



Biography

Joseph Vachal (1838–1911): French entomologist and politician

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Abstract

Joseph Vachal (1838–1911) was a French notary and politician who discovered 786 new species and 18 new subspecies of Hymenoptera, 630 of which are still valid and in use today. This makes Vachal a little-known yet the fifth most prolific describer ever of new bee taxa. The present catalog provides a brief biography of Vachal and a complete list of the taxa proposed by Vachal, including a bibliography of his 48 entomological publications. The catalog lists for all valid names published details on the type series, type locality, and collector. A tentative current combination is provided for all taxa based on literature.

Key words: Andrenidae, Apidae, Braconidae, Chalcididae, Colletidae, Halictidae, Ichneumonidae, Megachilidae, Megalyridae, Melittidae, Pompilidae, Sphecidae, Tiphiidae, Vespidae, Biography

Introduction

While bees as a group are well known insects to the public and the scientific community in general, their specific identification and species-group names in many parts of the world can be a puzzle, even to specialists. Such limitation is due to multiple problems: the species status of many taxa has never been tested since they were proposed centuries ago, identification keys are often outdated or even nonexistent, many species are known from a single sex only, and others are yet to be described as new to science. Comprehensive modern revisions provide the necessary taxonomic tools that allow for species identification, are available only for certain taxonomic groups. Often the most abundant and species-rich genera cannot be readily identified, and although this situation is particular true in the tropical and subtropical parts of the world, it is not uncommon even in areas where the bee fauna has been intensively studied, such as in North America.

Modern databases have made the scattered information on the diversity of nearly 20 000 described bee species and their distribution worldwide more accessible to science and society than ever before. An outstanding effort that exemplifies this is the recent checklist of the bee species of the world compiled by John S. Ascher and colleagues