

Carrion beetles
Family Silphidae

In Southcentral Alaska, 8 species are known from 3 genera in this family

Carrion Beetle
Nicrophorus investigator

Length 1/2" - 3/4". This brightly colored beetle, large by Alaskan insect standards, uses carcasses of small birds or mammals to feed its offspring. It is attracted by the odor of carrion, which it can locate from quite a distance. Several carrion beetles may reach a carcass but usually only one pair claims the goods after chasing off the competitors. After the carcass is buried, the female digs a chamber in the soil nearby in which she lays some 30 eggs. The female remains near the carcass and feeds the young larvae.

When disturbed, the beetle produces an audible stridulation, sounding like a bumble bee. The contrasting red and black pattern warns predators against the foul smelling secretion the beetle discharges when disturbed. *Nicrophorus* are found throughout the Northern hemisphere.

Carrion beetles are easily baited with a piece of meat left in a can open on the top and partly buried in the soil.



Thanatophilus lapponicus

Length 3/8" One of two species of this genus found in Southcentral Alaska, *Thanatophilus lapponicus* search for carcasses near which the female deposits 10 or so eggs. Adults mature after more than a month. The insect overwinters as an adult. It can be a pest of dried animal product like skins, dried meat or fish. This species is known from the whole Northern hemisphere.



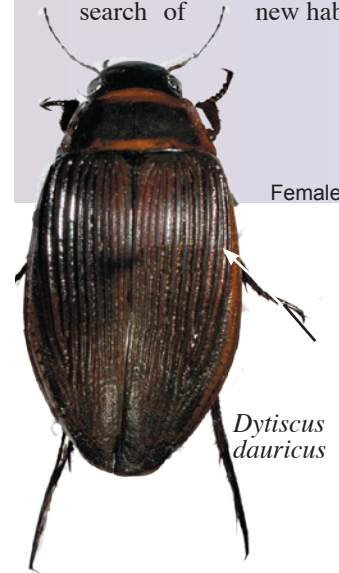
Predaceous Diving Beetles
Family Dytiscidae

Ninety four species of disticidae are known from Alaska, distributed in 13 genera.

Dytiscus sp.

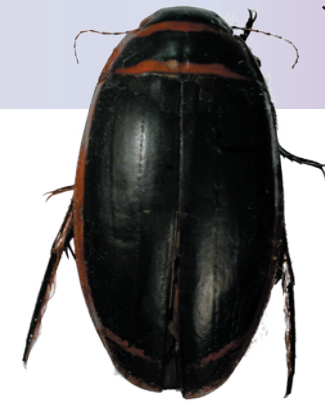
Length up to 1 3/4". These large diving beetles prey on small fishes, tadpoles, and insects in lakes and ponds. Males and females can easily be distinguished by the longitudinal grooves of the elytra of the female and the smooth and polished male elytra. The male's forelegs bear distinctive suction cups. The larvae look ferocious with their large hooked piercing mandibles with which they paralyze their prey by injection of a venom. This venom liquefies the tissue that is then sucked back by the larvae (external digestion). All that remains of the prey is an empty skin or carapace. *Dytiscus* breathe oxygen from the air which is stored in the space between the elytra and abdomen.

In mid summer, the adults crawl out of the water and fly, dispersing in search of new habitat



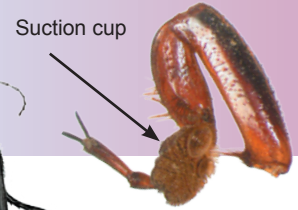
Female

Dytiscus dauricus



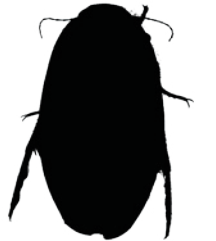
Male

Dytiscus sp.



Suction cup

Foreleg of the male



Whirligig Beetles
Family Gyrinidae

This family is represented in Alaska by 7 species of the genus *Gyrinus*



Gyrinus sp.

Length 1/4". The adults whirl rapidly in loose groups on the surface of lakes near the shore and pools or in river eddies. These beetles have eyes curiously divided in two: the lower part is adapted to see under water while the upper to see in the atmosphere. The larvae are aquatic and pupation happens outside the water in the river bank vegetation.