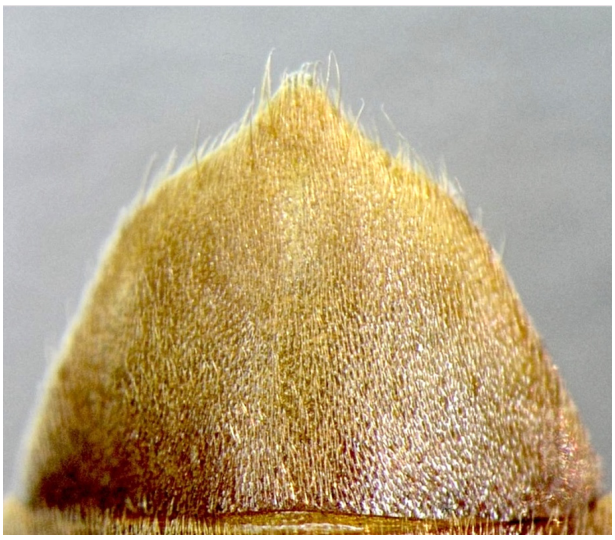


Figure 3. *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov.; female abdominal ventrite 5.

***Genitalia*.** Aedeagus (Figs 4, 5) length 1.25–1.30 mm. Median lobe narrow at midlength, spatulate apically, attenuate to narrowly obtuse apex, length 0.77× total length; shallowly convex dorsally, distal portion with ejaculatory duct orifice ventral before apex; ejaculatory duct with a narrow rod ventrally; basal portion of spatulate apex forming lateral hoods over median lobe stem, margined internally with dark arcuate margin. Paramere broad basally, narrowing in apical 0.25, length 0.6× total length; apex obtuse, subangulate mesally, rounded laterally apical area with long setae dorsally, ventrally, laterally; expanded ventromedially, encompassing median lobe stem, minute spines ventrally along mesal margin in apical third; long hair-like setae on ectal margin in apical third. Basal piece length 0.3× total length, subhexagonal, shallowly emarginate basal margin.

Ovipositor (Fig. 6) sclerites lightly sclerotized. Median tube mostly membranous, attenuate apically. Coxite with sclerotized ectal areas midlength and basally; apical quarter membranous, bulbous, lacking styli; laterally



Figure 4. *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov.; aedeagus, dorsal aspect.

sparsely setose. Baculus each side, slender, 1.25× length of coxite. Bursa (Fig. 7) membranous, ventral pair of 2-spined sclerites near vaginal junction, dorsal single spurred sclerite midlength; anterior region twisted, tubular, with pair of saccate glands; anteriorly one tightly coiled tubular gland, one very long thin tubular gland forming tangle.



Figure 5. *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov.; aedeagus, ventral aspect.

Etymology. The species epithet "*montanus*" reflects the sampling sites and habitats of occurrence in the mid and upper elevations of Hispaniola. Grammatically the name is masculine in gender.

Distribution. Hispaniola, Dominican Republic: Baoruco, Elías Piña, La Vega, Monseñor Nouel and Puerto Plata provinces.



Figure 6. *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov.; ovipositor, dorsal aspect.

Ecology. Known specimens of *A. montanus* were collected between late March and early December, with most records concentrated in May–July, suggesting a prolonged adult activity period. The species is currently known (Fig. 8) only from mid-elevation and montane localities in the Dominican Republic, between about 669 and 1075 m, including the Cordillera Central, Sierra de Neiba, Río Limpio, and Pico Diego de Ocampo. These records place *A. montanus* in higher-elevation mesic broadleaf forest, including transitions to pine forest and lower cloud forest (Fig. 9).

The holotype of *A. montanus* was collected by light trap at 1075 m near the Centro de Visitantes de Reserva Científica Ebano Verde (RCEV). The RCEV is a protected mountainous area that lies within one of the wettest sectors of Hispaniola and is recognized as a biotically rich region of endemism (Cano-Ortiz et al. 2015, 2016; Dinerstein et al. 2017). The RCEV covers nearly 3000 ha, ranges from approximately 800 to 1565 m a.s.l., and is situated on predominantly volcanic substrates. Its documented flora exceeds the 686 species of vascular plants and includes numerous epiphytes and bryophytes noted by García et al. (1994). Vegetation at the collection site includes humid broadleaf forest mixed with the endemic pine *Pinus occidentalis* Sw., just below the cloud-forest belt (Cano Carmona et al. 2010; Cano-Ortiz et al. 2016, 2017).



Figure 7. *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov.; bursa complex.

Taken together, the available records suggest that this is a montane species associated primarily with mesic to humid forest environments.

Discussion

Champion (1895), following Candèze (1859), separated his Mesoamerican species assigned to *Monocrepidius* Eschscholtz from *Heteroderes* Latreille that has "a double system of punctuation on the thorax", while relegating the same characterization for some species of *Monocrepidius* in his key to species with similar sculpture to variation between species. The so-called double or heterogenous punctation of the pronotum was exaggerated in importance and uncritically accepted subsequently as a supposedly unique genus character (e.g. Fleutiaux 1911, 1927, 1947; Van Dyke 1932). *Aiyitioderus montanus* and its nearest associated relations all have heterogenous punctation on the head, pronotum and ventral sclerites, much like on a number of species formerly regarded in the highly diverse genus *Conoderus*. This new species otherwise lacks characters indicating any close association with other Neotropical "*Heteroderes*" such as *H. amplicollis* (Gyllenhal) or *H. vagus* (Candèze) [= *H. falli* (Lane), *auctorum*], or with *H. fuscus* Latreille. *Aiyitioderus montanus* is immediately recognized by a narrow body form, slightly longer than wide convex pronotum, the scutellar shield being strongly inclined, longer than wide and subpentagonal, the hind angle outer dorsal carina is close to

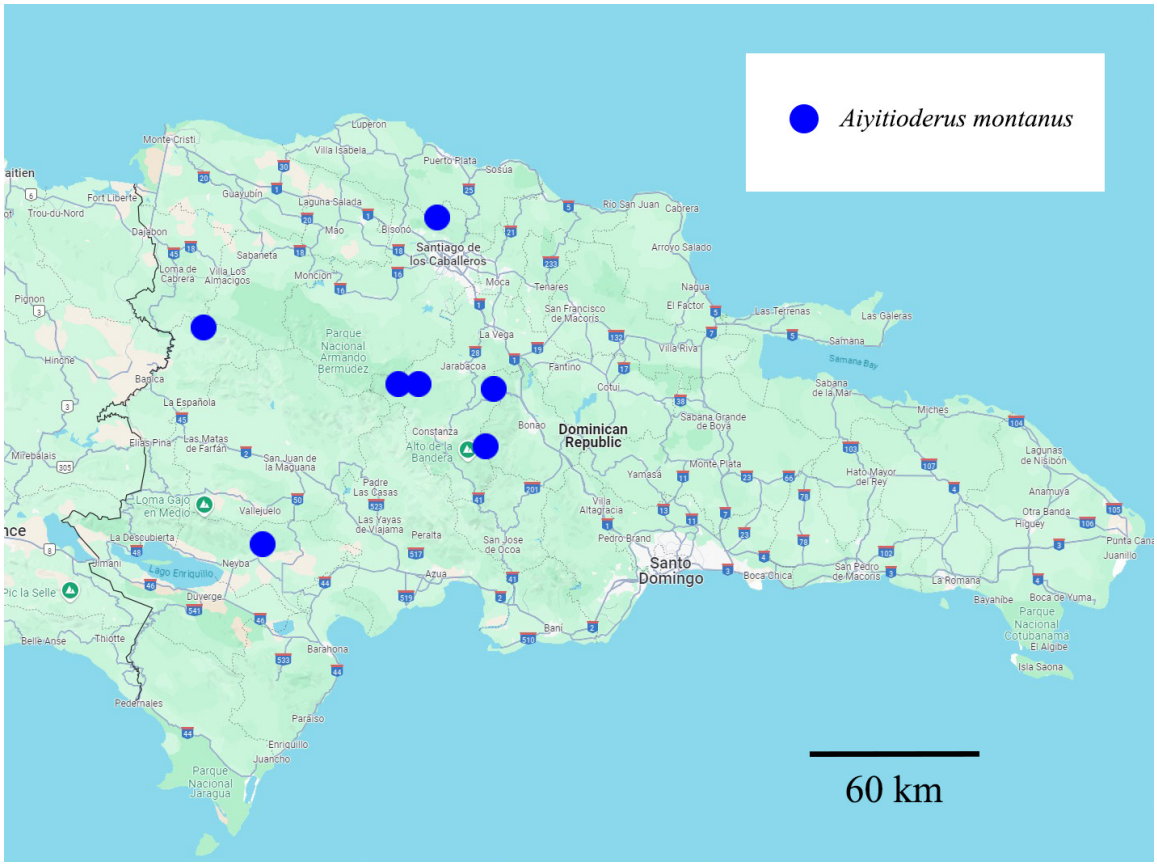


Figure 8. Map of the Dominican Republic with the approximate locations of *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov. shown by blue dots.



Figure 9. Type locality of *Aiyitioderus montanus* gen. et sp. nov. in Ebano Verde (el. 1075 m).

the lateral margin, the mesal carina is obsolescent, the mesal incisures demarking the hind angles are open and distinct, the female ventrite 5 has an extended lightly sclerotized and truncate apical lobe (Fig. 3), and the aedeagal, ovipositor, and bursa copulatrix traits given in the description and illustrated.

No other click beetle species known from the West Indies resembles this one with its combination of character states. In the broader click beetle fauna of the Americas this species is not congeneric with either *C. fuscofasciatus* Eschscholtz, *H. fuscus*, or *Monocrepidius pallipes* Eschscholtz, the type species of each genus respectively. An assessment of the suite of characters demonstrated in the description and images provides a falsification of hypothetical assignments of this new taxon to *Heteroderes* or *Monocrepidius* that are nominally restricted to Africa, southern and eastern Asia, Australia, or Pacific Oceania (e.g, Calder 1996; Arimoto et al. 2015; Sarkar et al. 2015; Platia and Ghahari 2016; Girard 2017). *Aiyitioderus montanus* resembles species of the heterostixus-group of species presently in *Heteroderes*, containing *H. heterostixus* Candèze of southern Mexico to Costa Rica (Blackwelder 1944; unpubl. data), *H. sordidus* (Horn) from northwestern Mexico and the southwestern United States (Johnson 2018), and *H. suturalis* (LeConte) from the southeastern United States (Mathison 2021). *Heteroderes heterostixus* is more similar to *A. montanus* externally, but the three mainland species form a species group that have proportionately shorter and broader dorsal silhouettes and the aedeagal median lobe and parameres both have wing-like expansions with arcuate carinae and likely form a genus-level taxonomic unit themselves.

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Additional information

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The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Data availability

All of the data that support the findings of this study are available in the main text.